

GENDER ASSESSMENT

Supporting a Funding Proposal to the Green Climate Fund

Project Title:

Scaling up the implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management (Project 2).

Commissioned by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

1.	Introduction	4
1.1.	GCF and GIZ Guidelines for the Promotion of Gender Equality	6
1.2.	Methodology	6
2.	Information on gender dimensions in Lao PDR	8
2.1.	The Meta Level: Norms and Traditional Roles of Women and Men in Laos	8
2.2.	Macro Level: International and Regional Commitments & National Legislation and Policies	10
2.3.	Meso Level: Institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations	11
2.4.	Micro Level: Gender Equality among the Target Group	13
3.	Gender dimensions in the sector	17
3.1.	Meta Level: Gender gaps in the sector	17
3.2.	Macro Level: Policies and strategies in the sector	22
3.3.	Meso Level: Gender dimensions at sectoral institutions and actors	25
3.4.	Micro Level: Consultations with the Target Groups in the Sector	26
4.	Gender responsiveness, expertise, and gender equality in the partner organisation	35
5.	Gender responsiveness and expertise in the project/ among project staff in the country	36
6.	Gender gaps and recommendations to integrate them into the GCF programme	37
7.	Measures for a gender responsive/transformational project design	49
8.	List of References	52
9.	Annex 1: List of consulted stakeholders	55
10.	Annex 2: Transcripts of stakeholder interviews	56

List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADWLE	Association for Development of Women and Legal Education
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAFO	District Agriculture and Forestry Office
DLWU	District Lao Women's Union
DoF	Department of Forestry
ER Program	Emission Reduction Program
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FLEG(T)	Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (and Trade)
FLR	Forest and Landscape Restoration
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GFP	Gender Focal Point
GIZ	German Development Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LDC	Least Developed Country
LWU	Lao Women's Union
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRV	Measurement, Reporting, and Verification
NCAWMC	National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children
NPA	Non-Profit Organization
NSAW	National Strategy for the Advancement of Women
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
NTFPs	Non-Timber Forest Products
PAFO	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office
PLWU	Provincial Lao Women's Union
PRAP	Provincial REDD+ Action Plans
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries
RECOFTC	The Center for People and Forests
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
Sub-CAW	Ministry-based (sub-)Committee for the Advancement of Women
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement

1. Introduction

Lao PDR is a landlocked, Least Developed Country (LLDC) with dwindling forest cover, from 70% in the 1960s to 58% in 2015. Forests are not only an important sector for Laos' national economy, but are also central to the income, nutrition and livelihoods of its people. Especially the poor rural population is strongly dependent on the natural resources derived from land and forests. Forest degradation and deforestation therefore pose a significant risk to the livelihoods of a majority of the Lao population. Women, the poor, and geographically remote communities are typically most vulnerable to these changes due to their limited adaptation capacities and limited access to alternative means of securing their livelihoods.

The core national strategies (9th Socio-Economic Development Plan, Central Party's Resolution on Land, Forestry Strategy 2035, Lao PDR's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 2021) acknowledge the importance of Laos' forest resources and their sustainable management as an integral component of rural livelihood support and improvement. The latest NDC and draft climate strategy (2021) aim to strengthen linkages between climate change mitigation and action within the agriculture and forestry sectors. The National REDD+ Strategy and National REDD+ Vision to 2030 build on these national policies and emphasize the importance of all stakeholders, including households, communities, Government and private sector, to be an active contributor to reducing deforestation and degradation, and to promote forest restoration and reforestation.

Overview of the overarching programme

This project is embedded in the overarching programme '*Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Programme through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management*' (Funding Proposal (FP) 117), which was approved by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Board at its 24th board meeting (B.24) in 2019.¹ The objective of the overarching programme is to support the Government and people of Lao PDR transition to sustainable and climate resilient management of forests and landscapes at scale. This will reduce approximately 11.7 million tCO₂e and directly increase the resilience of more than 273,700 villagers over the 7-year implementation period of Projects 1 and 2. The programme contributes to the successful implementation of the Lao PDR Emissions Reduction Programme (ER-Programme) under the FCPF in the aforementioned six provinces covered by the ER-PD.

Initially, FP117 was conceptualized as a pure mitigation single project which had to be reframed as a programme, with 3 Sub-Projects due to a limitation in available GCF funds at the time of board approval. FP117² explicitly outlined a programmatic approach with Project 1³ covering 3 out of 6 provinces of the Lao ER-Programme (Houaphan, Luang Prabang and Sayaboury), and the subsequent Sub-Projects 2 and 3 (hereafter Project 2) to expand the programme intervention area the all 6 provinces covered by the ER-Programme to fully reach the envisioned transformational change of forest and land management in the uplands of the Lao PDR.⁴

Project 1 (FP117) laid the ground for the transformational change in the project area, including supporting policy mainstreaming, strengthening the regulatory framework, and implementing and improving the MRV system, among others. It also supported interventions on the ground in 3 provinces, namely: Houaphan, Sayaboury and Luang Prabang. However, to fully reach the paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate resilient forest and land use practices outlined in the programmatic approach within FP 117, additional support is needed.

of Lao PDR transition to sustainable and climate resilient management of forests and landscapes at scale. Project 2 is comprised of three components (see Figure 1 below):⁵

¹ "The programme consists of 3 projects: Project 1 (mid-2020 to mid-2024) addresses the three provinces of Houaphan, Sayaboury and Luang Prabang, which contain the highest rates of deforestation and forest degradation within the programme area; Project 2 (mid-2024 to end-2029) scales-up the number of participating communities in the same geographical area; and Project 3 (2022 to end-2029) extends the geographical reach of the programme to the 3 additional provinces of Luang Namtha, Bokeo and Oudomxay." (GCF FP 117, page 3).

² The full proposal is available on the GCF website: <https://www.greenclimate.fund/project/fp117>.

³ Project 1 which was approved under FP 117 reached effectiveness on 19th May 2020. Since then, the Project has made significant progress. More details on the specific progress can be found under the Annual Performance Report (APR) in FP Annex 18.

⁴ The following excerpt is from FP 117's Programme-level Executive Summary: "This Funding Proposal presents a stand-alone GCF project (Project 1) for Board approval. Two subsequent stand-alone projects, embedded in the same programmatic context and theory of change as this project, will be submitted at a future date for Board approval. Board approval for the project presented in this Funding Proposal is wholly separate from, and does not pre-judge, Board approval for future related projects."

⁵ Note: Project 1 used the term 'outputs' instead of components. In order to ensure alignment with the GCF Integrated Results Management Framework (IRMF) and new Funding Proposal Template, the term 'component' is applied under Project 2. Outputs under GCF's IRMF

- Component 1 addresses barriers at the national and sub-national levels, including measures that aim to scale-up climate-informed participatory land use planning, strengthen land tenure security, improve forest law enforcement and monitoring, and scale-up and ensure access to sustainable financing for the AFOLU sector.
- Component 2 builds on the enabling environment (Component 1), and addresses key drivers of deforestation and degradation within the agricultural sector. It delivers emission reductions at scale through reducing the expansion of agricultural activities into forested landscapes, and promotes climate resilient agricultural practices that increase the resilience of local farmers and agri-ecosystems.
- Component 3 builds on the enabling environment (Component 1),⁶ and will reduce emissions and strengthen the resilience of local livelihoods and forest ecosystems through sustainable forest landscape management and the promotion of Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR), with a focus on village and conservation forests.⁷

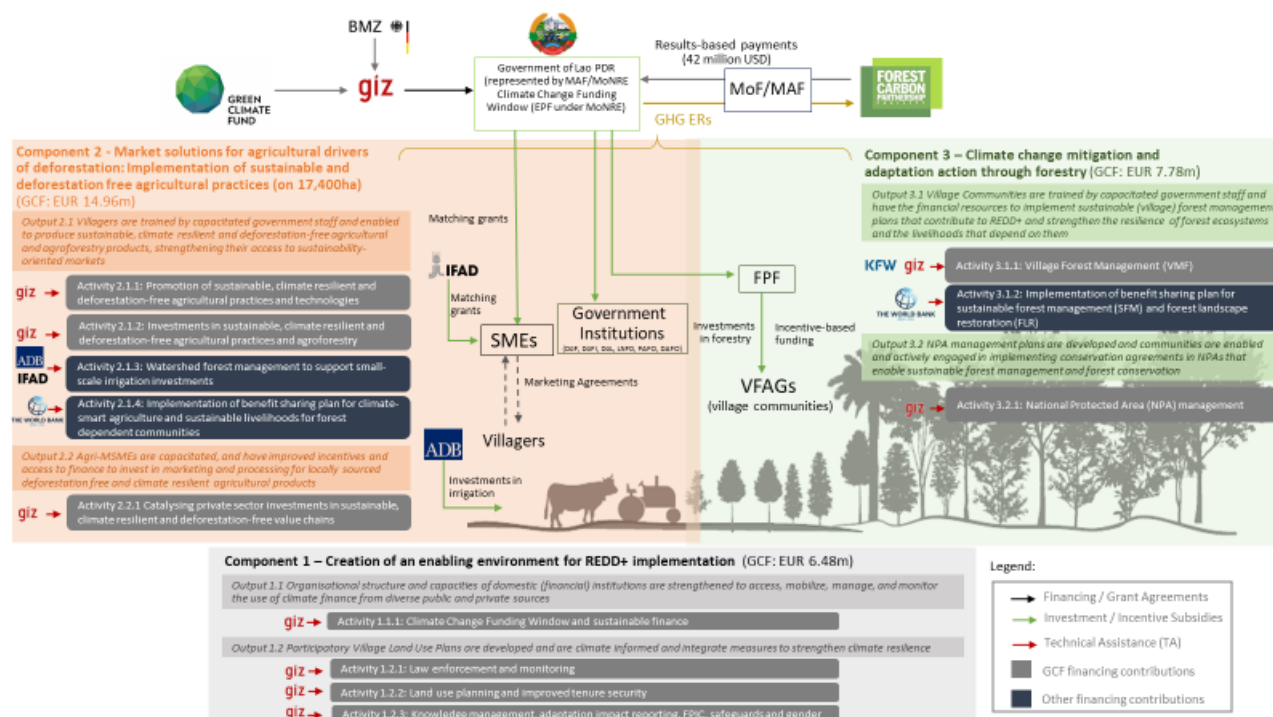


Figure 1. Overview of project 2 components and activities

Project 2 is complementary and additional to Project 1. Together both projects will facilitate a paradigm shift in the forestry and land use sector in Lao PDR that will be sustained by unlocking additional sources of results-based payments, as well as public and private finance managed through national funds and institutions with strengthened capacities for mobilizing and channelling climate finance. Project 2 has been revised and re-designed as a cross-cutting intervention, strengthening synergies between REDD+ and activities that build the resilience of ecosystems and local rural livelihoods, in full alignment with Lao PDR's latest Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2021) and the country's draft Climate Change Strategy (2021). It will scale up investments in climate-resilient and deforestation-free agriculture and forestry practices across six provinces, building on the strengthened regulatory framework and utilizing the tools and guidelines developed under Project 1.

are "Changes delivered as a result of project/programme activities that contribute to the achievement of outcomes." – GCF. 2022. [Guidance Note to support the completion of the IRMF elements of the revised funding proposal template for PAP and SAP, p. ii.](#)

⁶ Specifically, Activities under Output 3 that are subject to Output 1 deliverables are:

For Activity 3.1: Village Forest and Agriculture Grants (VFAG) must be in place after Village Forest Management (VFM) planning is concluded, to provide funds for the implementation of annual plans; Land use planning and improved tenure security – Land Use Plans have to be in place as a precondition for VFM, ensuring full compliance with the project's Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP, in FP Annex 6b), Ethnic Group Development Plan (FP Annex 6d) and Gender Action Plan (FP Annex 8b). Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is required, where the procedures are outlined in detail within Chapter B.3 of the Funding Proposal, and within the ESMP located in FP Annex 6b.

For Activity 3.2: Identification of existing and/or establishment of new VFAGs to channel climate finance to target villages – VFAGs must be in place after National Protected Area (NPA) management planning is concluded, to provide funds for the implementation of annual plans. Again full compliance with the ESMP and FPIC procedures are required.

⁷ Conservation forests will focus on 5 national protected areas (NPAs) and 1 national park within the project area.

With approximately 273,700 direct beneficiaries (136,850 women and 136,850 men) from at least 23 different ethnic groups, and an additional 723,372 indirect beneficiaries (361,691 women and 361,691 men), the ER Program aims to mainstream gender and ethnic sensitivity throughout all planned measures.

Project 2 will be overseen by GIZ's Headquarters in their role as a GCF Accredited Entity, and implemented by GIZ Lao PDR and the Lao PDR Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). It includes co-financing from the Government of Lao PDR, BMZ, ADB, IFAD, World Bank and KfW.

Overview of Gender Assessment

This document comprises the Gender Assessment for Project 2. In order to guarantee a gender-sensitive approach and implementation of Project 2 and to meet the standard requirements of the GCF and GIZ, this gender assessment provides recommendations for the funding proposal for the "Scaling up the Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management" (Project 2), funded by GCF.

Although by no means exhaustive, this gender analysis attempts to provide both a general and sectoral overview on the state of gender equality in Laos, covering direct and indirect factors which can impact the implementation of the program.

1.1. GCF and GIZ Guidelines for the Promotion of Gender Equality

According to the GCF's Gender Policy, *proposed projects or programmes submitted to the Fund are required to be aligned with national policies and priorities on gender and with the Fund's gender policy*⁸. This includes a mandatory socio-economic and gender assessment, complementary to the environmental and social safeguards (ESS) process.

The main goal of this assessment is therefore to determine how the project can respond to the needs of women and men in view of the addressed forest degradation and deforestation, and the proposed measures.

Gender dynamics and related drivers of change will be identified to achieve the project goals in a sustainable manner and will be reflected in the proposed activities. The assessment is required to include stakeholder consultations.

Additionally, implementation budgets will be provided alongside realistic indicators at output, outcome and impact levels.

In line with the above-mentioned GCF Gender Policy, GIZ's Safeguards and Gender Management System and Gender Strategy⁹ require that a gender analysis is conducted at an early stage of the preparation phase of a project in order to identify potentials for promoting gender equality and risks that need to be avoided, or at least mitigated, through specific measures.

The results and recommendations of this analysis are directly taken into account for the objective, indicators, the methodological approach and the results monitoring system of the project.

The assessment will conclude with gender-responsive strategies and measures with tangible benefits to women, and a concrete gender action plan (GAP) for addressing gender gaps and maximizing benefits and women's empowerment in the forest and landscapes sector in the accounting area.

1.2. Methodology

This gender analysis is an update of the gender analysis conducted for the GCF Programme "Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management" (FP117), approved by the GCF Board in 2019. It is a fit-for-purpose assessment, which has been revised

⁸ Green Climate Fund 2019

⁹ GIZ 2019

to focus on Project 2. It ensures the assessment reflects the revised project components and activities, and the extended project area within Project 2. The Gender Assessment has been informed by GCF guidance (including the gender analysis/action plan templates and guiding questions) as well as the GCF Gender policy and the available GIZ guidance for gender analyses.

The updated Gender Assessment has been elaborated in three phases:

1. A desk review of the original gender analysis and adjustment to changes in relevant national policies, legal and regulatory frameworks, and pre-existing assessments in the sector.
2. Consultations with relevant local government authorities and villagers in three villages in three of the target Provinces (Sayabouri, Luang Prabang and Oudomxay), and consultations with civil society organizations (CSOs), including women's organizations (see Chapter 8 for more detailed information)
3. Further research and finalization of the updated gender analysis and GAP.

Overall, the availability of recent data and information on gender in the forest sector is limited in Lao PDR, and data collection and analysis usually take place in the framework of larger and more generic country assessments of donors and census data collection.

Feedback from the consultations, including comments and recommendations from both consultation rounds (Project 1 and 2) have been integrated throughout the document. The findings and observations are crucial to the planning, implementation and monitoring of the planned project. In actively integrating gender-sensitive and gender-responsive measures throughout the project activities, the project can not only prevent the continuation of traditional gender stereotypes, but can also contribute significantly to improving gender equality and equity in the target areas. This will largely add to the positive impact the project can have.

2. Information on gender dimensions in Lao PDR

Laos currently ranks 113th on the Gender Inequality Index (rank 137 on general Human Development Index; as of 2019). Major negative contributors to that ranking are the maternal mortality ratio, the adolescent birth rate and the low female proportion of people with at least some secondary education. Positively influencing contributors are the proportionally high share of female parliamentarians and the high female labor force participation rate¹⁰.

2.1. The Meta Level: Norms and Traditional Roles of Women and Men in Laos

Despite a strong legal framework stating and promoting the equality of Lao women and men, the influence of gender norms and traditional roles is still seen as one of the major obstacles in achieving factual gender equality in Laos. This becomes most visible in decision-making positions throughout all sectors, as well as at the community level where women continue to struggle to participate on equal terms and in equal numbers.

Gender equality is additionally influenced by ethnic background in Laos. The Lao-Tai group represents 67% of Lao PDR's population, along with three major non-Lao-Tai ethno-linguistic groups, namely the Mon-Khmer (21%), the Hmong-Lu Mien (8%) and the Chinese-Tibetan (3%). These groups further splinter into 49 distinct ethnicities and 200 ethnic sub-groups. Many traditional norms within Lao-Tai cultures are favorable with regard to gender equality: women are often financial decision-makers, inherit land and property more often, and have gained equal access to education. The other three ethno-linguistic groups mostly have stronger patriarchal traditions and norms, limiting women's access to decision-making, property and education¹¹.

Violence against women is, however, a reality for women from all ethnic backgrounds in Laos. Research indicates that around 20% of Lao women have been physically and/or sexually abused by a partner or non-partner, and at least 35% of women live in circumstances of emotional violence, with both figures estimated to be much higher since most cases go unreported. Perhaps more jarringly, the majority of women and almost half of all men in Laos believe violence is justified if a woman does not adhere to traditional gender norms and roles, such as leaving the house without permission or burning the food¹². This indicates that problems are both in enforcement and broader issues of tradition and culture that cannot be fixed in the short-term¹³. Village Mediation Units are the first micro institution to deal with cases of domestic violence and often smooth over cases for the sake of village unity and the rewarded status of "case-free village" (no referrals to district courts). Traditional gender roles directly influence the village-based justice system, in addition to women's generally weaker access to justice outside the village structures due to illiteracy, lack of Lao language skills and legal knowledge, and lack of means and permission to travel.

Lao PDR has one of the highest rates of early marriage in the region as part of traditional practices, including "bride kidnappings" and child marriages. One-third of women marry before age 18, while one-tenth marry before age 15. Early marriage is often associated with early pregnancy. In 2012, 19.4 percent of reproductive-age women had given birth by age 18, while 3.6 percent had done so by age 15. Both early marriage and adolescent birth have a negative impact on the education and livelihood opportunities of women¹⁴.

The impact of these factors on a programme cannot be underestimated. It affects women's participation, their confidence to speak up and voice opposing opinions, and their willingness and capacity to participate in village management tasks. Many rural women themselves also think that women are generally not capable of decision-making due to lack of education and perceived lack of inherent leadership qualities, a viewpoint that was expressed in two out of three village interviews during the assessment mission. The third village had higher income rates for the women and a culture of women being part of decision-making. The latter is the more decisive factor,

¹⁰ Gender Inequality Index

¹¹ King & van de Walle 2007

¹² World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2012

¹³ Open Development Laos 2018: SDG 5 Gender Equality

¹⁴ Compare United Nations in Lao PDR 2018

since another village also claimed that women earn more than men, but there it did not lead to higher participation rates of women.

Implications for the planned GCF project

In addition to avoiding the continuation of existing gender stereotypes and norms which are of disadvantage to Lao women, the planned GCF project has a significant potential to contribute positively to gender equality. Inclusive awareness-raising measures targeting women as carriers of traditional knowledge and change agents within their families have great outreach, especially when presented in different ethnic languages, and tailored to lower education levels.

Since one of the GCF project's central approaches will be to promote more sustainable production methods and value chains, and therefore new /alternative and more diversified income structures for communities, it is important to minimize financial risks for participating families. Research indicates that financial and work-related problems increase the likelihood of domestic violence, especially in families where women have lower educational levels and lower incomes in comparison to their husbands¹⁵. Where forestry regulations affect family businesses, or communities are supported to change traditional ways of living and earning, it can be assumed that women are at a higher risk of domestic violence. Economically empowering women at local levels can lead to an improvement of their situation but can also bear certain risks that need to be considered. As another instance, a study on public work programme in Lao PDR found that "the program was successful in increasing female income, but it did not change women's experience of gender-based violence".

The GCF project could therefore contribute to a prevention of violence against women through the formulation of gender-sensitive and -responsive prevention strategies, aiming at women's skill development and empowerment, and men's change of attitudes towards gender equality. The project needs to carefully consider local contexts, traditions and gendered roles when designing the interventions. In the context of activities implemented under Project 2, coping strategies to address the risk of gender-based violence could include:¹⁶

- Mainstream gender sensitization throughout all project activities
- Provide women with access to information to become aware of their legal rights under national and international laws in the context of capacity building activities
- Engage men and boys to promote non-violence and gender equity. This may include community-based training on gender equality and how to respond to GBV, particularly for local leaders, men of all ages, including gatekeepers.
- Promote gender equality and challenge traditional gender norms in the context of participatory activities promoted by the project.
- Develop and provide training on Gender and countering Gender-based violence (GBV)
- Elaboration of Code of Conducts for the implementation of project activities
- Integrated GBV indicators in project monitoring and the grievance redress mechanism

Whenever possible, any form of awareness-raising, village consultation, training or dissemination meeting should proactively involve components of empowerment for village women. This includes separate meetings between men, women and village authorities to create safe spaces for everyone to share, trainings for concerned staff on inclusive facilitation, sending staff who speak ethnic languages or providing budget to hire translators, and designing any concrete activities with the specific social conditions of a village in mind.

