

# Non-Government Organisation-Facilitated Community Forestry in Lao PDR – Benefits and Challenges to LIFE (Livelihoods, Income, Forest Condition and Equity)



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## **Abbreviations**

CBFM -	Community Based Forest Management
CF -	Community Forests/Forestry
CIFOR -	Centre for International Forestry Research
DoF -	Department of Forestry
GAPE -	Global Association for People and the Environment
IFI –	International Finance Institution
INGO -	International Non-Government Organisation
FoF -	Faculty of Forestry
LFA -	Land and Forest Allocation
LIFE -	Livelihoods, Income, Forest Condition and Equity
LUPLA -	Land Use Planning and Land Allocation
JVC -	Japanese Volunteer Centre
RECOFTC -	Regional Community Forestry Training Centre
SUFORD -	Sustainable Forestry Development Project
VCF -	Village Conservation Forest

## Executive Summary

In Laos there have been a number of community forestry models used by INGOs, bilateral projects, international finance institutions and the government. This research focuses on the impacts of INGO-facilitated community forestry (CF) on community livelihoods, income, forest environment and equity. These four variables make up the LIFE framework used for this research.

Two INGOs which have facilitated CF establishment in Laos were selected for the research: the Global Association for People and the Environment (GAPE) in Champasak Province and Japanese Volunteer Centre (JVC) in Khammouane Province. The key difference between the approaches used by these two INGOs was that JVC worked within the Lao Government's Land Use Planning and Allocation (LUPLA) policy, while GAPE's facilitation was not associated with LUPLA. A total of six villages were visited, and in each village group interviews were conducted based on income and gender. INGO project field workers and government staff were also interviewed. One of the main criteria in selecting CF projects was to exclude CF that involved benefit-sharing from timber sales. These projects have largely been the domain of IFI support projects, whereas smaller INGO-supported CF has received much less attention.

This research is a cooperative effort between GAPE, the Faculty of Forestry (FoF) at the NUOL, aimed at providing the researchers with a greater understanding of the social aspects of forestry. Another objective of the project was to build the capacity of Lao researchers who led the fieldwork portion of the research. During the research process, although challenges were encountered by the team, these were learning experiences in themselves.

The research found that the establishment of community forestry in the research areas impacted LIFE variables (livelihoods, income, forest condition and equity) to varying degrees:

- The *forest condition* variable demonstrated the greatest change, with all six villages stating that the forest was in better condition after the implementation of CF.
- Impacts on the *livelihood* and *income* variables were less evident. It was found that villagers perceived these two variables to be similar and therefore distinguishing and interpreting specific changes to the variables was difficult.
- The *equity* variable had been affected on three levels. First, after the establishment of CF programs, equity between communities decreased, because the CF communities could exclude communities that had previously used the area, including resource-poor communities. On a second level, equity has shifted in the communities' favor, at least in theory, as their tenure security has increased along with state recognition

of their lands. On a final level, intra-community equity appears not to have changed significantly.

The change in equity was not the same for the two INGO projects in this study. In Champasak, the villagers were able to resist outsiders who wanted access to their CF, whereas in Khammouane there were cases of outsiders accessing the CF. This difference indicates that although increased tenure security was an objective of the LUPLA policy, in practice communities have not strengthened their tenure security. In Champasak, villagers displayed greater ownership and resistance when dealing with tenure pressures. The Champasak CF were not LUPLA-supported, but were approved at the same political or legal level as the Khammouane sites. The Champasak communities' tenure was more grounded in process than in legal recognition.

The results of this research therefore indicate that while it is possible for Community Forestry in Laos to have positive impacts on the LIFE variables, these impacts do not yet appear to be that significant. Positive impacts on the LIFE variables, when identified, are related to the level of participation and community ownership and the length of facilitation time. To enhance these impacts, INGOs need to be committed to a process that involves the surrounding communities in establishing guidelines for CF in their area. Communities should be responsible for determining the timeline for establishing the CF program, as well as the user rules. If communities are more involved in the process of designing the CF program, this will greatly increase the likelihood of villagers incorporating the changes in regulations into their daily lives.

Individual community facilitation of Community Forestry, although useful, was not found to be effective in managing large areas of forest land. Given the current large number of economic land concessions, a more holistic approach would be useful in conserving larger areas. Furthermore, it was found that CF facilitation within LUPLA policy is diluting positive impacts on LIFE variables, largely by restricting areas that are available for community agricultural activities.

Community Forestry is a complex issue and requires a strong commitment from INGOs and full participation of all stakeholders in order to be integrated into communities' traditional management systems. INGOs working in the field of Community-Based Forestry Management (CBFM) in Laos need to consider alternative management frameworks and trial new methods for CF establishment that include beneficial government support and which minimize policies that have negative impacts on livelihoods through CF.

To date, few INGOs in Laos have worked in the field of Community Forestry. The research shows that there are opportunities to cooperate with local governments and communities in order to come up with variations on standard government-sanctioned CF. Both GAPE and JVC were able to support increased levels of community participation in CF establishment. In the future, INGOs should continue to create innovative CF methods that are based in a combination of local knowledge and state laws.

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The initiation of Community Based Forest Management (CBFM) and other Community Forestry (CF) activities in Laos can be traced back to 1989 when a National Forestry Conference acknowledged the importance of peoples' participation in order to achieve sustainable forest management. In the early 1990s, a small but determined group of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) began working with the government on integrating CF plans into the national forestry management system. This resulted in the establishment of the Community Forest Support Unit in the Department of Forestry (DoF), but the unit did not last long, and was dissolved in the late 1990's.