The project's Grievance redress Mechanism (GRM) has been designed to enable equal access to men and women. The GRM is introduced to the project's stakeholder during the introduction of FPIC 2, in which approximately half of the village population is participating (out of which 44% are female). Further measures have been taken to ensure that women and other vulnerable groups have access to the GRM. These include posters to visualize the different GRM mechanisms and approaches to address language barriers, as mostly women and ethnic groups that do not speak local languages only or are affected by illiteracy. See the description of the project's GRM in the ESIA Chapter 7.5 for more information on the GRM mechanism.

¹⁵ NCAW 2015

¹⁶ Adapted from National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Lao PDR (2015): Summary report. A study on violence against women in Lao PDR. Lao National survey on Women's health and life experiences 2014. Available online: <https://data.opendevlopmentmekong.net/dataset/9572bc34-8279-4070-b532-a529c6a3fe22/resource/1dceb372-4607-4b33-be81-764b0742e1d9/download/a-study-on-violence-against-women-in-lao-pdr.pdf>

2.2. Macro Level: International and Regional Commitments & National Legislation and Policies

At the international level, Laos is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). A Capacity Assessment on CEDAW implementation in Laos conducted by the Association for Development of Women and Legal Education (ADWLE) concluded that, despite having a very advanced legal framework for gender equality, there is only very limited implementation of these laws due to lack of capacities, knowledge and budget¹⁷ - basically, the exact same situation as in the forestry sector, with strategic frameworks but a lack of capacities to implement them properly.

Besides that, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are having a strong overall influence on Lao strategies and policies, including SDG 5 which is aiming to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls. The elevated relevance of the SDGs for the Lao PDR is connected to the country's efforts to graduate from Least-Developed Country status. Even though the original goal to graduate in 2020 cannot be reached anymore, the Government is determined to further push towards it. Efforts to promote women's economic integration and opportunities will directly contribute to graduating from LDC status¹⁸.

At the regional level, several ASEAN declarations lay the foundations for gender mainstreaming in the region. The Declaration of the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region¹⁹ was signed in 1988 and focuses mainly on the promotion and implementation of equitable and effective participation in all fields and at all levels. Even though the declaration mentions the political, social and cultural sphere, the emphasis is on women's economic participation.

The social dimension was added consecutively in later declarations, namely with the ASEAN Declaration Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2004); the Ha Noi Declaration on the Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children (2010); the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration; the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence against Children in ASEAN (2013); and other relevant declarations, especially on social protection.

A further important step towards integration of gender aspects was the ASEAN Declaration on Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals in 2017. The Declaration provides unusually detailed guidance on the improvement of gender-responsive data collection and analysis, and policy review, emphasizes the necessity to end violence against women (including making men and boys engaged agents of change efforts), and encourages cooperation with women's groups and organizations for improved gender-responsive implementation²⁰.

Lao PDR has a strong legal framework for promoting gender equality. The revised Constitution of 2003 and other laws explicitly state that women and men have equal rights in all spheres - political, social, cultural and in the family. Women's equal rights are also stipulated in the Family, Land and Property Laws; the Labor Law; the Electoral Law; and the Penal Law. The Law on the Development and Protection of Women (2004) is the most specific Lao legislation with regard to equal rights and access for women, and provided the framework for several later laws defining women's rights, and served also as a basis to form the National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mother-Child.

Some sources claim that women's land tenure rights have been weakened by the revised Land Law (2019) as a paragraph on dual names (wife and husband) on land titles has been removed from the law.²¹ Yet, by law women and men enjoy equal access to agricultural and forest land but customary practices tend to override these. Communal or village ownership of land is recognized by the Land Law (2019) and is a common form of land ownership in Laos. How a village manages its communal ownership strongly depends on the ethnic group's customs. In the matrilineal Lao-Tai (Tai-Kadai language group) villages, inheritance customs follow the female lineage. Daughters and sons are allowed to inherit their agricultural lands, with the decision being left up to the parents. Among most ethnic minority groups, such as the Hmong-Mien and the Khmou (Mon-Khmer), the pattern of agricultural

¹⁷ Compare ADWLE 2016

¹⁸ UNDP 2017

¹⁹ ASEAN 1988

²⁰ ASEAN Declaration on Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals in 2017

²¹ LIWG 2020, Women and Land Rights in Lao PDR: Rural Transformation and a dream of secure tenure. Available online: https://data.opendatacommons.org/dataset/550ba9aa-79aa-4f80-ba41-8af35d322e6f/resource/22030fa3-66b7-4e9b-8f4e-fd44dd16aca4/download/women-and-land-right_29jan_eng.pdf

land ownership is patrilineal. The family name and property are transmitted from father to son.²² However, irrespective of matrilineal or patrilineal heritage systems, women generally have experienced a loss of access to land due to economic developments in the country. This includes policies promoting monoculture farming and transfer of land to investors, reducing traditional subsistence agriculture and leading to food insecurity and a defeminization of agriculture.²³

Implications for the planned GCF programme

The legal foundation for the promotion of gender mainstreaming into policies and regulations is strong, and has been further facilitated through targeted activities under Project 1. Laos has an elevated interest in adhering to international agreements relevant to gender mainstreaming. The ASEAN Declarations relevant to gender provide regional entry points, and the national framework to integrate gender into policies and strategies at all levels is broad and strong. Unfortunately, this strength might at the same time constitute a barrier for effective integration of gender into sector-specific legislation, including in the forestry sector: as mentioned also by interviewed Government staff, integration is not perceived as relevant because overarching legislation is seen as sufficient to inform the interpretation of sector-specific laws such as the Forestry Law.

Project 2 can promote gender equality in its efforts on law enforcement and capacity development. Guidelines developed by the project for adaptation mainstreaming, land use planning, agricultural investment planning and village forest management should also be formulated in a gender-responsive manner, and include targeted measures to empower and benefit women, in addition to ensuring gender-responsive monitoring. In adherence with the ASEAN declaration to engage with women's organizations to improve policy analysis²⁴, a Lao-based CSO such as ADWLE can assist with gender-proofing any planned intervention in this area. To develop capacity of the relevant Government agency, the Gender Focal Points/Sub-CAW within the MAF (national and Provincial level) should also be involved in these processes as much as possible (more under 5.3).

2.3. Meso Level: Institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations

The National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mother-Child (NCAWMC) is responsible for formulating and implementing the national policy for the advancement of women, as well as for mainstreaming gender aspects in all sectors. NCAWMC's capacity and institutional support remains limited despite donor support for capacity development.

The NCAWMC is also responsible for formulating the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (NSAW), which is renewed every five years and seeks to promote and enhance equality between men and women in Laos in all spheres. The inclusion of the strategy's goals in other strategies and plans, including the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED), is advancing well, but it often lacks implementation power and funded mandates²⁵.

The lead Government agency in the forest sector, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), was the first ministry to create a Division for the Advancement of Women ("Sub-CAW"), and a ministry-internal Gender Network with focal points in each department.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) supported this development significantly between 2006-2008. The final report of this programme ("Capacity Building for Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture and Forestry in Lao PDR") concludes that while MAF's commitment to gender mainstreaming and to the established structures is very high, the gender division remains understaffed and therefore with low absorption capacity²⁶. Interviews with two Provincial and District Agriculture and Forestry Offices mirrored these capacity gaps. If there was a Gender Focal Point (GFP) appointed in the office, the concerned staff member was not invited to the interviews because the

²² Lao Women's Union, 2018. Gender Profile, Lao PDR

²³ LIWG 2020, Women and Land Rights in Lao PDR: Rural Transformation and a dream of secure tenure. Available online: https://data.opendatacommons.org/dataset/550ba9aa-79aa-4f80-ba41-8af35d322e6f/resource/22030fa3-66b7-4e9b-8f4e-fd44dd16aca4/download/women-and-land-right_29jan_eng.pdf

²⁴ Ibid, page 3 of the Declaration

²⁵ World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2012

²⁶ Asian Development Bank 2008

senior staff did not consider her knowledgeable enough to be of value for the meeting, which they considered to be of a rather technical nature.

On the strategic side, the MAF developed a Strategy for Gender Equality in the Agriculture and the Forestry Sector (2016–2025) and Vision 2030²⁷ that aim for men and women of all ethnic groups to have equal access to natural resources, agricultural land, shelter, development funds and technical support. Vision 2030 additionally states that women should hold at least 30% of leadership positions.

The constitutional mandate to protect women's rights and interests is traditionally with the Lao Women's Union (LWU; Article 7 of Constitution). The LWU has representation in every village, with one member of the LWU representing women in each village council. Through its extensive networks, the LWU has been able to bring women's voices into public administration at all levels — often providing the only female voice at the table²⁸. The LWU also has its own policy research center (Gender Resource Information and Development Center, Vientiane), which has undertaken research tasks on issues such as violence against women and gender budgeting on behalf of donors²⁹. Development partners will almost automatically work with members of the LWU and should capitalize on its vast access to, and understanding of, Lao women as much as possible.

The Lao Front for National Construction oversees and coordinates all Lao mass organizations and is responsible for overall social mobilization and the inclusion of ethnic groups in national development. At the local level, the interviewed villages shared the view that the Lao Front is a key player in organizing activities related to forest protection and resource management.

There is a diverse range of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Laos active in areas of particular relevance to gender equality, including women's rights and development, child protection, support of people with disabilities, environment, education and health. CSOs in Laos are, however, usually not actively invited by the Lao Government to participate in policy dialogue at any stage. Most CSOs are therefore implementers at the local level but have limited opportunities to feed their implementation experiences into policy processes³⁰.

Organizations, Non-Profit Associations and NGOs which are active in the nexus of forestry and gender in Laos are³¹:

- RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests
- Green Community Alliance (GCA)
- Green Community Development Association (GCDA)
- Love Natural Resources Association (LNRA)
- Maeying Huamjai Phattana (MHP)

Organizations which are not directly active in the forestry sector but are valuable partners with in-depth gender expertise are:

- Gender Development Association (GDA; gender, law, community development, education)
- Participatory Development Training Center (PADETC; participatory community development)

Association for Development of Women and Legal Education (ADWLE; law, gender)

RECOFTC appears to have the strongest ties to the Department of Forestry (DoF/MAF). A joint national consultation workshop in October 2018 with the DoF, other Government partners, CSOs and private sector representatives focused solely on the identification of potential inputs to promote gender equality in the Lao forestry sector³². Another workshop was held in 2021 on building gender inclusion in forestry together with DoF, which was part of a series of workshops that RECOFTC organized through the Weaving Leadership for Gender Equality initiative, known as WAVES.³³ MAF's Strategic Plan to restore forest cover to 70% of the country's terrain until 2020 includes the goal of having at least 30% of all Government positions in conservation work held by women³⁴ - a goal strongly promoted by RECOFTC. The close collaboration leads to the assumption that RECOFTC has valuable and valued cooperation experience with the DoF which can be utilized by other programs.

²⁷ Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 2015

²⁸ World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2012

²⁹ ADB 2011

³⁰ ADB 2011

³¹ Compare Lao CSO Directory 2017

³² RECOFTC November 2018

³³ RECOFT October 2021

³⁴ RECOFTC October 2018

Implications for the planned GCF project

Based on the existing institutional structures and strategies, the planned GCF project has strong leverage to link up with MAF – particularly the DoF – for institutional support to promote female leadership and participation in stakeholder processes from the national to the local level. The political commitment seems currently particularly high and should be capitalized on. The approach should be two-fold: utilizing the existing gender structures (GFPs, MAF's Sub-CAW, LWU on all levels) while at the same time actively involving senior and technical staff to foster a Government culture where gender is increasingly mainstreamed.

Capacity development is necessary for all stakeholders, since only very few Government staff possess in-depth knowledge on gender and REDD+ at the same time. The efforts which have already been put into mainstreaming gender into forestry activities also need to become more prominent and shared as best practice³⁵. The planned GCF project can support the REDD desk to compile these practices and to disseminate them to other line agencies, departments, Provincial and District agencies, and LWU. The interviewed Provincial and District LWU offices demonstrated high commitment towards supporting the planned GCF project but admitted that they need more technical expertise to be of meaningful assistance, and budget to contribute responsibly and by their own means. A technical training for all concerned Provincial and District LWU, P/DAFO, P/DOFI (Forest Inspection) on gender and social inclusion in climate-resilient and deforestation agriculture and forest management is recommended to mainstream efforts and align the local implementers and decision-makers.

Project 1 involved the LWU as a key actor in its FPIC process and other participatory activities at village levels. The cooperation will be continued under Project 2. Moreover, District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO) staff was trained on participatory approaches such as the establishment of Village Forest and Agriculture Grant (VFAG) committees and village forest management.

Project 2 will need to ensure that the acquired knowledge from Project 1 and other initiatives is utilized. Under project 1 implementation, gender aspects have been integrated into Standard Operating Procedures, guidelines, manuals and work plans, and monitored the status of implementation. The activities will be continued under Project 2. Trainings and gender-sensitive guidelines alone will likely not be sufficient to ensure effective implementation. High-level, regular meetings, such as programme steering committee meetings, should make it a requirement to report on gender aspects and related implementation efforts.

2.4. Micro Level: Gender Equality among the Target Group

This section briefly examines the gender equality situation in the areas of political participation, decision-making and leadership, education and economic participation.

Political participation: Decision-making and leadership

With 27.5% female Members of Parliament, Laos is well above global average (22.5%). However, women in decision-making positions in the district, provincial and national Government agencies constitute only 5% (as of 2012). The highest proportion of women in the Government can be found in the legislative branches at the national level (more than a quarter)³⁶; the lowest proportion of women beyond administrative support roles can be found at the Provincial and District level. This is likely tied to the factors explained in the sections on education and health.

Within the potential partners of the planned GCF project, representation seems to vary between different ministries and departments, but generally the project also faces a lower representation of female leadership throughout its activities. Forestry at the community level is highly “female” on the user side, with women collecting non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and making up a significant proportion of the small business workforce in the forest and timber sector.

The interviewed village women and men stated that women spend usually more time in the forests and have a more detailed knowledge of the status of the forest resources. The interviewed Government partners added that

³⁵ RECOFTC November 2018

³⁶ The United Nations in Lao PDR 2015

village women additionally also showed more intrinsic interest in protecting the surrounding forests. At the same time, none of the interviewed villages included women in the village forest management committee or any other existing form of decision-making over forest resources.

Accordingly, the lack of women's representation at any decision-making level often results in a lack of consideration of women's needs and potentials in the forestry sector.

The land sector shows similar dynamics: whereas women and men have the same legal rights to land, women's factual land tenure is still less secure than men's. Women are also often not actively included in decision-making steps of land use planning (LUP). The subsequent forest management plan (if developed) is then seen as an even further specialized step which women perceive having even less access to. The provided reasons in the village interviews were lack of education, lack of technical knowledge and lack of confidence to participate in management decisions. Traditional gender norms of many ethnic groups further contribute to these dynamics.

Education

The gender equality gap has narrowed at all three levels of education enrolment in Laos, but challenges persist in completing education.

Two key determinants drive the patterns of gender inequity in education: First, girls are more likely to be kept at home due to safety concerns and household responsibilities, especially if the secondary school is far from home. Second, parents do not place the same value on education for girls as they do for boys, especially if this view is part of their cultural tradition, or if the parents are poor, or have little or no education, especially the mother³⁷.

The widest gap in gender equality is found among children from rural areas without road access, children from the non Lao-Tai groups, children of uneducated mothers and children of families in the poorest quintiles. This gap is much larger in secondary education: for example, in the appropriate age group of the poorest quintiles, 66 girls attend secondary school for every 100 boys.³⁸

The majority of interviewed village women had no or very low education. This lack of education was named - by men and women alike - as the main reason for the absence of women in village decision-making committees and groups in general, and particularly with regard to the villages' forestry.

Economic participation

An equal share of men and women make up the working population (77% each, as of 2015³⁹), but women generally occupy the lower rungs of the labor market. Women are relatively more excluded from formal sectors and the social protection that this entails. Some 64 percent of workers in the elementary occupations and 63 percent of those classified as service, shop and market sales workers are women. On the other hand, men account for the majority of civil servants, professionals, technicians and other sectors.

The partners of the planned GCF project reflect these proportions. As mentioned above, the Government has already set a 30% goal of having women hold positions in the conservations sector, but implementation lags behind.

Although women have significant roles in agriculture and forestry, they have less access to, and control of, farming and forestry-based inputs and outputs.⁴⁰ The village interviews showed the same tendency: the village women all stated that the key decisions on land and forest are usually taken by their husbands and the village authorities.

Experience from other sectors, such as fisheries, shows that women's multiple roles in traditional, complex and lengthy value chains tend to diminish when value chains are modernised. This may also be true for the forestry sector, but the lack of data does not allow us a clearer picture.

Women's rights to forest and tree products tend to be restricted to products that are not profitable or have little commercial benefits⁴¹.

³⁷ Compare United Nations in Lao PDR 2018

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Human Development Index 2018

⁴⁰ Compare United Nations in Lao PDR 2018

⁴¹ Climate Investment Funds 2017

Gender, wages and financial resources

The share of women in wage employment is low in all sectors, at 35 percent. Instead, among the unpaid workers for the family, about 70% percent were women in 2015, but only 32% are identified as “own account workers” – which suggests that women are less likely engaged in productive work with income they control. This reality was mirrored in the interviewed villages: women and men agreed that women work longer hours in a day while men do less and/or focus more on physically-demanding tasks. Accordingly, men produce more tangible results and have more time available for management-related tasks. In the visited Akha village in Luang Namtha, the village authorities noted that the village women earned more money than their men but had no role in the village decision-making. Several women stated that they would strongly like to be involved in the management of forest resources.

Gender wage gaps are present, and women work longer work hours than men, as they spend 7 hours per day on productive and reproductive tasks (men: 5.7 hours).⁴² Women’s GESI and physical safety concerns limit their wider access to, and use of, forest resources. In the case of the interviewed villages, it mainly hindered women from participating in forest management tasks, including decision-making.

Women can face discrimination in the market when marketing their produce directly, and also can be stymied by lack of language skills, access to information or training⁴³.

Especially in the rural areas, women’s lower income often also directly translates into a lower decision-making power in the family: the lower their income, the lesser their voice. Women with higher own-income possess higher decision-making power, but the final say is usually with the man as head of the household. Disadvantages from income disparities are therefore particularly relevant in combination with certain cultural gender norms. This needs to be taken into account in all project activities where behavior change and new income activities are promoted, or where regulations affect family businesses or access to forest resources.

Microfinance access has been shown to empower communities if the villagers are not amongst the poorest. In that case, microfinance is often seen as too risky. Women are often more hesitant to take on debts to protect their families, and use micro credits most often for health emergencies and children’s education.

Village Development Funds are often managed by women, and many ethnic groups’ women are responsible for the families’ financial management. The interviewed villagers and local authorities agreed that access to micro grants as planned by the GCF project would create more opportunities for the local communities to improve their income situation, including complementary micro investments into alternative, deforestation-free agricultural practices. Semi-formal and informal microfinance, such as provided by the Lao Women’s Union, is an important source for women in the rural areas of Lao PDR.

Implications for the planned GCF project

The planned GCF programme will have great leverage to advocate for improving women’s representation in forest management positions from the national to the local level:

- At the national level, the political willingness to increase the number of female Government staff in conservation work exists. A consultation with DoF and RECOTFC could help to shed light on the known reasons for the lack of women in this sector. A gender-proofing of Human Resources procedures and internal career advancement processes could be advised. The programme could furthermore initiate a sector-based mentoring system to motivate superiors to promote younger colleagues, and to build the capacities of junior staff using internal resources.
- At the Provincial and District level, the same principles apply, but one additional barrier hinders field teams to be more gender-balanced: it is more difficult to find female staff willing to travel to remote villages. This is even more relevant knowing that women living in remoter villages are often the ones who would open up most to female staff for reasons of culture and lack of confidence. Female staff barriers to traveling are usually safety concerns and family considerations. The GCF programme could investigate possible support measures in addition to building female staff confidence in technical areas through trainings. At the same time, the LWU should be supported both with technical trainings (REDD+,

⁴² Compare United Nations in Lao PDR 2018

⁴³ Compare Climate Investment Funds 2017

forest management, climate-resilient and deforestation free agriculture and agricultural value chains) and budget to travel and accompany planned community measures.

The influence of the education gender gap is also very relevant for the scope of work of the planned GCF programme: global experience shows that education has considerable power to help individuals reconsider environmentally harmful lifestyles and behavior⁴⁴. Women's lower education levels can therefore influence the capacities of target communities to fully understand and support environmental protection measures and change of behaviors. Since the interviewed men and women agreed that women traditionally possess deeper understanding about the forest resources, spend considerable time in them as users, and – according to the interviewed Government staff – are more likely to show interest in forest protection, educational measures should particularly target women. Younger men and women can also play a key role in protection measures, since the interviewed villages revealed that the Lao Youth Union at community level is already assigned with forest protection tasks.

A lower education status is also often mentioned as the key reason for Lao women's low levels of confidence, which strongly effects their willingness to aim for leading positions in their communities and to be active change-makers in their families and villages. This was absolutely reinforced in the village interviews: all women groups showed high interest and willingness to participate in forest management and decision-making much more than they currently do but felt insecure about their lack of education. The planned GCF programme therefore needs to install mechanisms to give men and women with lower education levels access to management positions. This can be achieved with the development and promotion of alternative requirement catalogues to qualify for management tasks, and targeted skills development activities. In this context a specific focus should be on women-headed households as they tend to be most likely to be excluded from decision making processes and need to be given targeted opportunities to participate and benefit from project activities.

The planned GCF programme can consider accessing information about the impact of regulations on women in family businesses, and what measures could mitigate this impact, or create pathways for new income opportunities which consider cultural limitations and current change behavior. The interviewed women and men were keen to find alternative income paths, but also showed high risk-avoidance attitudes based on their currently vulnerable economic status and previous negative experiences with new crops and investors. Women are also interested in micro-finance, but targeted support is needed to enable them to build confidence to take on more prominent management positions in village management committees, and to strengthen their capacities on financial and business literacy. Such courses could build off of successful initiatives, such as the courses implemented by ILO together with LWU and other government departments to strengthen women's engagement in village banking called "Get Ahead for Women in Enterprise", a course designed for poor women who want to start or expand a micro business.⁴⁵

It is further recommended to support gender sensitization for men and women, raising awareness about gender equality as well as the national legal and regulatory framework. In addition, LWU should serve as an important resource for rural women providing information on key services.

⁴⁴ World Education Blog 2015

⁴⁵ For more information refer to: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_099876.pdf

3. Gender dimensions in the sector

The following chapter provides an overview of relevant gender strategies in the forestry sector at international, regional and national level.

3.1. Meta Level: Gender gaps in the sector

Gender and Agriculture

Traditional gender roles and expectations of ethnic women and girls make their lives difficult with long working hours in both home and fields. Women do most of the farm work (planting, weeding and harvesting crops), tend small livestock and collect NTFPs (men occasionally hunt wild animals in some villages). Hard work is associated with women's virtue, reinforced by the cultural norms that good women are strong, dutiful and do not complain. Women spend around four times more time than men on household and caring work leading to significant time constraints of women for other activities such as training opportunities, participation in community meetings or other local decision-making bodies and long-term economic planning⁴⁶. Gender inequality between male and female-headed households in the agricultural sector is evidenced by the agricultural land they used, both by the size of the land plots and the number of plots.⁴⁷ In many cases, female-headed households have less labour and productive assets available to them while having a less diversified crop base than men.⁴⁸

Due to traditional expectations, women are often less mobile than men. The social expectation is that women move within the boundaries of the village while men are more likely to be expected to travel larger distances for work or trade. In addition, women's mobility is limited by household and family responsibilities which does not allow them to leave the house long periods of time. Yet, this situation has changed during the last two decades as economic development and regional trade increased cross-border exchange and industrial development in urban centres. These factors led to an increase in cross-border trade and migration to larger cities, majorly for men but also for women. Yet, especially in remote rural areas, traditional norms concerning the role of women can be expected to persist and need to be considered in project implementation. For instance, limited mobility of women has impacts on their involvement in economic activities and training activities which needs to be considered in value chain development.

Current trends in agriculture have seen rotational periods shorten, while promoting more intensive production systems or cash crops that accelerate soil degradation. When shifting agriculture is reduced to only a three-year rotation, women's work greatly increases because of heavy weed pressure (women and girls are generally tasked with weeding). If female labor is not enough to keep up with weed pressure, the next step is often herbicide use. The use of pesticides and fertilizer in Lao rural communities is increasing. The 2011 Agricultural Census indicated that women have a slightly higher use than men have. One reason for this might be that pesticides and chemical fertilizer reduces the workload of women by decreasing the time needed for tasks traditionally performed by women, such as weeding. FAO concludes that *"women and children are particularly vulnerable to the health effects of pesticides and chemicals, as women are frequently the ones spreading them in fields, often with their children on their backs"*.⁴⁹

While several projects and initiatives aim to provide support to local villagers, often approaches applied are not gender-sensitive. For example, agriculture extension advice is most often provided to the "farmer", often targeting male farmers who are considered the main decision-makers. Generally, women are less reached by extension and training services due to various reasons. Women are less likely to participate in decision making, are busy with household and family chores, receive information through their husbands and have in many cases lower levels of education and literacy. Depending on the ethnicity, Lao women might lack Lao language skills. Women's involvement in agriculture is often undervalued by agricultural investments and public services. Women are not

⁴⁶ Climate-Friendly Agribusiness Value Chains Sector Project (2018): Project Administration Document.

⁴⁷ Care international and European Union, 2016. Gender Profile of Natural Resources Sector in Lao PDR

⁴⁸ FAO: Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2018. Available online: <https://www.fao.org/3/ca0154en/CA0154EN.pdf>

⁴⁹ FAO: Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2018

perceived as leaders and do themselves often not feel confident enough to attend and speak in meetings and training.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, women's involvement in agricultural activities is significant and they are key actors to specific value chains. At household level, many decisions are taken jointly, and rural women share equal access to markets, even though it is mainly men accessing marketing information. In the project area, based on former project experience, the work distribution in selected value chains is assumed to be as follows:

Table 1: Work distribution along selected value chains

Commodity⁵¹	Work sharing along the value chain
Coffee	Equal men/women; planting more by men, weeding by both, harvesting by both, but more women and marketing by both
Tea	Equal men/women; planting more by men, weeding by both, harvesting by both, but more women and marketing by both
Eucalyptus and Acacia trees	Mostly by men (planting, weeding, felling of trees)
Bong Bark	Mostly by men (planting, weeding, harvesting of bark)
Tung Oil	Mostly by men (planting, weeding, harvesting of seeds)
Benzoin	Mostly by men (planting, weeding, harvesting of resin)
Rubber	Mostly by men (planting, weeding, harvesting of latex)
Paper mulberry	Mostly by women; planting by men, weeding by women, harvesting of bark by women and especially processing by women
Fruits	Mostly by women; planting by men, weeding by women, harvesting of fruits by women and especially processing by women
Bamboo	Depends on the product. Planting, maintenance, harvesting of poles and processing of dried bamboo by men; harvesting, processing and marketing of bamboo shoots by women
Cardamom	Mostly by women (planting, maintenance, harvesting, processing, marketing)
Rattan	Depends on the product. Planting, maintenance, harvesting of vines and processing of dried vine by men; harvesting, processing and marketing of edible shoots by women.
Sichuan Pepper	Mostly by men (planting, weeding, harvesting of seeds)
Broom Grass	Mostly by women (planting, maintenance, harvesting, processing, marketing)
Pineapple	Mostly by women (planting, maintenance, harvesting, processing, marketing)
Sacha Inchi	Mostly by men (planting, weeding, harvesting of seeds; processing by women, marketing together)
Cotton	Mostly by women (planting, maintenance, harvesting, processing, marketing)
Jatropha	Mostly by women (planting, maintenance, harvesting, processing, marketing)
Rosella	Mostly by women (planting, maintenance, harvesting, processing, marketing)
Sugar cane	Mostly by men (planting, weeding, harvesting of canes); processing by women
Maize	Equal men/women
Soy bean/Mung bean	Equal men/women
Peanuts	Mostly by women (planting, maintenance, harvesting, processing, marketing)
Cassava	Equal men/women
Job's tears	Equal men/women
Sesame	Equal men/women
Vegetables	Mostly by women (planting, maintenance, harvesting, processing, marketing)
Forage plants	Mostly by men (planting, weeding, harvesting of forages)
Fish	Equal men/women
Honey	Mostly by men

⁵⁰ FAO: Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2018.

⁵¹ The project selected 35 commodities included in a "white list" which shall be promoted.

The Project will need to ensure that value chains are targeted which involve the participation of women and empowers their roles and responsibilities in the respective value chain. Gender and Forestry

Often the poorer a family is, the more likely they are dependent on forest resources. Therefore, it can be assumed that women-headed households tend to have a larger dependency on forest resources than male-headed households. Rice shortages are highest during the dry season from March to October. In order to survive, men, women, and children collect non-timber products from the surrounding forests for food and some income. The forest is an important source for local livelihoods, especially for NTFPs. In 2001, the consumption of NTFPs was at an equivalent of 40% of the average rural household cash income. Overharvesting and lack of knowledge on sustainable harvesting methods resulted in declining forest productivity and greater demands for labor, and time spent gathering NTFPs (e.g. requiring, often women, to walk farther distances or spend more time collecting NTFPs to maintain their livelihoods).⁵²

NTFPs play an important role in promoting the livelihood of the rural population and the national economy. About 70% of the total population lives in rural areas, are dependent on upland farming and forest products for their food, cash income, and livelihood. They use NTFPs for their daily subsistence. They also play an important role in food security and are perceived by the Lao government as an important strategy in poverty eradication⁵³. Women's active roles in harvesting and use, but they often do not have direct control of the income derived from commercial NTFPs, and therefore may not directly benefit from increased commercialization. The general pattern is that women are being displaced by men when new labour-saving technologies for NTFP processing are introduced.

Approximately 10% of Lao households are led by women with a strong concentration in urban areas. It is approximated that less than 5% of households in rural areas are headed by women.⁵⁴ In the project area the share of women-led households is 3%. According to FAO⁵⁵, the main inequalities between female and male headed households in rural Laos lie in respect of land, livelihood diversification and cash income. Households headed by women tend to have smaller land plots (if at all), fewer options for income generation and lower crop marketing rates. Moreover, female headed households spend a higher ratio of their income on food. Women in rural areas suffer from time constraints, induced by an overburdening of work on farmlands and at household level combined with cultural expectations concerning their role in the family. These time constraints are even more severe for women-led households, turning them into the most vulnerable households at village level. Their voices are often not heard as they are excluded from decision making processes, their mobility is limited and therefore their ability to access external opportunities such as markets beyond the village boundary and trainings in nearby hubs.

Women as entrepreneurs in agriculture and forestry

The private sector is creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs in Lao PDR, and at least 40 percent of all enterprises are at least partially owned by women, especially in the urban areas. For newly registered enterprises, the majority are women-owned⁵⁶. However, women-owned enterprises are usually smaller (mostly at micro-scale) and employ fewer workers than those owned by men and tend to be less mobile, as females in their role as primary caregiver locate their businesses close to their homes.⁵⁷ Among the 19 interviewed entrepreneurs in preparation of Project 2, five had female owners (some of which co-owned with the husband). Those

⁵² Lao Women's Union (2018): Lao PDR Gender Profile

⁵³ Care international and European Union, 2016. Gender Profile of Natural Resources Sector in Lao PDR.

⁵⁴ FAO (2013): Gender and Equity Implications of Land-related Investments on Land Access and Labour and Income-Generating Opportunities. Available online: https://repub.eur.nl/pub/51499/Metis_197510.pdf

⁵⁵ FAO (2013)

⁵⁶ There is no universal definition of "woman-owned or women-led enterprise". Multiple definitions exist for businesses owned or led by women. In this case, we apply the definition formulated by ISO which is as follows: Business that is more than 50 % owned by one or more women, whose management and control lie with one or more women, where a woman is a signatory of the business's legal documents and financial accounts, and which is operated independently from businesses that are not owned by women. Source: IWA 34:2021(en): Women's entrepreneurship — Key definitions and general criteria. Available online: <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:iwa:34:ed-1:v1:en>

⁵⁷ USAID, 2016. The Ecosystem for Women's Entrepreneurship in Lao PDR. Available online: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301498066_The_Ecosystem_for_Women%27s_Entrepreneurship_in_Lao_PDR

five firms focused on NTFPs and agricultural products, including Cardamon, Mung Beans, Pumpkin, Maize and Broom Grass.

About 74% of small and medium enterprises in Laos are family-owned, including the wood-processing sector which is influenced by the regulations and negotiations around the Lao FLEGT-VPA process, and potentially other regulations which will be supported by the planned GCF project. Even though men are often the more visible ones in these small family businesses, it is usually the whole family which is engaged and therefore equally impacted by regulations to their business.⁵⁸

An assessment commissioned by the World Bank in 2011 identified the following main barriers for female entrepreneurship⁵⁹:

- Limited exposure to innovative practices, resulting in little product differentiation
- Lack of formal business training and limited opportunities for acquiring additional technical, financial, and management skills for managers and staff
- Extremely limited access to networking opportunities, with a particular lack of successful role models for businesswomen
- Poor access to capital for expansion
- Mindset limitations, such as low confidence, poor tolerance for risk, and inflexibility/low propensity to perceive and adapt to market demands

The change and volatility of market demand, increase of entrepreneurship and off-farm work opportunities leave many rural women rather intimidated, since they perceive their lack of education and skills, including their lack of knowledge how to reach and understand a non-visible market, as barriers to their potential for increasing their productivity or starting a business. Most women seemed afraid of starting something entirely new and tend to stick to familiar work such as agriculture and NTFPs, animal husbandry and weaving.

The interviewed local Government agencies and local villagers welcome private sector investment as long as it does benefit the communities in terms of higher income and less workload, as well as enhanced skills. All parties expressed the wish to have the Government strongly controlling such potential investments to limit risks for the communities. The interviewed women stated that they do not feel confident to participate in decisions over investments.

Gender and Climate Change Adaptation

Disaster management has worked as a critical entry-point for challenges related to environmental sustainability with a high degree of acceptance. The environmental burden of disease due to climate change already constitutes 26 percent of the disease burden of Lao PDR. Women and men experience the impacts of floods and droughts differently. Given women's roles in the home, their responsibility for family care and the nature of their employment, they are more likely to bear the brunt of the impacts of floods and droughts.⁶⁰

Different studies show that women are disproportionally impacted by climate-induced natural disasters, which in many cases come along with increasing rates of violence against women and girls. Mortality rates of women are often higher than those of men. According to Thurston et al, this is often rooted in *"biological differences, gender discriminatory practices in relief efforts, lower access to information and resources, care responsibilities and gendered poverty"*⁶¹. Natural disasters at different scale create risk factors that, in turn, increase the risk of gender-based violence. These factors are, for instance, trauma and mental health issues or substance abuse, but also social impacts such as the breakdown of family structure or loss of housing and livelihoods. Moreover, collapsing or lacking law enforcement might worsen the situation. Natural disasters increase the risk of women and girls to become a victim of Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse, and Sexual Harassment (SEAH). Cases of violence against women and girls after natural disasters include rape/sexual assault by a non-partner or intimate partner, but also female genital mutilation, honour killings and the trafficking of women.⁶²

⁵⁸ USAID, 2016. The Ecosystem for Women's Entrepreneurship in Lao PDR.

⁵⁹ As cited in USAID, 2016. The Ecosystem for Women's Entrepreneurship in Lao PDR.

⁶⁰ Thurston, et al (2020): Natural hazards, disasters and violence against women and girls: a global mixed-methods systematic review. Available online: <https://gh.bmj.com/content/6/4/e004377>

⁶¹ Thurston, et al (2020): Natural hazards, disasters and violence against women and girls: a global mixed-methods systematic review.

⁶² Virginie Le Masson (2022): Disasters, Climate Change, and Violence Against Women and Girls. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199389407.013.393>

Women are often more affected by the negative impact of climate change. For instance, families may decide to take girls out of school to increase the household's resources, while boys are more likely to be kept in school during crisis periods. Another coping strategy might be the early marriage of daughter placing them in a more secure home. In rural areas, ecosystems degrade from climate change, which may increase household burdens on women, forcing them to search for resources such as NTFPs or firewood in unsecured areas, increasing their exposure to violence and sexual assault. Such threats are even higher if families are displaced by disaster.

Lao women play key roles in both climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, but these are often insufficiently recognized or supported. Project's focusing on adaptation to climate change can also negatively impact women, or benefit men and women unequally if gender considerations are not fully considered and mainstreamed. For example, projects might just be adding adaptation activities to the already long list of women's responsibilities in their everyday life, leaving women with less time and resources.⁶³ Adaptation to climate change is dependent on issues such as wealth, technological power, access to information, all of which are mediated by gender dynamics in the household, economy and society. Lao women's traditional responsibilities in the household and as stewards of natural resources, also position them well to develop strategies for adapting to changing environmental realities. For example, women can have an important impact on the transition to using of clean fuels for household consumption (benefiting both family health and the environment) and in maintaining their traditional roles in the protection of biodiversity – particularly in fragile upland areas and in national protected areas⁶⁴.

Implications for the planned GCF project

As the analysis showed, women are often the key knowledge carriers regarding the status of community forests and its resources. Since the programme plans to support the development of a National Forest Inventory and Monitoring system, it would make sense to explore the utilization of local women for community monitoring support. The interviewed women and men, and local Government partners, all agreed that such measure would be suitable to the local realities, and the local women were very supportive of this suggestion.

Further, research could be commissioned by the planned GCF programme to identify and highlight what opportunities exist to strengthen women's roles as producers and processors in Agriculture and Forestry, including support for financial services, financial management and business development services. The results of this research should influence any further analysis on new potential value chains promoting deforestation-free agriculture. The value chains to be promoted under the project will be assessed concerning the distribution of work among men and women. As women farmers face significant constraints, the project will ensure that women received targeted training opportunities (e.g., business capacities, financial literacy) and extension services as well as access to information on climate change impacts and sustainable agricultural practices.

Project 1 initiated a number of processes to improve access to finance for rural women, increase the involvement of women in land use planning and village-level decision making processes. Women are given the opportunity to participate in all Project 1 activities. The Annual Progress Report⁶⁵ showed that there is strong participation of women in all village meetings and in all key areas of intervention (e.g. FPIC 54%, PLUP⁶⁶ 46%, PSAP⁶⁷ 47%, VFAG⁶⁸ 47%).

Furthermore, female headed households are given priority in the selection of PSAP participants. 7% of PSAP beneficiary households are led by women, which is approximately double the ratio of female headed households in rural Laos. This proves that the prioritization was implemented in practice. In 80% of villages women are represented in VFAG Committees, thereby attaining financial management capacities and promoting women's inclusion in economic activities promoted by Project 1.

These processes are planned to be upscaled in the three Provinces of Project 1 and extended to the three new Provinces covered under Project 2. The strengthened focus on climate resilience will further raise awareness of

⁶³ SEI, 2019. Why gender matters in climate adaptation. Available online : <https://www.sei.org/perspectives/why-gender-matters-in-climate-adaptation/>

⁶⁴ Lao Women's Union, 2018. Lao PDR Gender Profile

⁶⁵ GCF Programme Annual Progress Report, December 2021.

⁶⁶ Participatory Land Use Planning

⁶⁷ Promotion of Sustainable and Deforestation-free Agricultural Practice and Value Chains

⁶⁸ Village Forest and Agriculture Grant

the importance of conserving forests for strengthening climate resilience, and will include information on gender benefits associated with ecosystem-based adaptation approaches.

In addition, the project's strengthened focus on adaptation will ensure a gender-sensitive approach is mainstreamed, where the differentiated needs and priorities of men and women are considered throughout all activities, especially implementation-oriented activities such as PLUP PSAP, VFAG, VMP and Village Forest Conservation Agreements, among others. Further support will be provided to agricultural extension under Project 2 Component 2, and PSAP investment plans will consider the differentiated needs and how selected PSAP measures could benefit or potentially adversely impact women (e.g. adding additional time burden, etc.) to identify alternatives or suitable mitigation measures.

3.2. Macro Level: Policies and strategies in the sector

Agenda 2030, FAO's Criteria and Indicators

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, including its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), represents the overarching framework for sustainable global development throughout different sectors, including gender and forest protection. Gender equality is addressed as a stand-alone development goal under SDG 5, but is also integrated into all other SDGs. With regards to forest governance and protection, three SDGs provide guidance for the planned programme:

- Sustainable production and consumption (SDG 12): development of production and consumption that takes into account the limitation of natural resources and empower local populations, including women, to keep the ownership of their lands and means of production.
- Climate action (SDG 13): women, indigenous peoples and local communities, and other groups have the right to be represented in climate summits as climate change affects them in different ways and they are the holders of knowledge and experiences that can help finding adapted solutions to climate change.
- Conserving forests and biodiversity (SDG 15): limiting the industrialization of agriculture and forestry in order to protect forests, biodiversity and preserve local communities' ways of subsistence.⁶⁹

The Women 2030 Program is a coalition of gender network organizations supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It is implemented in 50 countries all over the world, including Lao PDR, aiming at the realization of the SDGs in a gender-equitable and climate-just manner. The Program works mainly through capacity building of women's civil society organizations and enables them to participate in relevant policy dialogues and monitoring, as well as citizens' engagement.⁷⁰

Amongst the agencies of the United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) leads the way regarding an integrated approach of gender and forestry. FAO's Criteria and Indicators for sustainable forest management (SFM) were recently updated with a gender-responsive toolbox providing a general framework for practical integration of gender aspects for the forest development sector⁷¹. FAO recognizes that, even though women play a very important role in forest-related work and the generation of income from forest resources, this is rarely reflected in forestry-related planning and programming⁷².

Another important international framework is provided through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which Laos ratified in 1996. A Gender Plan of Action (currently until 2020) is aligned with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and provides concrete tools and action steps to integrate gender into related national policies and implementation efforts. Parties to the Convention are requested to report on actions undertaken to implement the Gender Plan of Action under the CBD⁷³.

The four strategic objectives of the CBD Gender Plan of Action are:

1. Integration of gender perspectives
2. Promoting gender equality

⁶⁹ Women2030 Project: About the Sustainable Development Goals

⁷⁰ Women2030 Project: About Women2030

⁷¹ FAO 2018

⁷² FAO 16/07/2018: Sustainable Forest Management Toolbox increases gender considerations in its modules.

⁷³ Convention on Biological Diversity: 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action

3. Demonstrate the benefits of integrating gender
4. Increase the effectiveness of implementation efforts

Actions based on these objectives are organized around four spheres of work: policy, organizational, delivery, and constituency. The Plan further provides concrete actions to integrate gender aspects into all mentioned spheres relevant to successful implementation of the Convention.

Regional Agreements on Forestry in the ASEAN region

The only regional agreement in the forestry and biodiversity sector is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on ASEAN Cooperation in Agriculture and Forest Products Promotion Scheme. The MoU has been renewed three times since 1994, with the current one being in force since 2014. As an MoU, it does not require further ratification or detailed integration processes, and it focuses on economic promotion rather than resource protection. None of the related documents considers gender aspects of the addressed schemes and production chains⁷⁴.

The year 2007 was seen as a political landmark in ASEAN cooperation with regard to forestry and related forest law enforcement and improved forest governance. The ASEAN Statement on Strengthening Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) was issued in 2007 and paved the way to take action addressing illegal logging and its associated trade issues as a joint effort with regional partners and international stakeholders. The FLEG work plan 2016-2025 does not provide specific recommendations for gendered aspects of transboundary trafficking of wildlife and timber or illegal logging, but it recognizes the social and cultural aspects in general, and poverty as a driver for related illegal practices in particular.

Gender considerations are notably absent in the actions set for improved market access, capacity building for law enforcement-related authorities and community stakeholders, awareness-raising activities and training on forest governance for business actors, civil society organizations and local communities⁷⁵.

Forestry, Agriculture and Biodiversity in Lao PDR

The current Lao National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025 mentions the Lao Women's Union as a potential civil society stakeholder to reach out to women, but it does not take gender issues into account beyond that. The proposed way forward for the current strategy, however, recognizes that future training efforts supported under the National Strategy should also consider women, youth and ethnic groups beyond the internal Government system. Furthermore, the Strategy also proposes to consider women and youth leaders as specialists and training resources in their function as keepers of Traditional Knowledge⁷⁶.

With regard to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on ASEAN Cooperation in Agriculture and Forest Products Promotion Scheme, Laos assigned the Director of the Division of Planning under the Department of Forestry at the MAF to be the national coordinator and focal point for the other ASEAN member countries. The overall coordination of all ASEAN members under this MoU is facilitated through the ASEAN Forest Products Industry Club – led by the Malaysian Timber Industry Board and therefore the private sector. Given the variety of stakeholders involved in the concerned promotion schemes, gender considerations would have broad potential to be taken up, but do not form part of any guiding principles of the Club or the agreement itself.

It is not likely that the MAF's focal point will proactively add a gender dimension to the cooperation. The MAF has its own gender focal point who could be consulted for such matters, but that is usually only utilized when projects/partners set specific requirements towards gender mainstreaming.

The Lao FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) process is still in the negotiation phase, which was to be concluded in March 2021 but has been delayed due to COVID.⁷⁷ Despite the relevance for gender- and ethnicity-sensitive inclusion in areas concerning production and village forests, and the implications of the VPA on forest governance structures, the FLEG VPA negotiations completely lack a respective gender lens⁷⁸. In a 2018 gender analysis, the GIZ-FLEGT programme in Laos pointed out that most FLEGT-VPA meetings were predominantly led

⁷⁴ Memorandum of Understanding on ASEAN Cooperation in Agriculture and Forest Products Promotion Scheme 2014

⁷⁵ Compare Work Plan for Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) in ASEAN, 2016-2025

⁷⁶ National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025

⁷⁷ <https://flegtlaos.com/flegt/flegt-vpa/>

⁷⁸ Compare: FLEGT VPA process in Lao PDR 2018

by senior men. If social issues were raised, it was mostly initiated by the represented CSOs, and had a rather general focus on people's benefit-sharing⁷⁹. A gender imbalance at decision-maker levels, combined with generally low gender knowledge, is a significant barrier to successful integration of gender aspects into Laos' forestry sector as a whole.

The 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED), as Laos' guiding strategic document, refers to environmental protection and disaster risk reduction under Outcome 4, but its content is not specifically gender-differentiated. The cross-cutting section on Women's Development, however, offers several targets which directly or indirectly influence the forestry sector and therefore can be used for strategic decisions/communication of such decisions towards donors and partners of the GCF programme, such as to "expand the membership of the Lao Women's Union to cover all areas of work, and strengthen the capacity of female leadership and management staff and successor staff; to "encourage women and children to receive vocational and technical training such as: agricultural production, farming, animal husbandry, handicrafts, financial services, business management, banking, taxation, laws and business regulations, as well as research and formulate policies on access to finance and women's entrepreneurship to contribute to socioeconomic development; and the goal to "promote and create conditions for women to take up leadership and management positions at various levels, reach an average of 20%"⁸⁰.

Lao PDRs' updated NDC (2021) puts significant weight on the forestry sector, for both mitigation and adaptation. It states that nature-based solutions shall be prioritized to counter climate-induced disasters such as floods, landslides and droughts. It further highlights that "mitigation co-benefits will be strongly considered in sectoral adaptation strategies and adaptation plans", showing the potential to strengthen the promotion of cross-cutting measures. The main legal document in the forestry sector is the 2021 Forestry Law. It does not mention gender or women in any of its articles. The interviewed Government partners at Provincial and District level all agreed that the Forestry Law itself does not need to mention gender dimensions explicitly since other relevant legislation – the Constitution, the Labor Law, the Family Law, the Law on Women's Union, and the Law on the Development and Protection of Women – already provide the legal basis for gender equality throughout all sectors.

The (draft) Climate Change Strategy (2021) provides a comprehensive strategy for climate change adaptation and mitigation in Lao PDR, and strongly highlights the role of nature-based solutions. For instance, it highlights the need to "enhance deployment of ecosystem-based adaptation such as crop cover, wetland protection, forest and landscape for flood water storage, retention and regulation" to strengthen the resilience against an increasing risk of droughts and floods.⁸¹ The Climate Change Decree (2019) focuses on technical aspects of vulnerability, such as hazards, and the impacts of climate change on defined vulnerable groups. This provides an avenue for addressing differential social dimensions of climate change, such as risks and coping capacities of men and women. It also promotes a participatory model of action on climate change, including the participation of women's organizations in risk assessments and adaptation planning and implementation. Northern Lao PDR is particularly at risk of climate change due to its high exposure, low capacities, and high sensitivity. This region is among the poorest in the country, and villagers in the region are largely dependent on rainfed upland agriculture to maintain their livelihoods.

The Lao National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA)⁸² does not explicitly address gender challenges or opportunities in relation to climate change. In 2009, NAPA was released and includes a list of 45 adaptation priority projects in the areas of water resources, forestry, agriculture and public health, but it does not include any analysis, strategy or interventions for addressing gender issues. Lao PDR is in the process of developing a National Adaptation Plan, although it is not clear when the plan will be finalized and approved.

The National REDD+ Strategy to 2025 and Vision to 2030 guides REDD+ implementation in Lao PDR, and together they aim to improve the quality and extent of forests nationwide to provide economic, social and environmental benefits for women and men. This is further aligned with the country's Forestry Strategy 2035, which includes three core elements: i) ensuring the sustainable management and use of forest resources ii) conserving forest resources in order to protect forests, forestland, flora and fauna, aquatic animals and wildlife, including through

⁷⁹ GIZ/Bode 2018

⁸⁰ Lao PDR's 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2021 - 2025

⁸¹ Government of Lao PDR [2020]. Draft Climate Change Strategy. p.30.

⁸² National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change (2009). Available online: https://www.adaptation-undp.org/sites/default/files/downloads/laos_pdr_napa.pdf

preventing and combatting wildfires, supporting forest restoration, and reducing deforestation and forest degradation, among others, and iii) developing the forestry and timber industry in a sustainable manner. In 2017, Provincial REDD+ Action Plans have been developed for the six programme provinces. Consultations during PRAP development included the Lao Women's Union ensuring that gender aspects are considered. Proposed interventions of the PRAPs included the improved access to extension services for women and youth and a gender-sensitive monitoring system ensuring sustained participation of both women and men during the PRAP process.⁸³

Implications for the GCF project

Regional structures and existing legal frameworks do not provide sufficient guidance for all concerned stakeholders for a gender-sensitive implementation of the project. The planned project can draw valuable recommendations for the practical integration of gender into forest governance from international frameworks and action plans, as mentioned above.

A valuable contribution of the project can lie in supporting the development of guidelines and regulations for forest governance and protection which are sensitive to the diverse needs of the communities with regard to gender, ethnicity and economic status. Furthermore, the project might be able to significantly promote gender balance in stakeholder meetings and other platforms relevant to decision-making.

So far, Project 1 has promoted the development of a number of guidelines in a gender-sensitive process. Guidelines for the Promotion of Sustainable and Deforestation-free Agricultural Practices and Value Chains (PSAP), have been developed drawing on participatory processes including women and vulnerable groups. In a similar way, the development of guidelines for Village Forest and Agriculture Grants (VFAG) has been supported by Project 1. The guidelines ensure that fund allocation from the VFAG prioritizes support to women-headed households and young farming families. Project 2 will draw in these guidelines and scale up their application.

3.3. Meso Level: Gender dimensions at sectoral institutions and actors

The interviews showed that the Provincial and District Forestry agencies might possess only limited awareness on the relevance of gender-responsive measures in their sector. This was signaled by their responses, which lacked concrete understanding of gender mainstreaming, as well as the fact that most interview partners in the forestry offices were men. One office mentioned that they have a gender focal point but did not consider inviting her to the interview. This is rather symbolic of the under-utilization of gender resources within the partner structures.

The key message from the interview partners was coherent with other programme findings: the key challenge to effective gender mainstreaming in the forestry sector is only partly in the legal provisions but mainly at the implementation level. This includes knowledge and awareness, as well as personnel and financial resources, and lack of designated and committed responsibilities beyond the Lao Women's Union.

The institutional structures for improved gender-responsive forest governance exist (ministries' gender focal points, Lao Women's Union), but currently lack in-depth technical knowledge, budgets and the internal mandates to be taken seriously enough.

Implications for the GCF project

The project should actively pursue the cooperation with the LWU during implementation. On the one hand to make use of the LWU's resources, experience and local networks to promote gender equality in the land use sector. On the other hand, to further capacitate the organization to promote gender equality in the context of deforestation-free agriculture, value chain development, climate change adaptation and community forest management. During implementation of Project 1, the Lao Women's Union (LWU) became a key partner in the context of gender-related project activities. LWU participated in key village-level activities to ensure the integration of gender perspectives. As per Annual Progress Report, monitoring data shows that LWU has participated in 87% of all village level activities.⁸⁴ The intense cooperation with the LWU will be continued under Project 2.

⁸³ Provincial REDD+ Action Plans (PRAP) for Houaphan, Bokeo, Lung Namtha, Luang Prabang, Oudomxay, and Sayaboury. 2017.

⁸⁴ GCF Programme Annual Progress Report, December 2021.

Further, the project should aim to improve capacities of implementation partners on GESI, gender equality and inclusive processes through adequate training. Further, GESI needs to be integrated as cross-cutting issue into all technical training materials.

3.4. Micro Level: Consultations with the Target Groups in the Sector

Summary of stakeholder consultations on gender for the Programme (Project 1)

The field consultations took place between 15-24th January 2019: one mission to Houaphan Province from 15-18th January, and one mission to Luang Namtha Province from 22-24th January 2019. In both Provinces, interviews were conducted with the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO) and the Provincial Lao Women's Union (PLWU).

At the District level, interviews were conducted with the District Agriculture and Forestry Offices (DAFO) and District Lao Women's Union (DLWU) in Xam Neua (Houaphan) and Luang Namtha District. In total, four village consultations took place: Ban Yard Village in Xam Neua District; Ban Nam Mad Mai village and Ban Nam Dee village in Luang Namtha District. In total, 148 people were interviewed and consulted (79 men and 69 women).

The selected villages are of different ethnic and economic backgrounds, and showed different levels of women's participation:

- Ban Yard village/Houaphan: Khmu and Hmong ethnicity, with two villages merged into one. High poverty and unemployment rates, low education standard. Strong weaving tradition, livestock as central income activity, shifting cultivation and paddy rice production. Women were highly active during the consultations, and the organization of two separate meetings for women and men was supported.
- Ban Nam Mad Mai village/Luang Namtha: Akha ethnicity. Village was moved several times in the past 20 years and has experienced improving income levels since they now live close to Luang Namtha town. Education levels are still very low. Rubber provides the main income, in addition to income from forest resources and rattan production. Shifting cultivation is still practiced. The villagers refused separate meetings. The women needed continuous translation between Akha and Lao, and appeared overall very shy to speak up in front of the village authorities and other men.
- Ban Nam Dee village/Luang Namtha: Lanten/Yao ethnicity. The village is an eco-tourism site. Income levels are proportionally higher, but with high dependence on funds for the tourism site which will end soon, and on their income from rubber with strong price fluctuation (monopoly of one Chinese company). Very low education levels amongst the women; the few women who attend school tend to leave the village. Villagers did not organize separate meetings, and the village head continuously overpowered the attending villagers. Women's participation could only be encouraged through the attending national Lao Women's Union representative.

In general, the programme was well received by all consulted stakeholders. At the district and village level, many participants noticed that resources are becoming increasingly scarce and in poorer quality. Women, as the main collectors of forest products, know forests well and have seen the impact of deforestation and forest degradation on their livelihoods. As forests become increasingly degraded, women must either travel longer distances, or use less NTFPs for domestic consumption. Also, some stakeholders noted forest biodiversity has declined. In terms of agriculture, consulted women also noted that soil quality has been in decline. Some villages noted that initially they tried to use dung fertilizers, but then switched to some chemical fertilizers. While they can see the impact of some land use practices (e.g. shifting cultivation), they noted a major barrier for them to address this is the lack of available finances and knowledge of alternative "good" agriculture and land use practices. They further noted the need for support in marketing and identifying suitable opportunities (based on land use planning). A summary of comments from the gender-specific stakeholder consultations and a brief description of how they have been incorporated into the programme and/or GAP is provided in the following Table.

Implications for the GCF project

Table 2. Summary of comments (Project 1)

#	Stakeholder comment and/or recommendation	How it has been integrated in the programme's gender action plan:	Related programme component/activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
1	LWU is an important institution in supporting gender equality and gender-sensitive development in Lao PDR. Nonetheless, their capacities can be further strengthened to better enable them to support gender equality within both the context of the program, and in general.	The program will develop the capacities of line implementing Government agencies and the Lao Women's Union to provide gender-sensitive facilitation of programme activities in village communities. Implement targeted trainings on REDD+ and gender. Technical staff from DAFO, DOFI and DLWU will be trained in "REDD+ and Gender", as well as social inclusion. It will further support the capacity of female staff within government agencies to improve the gender balance within the forest and agriculture sector, and will aim to increase the number of women supporting the implementation of program activities.	Cross-cutting/ all	(3)
2	Implementing government agencies have weak capacities on gender.			(3) (7) (6) (13)
3	Women's participation in meetings, trainings and committees is often limited. This is due to various factors (e.g. cultural norms, timing and location of trainings, education of women, among others). Targeted technical support is needed to strengthen women's participation in program meetings.	<p>Encourage the active and effective participation of women in community meetings, through the following practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building the capacities of LWU and government agencies on gender and social inclusion (see recommendations above) • Setting a quota of 40% participation of women in community meetings • Conducting a survey to determine if women felt actively included in REDD+ related meetings • Time and locate trainings taking into account women's work schedules and accessibility to ensure maximum participation and outreach, coordinate with LWU, LNFC, and local women's organizations to build on existing networks and best practices for outreach. • Ensure that village consultations regarding potential private sector investments in community-based agroforestry 	Cross-cutting/ all	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (13) (14) (16) (30)

#	Stakeholder comment and/or recommendation	How it has been integrated in the programme's gender action plan:	Related programme component/activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
		enable all villagers equally to participate in the investment decisions.		
4	Women and men are interested in stopping shifting cultivation, as it is labour intensive and difficult work, however they need suitable alternatives. Women's capacities are low, and they often have less access to extension services, trainings and information than men.	<p>Activity 1.4 will support villagers with LUP, which will help identify suitable land use activities. Components 2 and 3 will provide technical and financial support to communities to adopt sustainable land use practices on agricultural and forested land. Participation in the program is voluntary, and based on participatory processes where villagers are able to identify practices that are suitable and of interest based on their local context.</p> <p>The program will support the development of women's capacities to adopt sustainable land use practices, and venture into the production, processing and marketing of new value chains. All training modules and extension materials will be reviewed by a gender specialist, all extension agents and trainers will be trained on gender equality and social inclusion (e.g. promotion of time-saving practices). In addition, the program will ensure close cooperation with LWU to reach the most women possible, and encourage their participation.</p> <p>Trainings for only women on "business skill development" will be implemented, to help women to improve their business literacy, build confidence and develop leadership skills.</p> <p>Assessments on targeted value chains will include gender assessments, to understand the key opportunities and challenges for women.</p>	Activity 1.2.2, all Activities within Components 2 and 3	<p>(1-14)</p> <p>(16-19)</p> <p>(20)</p> <p>(21)</p> <p>(22)</p> <p>(23)</p> <p>(24-16)</p> <p>(27-30)</p>

#	Stakeholder comment and/or recommendation	How it has been integrated in the programme's gender action plan:	Related programme component/activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
		Ensure that village consultations regarding potential private sector investments in community-based agroforestry enable all villagers equally to participate in the investment decisions. As for women's access to such services, see the additional recommendations in the row above.		
5	Women often have less access to decision making and planning processes, despite being the main users of forest lands.	The program will help empower women to become members of village forest management committees and other village decision-making bodies at the local level. The program will support the development of guidelines local village forest management committees to strengthen gender and social inclusion. It will further ensure gender is cross-cutting throughout all training modules and materials, and will encourage gender sensitization for men and women.	All activities within Component 2 and Component 3	1-14) (16-19) (20) (21) (22) (23) (24-16) (27-30)
6	Women often know the forest better than men, but are often not involved in monitoring or law enforcement/ patrolling due to various reasons (cultural norms, unpaid labour/ household responsibilities, lower education). Nonetheless, women should be increasingly involved in these activities (if activities are safe, and close to villages). Women should be fully consulted on patrolling activities. Safety must be closely considered for forest patrols, as they are often dangerous activities, and may be far away from villages.	Review the potential for community-based women-led ⁸⁵ patrolling groups, and support their creation with capacity development and awareness raising.	Activity 1.2.1 and 3.1.1	1-14) (16-19) (20) (21) (22) (23) (27-30)
7	As with monitoring and law enforcement, despite women's in-depth knowledge of the forest, they are often not involved in monitoring	Capitalize on local women's extensive knowledge about community forests in making them an integral part of community contributions to the National Forest Monitoring System. This	Activity 1.2.1	(6) (7) (27-28)

⁸⁵ Women-led implies that the groups are organized and led by women, however it does not mean that the participation is only women. These groups can be mixed patrolling groups, however, majority of the leaders and organizers of the group should be women.

#	Stakeholder comment and/or recommendation	How it has been integrated in the programme's gender action plan:	Related programme component/activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
	activities. Women should be actively engaged and consulted on forest monitoring.	includes gender-responsive mechanisms for community monitoring within the National Forest Monitoring system.		(29-30)
8	It was mentioned in the consultations that women often know more about marketing than men, whereas men are often involved in more activities requiring 'heavier' labor. Thus, it is important for the value chain assessments conducted within the framework of the program that gender-related issues are considered within value chain assessments, including key opportunities for women to strengthen their roles and capacities.	The program will ensure that a gender assessment is integrated in every analysis for potential new agricultural practices and value chains utilized by the program. All feasibility studies for the development of new value chains or agricultural practices should review the estimated gendered impact of the desired change (access, needs, barriers, potentials, work load, benefits).	Activity 2.1.1 and 2.1.2	(2) (7) (9) (8) (20-26)

Summary of stakeholder consultations on gender for Project 2

With updating the safeguard documentation during preparations for Project 2, field consultations have been conducted in Oudomxay, Luang Prabang and Sayabouri from March 13 till 26. The stakeholder consultations at local level included male and female villagers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. At district level, governmental institutions, the Lao Women's Union and the Lao Front for National Development have been consulted. Moreover, private sector interviews have been conducted, including consultations with 39 stakeholders from agri-MSMEs, collectors of NTFPs and agriculture products and processing factories. In addition, several civil society organizations (CSOs) have been interviewed, and national and provincial level kick off meetings (all six provinces) have been conducted. The consultations with CSOs included organizations focusing on gender topics and women rights (Gender Development Association (GDA) and the Association for Development of Women and Legal Education (ADWLE)). In total, 543 persons (30% women) have been consulted. The following section provides an overview of the comments and recommendation collected during the field work conducted for Project 2.

The consultations showed that women participated in activities implemented under Project 1. It was generally reported that women had equal opportunities to participate and gain benefits from the project. In some villages, it was emphasized that women have a wealthy knowledge of the local forest which should be considered by the project implementors. With Project 1, women became specifically involved in law enforcement and participate in land and forest management committees and forest patrolling groups at village level. The project was found to strengthen forest management operations at the local level, especially for women, who have a better understanding of gender roles.

Implications for the GCF Project

Table 3. Summary of comments (Project 2)

Stakeholder comment and/or recommendation	How it has been integrated in the project's gender action plan:	Related project component/ activity	Corresponding measure in GAP
<p>Women know the forest well. Women frequently go to the forest in search of forest products for consumption and sale in marketplaces, and they are well knowledgeable about the condition of various resources. Furthermore, women have also demonstrated a wide range of interest in forest preservation.</p> <p>Most of the women went to the forest to find bamboo shoots, vegetables, rattan shoots, Boun shoots, cardamoms, and herbs to consume and sell. Women are more likely to go to the forest to find forest products than men.</p>	The GAP required that new guidelines developed under the project consider gender as a crucial factor in forest protection, monitoring, equal user rights, and benefit sharing, as well as resource management.	Activity 1.2.2, 3.1.1 and 3.1.2	(3) (7) (8) (27-30)
In general, women are more likely to be involved in forest and land use than men due to the fact that they are more likely to seek forest resources for consumption and sale in markets and will get to know many details about the condition of the resources. In addition, women have shown a wide range of interest in protecting forests.	See item 5 in Table 2	-	-
<p>Women have the same rights as men to participate in meetings for discussions, decisions, and express their concerns about work. Despite the fact that women have the same rights as men and mainly use forest areas for living, they are less likely to involve in decision-making or other planning. (Yet, this does not seem to be the same in every village as in some villages, women form an important component of the main decision-making in farming and other businesses, with the majority of women serving as managers.)</p>	See item 3 in Table 2	-	-
Family obligations does sometimes keep women away from doing similar work as men in forest management or agriculture.	Extension workers and trainers are trained on gender-sensitive extension, and social inclusion in order to sensitize them for challenges faced by women. Gender expert reviews all training modules (materials, coursework, etc.) in order to ensure accessibility for women. It is a cross-cutting goal of the GAP that	Cross-cutting	(3) (10) (11) (22)

Stakeholder comment and/or recommendation	How it has been integrated in the project's gender action plan:	Related project component/ activity	Corresponding measure in GAP
	Gender sensitivity and women's interest are guaranteed in the project. The project will consider women-specific challenges when promoting agricultural practices and technologies.		
There are some challenges faced by women and women-owned or-led businesses, including the absence of the primary laborer in their households.	The project will promote women-owned businesses by promoting their participation in PSAP agricultural extension activities. At least 7% or more of the households joining PSAP agricultural extension activities and receiving support are women-led.	All, especially Component 2	(21) (22)
Clear communication should be ensured by the project. It was recommended that it is important to build the capacity of the government coordinator on communication and facilitate women's participation, because the government coordinator has the responsibility of announcement to women to participate in the activities. The project should promote women's self-empowerment and more trust in themselves. The project should closely work with the village chief and a representative of women at village level to ensure women's engagement in the project.	Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) is considered a cross-cutting element and will be mainstreamed through project-related products/ materials, and trainings. Technical staff from District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO), (Department of Forest Inspection) DOFI, and (District Lao Women's Union (DLWU) will be trained in gender issues.	Cross-cutting	(1) (3) (6) (10) (16) Cross-cutting
The project implementation committee at all levels should have women as members, including at district and village levels.	The LWU is part of the Steering Committees on all levels and also participates in implementation. For the village-level, the project emphasizes the participation of women for all different committees. For instance, for village forest management committees there is a quota of 30%	Activity 2.1.2 and 3.1.1	(3) (13) (17-19) (21) (22) (23) (28)
The project should ensure that trainings are conducted in local languages and provide interpreters, if needed. Most challenges to ethnic women's participation are communication and access to information because of language barriers, especially for Hmong and Lahoo ethnics.	The project is aware of this challenge and will ensure that interpreters are present if needed. The Ethnic group development plan emphasized that translation support will be available, and key materials will be provided in local languages, where suitable. Project 1 gathered experience and the use of local languages was monitored. This confirmed that local languages have been used in village	Cross-cutting	Cross-cutting

Stakeholder comment and/or recommendation	How it has been integrated in the project's gender action plan:	Related project component/ activity	Corresponding measure in GAP
	meet-ings concerning all activities (including FPIC) in relevant villages. Project 2 will build on this experience and ensure accessibility to all activities.		
Local and traditional knowledge should be mapped, shared, and scaled up based on proper location. Women do well know how to use NTFPs, so include them on village forest committees. Each ethnic minority has their own traditional knowledge and capacity. This knowledge and capacity should be listed and mobilized to support project implementation.	NTFP management and development will be promoted under Activity 3.1.1 on village forest management. The project will ensure fair participation and access to these activities for women and ethnic minorities.	Component 3 3	(27) (28)
There is limited in access to information on laws and regulations on forest conservation and management and sustainable land use available to villagers, including ethnic minority groups. Appropriate information and education material for ethnic women and ethnic minority groups should be developed and distributed with frequency, such as including forest or land law content in the materials.	Under Component 3 Village Communities will be trained by capacitated government staff to implement sustainable (village) forest management plans. This activity will include the development of appropriate information and education material.	Component 3	(16) (19)

4. Gender responsiveness, expertise, and gender equality in the partner organisation

The main implementing partner of the planned GCF programme will be the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and the EPF (host of the National REDD+ Funding Window).

The majority of staff – especially at senior level – within the responsible departments and divisions, including the REDD+ desk, are men. Hence, there is a general gender imbalance at partner level. This imbalance becomes worse at the Provincial and District level. As mentioned above, the DoF is striving to hire and promote more women into its divisions to increase the number of women in conservation work to at least 30%. A current figure could not be obtained.

Representation in terms of numbers is one issue; the factual participation of female staff who are already working in the departments is another, as particularly female junior staff are often not actively participating in meetings. This was also observed in the Provincial DAFO/DOFI interviews.

Implications for the planned GCF project

Besides supporting the partners in proactive and improved recruitment and promotion processes of female staff, the current gender capacities of all staff seem to be rather low. The GCF programme should emphasize the importance of gender mainstreaming clearly and from the design stage all the way through to evaluation of activities. Knowing that partners do particularly well in response to quantified analysis of the costs of gender inequality, the GCF programme could benefit substantially from a commissioned study used for partner communication and capacity development measures.

A gender training for all involved partners – including the LWU – should be supported, focussing on the gender dimensions of the forestry sector, REDD+ and climate-resilient and deforestation free agriculture and agricultural value chains.

The Lao Women's Union is not seen as a direct implementation partner but should be utilized by the programme as much as possible to compensate for the current lack of gender capacities and to ensure a continuous commitment to gender equality (see also Chapter 3.3).

5. Gender responsiveness and expertise in the project/ among project staff in the country

As Project 2 has not started yet, nothing can be said about the gender responsiveness of the not yet assigned project staff. However, the performance of Project 1 as the successor of the Project 2, can be assessed.

For Project 1, a consulting team was hired to ensure that environmental and social safeguards are enforced and also to mainstream gender. The Gender and Safeguards Team has focused on mainstreaming gender and the Gender Action Plan into the actual processes, a broad set of activities and all systems of the project.

One of the team's initial tasks has been to review all major approaches of (village level) guidelines and to confirm their integration of gender. Also, the Master Budget was thoroughly checked for risks associated with gender, ethnic minority status, disability status, literacy, and other axes of vulnerability, and action proposed. During each quarterly planning, all POs review and assess the risks and mitigation measures related to the planned action inputs.

When developing the system, the ESMP and the Gender Action Plan were analysed in detail by the Safeguards team, and their key elements were integrated into the project's activities and operational systems.

Consideration of gender is fundamentally embedded into the approaches of all village level activities, mainly Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP), and Village Forest Management and the Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Practices (PSAP).

Implications for the planned GCF project

The planned Project 2 should build on the experience of Project 1 and established a Safeguards Team to implement and monitor the project's safeguards and gender management system. It should employ at least one advisor with in-depth knowledge and implementation experience in gender equality and mainstreaming in the conservation sector. The vacancy should explicitly require such expertise.

To ensure sound integration into all activities, this position would ideally be with a senior technical advisor rather than with a junior position. This person would be most appropriate to also become the general Gender Focal Point of the project to oversee gender mainstreaming efforts, including gender sensitization for both men and women.

It is important, however, to equally empower all team members to be able to mainstream gender into their work areas, especially the senior staff and the staff responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

If not all staff possess sufficient gender expertise, the project should invest in a technical gender training aiming to enable the team to proactively and effectively integrate gender into all workstreams.

All standard procedures of the programme should be streamlined to review gender aspects throughout the course of the project.

The GIZ Gender Strategy, GIZ Guidelines on Designing a Gender-Sensitive Results-Based Monitoring System, the Practical Guide to Gender-Responsive Programme Management and the Guidelines on Gender in Reporting provide useful guidance for the whole team.

Additional technical expertise to integrate gender into forestry projects is provided by FAO's Practical Field Guide, "How to mainstream gender in forestry"⁸⁶.

⁸⁶ FAO 2016

6. Gender gaps and recommendations to integrate them into the GCF programme

The following table connects the identified gaps (i.e. in addition to those identified in the stakeholder consultations), with regard to gender with proposed recommendations to act upon these drivers. The third column shows the integration into the existing outline for components and activities of the planned GCF programme, and the fourth column where they have been integrated into the Gender Action Plan.

They are not listed according to priority. They should be integrated as much as possible throughout the course of the programme, starting with the funding proposal, the Log-frame, the operational planning, and monitoring and evaluation systems.

Furthermore, it is strongly recommended to review this analysis and the effectiveness of the suggested activities on a regular basis, and to include it in the required on-boarding documents for new programme staff.

Table 4: Identified Gender Gaps

Identified gender gap	Progress under Project 1	Recommendation	Related Project Activity	No. of GAP measure
The current capacities of Government staff at all levels to actively integrate gender and ethnic considerations into their management and implementation approaches are very limited, and the majority of staff are male. Ethnic languages are often a barrier of communication which is not actively addressed. This strongly affects inclusiveness at the ground level, where women are often left out of planning and decision-making activities if not actively encouraged to participate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project 1 conducted various trainings and trainings of trainers for Lao Women Union and Agriculture and Forestry Office staff. At village level it was made sure to include both genders in all trainings related to participatory land use planning and agricultural development. This approach will be continued under Project 2. All guidelines on FPIC, PSAP, PLUP, VFM and VFAG developed or updated under the project's scope have been thoroughly reviewed by the Safeguards team and in can be confirmed, that each of these approaches explicitly includes gender. 	<p>The program will train all concerned Government staff, including Lao Women's Union (LWU) and the REDD+ Funding Window management, on gender equality, climate change risks and best practices to strengthen resilience, climate-resilient and deforestation-free AFOLU measures and social inclusion.</p> <p>The project will mainstream gender across all guidelines, manuals and training materials.</p> <p>It will further implement targeted trainings to support the capacity development of female staff for all implementing Government agencies at all levels to improve the gender balance within the land use sector.</p> <p>Communication materials on forest protection, climate-resilient and deforestation-free agriculture and other project-related awareness raising and capacity building activities should be gender-sensitive, user-friendly and in different ethnic languages whenever possible. All communication and information materials will be revised by a gender specialist.</p>	Cross-cutting/all	(3) (5) (6) (7) (8)

Identified gender gap	Progress under Project 1	Recommendation	Related Project Activity	No. of GAP measure
The consultations showed that women are considered the main users of forest resources and possess vast knowledge of their surrounding natural habitats and their status of degradation, but rarely participate in forest management and monitoring due to lack of education and traditional norms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Village Forest Management Plan (VFMP) guidelines describe the process for the creation of VFM committees (VFMC) and integrate the quota of at least 30% female committee members. To date (April 2021) 40% of VFMCs consist of at least 30% women with 40 villages assessed. The low share of female members in initial villages had been reported to GIZ advisors and implementers by Safeguards Team and since then female participation has gradually increased. 	<p>The program will support the development of guidelines local village forest management committees, and set standards of to ensure such committees are accessible for women, members of diverse ethnic groups and the poor, including a quota of at least 30% of female members per committee. The by-laws should also provide alternative pathways for people to fulfill the necessary requirements to become committee members (e.g. minimum education standard OR passing of a standard oral test).</p> <p>LWU will support consultation processes to help strengthen gender equality in program implementation.</p> <p>VFM's will be designed in a gender-sensitive manner, considering the differentiated priorities and needs of women (facilitated by gender-sensitive guidelines, and staff trained on gender equality and social inclusion). The specific needs of women-headed households will be discussed at village level to enable their participation in forest management committees.</p>	3.1.1	(1) (5) (13)
The consultations at village level showed that environmental awareness is still very limited. The greatest motivation for villagers to engage in protection measures is found when they see immediate effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project 1 used gender-sensitive communication materials throughout implementation. The LWU was actively engaged in exchanges and meetings at 	The program will promote awareness-raising campaigns through the use of interactive tools and gender-/ethnic-sensitive communication materials which consider existing motivation factors, and differenti-	1.2.2 2.1.1 3.1.1 3.2.1	(1) GAP budget considers DSAs for villagers,

Identified gender gap	Progress under Project 1	Recommendation	Related Project Activity	No. of GAP measure
on their livelihood through diminishing resources (less income, less food). Exchange with other villages is commonly seen as a very effective tool to initiate change, but women are often prevented from traveling due to traditional norms and lack of transport.	village level to enable women to participate.	ated needs and priorities. All major communication materials and awareness raising campaigns will be reviewed and approved by the program's safeguard, gender and M&E specialist. A specific focus will be on raising awareness on climate change impacts and mainstreaming adaptation across project activities to strengthen the resilience of men and women. As men and women are impacted differently by climate change impacts, these activities need to be gender responsive. The program will further enable female villagers to participate in exchanges and meetings outside the village through direct campaigning through LWU and Government staff, and provide allowances and means to travel if necessary.		and will provide support to access trainings.
There are currently no specific women groups active in forest management. The Lao Women's Union (LWU) is usually the only active organization which can influence decision-making at all levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LWU participated in key village-level activities to make sure, that the gender perspective is put into practice. Monitoring data shows, that in 87% of all village level activities, the LWU has actually participated (total of 1,415 working days). 	The project will to continue to utilize the LWU as much as possible to represent and reach women, and it is recommended to allocate budget directly to the local LWU offices to enable them to responsibly co-facilitate project activities.	Cross-cutting/all	(3) (13) (17)-(20) (25) (27)
The current Law Enforcement Actions Plans do not consider gender aspects and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project promoted the participation of women in law enforcement measures such as patrolling. According to the APR 	The project will continue to support inclusion of women in law enforcement measures (e.g. patrolling) and ensure consistent monitoring. Early experiences with	1.2.1	(29) (33)

Identified gender gap	Progress under Project 1	Recommendation	Related Project Activity	No. of GAP measure
are therefore not considerate of the potentials of women's role in forest use and protection.	2022, an assessment of the acceptance by villagers of local women-led forest patrolling groups has been done. It shows that in the 8 villages assessed, 63% of the respondents would accept a woman-led forest patrolling group. (If including the not-yet validated data, 57% over 18 villages expressed a positive interest). Even though their training has not yet started, current data shows that 5 village patrolling groups have a woman leader, out of 7 villages with validated data available.	"good practices" of female-led patrolling groups should be used for scaling up activities in the three new provinces.		
Legally, women and men have the same rights to land. Reality shows, however, that women's land tenure is still less secure than men's. Women are also often not actively included in decision-making steps of land use planning (LUP). The subsequent forest management plan and agricultural activities are then seen by local men and women as a specialized step which women are even less part of. Reasons provided are lack of education to assume responsibility for "technical" tasks, time constraints, lack of confidence to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 14,000 villagers engaged in the consultation process of PLUP with 46% of total participants female. • As noted above, to date (2021) 19% of VFMCs consist of at least 30% women with over 21 villages assessed. • Generally, the share of women implementing actions is 46% over 544 events. (if including not-yet validated data, the 	<p>LUP processes supported by the project will be vigilant in actively including all women and men in the target villages (separate meetings; women meetings led by female staff).</p> <p>Quotas will to be set and monitored to encourage women's inclusion in village management committees (at least 30%).</p> <p>Quotas will be set to encourage the participation of women in meetings, and targeted support (e.g. business skill training, training of program staff on gender equality and social inclusion) will be provided to strengthen the effective engagement of</p>	Cross-cutting/all	Cross-cutting, all measures

Identified gender gap	Progress under Project 1	Recommendation	Related Project Activity	No. of GAP measure
<p>participate in management decisions, and traditional norms of many ethnic groups.</p>	<p>numbers are 45% women implementing actions over 743 events).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It should be noted that the selection of (female vs. male) implementers (usually government staff, who implement activities in the field) is largely out of reach of the Safeguards team, as staffing decisions are taken by the partner organizations (LWU, LFND and mostly District Agricultural and Forestry Offices). As in early stages FPIC implementation strongly relies on the LWU and future activities will more strongly pronounce technical agricultural and forestry activities, the share of male implementors is expected to rise significantly. Thereby, the project's ability to "increase" the ratio of female implementers is limited to a certain extent. 	<p>women. Adequate timing and location will be chosen to enable the participation of women.</p> <p>Again, LWU can function as a facilitator and skills developer for village women, if budget is allocated accordingly.</p> <p>In the context of agricultural and forestry activities, the project will consider gender inequalities and ensure that women are involved in the development of deforestation-free agricultural supply chains (e.g. include the promotion of female dominated or gender neutral supply chains and agricultural practices, or enable women to gain access to formerly male-dominated agricultural domains, as appropriate). The focus will be on empowering women in the respective value chains by providing them with better means, knowledge and networks to do their work instead of loading them with more work on top of their already full daily schedule.</p> <p>Implementers and project partners need to be capacitated to mainstream gender aspects in their work for the project and motivated to choose female implementers whenever possible.</p>		

Identified gender gap	Progress under Project 1	Recommendation	Related Project Activity	No. of GAP measure
Women and men in the villages are willing to make the shift away from shifting cultivation and other land use systems contributing to deforestation, towards deforestation-free agriculture as long as the shift provides more income and considers the high work loads of villagers. Women traditionally work longer hours per day, whereas men's work is physically of higher intensity.	<p>A market study is being carried out on 9 of the major PSAP whitelisted commodities, and the gender aspect will be integrated into it.</p> <p>35 products and agricultural practices have been "white listed" and private sector analysis is ongoing to identify all potential partners. All potential partners will go through the "business partners screening" before any agreement is made with them.</p>	<p>The project will focus on the Promotion of Sustainable and Deforestation-free agricultural Practices and Value Chains (PSAP) approach, which has been tested and refined in Project 1. Sustainable, climate-resilient, and deforestation-free practices are promoted among target beneficiaries through the use of the "White List", Community-based learning and consultation activities need to ensure that women and men can openly express their concerns (separate meetings, grievance mechanisms considerate of gendered barriers). The distribution of labor among men and women will need to be assessed so that all actors receive adequate training according to their roles and responsibilities. Women will have to be provided with the means to empower their roles along the selected value chains.</p> <p>There will be a quota of 40% participation of women in "PSAP" awareness meetings. Gender aspect will be considered within the Business Partner Screening processes.</p>	2.1.1 2.2.1	(21)-(28)
Women's and men's access to local markets strongly depends on road access. Women's access is further limited by safety concerns, traditional norms and time constraints due to higher workload in	Training of Trainers approach has been developed and knowledge transmission will be cascading from "main" trainers/implementers" to the other levels. ToT trainings are based on guidelines, all of which	Extension and training for agriculture and forestry interventions have been and will be continued to be closely monitored by the project's safeguard, gender and M&E specialist. All training modules and materials will be reviewed and approved by the	Component 2, cross-cutting	(3) (9)-(12)

Identified gender gap	Progress under Project 1	Recommendation	Related Project Activity	No. of GAP measure
<p>the families which prevent them from venturing out.</p> <p>Regarding general market access, women feel less confident and knowledgeable to venture beyond women's traditional products (handicraft, weaving, NTFPs).</p> <p>Women also tend to have lower access to financial resources (see also the row below)</p>	<p>have been reviewed by the Safeguards Team.</p> <p>Gender aspects (such as access to markets, safety concerns, gendered workloads) are integrated into these ToT trainings through the "Promoting Social and Environmental aspects into field work" section, mainstreamed into a broad variety of technical trainings.</p> <p>So far, 67 implementers have been trained.</p> <p>Moreover, workshops and trainings were organized covering REDD+ and gender topics in each province, to which a total of 151 participants attended (with on average ~38% women).</p>	<p>specialist prior to approval to ensure that Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and women's related issues and challenges are adequately considered.</p> <p>The issue of time poverty will be given attention during planning and implementation of all training activities by choosing adequate timing and location of trainings to enable participation of women.</p> <p>All extension agents and trainers will be trained by the safeguards, gender and M&E specialist on gender equality and social inclusion within the framework of the program.</p> <p>Women-only business skills courses to be conducted for kumbans to support women-owned or led businesses and female entrepreneurship within agri-MSMEs. This will also support business-plan development to improve women-led agri-MSMEs access finance.</p> <p>Gender-responsive monitoring will be conducted, that permits active management and learning throughout program implementation. Participation of women will be actively monitored, and measures will be taken to mitigate lack of participation in a timely manner.</p> <p>Budget will be provided for the provision of translators and the translation of materials into local languages, as necessary.</p>		

Identified gender gap	Progress under Project 1	Recommendation	Related Project Activity	No. of GAP measure
How to ensure women can access finance? Women are often less able to access loans from larger financial institutions (e.g. may not have land titles), and may be more reluctant to take loans.	<p>Female headed households and disabled people, young households are given priority in the selection of PSAP participants. Monitoring data shows, that there are approximately 10 female participants in PSAP per village (27% of participants). 7% of PSAP beneficiary households are led by women, which is approximately double the ratio of female headed households in rural Laos.</p> <p>In 80% of villages women are represented in VFAG Committees, thereby attaining financial management capacities and promoting women's inclusion in economic activities promoted by Project 1.</p>	<p>Village banking in Lao PDR has been successful in strengthening access to finance for rural women in Lao PDR. Over 1,650 Lao Village Credit Associations exist, having been strongly promoted by international donor agencies as well as the LWU. LWU has as one of its main objectives increasing access to credit and finance for women.</p> <p>VFAG committees must consist of both men and women, and have stringent requirements for representation. LWU also plays an important role in supporting village banking across the country.</p> <p>The project will support the channeling of small grants to Agri-MSMEs through the Climate Change funding window. This process will be closely aligned with the VFAG approach and follow guidelines and best practices for integrating women and ethnic peoples in management committees. Training will be provided for village committee members on managing finance, and ensuring socially inclusive and gender-equitable best practices are applied. The participation of women will be monitored by the gender-responsive project monitoring and included in the annual progress reports. Guidelines for the creation of local village forest management</p>	<p>1.1.1 2.1.1 2.2.1 2.1.2</p>	Cross cutting, all measures

Identified gender gap	Progress under Project 1	Recommendation	Related Project Activity	No. of GAP measure
		committees set standards of requirements accessible for women and the poor, and a quota of at least 30% of female members per committee. In addition, additional trainings will be conducted for women on financial literacy and business development (within Activity 1.7, as described in the GAP). ⁸⁷ These trainings build on best practices, and further address comments raised in the consultations that women may have more fears about lending risks and lower education and require targeted trainings and education on financial literacy and business planning. Nonetheless, women in Lao PDR are often responsible for household finances, often considered ' <i>family bankers</i> ' and thus many villages have had positive examples in developing village banks and having women directly benefit from such micro-finance institutions. ⁸⁸		
Improved access to financial resources could lead to a risk in the escalation of domestic violence.	In 80% of villages women are represented in VFAG Committees, thereby attaining financial management capacities and promoting women's inclusion in economic activities promoted by Project 1. The	Women play an important role as family bankers, and while finances are often managed by women – decisions are often made jointly in many communities. It is not expected for the programme to lead to an escalation of domestic violence.	Gender sensitization and equality cross-cutting in all Activities;	(3) (4) (5) (8) (9) (10)

⁸⁷ Builds off of positive experiences, such as those conducted in the ILO training courses "Get Ahead for Women in Enterprise", which were designed for poor women who want to start or expand a micro-business. For more information refer to: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_099876.pdf

⁸⁸ E.g. see studies by Siebel and Kunkel (1999) – Microfinance in Laos: A Case for Women's Banking; GIZ (2012) – Microfinance in Rural Areas – Access to finance for the poor; ILO (no date) – Banking as a solution: How microfinance can help reduce the need for young people to migrate for employment and thus diminish their vulnerability to human traffickers.

Identified gender gap	Progress under Project 1	Recommendation	Related Project Activity	No. of GAP measure
	project monitoring did not indicate signs of increasing domestic violence due to project activities.	<p>Early experiences with micro-finance and village banks in Lao PDR have demonstrated that it has led to mostly positive impacts for women, with main concerns voiced by women to include:⁸⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dominant role and decision making of men - Limited capacities of women (financial literacy and business planning), and <p>Gender equality and social inclusion will be cross-cutting throughout all consultations, and trainings, as well as program activities in general. Gender sensitization should be conducted for both men and women, including different age groups (e.g. youth, adults, elderly). Training will be held for men and women to understand their rights and relevant laws, while also discussing the importance of men and women to have access to finance and trainings, as well as other issues related to gender-equality. In trainings and consultations, representatives from LWU will be present, and can support awareness raising on women's rights and available resources.</p> <p>For instance, at trainings for women on financial literacy, information will also be provided on women's rights, and available</p>	Activity 1.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.4	(12) (13) (16)

⁸⁹ GIZ (2012) – Microfinance in Rural Areas – Access to finance for the poor

Identified gender gap	Progress under Project 1	Recommendation	Related Project Activity	No. of GAP measure
		resources in the instance of gender-violence. LWU will be an important institution to support such trainings, and provide key information – including disseminating the number for the Lao Women’s Union Counselling and Protection Centre for Women and Children, and discussing other services provided by LWU. There are often limited CSOs and resources in rural communities working on topics related to gendered-violence, and thus LWU remains one of the main focal points for disseminating information and providing support to rural women.		
Both local Government agencies and local villagers welcome private sector investment as long as it benefits the communities in terms of higher income and less workload, as well as enhanced skills. All parties expressed the wish to have the Government strongly controlling such potential investments to limit risks for the communities. The interviewed women stated that they do not feel confident to participate in decisions over investments.	Consultation have been conducted in a manner which ensured that all villagers feel safe to express their views and ask questions.	Village consultations about potential private sector engagement need to separate villagers from village authorities and men from women to ensure that all villagers feel safe to express their views and ask questions.	2.1.2	(25) (28)

7. Measures for a gender responsive/transformative project design

Table 5: Overview of measures for a gender-responsive/ transformative project design

1. Summary of the results of the analysis, observed risks and conclusions for the project	2. Measures to promote gender equality	3. Measures to prevent or reduce gender-related risks and possible unintended negative impacts
<p>Gender aspects and risks which are particularly relevant for the implementation of the project and must be taken into account (external gender mainstreaming)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violence against women is a reality for women from all ethnic backgrounds in Laos, combined with traditional norms, low levels of education and lacking mobility. This affects women's participation, their confidence to speak up and voice opposing opinions, and their willingness and capacity to participate in village management tasks. Economically empowering women at local levels can lead to an improvement of their situation but can also bear certain risks that need to be considered (e.g. risks associated to increased mobility and GBV). Capacity development on GESI is necessary for all stakeholders and implementation partners, since only very few Government staff in the sector possesses in-depth knowledge on gender and gender-related stereotypes prevail. Through its extensive networks, the LWU has been able to bring women's voices into public administration at all levels — often providing the only female voice at the table Women spend around four times more time than men on household and caring work leading to significant time constraints of women for other activities such as training opportunities, participation in community meetings or other local decision-making bodies and long-term economic planning Depending on the ethnicity, Lao women might lack Lao language skills. Women are often more affected by the negative impact of climate change. <p>Conclusions relevant to Component 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women and men have the same rights to land from a legal perspective, yet this is often overridden by local traditions and norms. As with monitoring and law enforcement, despite women's in-depth knowledge of the forest, they are often not involved in monitoring activities. 	<p>Overarching project measures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mainstream gender sensitization throughout all project activities Provide women with access to information to become aware of their legal rights under national and international laws in the context of capacity building activities Develop and provide training on Gender and countering Gender-based violence (GBV) Utilizing the existing gender structures, especially the LWU, for project implementation. Project 1 involved the LWU as a key actor in its FPIC process and other participatory activities at village levels. The cooperation should be continued under Project 2. Technical training for all concerned Provincial and District LWU, P/DAFO, P/DOFI (Forest Inspection) on gender and social inclusion in climate-resilient and deforestation agriculture and forest management is recommended to mainstream efforts and align the local implementers and decision-makers. Introduce quotas for the participation of women in relevant project activities Gender expert to review all training modules (materials, coursework, etc.) in order to ensure accessibility for women. Ensure that interpreters for local languages are present if needed to ensure accessibility for women of ethnic minority groups 	
	<p>Measures for component 1 – Enabling environment for REDD+ implementation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure equal participation of men and women in participatory land use planning activities by setting meeting quotas (e.g. 40% participation of women in "PLUP" consultation meeting and 40% participation of women in FPIC meetings) Making them an integral part of community that contributes to the Provincial Deforestation Monitoring System and law enforcement. This includes gender-responsive mechanisms for community monitoring. 	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Engage men and boys to promote non-violence and gender equity. This may include community-based training on gender equality and how to respond to GBV, particularly for local leaders, men of all ages, including gatekeepers. Actively involving senior and technical staff to foster a government culture where gender is increasingly mainstreamed Project 2 will need to ensure that the acquired knowledge from Project 1 and other initiatives is utilized. Under project 1 implementation, gender aspects have been integrated into Standard Operating Procedures, guidelines, manuals, and work plans, and monitored the status of implementation. New or revised guidelines developed under the project to mainstream climate change adaptation should consider gender as a crucial factor in land use planning, deforestation free value chains, forest protection, monitoring, equal user rights, and benefit sharing, as well as resource management to avoid cases of maladaptation 	

Conclusions relevant to Component 2:

- Main inequalities between female and male headed households in rural Laos lie in respect of land, livelihood diversification and cash income. Households headed by women tend to have smaller land plots (if at all), fewer options for income generation and lower crop marketing rates. Depending on the agricultural product and value chain, the role of women and men can differ significantly. Some are male-dominated, some are female-dominated, others are equally shared.
- Women-owned enterprises are usually smaller (mostly at micro-scale) and employ fewer workers than those owned by men and tend to be less mobile. This poses a risk to achieve gender equal participation in project activities.
- Main barriers for female entrepreneurship include limited exposure to innovative practices, lack of formal business training, limited access to networking opportunities, poor access to capital and mindset limitations, such as low confidence.

Conclusions relevant to Component 3:

- Women traditionally possess deeper understanding about the forest resources, spend considerable time in them as users, and – according to the interviewed Government staff – are more likely to show interest in forest protection, educational measures should particularly target women.
- Local and traditional knowledge about the collection of forest products and NTFPs is often with women and ethnic minorities.
- Lao women play key roles in both climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, but these are often insufficiently recognized or supported.
- Women often have less access to decision making and planning processes, despite being the main users of forest lands. Therefore, there is a risk of unequal participation of women in project activities

Measures for component 2 – Market solutions for agricultural drives of deforestation

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assessment of value chains to be promoted under the project concerning the distribution of work among men and women. Thereby ensure that a gender assessment is integrated in every analysis for potential new agricultural practices and value chains supported by the program. 2. Ensuring that women receive targeted training opportunities (e.g., business capacities, financial literacy) and extension services as well as access to information on climate change impacts and sustainable agricultural practices. 3. Introduce quotas for the participation of women-led agri-MSMEs in relevant project activities. 4. Integration of gender aspects within the agri-MSME screening processes and monitoring to ensure accessibility of funds to women-led agri-MSMEs | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provision of training exclusively targeting women to enable their active participation to create a trustful and safe meeting environment so that they feel safe to express their views and ask questions 2. Careful selection of location and timing of meetings, therefore addressing the challenge of time constraints to enable the participation of women in meetings and trainings. Inadequate timing and location could result in an unintended preselection of participants by gender 3. Selection of value chains traditionally controlled by women for promotion to prevent male dominance 4. All assessments for the promotion of value chains or agricultural practices should review the estimated gendered impact of the desired change (access, needs, barriers, potentials, workload, benefits) to not only increase the participation of women, but to also mitigate risks of additional time and workload on women. 5. Train extension workers and trainers on gender-sensitive extension, and social inclusion in order to sensitize them for challenges faced by women. 6. Ensure that no additional burdens are put on women by increasing their workload. Instead, the project should provide women with better means, knowledge, and networks to improve their agri-MSMEs. |
|---|--|

Measures for component 3 – Climate change mitigation and adaptation through forestry

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce quotas for the participation of women and women-headed households in relevant project activities. 2. Setting a quota of 40% participation of women in community meeting 3. Setting a quota of 30% female members in forest management committees 4. Conducting a survey to determine if women felt actively included in REDD+ related meetings 5. Empower women to become members of village forest management committees and other village decision-making bodies at the local level 6. Promote community-based women-led patrolling groups and support their creation with capacity development and awareness raising. 7. Enable participation of women-headed households in forest management committees by meeting their specific needs (considering time poverty, lack of resources, limited mobility, and network) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that gender is a cross-cutting topic throughout all training modules and materials and will encourage gender sensitization for men and women. 2. Closely consider safety aspects for female forest patrols, as they are often dangerous activities, and may be far away from villages. |
|---|---|

Key findings on gender expertise, gender responsiveness, and equal opportunities in the partner organizations (chapter 4) (external gender mainstreaming)

1. While MAF's commitment to gender mainstreaming and to the established structures is very high, the gender division remains understaffed and therefore with low absorption capacity. Implementing government agencies have weak capacities on gender, potentially posing a risk to achieve gender equality within the project.
2. Most staff – especially at senior level – within the responsible departments and divisions, including the REDD+ desk, are men. Hence, there is a general gender imbalance at partner level. This imbalance becomes worse at the Provincial and District level.
3. Lao Women's Union is not seen as a direct implementation partner but should be utilized by the programme as much as possible to compensate for the current lack of gender capacities.

1. A gender training for all involved partners – including the LWU – should be supported, focussing on the gender dimensions of the forestry sector, REDD+ and climate-resilient and deforestation free agriculture and agricultural value chains. This would strengthen gender responsiveness of partner organizations.
2. Proactive involvement of LWU in all project activities as local implementation partner

1. Emphasize the importance of gender mainstreaming clearly and from the design stage all the way through to evaluation of activities to change processes that could reinforce gender inequalities.
2. Support DOF in its ambition to for striving to hire and promote more women into its divisions to increase the number of women in conservation work to at least 30%. This could be done by emphasizing the need to collaborate with female implementers and setting quotas for female participation in staff training for partner institutions, this could prevent reinforcing existing gender imbalances by training male public staff only.

Key findings on gender expertise and responsiveness, in the project team (chapter 5) (internal gender mainstreaming)

1. As Project 2 has not started yet, nothing can be said about the gender responsiveness of the not yet as-signed project staff.
2. For Project 1, a consulting team was hired to ensure that environmental and social safeguards are enforced and to mainstream gender.
3. The Gender and Safeguards Team has focused on mainstreaming gender and the Gender Action Plan into the actual processes, a broad set of activities and all systems of the project.
4. The ESMP and the Gender Action Plan were integrated into the project's activities and operational systems.

1. The planned Project 2 should build on the experience of Project 1 and established a Safeguards Team to implement and monitor the project's safeguards and gender management system.

1. It is important to equally empower all team members to be able to mainstream gender into their work areas, especially the senior staff and the staff responsible for monitoring and evaluation, to work against gender-based inequalities at implementation level.
2. All standard procedures of the programme should be streamlined to review gender aspects throughout the course of the project.

8. List of References

ADWLE 2016 (Association for Development of Women and Legal Education), accessed 29.01.2019: http://adwlelaos.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/SRP001_Cedaw-Assessment_EF-14-07-2016-ENG.pdf

ASEAN 1988: Declaration of the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region. Accessed https://asean.org/?static_post=declaration-of-the-advancement-of-women-in-the-asean-region-bangkok-thailand-5-july-1988

ASEAN Declaration on Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals in 2017. Accessed 01.02.2019. https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/7.-ADOPTION_ASEAN-Declaration-on-the-GR-Implementation_CLEAN_Sept.8-2017_for-31st-Summit_CLEAN.pdf

Asian Development Bank (ADB) 2008: Final report on “Capacity-building for Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture and Forestry in Lao PDR” 2008. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-document/67491/35309-lao-tacr.pdf>

ADB 2011. Civil Society Briefs: Lao PDR. Accessed 28.01.2019. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/28968/csb-lao.pdf>

Climate Investment Funds 2017: Gender and Sustainable Forest Management: Entry Points for Design and Implementation. Accessed 01.02.2019: https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/cif_enc/files/knowledge-documents/gender_and_sustainable_forest_management.pdf

Convention on Biological Diversity: 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action. Accessed 20.01.2019. <https://www.cbd.int/gender/action-plan/default.shtml>

FAO 2016/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: How to mainstream gender in forestry: A practical field guide. Accessed 14.01.2019. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6610e.pdf>

FAO 16/07/2018: Sustainable Forest Management Toolbox increases gender considerations in its modules. Accessed 21.01.2019. <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-forest-management/toolbox/sfm-home/detail-events/en/c/1145493/>

FLEGT VPA process in Lao PDR 2018. Accessed 19.01.2019. <http://www.euflegt.efi.int/documents/10180/451571/Lao+PDR+at+Chiang+Mai.pdf/927b65b0-24fa-705d-8d69-9df73c7a9f5f>

GCF Programme Annual Progress Report, December 2021. Internal Programme Document.

Gender Inequality Index. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

Green Climate Fund 2019, Updated Gender Policy and Action Plan 2020-2023, November 2019, GCF/B.24/15

GIZ 2019, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), „GIZ Gender Strategy“, January 2019.

GIZ/Bode 2018: Gender Analysis of the programme “Protection and Sustainable Use of Forest Ecosystems and Biodiversity”. Analysis can be requested by the ProFEB project.

King & van de Walle 2007: Girls in Lao PDR: Ethnic affiliation, poverty, and location. Pp 31-70 in Lewis & Lockheed (eds): Exclusion, gender and education. Case studies from the developing world. Washington DC, Center for Global Development

Lao CSO Directory 2017. Accessed 05.02.2019. https://laocs-kis.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/e-Directory_LAO-CSO_eng.pdf

Lao PDR's 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2021 - 2025. Accessed 24.03.2022. https://data.laos.opendevlopmentmekong.net/lo/dataset/594f94b8-1b77-4225-b779-8c16512bf073/resource/34208f7e-ba9e-4a50-90e3-3632581658be/download/_eng_9th_nsedp_final_print_12.1.22.pdf

Memorandum of Understanding on ASEAN Cooperation in Agriculture and Forest Products Promotion Scheme 2014. Accessed 22.01.2019. <http://agreement.asean.org/media/download/20141003172848.pdf>

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 2015: Agricultural Development Strategy to 2025 and vision to the year 2030. Accessed 20.01.2019. <http://www.maf.gov.la/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/MDS-2025-and-Vision-to-2030-Eng.pdf>

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025. Accessed 22.01.2019. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/la/la-nbsap-v2-en.pdf>

NCAW 2015 (National Commission for the Advancement of Women): Summary Report. A Study on Violence Against Women in Lao PDR. Accessed 25.01.2019. http://www.la.one.un.org/images/publications/Lao_PDR_Violence_Against_Women_Summary_Report.pdf

Open Development Laos 2018: SDG 5 Gender Equality. Accessed 24.01.2019. <https://laos.opendevlopmentmekong.net/topics/sdg-5-gender-equality/>

RECOFT October 2021. Lao uplifts strategy to build gender inclusion in forestry. <https://www.recoftc.org/en/lao-pdr/stories/lao-uplifts-strategy-build-gender-inclusion-forestry>

RECOFTC October 2018. More Women in Conservation a Forestry Department Goal. <https://www.recoftc.org/en/lao-pdr/news/more-women-conservation-forestry-department-goal>

RECOFTC November 2018. Solutions for Change: Changing Gender Narratives in Lao PDR. <https://www.recoftc.org/en/lao-pdr/stories/solutions-change-changing-gender-narratives-lao-pdr>

Southiseng & Welsh 2010: “Competition and Management Issues of SME entrepreneurs in Laos: Evidence from Empirical Studies in Vientiane Municipality, Savannakhet and Luang Prabang”, accessed 01.02.2019: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0ecf/65aa1985eb04f17330e721daadc785a0a1d5.pdf>

The United Nations in Lao PDR 2015. The Millennium Development Goals and lessons learnt for the post-2015 period: A Summary Review. http://www.la.undp.org/content/dam/laopdr/docs/Reports%20and%20publications/2015/Government_LaoPDR_MDG_%20Review_September2015_FINAL.pdf

The United Nations in Lao PDR 2018, accessed 24.01.2019: <http://www.la.one.un.org/sdgs/sdg-5-gender>

UNDP 2017 (United Nations Development Programme): Graduation from Least Developed Country Status: Lao PDR. Accessed 25.01.2019. <http://www.la.undp.org/content/dam/laopdr/docs/Reports%20and%20publications/2017/5th%20NHDR%20-%20Lao%20PDR.pdf>

Women2030 Project: About the Sustainable Development Goals. Accessed 21.01.2019. <https://www.women2030.org/about-the-sdgs/>

Women2030 Project: About Women2030. Accessed 21.01.2019. <https://www.women2030.org/the-women-2030-programme/>

Work Plan for Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) in ASEAN, 2016-2025. Accessed 24.01.2019. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Work-Plan-for-FLEG-in-ASEAN-2016-2025.pdf>

World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2012: Country Gender Assessment for Lao PDR, accessed 15.01.2019: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/33755/files/cag-lao-pdr.pdf>

World Education Blog 2015: Education increases awareness and concern for the environment. Accessed 02.02.2019. <https://gemreportunesco.wordpress.com/2015/12/08/education-increases-awareness-and-concern-for-the-environment/>

9. Annex 1: List of consulted stakeholders

Names	Government office/village
Mr. Kim Thoummala	Deputy Director General of PAFO Houaphan
Ms. Phengvanh Sermkhamlar	Deputy Director General of LWU Houaphan
Mr. Lar Khamvongsa	Technical Coordinator PAFO Houaphan
Mr. Singthong Phanthavongkham	Deputy Head of DAFO Sam Neua
Ms. Kongkhammany Lorlakhang	Deputy Head of LWU Sam Neua
Ms. Phoungseng Oudommyxai	Deputy Head of LWU Sam Neua
PAFO & POFI team	PAFO/POFI Luang Namtha
PLWU team	PLWU Luang Namtha
DAFO team	DAFO Luang Namtha
DLWU team	DLWU Luang Namtha
15 female villagers	Ban Yard, Houaphan, Sam Neua
13 male villagers	Ban Yard, Houaphan, Sam Neua
27 female & 8 male villagers	Ban Nam Mad, Luang Namtha
4 female, 10 male villagers	Ban Nam Dy, Luang Namtha

10. Annex 2: Transcripts of stakeholder interviews

GCF/GIZ, GoL interviews: PAFO & PLWU Houaphan

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

1. What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?

Supporting the CLIPAD activities

2. From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?

Collection of NTFPs.

3. How are women already part of REDD+ mechanisms?

PAFO: Women should be part of REDD+ activities but in fact are not yet, except of women's participation in village meetings (PRAP etc.). Awareness-raising campaigns on forest laws and regulations also targeted women. Capacity-building activities on District level also focus on gender in REDD+ activities (trainer from PAFO, participants LWU, DAFO, DoNRE, police, DIndCommOffice). More trainings will follow in every District (supported by FCPF).

4. How could they be more part of it?

Higher levels (Provincial and national) need to be trained further so that they can support building the capacities of the Districts. Also, activities in the villages need continuous effort to reach out to women.

5. Which challenges do you see when it comes to remoter areas, women, ethnicity?

80% remoter, mountainous communities, so change of livelihood will take time and a multi-sector approach. If women are not understanding the activities and goals, change will not happen. Challenges in having women truly participating: lack of understanding and education esp. amongst remoter living ethnic groups; changes to their lifestyle need lots of awareness raising first; if women are not convinced of the suggested change (lifestyle, livestock & agriculture changes etc.), it usually does not happen in the communities.

Note: Village Development Funds (VDF) are mainly used by women (livestock projects mainly).

6. Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?

NTFPs & firewood are usually collected and sold by women (often to Chinese marketers), so the benefits include them.

Forest Management Plans help to determine roles and responsibilities in villagers' forest use.

7. What women groups are currently involved in forest management modalities?

Women groups are usually less active in forest management activities, but the LWU is part of the Livelihood Improvement Group, and women are mainly responsible for the VDF management.

8. How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality?

PAFO: Our knowledge and experience to support gender equality are not sufficient, despite the many projects we have implemented. We need trainings in management, procurement, accounting, and finance, and other technical trainings including livelihood improvement and gender, implementation and agriculture-related technical trainings. Study tours to other countries are useful to understand practical implementation, even between villagers (peer-to-peer learning between different villages from different Provinces).

9. How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are? How much are REDD+ and gender aspects of it integrated into the SEDP?

Clipad implementation has improved our understanding about gender issues and women's participation. (Note: Interviewees did not understand the question.)

10. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?

Decree PM, LWU law, SEDP all suggest the equal participation of women. This must be mentioned in the regulations as well, and integrate these existing laws into the new regulations, even if only in the programme area first as a pilot. The laws for equal participation are in existence – but it's upon regulations to make sure it is happening.

11. How can women be part in law enforcement measures?

We have a Law Enforcement Action Plan until 2020 (responsible: Dep. Of Forestry Inspection, POFI), but it is very generic, no mentioning of women's participation. We should think of ways to include women in law enforcement measures. If they would like to go on patrolling, they should be supported in that.

12. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?

LUP before forest management plan, so it paves the path to equal participation. The plans should be very specific (giving %, at least 20% suggested) how many women have to participate in which land & forest use & management.

So far, LUPs have only been done for areas, not for individual HH, so it's hard to draw conclusions on the factual land tenure security from that. Having both names of husband and wife on land titles will guarantee women's and men's equal and tenure.

13. Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?

Note: Question was not understood correctly.

14. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices:

Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.

Agricultural Strategy leads the way. Cash crops promoted for Houaphan: coffee, Chinese cardamom, pilot projects are already running (too early to draw conclusions). One main difficulty is the lack of markets.

15. Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?

Key problem is the general lack of markets, not the production. PSEDP tries to address the market gaps and production needs. Rice is not identified as a commercial crop in Houaphan, only for domestic consumption.

16. Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?

LWU: Micro finance is a very essential mechanism to promote women's economic activity. However, MFI are hard to access for people, only a few Village Banks exist /through VDF). PAFO & PLWU think it would be essential to increase access to microfinance/village banks in Houaphan to promote people's confidence in new production methods etc.

17. How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fiber industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?

Investment are a huge potential but need to be tailored to the different potentials of the Districts, e.g. Livestock in Houameuang and Sam Neua, Viengxay for fruit trees, etc. Ecotourism as huge potential for the NPA areas. The potentials are already assessed and written into their strategy.

GoL has to support with careful study of the impacts on local communities – if the investment is not beneficial and does not create increased income for people, we cannot allow such investment.

18. Any other remarks?

LWU: national laws & strategies, as well as leadership position quotas are in place – the gap is on the implementation level, where we need very concrete guidelines, with details on gender equality, participation figures.

Women lack knowledge because of lower education levels, young marriage an issue, lower roles in society despite laws stating equality. Just setting quotas does not help if it is not combined with awareness raising on all levels (incl. villages); needs trainings for GoL officers dealing with villagers; LWU is present in all villages but needs stronger utilization in village management

Women can play a huge role in deforestation-free agriculture, e.g. silk worm farms & silk production, cotton could be female-driven productions. Now too much import from Vietnam, but we could support the development of these value chains in Houaphan. Textile industry is very inclusive, since it does not require high education and also disabled women can work in it.

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

1. **What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?**

Districts/DAFO are key implementers of REDD+ mechanisms. Roles: planning process, hotspot and potential analysis,

2. **From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?**

Women are main users of forests, so they need to get involved in all activities and facilitated by all sector agencies incl. LWU

3. **How are women already part of REDD+ mechanisms?**

Involvement of women in the planning processes very limited, since mostly only the head of HH participate.

4. **How could they be more part of it?**

We have to have more women participating already from the planning process in villages onwards. That starts with awareness raising for the women (DLWU key responsibility, in collaboration with DAFO and other line agencies).

5. **Which challenges do you see when it comes to remoter areas, women, ethnicity?**

Language barriers; kumban level meetings usually include travel which women cannot do, so only men attend.

Solutions: hire more ethnic staff in District teams. Keep either meetings to the village level only, or allocate resources and organize pick-ups for women to be able to travel.

6. **Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?**

Women have little access to decision-making and planning processes on forest resources, but are the main users of the same (NTPFs collecting & marketing/selling). In regards to benefitting from that work in the form of shared decision-making, families definitely discuss purchases and investments jointly, but the final decision is with the husband as the traditional head of the HH.

7. **What women groups are currently involved in forest management modalities?**

No women groups except of LWU.

8. **How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality?**

Still need CB; new technology which needs more training and staff fluctuation are challenges; need more training on gender issues, plus regular opportunities to discuss and exchange on implementation experiences.

9. **How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are? How much are REDD+ and gender aspects of it integrated into the SEDP?**

Insufficient integration on implementation level. Suggestion of study tours between villagers (learning exchanges), and integrate a gender perspective into these exchanges

10. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?

The Forest Law is too general, so regulations need to be based on the reality of Districts and Provinces. For the creation of the regulations, it would be best to include both District authorities and villagers in the consultations. Bottom-up approach.

11. How can women be part in law enforcement measures?

Villagers incl. women first need to understand why the laws are relevant, so enforcement starts with encouraging villagers' support to adhere to the laws.

12. Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?

Women could be part of NTFP monitoring, but needs a lot of initial support and follow-up.

13. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?

LUP did only allocate land on a village level so far, but most of the times, no land titles have been issued yet. That put women in disadvantage because the key decisions in LUP were and are taken by the (mostly male) village authorities and heads of HH. Future LUPs need to be more specific in regards to land use, and half-completed LUP processes need to be completed. No land tenure security on the current basis.

14. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices: Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.

Needs in-depth village-by-village potential and risk analysis. Funding to invest needs to be available. People are already willing to stop shifting cultivation but currently don't have alternatives.

15. Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?

Lack of financial resources, plus lack of confidence to risk investments.
Markets are local, and many villages are too far off the markets and cannot access them.
DAFO suggests creating a form to monitor which products are produced where and sold where, so that market assessments become possible, and prices can be regulated for the benefit of the farmers (who usually don't get paid enough). Creation of this form could come from the Provincial Office for Industry and Commerce, collection of data by their District offices.

16. Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?

They would probably benefit from that if there would not be the immense risk to lose investments (e.g. when livestock diseases kill the animals they purchased from borrowed money). Also, the interest rates need to be low so that poorer people can access MF, e.g. in Village Banks.

17. How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fibre industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?

Proposals will go through PAFO which will review the benefits for the villagers carefully. Consult with the villagers, and do an area survey. Monitoring and follow-up by DAFO.

18. Any other remarks?

Plans need to be realistic in terms of budget. Use regular village visits to raise other than usual topics (e.g. gender issues in the frame of livelihood improvement, something tangible for the villagers). Make meetings more attractive for villagers, making clear what the benefit for them is in attending.

DDG DAFO: target the senior men in a village if you want to promote gender equality, and keep it simple and interesting (videos, games etc.).

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

1. **What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?**

FPIC and VDF implementation and management; no direct implementation responsibility for REDD+, e.g. village forest management agreement as part of FPIC process

2. **From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?**

LWU contribute to legal dissemination and mobilization of women in the villages to aid forest protection.

3. **Which challenges do you see when it comes to remoter areas, women, ethnicity?**

Knowledge and understanding in women low which affects meetings and participations significantly: low education rates esp. amongst women in remote areas

4. **Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?**

Forest Management Committee has LWU member, but usually not more women (7 members total) – so women's decision-making power is very limited. It is difficult to find more women for this task because most don't feel educated enough to do the technical tasks related to that responsibility.

5. **How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality? Are there activities in the planned program they think they will/would like to support but would need more in-depth knowledge for?**

Once District Steering Committee is in place, conduct a gender training for them and us focused on the kind of activities which will be implemented on the village level.

6. **How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are?**

The implementation is usually not gender-sensitive, very few people understand gender equality.

7. **The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?**

Regulations and all legal documents should include aspects of gender equity, which build the basis for implementation. Create a specific guideline on gender for the implementation of programme activities. Add to the guidelines that line agencies have to send at least local language-speaking staff to the villages to ensure that everyone understands the activity and is able to participate.

8. **LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

Challenge to follow through now with jointly signed land titles for wife and husband. LWU is part of LUP committees in the villages and tries to engage female villagers in the discussions.

9. **Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?**

Forest Management Committee of all villages have already one fixed female member (the LWU member), so she could support women's support to monitoring the forest.

10. **Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices:**

Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.

Promoted alternatives need to make sure that tasks in the production can be fairly distributed between men and women so to avoid increased work load for either, esp. women. Alongside promotion of more equitable share of domestic work (awareness raising campaigns).

11. **Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?**

MOIC has to support the identification of new markets. Markets now are too far away for most remote villages. Sometimes villages produce a lot (e.g. vegetables) but markets are too far away to bring it there and sell it.

12. **Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?**

MF can aid women to start businesses in handicraft, livestock, agriculture. Main customers of MF institutions are currently women. Combine access to MF with business trainings for women. In case of cash crop promotion, provide such training before the introduction of new cash crops, so that women are prepared and more confident.

More hands-on trainings to learn new skills are needed (e.g. handicrafts). Also not only talking about how to access markets, but organize learning tours for villagers to markets.

When creating access to MF: Conduct educational trainings on MF which are sensitive to women's fears and insecurities regarding risk and lower education levels.

13. **How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fiber industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?**

Concession & labor fees should go to villagers, land goes back to village. Technical knowledge should be provided by the company to the villagers.

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

1. **What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?**

Preparing new structure for REDD+ implementation right now; PRAP finalized but awaits signing. Consulted with Provincial REDD+ task force. Activities budgets are currently prepared, five core activities: REDD dissemination, forest regulation dissemination, scaling up PRAP activities & training, admin budget

2. **From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?**

No separation from GoL side. VDF or conservation fund oftentimes are more lead by women and are seen as key players in management and accounting. Patrolling is traditionally done by men, even though it is not specified to be like that. As long as forests are close to the village, women could also do that task.

3. **How are women already part of REDD+ mechanisms?**

Women could have many roles – because they are more careful and considerate of the natural resources. Women often have more valuable additional work, like handicraft/textiles. NTFP collection. Rubber harvest done more efficiently and successfully by women.

4. **How could they be more part of it?**

We are aware that we need to involve especially women when it comes to the dissemination of forest-related information to village women. We will separate in women and men discussion groups because otherwise women will not speak out. Women are also important educators towards their children.

5. **Which challenges do you see when it comes to remoter areas, women, ethnicity?**

Women are the key persons in collecting NTFPs etc, but in ethnic villages, it is mostly men who take all decisions. We need to increase our awareness raising to these communities regarding equal decision-making.

Lack of Lao language skills makes it difficult to communicate with ethnic villagers, esp. the women. They often only talk to the Naiban. But many ethnic groups, including Akha improved their Lao significantly in the last ten years, so it is getting easier to access them.

6. **Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?**

Women as money-keepers of the family possess higher benefits from the resources. In many ethnic minorities, men however have often the "last word" in decision-making. Not the case in the cities, where women usually have higher decision-making power.

Men have more access to forest resources management. We need to get more women into the forest management. Women are usually the money keepers in Lao culture, so if women see the "cash value" of forest resources and their management, they will naturally want to become more involved.

7. **What women groups are currently involved in forest management modalities?**

LWU only as a group. VDF has promoted a lot of women in managing roles, especially in regards to SME development. Ecotourism activities have promoted women into management positions.

PAFO has some women in natural protection section (3 out of 8), forestry section (13 in total, 6 women).

8. What are their capacities, what would they need to improve?

PAFO female staff has same capacities, but child birth puts them behind. Two female patrollers in Long District who work together with POFI as part of law enforcement.

9. How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality?

PAFO has two-three gender focal points, men and women, who is often involved in setting up activities and sometimes goes to the villages. Also, LWU is the go-to structure to implement any specific activities.

A specialized training on REDD+ and gender would be useful before implementation starts. Also a training on improved facilitation and presentation skills for the staff to improve village work.

10. How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are? How much are REDD+ and gender aspects of it integrated into the SEDP?

Women were very much involved in the planning process of the current REDD* plan. The overall gender-sensitivity is hard for us to assess.

11. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?

Not necessary to mention gender specifically in the regulations, but instead bring more women into the implementation. In some cases there is already a balance, but not everywhere. On Provincial level, balance is fine, but not in most villages, so focus there.

12. How can women be part in law enforcement measures?

Patrolling is accompanied by PAFO, DAFO, DOFI together with militia and police. Not possible without villagers' involvement. Villages often request GoL support. Work can be dangerous (hunters, loggers). Some women might have the capacity, but not in general.

13. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?

LUP has majorly completed except of villages with lots of immigration which makes it difficult for authorities to update the necessary information to allocate land. Sustainable LUP needs to think more long-term than it previously has. Sing-District has particular immigration issue due to fast development (pull location for many people). In terms of gender equality, LUP has so far benefitted everyone equally. Participation in forest-related decisions was very equal, and women and men feel equally involved.

14. Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?

Women know the forests well and should be largely involved in their monitoring. They are also viewed as more reliable and honest than men in providing this kind of information.

15. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices: Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.

Cardamom, tea, NTFP. A negative point: in order to plant cash crops, small trees are often cut down. So the balance for agrobiodiversity is not perfect, leads to decreasing biodiversity. If we amp up cash crops, this also often means disturbance of wildlife, so we should find ways to limit disturbance. Shifting cultivation needs extensive labor, so any change from that to cash crops is likely positive in regards to people's work load. In village consultations, women should be particularly targeted, esp. also with technical knowledge to empower them, and to utilize their role as their children's educators.

16. Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?

In the promotion, it is often good to discuss potential work divisions needed for a new product (e.g. men do planting, women harvesting etc.). Women usually know more about market access than men, and also what prices certain products get. That can be utilized in trainings.

17. Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?

Microfinance institutions are often a high barrier for people to use as starters for a new value chain/product etc. because people are afraid of the interest rates and paying back the money on time, and might therefore not use it. Microfinance institutions possess very valuable technical knowledge though which can be useful for the villagers to learn how to identify sources for investment themselves, so a cooperation would be best.

18. How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fiber industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?

Lessons learned from the past: organized study tour for villagers and provided them with seeds to empower them to start a new product, and PAFO made sure that a company buys the product (mak dao). In some cases, the companies provided the funds for these activities, sometimes PAFO if they have the budget for it. Another example: a paper company was built, so PAFO trained villagers how to plant bamboo to sell to that company.

Both are running well, but they don't feel these are sustainable solutions because price fluctuations tend to heavily impact the villages, often leading to deforestation because villagers rapidly need to plant other crops to earn additional income.

If more companies are interested to invest, maybe agricultural land can be directly allocated to them.

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

1. What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?

PAFO usually coordinates with PLWU about forest-related activities, and vice-president and one technical staff are assigned to join all REDD+ consultations, including on the village level. Also join SUFORD activities on village level. Also gender-sensitive information dissemination to villagers.

2. From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?

LUP has been improved, many stopped shifting cultivation, jobs were created

3. Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?

4. What women groups are currently involved in forest management modalities?

LWU is not a key implementer but coordinates with all sectors to ensure gender equality. We wish more women to be part of the management also on village level. We need to mobilize women in the villages, and ask the village authorities to make sure that women equally attend. It is always a problem if only the head of the HH are called into meetings, because then only men join. Customary practices and too much house work hinder women further from attending. Education is lower for women, so they feel less confident in participating. All these factors need to be taken into account when planning village activities.

5. How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality?

We had some trainings as introduction into the sector but would appreciate more in-depth trainings on REDD+ and how to support the programme activities best.

6. How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are? How much are REDD+ and gender aspects of it integrated into the SEDP?

It was good that PLWU was involved in all consultations towards formulating REDD+ activities in the last year, so they feel it improved the gender-sensitivity of the process.

7. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?

LWU should be involved in the development of these regulations and guidelines. The Forestry Law has not been reviewed by them yet, so they don't feel like they know enough. They want to improve their understanding once the law has been improved in the National Assembly.

8. How can women be part in law enforcement measures?

Women are parts of different committees in the forest and should be systematically trained to also take part in law enforcement measures including patrolling.

9. **LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

No specific challenges by gender, rather the general challenge that LUP has not been completed in some areas.

10. **Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?**

Women know the forests better than men and should therefore be strongly involved in the monitoring of forest resources, esp. NTFPs.

11. **Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices:
Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

New crops need a gender-sensitive analysis before introduction if that crop would benefit everyone in the village and does not give women more work.

Community-based learning and consultation activities need to separate women and men to make sure that all voices are heard equally.

12. **Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?**

Make women more confident in starting a new crop/value chain. LWU and other sectors should be included in educating them several times and support them in identifying markets and promote their access for women to these markets. For example, this year cardamom suddenly did not sell well which scared many villagers away from trying out new products in fear of financial problems. We need a thorough documentation of lessons learned like this, and find sustainable solutions together.

13. **Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?**

Having microfinance support is better than nothing but not the sole and optimal solution. For some women, this might help to get started. Very poor HHs do not take the risk in the first place, so microfinance alone is not the solution.

14. **How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fiber industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?**

Village consultations for such potential private sector investments need to ensure that village women's voices and concerns are actively taken into account (only-women meetings etc.).

15. **Any other remarks?**

LWU should always be involved in village level activities because they can easily access village women. So they recommend to make the responsibility very clear that LWU is responsible to implement all activities related to REDD+ and gender. This way it is ensured that gender is always an integral part. They feel ready to fully support the project.

GCF/GIZ, GoL interviews: Luang Namtha, District Lao Women's Union

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

1. What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?

DLWU is usually invited by DAFO to join forest-related activities. No specific implementation experience in REDD+ activities so far but the Deputy Head of DLWU has participated in consultation meetings for ICBF (by KfW), and bamboo projects.

2. From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?

Women take part in forest management and protection, especially in regards to NTFPs. In the ICBF project, there are always also women in the village steering committees (usually the village LWU representative).

3. How are women already part of REDD+ mechanisms?

4. How could they be more part of it?

5. Which challenges do you see when it comes to remoter areas, women, ethnicity?

Language, traditions, lower education. Early marriages in many ethnic groups. Children are living so close to nature and traditional life that they don't want to go to school. In some ethnic groups and villages, not even the LWU can get the village women together: when they call for a women's meeting in an Akha village, the men send their women away and attend the meeting themselves instead of their women. It's very difficult to overcome their traditions.

Also, road access and remoteness (in combination with lack of proper vehicles) is a barrier for staff to reach these villages. The District offices try to support each other with vehicles and in joining in activities together.

What they do to overcome these barriers: information dissemination to both women and men, through women's law information integrated into gender issues. Traditional gender norms which led men and women to believe that women are worth less than men are the biggest barrier to women's inclusion in activities. Also, staff needs to adapt to villagers' schedules. E.g., Akha women are not at home throughout the day, so if you want to meet them, the team needs to be flexible and wait until evening and sleep in the village. Also, changing traditions takes time – projects need to plan for repeated activities and flexible time frames to trigger change.

6. Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?

Women are the key collectors of forest resources but most of the time are not given the opportunity to participate in anything related to village politics, including forest management.

7. How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality?

They feel they need more technical training on REDD+ and its gender implications to be able to fully support the new program.

8. How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are? How much are REDD+ and gender aspects of it integrated into the SEDP?

Very little. Gender is not an integral part of these planning processes and consultations.

9. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?

The LWU Law should be consulted when drafting those guidelines and regulations. Opportunities for women to participate need to be actively integrated into any guideline, otherwise it will not happen. Also, include that the LWU should always by standard be involved in planning and implementation activities, and any consultations. That would also then include that the LWU gets budgeted support to do this.

10. How can women be part in law enforcement measures?

LWU would like to be part of forest law enforcement measures. Village women should be part of the village steering committee where decisions about forest management and law enforcement needs are taken.

11. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?

Women and men have the same rights according to the Law but women are often not having the same opportunity to decide about their land use in comparison to men. That starts with a more equal and active participation of women in LUP village meetings which is often not realized. Women especially need to think about having only their own name on property which they inherited. Shared property can have both names, but since women are still often at disadvantage when it comes to local legal procedures, they often lose their land, e.g. when their husbands die and the women remarries, and the land right was not clearly with the woman – the land usually then goes over into the men's family.

12. Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?

Whenever village conditions allow, both men and women should partake in forest resource monitoring efforts, including patrolling if the traditions allow that. Whenever an active monitoring would not be possible for villagers (too far away, no vehicles, too dangerous, too much other work), they should at least always be consulted regularly.

**13. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices:
Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

See next answer.

14. Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?

LWU is often asked by projects to identify markets specifically for women which is necessary to do when introducing a new value chain. Many projects support women-typical income activities such as weaving/textile production but if there is no market and promotion of women's market access, then the new value chain is not improving women's lives

15. Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?

Beneficial for women, village women should be included in the management of these banks at village level from the start. DLWU in Luang Namtha is not involved in microfinance. Difficult to assess for them if microfinance access would in fact empower women to start new products/businesses, but the

DLWU would support this potentially beneficial activity to make sure that women are part of the management and implementation.

16. **How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fiber industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?**

They don't see potential for Luang Namtha District since there is no area for that. There is already a lot of rubber plantations. People don't have funds to start such endeavors themselves, and there is no market to sell the new products. So any potential investment would have to analyze these challenges and keep sustainability and ongoing benefits for the involved people in mind.

17. **Any other remarks?**

DLWU Luang Namtha would be more than willing to implement own parts of the programme because they are usually only consulted. So a budgeted sub-implementation would be their favorite solution, or at least involve them in the steering committees for the program.

GCF/GIZ, GoL interviews: Luang Namtha, District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO) and District Office for Forest Inspection (DOFI)

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

1. What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?

Deputy DAFO head usually joins REDD+ consultations, but they feel they still have only limited knowledge of REDD+

But DAFO's key role is to protect forests and their species, as well as general biodiversity/wildlife protection and emission reduction, and the adherence to laws and regulations, patrolling, deforestation.

2. From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?

Forest protection on village level, women have more roles and responsibilities because women usually go to the forest for NTFP production/collection and vegetable collection. Men mainly do dissemination and enforcement of regulations; only a few women are part of that level of protection/resource management.

3. How are women already part of REDD+ mechanisms?

In general, all activities aim to benefit all villagers equally. But especially in many ethnic groups, women are participating less in activities due to traditions.

4. Which challenges do you see when it comes to remoter areas, women, ethnicity?

Language, education, understanding of regulations and laws is very low. Use modern communication tools like posters, videos shown by LCDs to engage all villagers and to convey messages more playfully.

5. Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?

In some villages, women are already part of village and forest management committees. DAFO thinks that the local LWU representatives are the best choices to systematically place into the forest management committees because they usually possess better education.

6. How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality?

Implementation-wise we are ready, but always appreciate additional specialized trainings to improve our work, especially when the program requires certain knowledge and technical skills. We have sufficient staff and capacities to implement the program. Study tours to other Provinces are very useful learning tools for them.

7. How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are? How much are REDD+ and gender aspects of it integrated into the SEDP?

The activity is still too new for them to be able to assess that.

8. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?

The Forest Law is gender-neutral because law is law, and both men and women equally need to follow

it once approved. Guidelines can be supportive in setting standards for village participation. Of course we also have to keep realities in mind – some ethnic groups just won't let women participate, and even on the District Government level, we often struggle finding enough suitable female candidates to work with us.

Since women are naturally already seen as the “protectors” of the forests, the development of guidelines can be a chance to foster this role for women.

9. How can women be part in law enforcement measures?

Women are much more reliable and committed to forest protection. They protect, men destroy. So we need to find ways to support women's natural protection efforts.

Women need to be formally part of law enforcement units. If it is not formalized beforehand, the village authorities will just take over. Instead of approaching the village head (naiban), approach village LWU first. Could be entry point for PLWU/DLWU. Also, if women are more systematically placed in village steering committees, they will also be more part of any law enforcement measures.

10. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?

Women's and men's names are both on land use titles now, so the legal status is equalized. Same for LUP.

The challenge is within internal decision-making power relations in HHs which are harder to address. Land titling is not very advanced in the remoter areas of Luang Namtha.

11. Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?

If such system is developed, formalize women's support and contribution to that from the beginning. Women need to be part of that because they are main users and protectors of the forests.

12. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices: Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.

If we want to stop deforestation, the focus needs to be on income-generating activities, including NTFP conservation, sustainable use of NTFPs, value-added products. Government needs to partake in village consultations since they will be part of the implementation.

13. Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?

It is essential to focus on market demand when developing new value chains, but all in the frame of local traditions (e.g. Akha: textiles) to make it valuable and realistic for the villagers. Government needs to be part of the negotiations to ensure monitoring and support.

14. Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?

Luang Namtha has only limited experience with microfinance. It could be very beneficial for people though to empower them to start new production methods, products etc.

Besides microfinance, the DOFI sees VDF are great ways to empower especially women in leadership and management. Introducing village-managed funds for forest protection would empower women to take over that role.

15. How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fiber industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?

In Luang Namtha, rubber plantations are one of the drivers of deforestation. This needs to be taken care of, and avoided to do the same mistake again with another potential investment promotion. Government needs to be part of the negotiations to ensure monitoring and support.

16. Any other remarks?

Feasibility studies of every village are necessary before activities are decided upon because every village is different.

Road access/improvement is a huge issue for program implementation – many villages where deforestation is an issue are remote and hard to reach. So small infrastructure improvements should be part of the program.

DAFO staff needs vehicles to access more remote areas.

GCF/GIZ, Village interviews: Houaphan, Sam Neua, Ban Yard (Khmu & Hmong) – WOMEN GROUP (15 women)

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

1. Tell us something about how your life is like.

Weaving, selling in Sam Neua, sometimes they have traders who regularly buy their weaving, shifting cultivation, paddy fields, livestock.

2. What are women's and men's specific roles in forest and land use?

Forest:

Demarcation boarder clearing both, natural regeneration activities both (esp. youth);

Men lead demarcation group, patrolling, timber harvesting for domestic construction, firewood collection (together with women), hunting

Women collect vegetables, NTFP & tree fruit & bamboo shoots

Land: work together, paddy fields, garden

Livestock: poultry, everything near the house – women; further away (bigger animals): men

3. ...and in forest protection?

Small planting activities; plantations of trees (rubber) inside the forest cover; adhere to the different forest management modalities according to LUP

4. Do you feel like the work related to forest and land use are distributed fairly between men and women?

Women are having higher work load than men because they take care of all the "less hard" tasks; men do the heavy tasks like plowing the field. This makes women busy over the course of a whole day.

5. Do you know of REDD+ mechanisms and why they are existing?

Not of REDD+ as such, but about Environment Protection, climate change, forest protection and that we have to take care of it.

6. From your knowledge of the forest and land: did you see any changes over the years? E.g. Less resources, NTFPs etc.?

Resources becoming less and less over the last years. Since they started forest protection area, the trees recovered and to them it seems like there are more trees again. NTFPs got less. Women don't want to walk too far away from the village (time constraints), so they have less NTFPs for domestic consumption.

Soil quality went down, trying to use dung to fertilize but with little effect so far. No chemical fertilizers so far.

7. Do you feel like you benefit from forest resources? How?

Not balanced within the village depending on how much you can collect and sell. Within HH, equal benefits.

Women take care of finances. Decision-making about finances: small things sole decisions, bigger investments are discussed and decided jointly.

8. **What kind of forests do you have access to? Examples: community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests.**

Village use forest, protection forest, forest for NTFP collection

9. **Do you feel you are participating in forest management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities (like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests)?**

Have a Forest Management Plan. Committee has 9 members total, 3 women. Women participate in the discussions very well, esp. the LWU member who has higher education and is from the city and can bring lots of knowledge into the discussions.

10. **LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

The existing LUP had positive effects for the villagers, esp. in regards to forest restoration and protection. No more conflicts about land since LUP, but as a suggestion it could be done for forest allocation/upland land as well because there are still conflicts between villagers.

Land security did not change since LUP. They feel empowered and land-safe enough to negotiate with potential investors.

11. **Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices:**

How do you hope this will change your livelihoods? What are your fears?

Note: Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.

They hope to get more income, and to be able to construct a village meeting hall (and other things to develop the village). Interested in: vegetables to export to the markets, livestock, weaving, fish pond. Fears: if full financial support by the project, they are ready to give up shifting cultivation. They just still do it because of lack of alternatives and financial resources to do the shift.

12. **The programme wants to make the villagers an active part of forest management (village forest management planning & agreements, forest planting, restoration activities) and monitoring (incl. patrolling): what do you think of that? Where do you feel women and men should be part of?**

If women can work in groups, they would get involved in forest monitoring & patrolling. The programme could train them how to do it, and they would like to get involved in that kind of forest management. In the committee, they already feel represented.

13. **What are your barriers to access markets? Which support would you need to access them?**

Poor families because no transport to reach markets, and also because they often only produce very small amounts. Road condition is bad, esp. in rainy season (barely access then), so that should be the first thing to be changed. That would also change livelihoods in regards to health care access.

14. **What do you think of microfinance to start a business/invest in a new agricultural practice etc.?**

Want Village Bank, would be best to access money on the village level and use it to do small investments. For what exactly, they would like to work with the programme in joint discussions and develop a plan together.

15. **The programme wants to invite private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests. What do you think of that?**

They always support having new projects in the village, but are very careful with private sector involvement. It must be completely ensured that the activity in the village will benefit everyone and is

creating alternative jobs and increased income.

16. Any other remarks?

Priority on road improvement, increase paddy rice area, improve school building, irrigation systems, small village infrastructure like village hall, office. Small road to the paddy area would improve patrolling as well. Financial support for forest management esp. for fire prevention (clearing forest line), patrolling, surveying, replace demarcation signs.

GCF/GIZ, Village interviews: Houaphan, Sam Neua, Ban Yard (Khmu, Hmong) – MEN GROUP (13 men)

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

1. Tell us something about how your life is like.

Unity between men and women. Very poor living conditions/poverty. Low education, few jobs. Mainly work paddy fields, agriculture on shifting cultivation plantations. Deforestation decreased. Water supply good. Road access is at least there, so better off than other villages, but could still be improved. HH try to develop step by step. Some families don't have enough rice throughout the year. Village has primary school. Compared to more remote villages, we feel we are having better conditions, but still many things to improve. Need to improve housing, commercial trade products. Some HH raise livestock to increase their income, but not too successful yet. Challenges in the village (Naiban) also include that the village is divided into two ethnic groups and villages which makes coordination and meetings harder. Road access improvement necessary for health care access. Improve school building. The Hmong group does not have enough paddy fields. They dug a road access to their fields with their hands. More forest land is available but too far away from their village (30km). For secondary school, the kids walk about 6km to the neighboring village.

2. What are women's and men's specific roles in forest and land use?

Forest: men and women work together
Land: Work together (harvest, fencing, paddy fields)

3. ...and in forest protection?

Fire prevention, restoration.
Patrolling currently done by men, but they feel women could also do that job if they want to do that. They also do watershed protection patrolling.

4. Do you feel like the work related to forest and land use are distributed fairly between men and women?

Men work more than women outside the harvest season because men check all the time on the fields whereas women are working at home & weaving. Naiban adds: men work harder but women work more. Men feel the main pressure to provide for their families is on men, and have to take on tasks and jobs which generate more income. They also feel like they always have to think ahead as much as possible to ensure their families' income and well-being.

5. Do you know of REDD+ mechanisms and why they are existing?

Never heard of REDD+, but of climate change, environmental protection etc. (activities by Clipad). Since the programme (2016), they started to protect their forest and created a Forest Management Committee which regularly reminds the villagers to take care of the forest.

6. From your knowledge of the forest and land: did you see any changes over the years? E.g. Less resources, NTFPs etc.?

Fruits on the trees increased because of the forest restoration measures, as well as bigger trees due to protection measures. Wildlife increased for the same reason. Good forest results in good/lots of mushrooms.
NTFPs decreased.
They also observe that the climate is changing: rainy season has more rain, more flooding, but the programme (Clipad) helped to control the flooding.

7. Do you feel like you benefit from forest resources? How?

Depends on how much work a family puts in, and how many family members contribute. But on average, all villagers benefit equally from the forest resources. Within HH, equal benefits, even in consumption.

8. What kind of forests do you have access to? Examples: community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests.

Agroforestry area, NTFP.

Protection forest is mentioned only after mentioning by programme team.

9. Do you feel you are participating in forest management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities (like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests)?

They feel women and men are both part of forest management, because they share tasks and have both men and women in the Forest Management Committee.

10. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?

No more conflicts about land with other villages any more since LUP, which they are very happy about. Forest protection measures are showing positive impact already (except for NTFP decrease).

Recommendation: agricultural area should be divided by HH as well (DAFO came but still in the negotiation process with villagers in conflict; for housing, areas are allocated already).

Naiban: For the Forest Management, they still need funding for fire prevention (clearing forest line), patrolling, surveying, replace demarcation signs.

11. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices:

How do you hope this will change your livelihoods? What are your fears?

Note: Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.

Villagers lack experience and knowledge on agricultural methods, and we have nothing to export to markets so far. So we need both technical and financial support to change to alternatives. Also, land analysis needs to be done to determine what cash crop would be suitable. We need support to do this analysis, as well as how to access markets. We want to be involved in consultations and decide together, and we want to feel sure that this change would improve our living conditions and income.

12. The programme wants to make the villagers an active part of forest management (village forest management planning & agreements, forest planting, restoration activities) and monitoring (incl. patrolling): what do you think of that? Where do you feel women and men should be part of?

Villagers are already an active part in forest management and are very keen to keep doing that, and take over new tasks if they feel it makes sense for the village.

13. What are your barriers to access markets? Which support would you need to access them?

They feel like there are already a lot of vegetables on the Sam Neua market, so the transport costs are not worth the market trip.

They would like to develop new value chains, new products (e.g. dried food which stores longer and is more unusual, so more people would buy it).

14. What do you think of microfinance to start a business/invest in a new agricultural practice etc.?

In the past, when funds were provided to villagers, they did not know how to use the money. So if access to finance is provided, then jointly with business plan development.

They feel taking loans is risky for the villagers in case they cannot sell their products. If analyzed carefully, MF/Village Banks would be great for the village. The village developed a lot in the last years, but with MF access they could start doing the investments into livelihood improvement as mentioned above.

15. The programme wants to invite private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests. What do you think of that?

Private sector investment would be very welcome because they would create more jobs and infrastructure in the village. They see potential for ecotourism with the nearby waterfall.

Investments would need to be tightly controlled by the Government though to ensure that the villagers benefit from the cooperation because we lack the experience and capacity to control the cooperation ourselves. If a cooperation would change too much infrastructure in the village, they would not want it.

16. Any other remarks?

Allocation of HH agricultural land needs to be continued.

All programme activities should aim to increase people's income through distinct products (similar to One District One Product),

Road and school improvement will create better access to health care & markets, and education.

Hmong representative repeats that they need road access to their fields and forest area.

GCF/GIZ, Village interviews: Luang Namtha District, Ban Nam Mad (Akha ethnic); participants: 8 men, 27 women)

Notes: the interview was conducted with a mixed group of women and men of all ages. A separation by gender was impossible to get organized since the villagers had celebrations ongoing and decided that they would rather have one joint discussion. The discussion with the women also needed a lot of additional translation (Akha-Lao-English).

Further observations: the village is located only a few kilometers outside main town Luang Namtha. The access to the city had significantly improved people's access to health centers and markets. On the other hand, the trash problem of the village is immanent in every corner of the village. Environmental education has not been provided, and people's understanding of the necessity of proactive environmental protection is basically not existing. Only the women showed a basic understanding of the correlation between their actions and the swindling resources.

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

1. Tell me how your life is like.

Women: Harvest rubber in the morning, evening bamboo, rattan, broom grass, firewood & vegetables. Lot less work since women have road access & motorbikes & access to a rice mill. Getting up early to prepare rice and breakfast, feeding animals, washing. Women work more than men. Women earn more money than men, because men are lazy. Women are the money-keepers.

Men: bringing harvest/rice down from the upland fields, now by tractor (until recently by foot or motorbike). Shifting cultivation, no paddy rice.

Rubber trees: share the work, depending on family

2. What are women's and men's specific roles in forest and land use?

See answer above.

3. ...and in forest protection?

4. Do you feel like the work related to forest and land use are distributed fairly between men and women?

Depending strongly on family, all variations exist in this village. Generally, women work longer and more, while men do physically more straining work.

5. Do you know of REDD+ mechanisms and why they are existing?

Since 2012 no timber harvesting regulation in place. 1mio LAK fine is to be paid per m2 harvested.

6. From your knowledge of the forest and land: did you see any changes over the years? E.g. Less resources, NTFPs etc.?

More people in the village, so the forest resources are getting less. Some people are harvesting continuously without giving the forest the chance to recover.

7. Do you feel like you benefit from forest resources? How?

Women benefit even more than men from the forest resources because they harvest everything from the forests and keep the money (and often earn more than their men).

8. **What kind of forests do you have access to? Examples: community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests.**

Nearby is a natural protected forest area; land and forest allocation was only done between different villages so far.

9. **Do you feel you are participating in forest management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities (like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests)?**

Mainly village authorities are taking decisions about all village decision, including forest management. No women in the village committee. Some women are ok with that, others not (but they don't challenge the decisions).

Note: After repeated attempts of getting the women to speak about their potential involvement in forest management, one woman speaks up stating that she would like to be an active part of the village forest management. Then the women start a discussion on what ideas they have to support forest recovery, and how beneficial it would be if they could be part in decision-making. This discussion shows the importance of persisting in men-led discussions to hear women's voices. The accompanying LWU member was helpful in explaining and encouraging women to speak – which showcases the important role the LWU is still able to play in village facilitations.

10. **LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

No LUP or titling yet, only zoning. Process needs to be continued. Demarcation borders don't mean much to them and the nearby villages – no one is really controlling the use.

11. **Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices:**

How do you hope this will change your livelihoods? What are your fears?

Note: Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.

Shifting cultivation is very hard and lots of work, so they would very much like to change to alternative crops. Rubber plantations meant less work for everyone, at least after the initial period (young trees need more care).

12. **The programme wants to make the villagers an active part of forest management (village forest management planning & agreements, forest planting, restoration activities) and monitoring (incl. patrolling): what do you think of that? Where do you feel women and men should be part of?**

Women want to be part of the forest management, restoration activities, planning. Villagers want to increase patrolling in the future because currently, everyone is using the forest as they want and they see the resources decreasing.

13. **What are your barriers to access markets? Which support would you need to access them?**

They keep some for their own consumption, and sell the rest on markets in Luang Namtha town nearby and a market in a nearby village. Rubber is sold to a company which is either coming to pick up harvested rubber or the villagers transport it to the company.

14. **What do you think of microfinance to start a business/invest in a new agricultural practice etc.?**

The village has no experience with any form of microfinance yet. With access to small amounts to borrow, the men would start small shops, the women would like to increase their handicraft and textile production and create a small business.

15. **The programme wants to invite private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests. What do you think of that?**

The village would be open to a collaboration with the private sector, if the land is suitable.

16. **Any other remarks?**

They would like to have access to the VDF, a bridge (requested since 10 years). They had built the school building by themselves but need more furniture for it. They feel like they are often requesting for things but rarely anything happens.

GCF/GIZ, Village interviews: Luang Namtha District, Ban Nam Dy (Lanten ethnic group, natural tourism site; 4 women, 10 men)

Note: villagers asked for one joint meeting because they felt too busy to organize separate meetings.

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

1. Tell us about your everyday life.

Naiban: rubber plantation care, paddy rice fields, some HH do shifting cultivation, livestock (pig, chicken, ducks, goats), few HH have small shops; paper production and textiles & handicraft mainly done by all women. Started to be tourism site in 2003 (officially opening in 2007 when they also received funding support for that by ADB, today New Zealand's Fund for Community Tourism Development is supporting with funding until 2020), upon the idea of one of the villagers (a man). 7 villagers created the tourism site. When funding ends, the village plans to keep maintaining it themselves. 60% of the income from the site stays with the village, rest goes to Provincial Tourism Office and Tourism Fund and others. Villagers take care of it in rotation (cleaning, maintenance, ticket selling). No women in the management committee for the site because village women who stay in the village have low education (no literacy and calculation skills).

The Naiban recognizes that they need external support to find ways to include women more in the management structures of the village. Women usually don't want to participate in meetings.

Women: they join meetings if they feel they can learn something. They feel shy, not educated enough, and as if they cannot contribute much.

2. What are women's and men's specific roles in forest and land use?

Villagers don't use the forests much as the forest area is very small. Also see answer above.

3. ...and in forest protection?

Only individual measures, nothing systematic.

4. Do you feel like the work related to forest and land use are distributed fairly between men and women?

Work is equally divided in our village: women do handicraft, paper, textile and clothing; men do construction, paddy rice care

Cooking, animal raising, rubber plantation care are done by everyone jointly

5. Do you know of REDD+ mechanisms and why they are existing?

Some families have little awareness about forest protection and watershed protection. They did not hear about REDD+ so far, but about deforestation, environmental protection, and they try to educate villagers who contribute negatively to that.

6. From your knowledge of the forest and land: did you see any changes over the years? E.g. Less resources, NTFPs etc.?

10-15 years ago the biodiversity was significantly higher, now they perceive a stagnation.

7. Do you feel like you benefit from your forest/natural resources equally?

Income and benefits are shared equally within the HHs.

Women: normally, the families keep the earned money together, but some men spend too much

money on alcohol, so the women try to keep it together.

8. **What kind of forests do you have access to? Examples: community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests.**

LUP completed. Protected forest and use forest.

9. **Do you feel you are participating in forest management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities (like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests)?**

Women: we don't have enough education to partake in any decision-making, and we are not strong enough. We would like to be part in decision-making, but don't fulfill the requirements. The few women who have education either leave the village to the city or don't want to be part in village management.

10. **LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

Need to improve the existing LUP enforcement. When villagers don't adhere to the LUP and cut down protected areas, they are called to the village office and have to pay a fine, and the District office is involved. But once the villagers do it again, no further consequences happen, so the villagers don't take the protection areas serious enough. So enforcement is the key issue for our village. If the population is growing as expected, the LUP will also need to be adjusted and they will need more agricultural land.

11. **Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices:
How do you hope this will change your livelihoods? What are your fears?
Note: Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

Villagers want to be involved in the consultations. Consultations teams need to be very clear that they want women to participate in meetings. Less than 10 families do shifting cultivation, so it is not seen as a big problem. We see that rubber prices are falling right now, so we need to think of alternative crops.

12. **The programme wants to make the villagers an active part of forest management (village forest management planning & agreements, forest planting, restoration activities) and monitoring (incl. patrolling): what do you think of that? Where do you feel women and men should be part of?**

See answer to question 9.

13. **What are your barriers to access markets? Which support would you need to access them?**

Rubber is currently the village's main income source and bought by the only rubber company (Yunnan), which is trying to lower the price. Villagers are afraid that they lose income because of that monopoly soon.

Handicraft and textiles are sent mainly to a center in Luang Prabang, and some to the Luang Namtha Tourism shop. They requested the Provincial Tourism Office to establish a connection, and the New Zealand Fund connected them and established a regular business. This is, however, just an additional income for the village, they are more dependent on rubber.

14. **What do you think of microfinance to start a business/invest in a new agricultural practice etc.?**

They have a village bank which made it easier for the villages to take small loans. They need more training for the village bank steering committee though, because financial literacy and understanding is still low.

Women: most women do not take loans because they don't know what kind of business/new product they could invest in. So a training and support in market demand analysis would be appreciated by both women and men.

The village started their own VDF one year ago, and the money will be used for small infrastructure projects in the village.

15. The programme wants to invite private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests. What do you think of that?

In the past, we had a company approaching is to plant crops for biofuel but in the end, no one bought it. So a thorough market demand analysis is needed, and a diversification of crops and products to secure income despite market fluctuations. Their dependency on rubber is too high, especially with the existing monopoly by Yunnan which already has huge concessions.

16. Any other remarks?

The funding support for the tourism site is ending soon, so the villagers are afraid what will happen then. The site already needs more maintenance than they can afford to provide. They also need funding and technical assistance in developing the site because many tourists just come to take photos of the village and the handicrafts but don't go to the site. They have the idea to develop the site with accommodation for tourists, and other interesting features like in other sites (swing etc.).

They would also like more traders coming to the village and buy handicrafts – if that would happen regularly, many women would potentially be interested to take small loans to develop their handicraft businesses.

Agricultural practices need to be improved, and market access beyond rubber.

Watersheds are shared with other villages, so it is very polluted due to rubber pesticides. So even though villagers live at the stream, they experience severely limited water access.