After the closing of the Community Forestry Support Unit, INGO involvement in CF decreased, and larger international and bilateral projects became more involved in CF. Projects with CF elements have included the Lao Swedish Forestry Programme – Joint Forest Management in Savannakhet Province, the GTZ Rural Development in Mountainous Areas Project in the north of Laos, the World Bank/Finland-supported Forest Management and Conservation Project (Village Forestry) in Savannakhet and Khammouane Provinces, and most recently the World Bank-funded Sustainable Forestry Development Project (SUFORD), which is operating in 4 southern Lao provinces, with plans to expand into other provinces. Other projects include the Japanese International Cooperation Agency's (JICA) Forest Conservation and Reforestation Project in Luang Prabang Province and the World Wild Fund for Nature's (WWF) Xekong Sustainable Forestry Project. Often the difference between INGO-supported CF projects and non-INGO supported projects has been that the former did not focus on sustainable timber harvesting. Instead, INGO projects have concentrated on village forest protection and livelihoods support. These initiatives and efforts introduced various models for community participation and management of forest resources, benefit-sharing of timber royalties, and transparency in forest management (Phanthanousay, 2005).

In the 1996 Lao Law on Forestry, the term 'village forestry' was introduced. This term has been used to describe a process, as opposed to a fixed management concept. It covers a range of approaches and efforts to promote villager participation in forest management. Village Forestry is often referred to when discussing Community Forestry in Laos. In addition to the Law on Forestry, in the early 1990's the Lao government also introduced the Land Use Planning and Land Allocation (LUPLA) policy (*beng din beng pa* in Lao). International and bilateral projects, as well as several INGOs and the Lao government have supported CBFM through implementation of the LUPLA policy<sup>1</sup>. This policy deals with both agricultural land and forest management, and deserves attention as it has reached the greatest number of villages, when compared to other initiatives and approaches. LUPLA qualifies as CBFM because, at least in theory, it recognizes the rights of local people to manage village forests, and it encourages peoples' participation in resource management. However, in the past these elements were not always promoted, and LUPLA has often ended up being a top-down exercise that has negatively impacted

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<sup>1</sup> The acronym LUPLA and LFA are often interchangeably used. LUPLA refers to land allocation and planning whereas LFA refers only to land and forest allocation but does not include planning. The focus of this research is allocation of community forests and their use or planning, therefore the term LUPLA is used.

villages. The policy has been particularly problematic for upland communities, as one of the key provisions of LUPLA is to reduce the amount of swidden agriculture. Thus, the LUPLA process has been used as a government tool for reducing agricultural fallow periods to three years, which has proved to be unsustainable (Chamberlain 2001; 2006). Regardless of these concerns, the LUPLA policy has been applied widely in Laos (in approximately half of the villages in the country) and stands as the government's most prominent and recognized form of CBFM.

In addition to LUPLA-linked CF, another form of CF which has been utilized by INGOs is 'village conservation forest' (VCF). "Conservation Forest" is one of three official forest classifications described in article 11 of the 2007 Lao Law on Forestry. The other two are Protection and Production forests. As described in the forestry law, a Conservation Forest is "a forest designated to conserve nature, including preserving plant and animal species, forest ecosystem and other valuable natural, historical, cultural, tourism, environmental, and scientific sites. Conservation Forests include National Conservation Forests and conservation forests at the Provincial, District and Village levels" (Article 11, Lao Law on Forestry). VCFs are not inherently linked to LUPLA, and there have been cases where they were established independently of the policy. The benefits resulting from VCF for communities have received far less attention than LUPLA-related CF.

Since the year 2000, there have been no major changes in INGO involvement in CF, nor have bilateral funders been creative in developing or adapting the models they are currently supporting. During this time, there have been no significant changes on the part of the government that have increased or consolidated community involvement and tenure security other than a possible recognition of communal land registration, although this type of registration has yet to be implemented in the field. The history of CF in Laos can be characterized as having small bursts of progress mixed with periods of stagnation. Projects have not followed a single model approach but have involved various levels of villager participation, different natural resources, and varying degrees of community ownership.

The involvement of INGOs in CF has been considered beneficial by the INGOs themselves. They claim that their involvement makes the process more transparent and participatory, thereby resulting in a greater level of understanding for all stakeholders, while also increasing ownership by, and benefits flowing to, the rural communities involved. While there has been research into the impacts of LUPLA, this has not focused on CF; this is especially true in the case of INGO involvement in LUPLA. Previous research has looked mainly at the LUPLA process as implemented by government agencies acting without specific donor support (Fujita and Phanvilay, 2008; Ducourtieux, 2005).

## **1.1 Research context**

The current research was conducted to learn more about the impacts of INGO-facilitated CF, including LUPLA and non-LUPLA CF. In order to assess the impacts of these CF projects, researchers used the "LIFE" framework. "LIFE" consists of four variables: Livelihoods, Income, Forest Condition and Equity. The framework stems from a global

research initiative in twelve countries (four each in Asia, Africa and Latin America). The focus of the research is on those benefits which flow to communities as a result of different types of community forestry, and using the LIFE framework allows for direct comparisons between the countries.

As the LUPLA policy is currently being amended, with the new policy scheduled to be released in mid-2009, it is hoped that the research can capture lessons learned and thereby contribute to improving LUPLA-related Community Forestry. In addition, the research also aims to illustrate how INGOs can contribute to the CF process by working outside the LUPLA process, thereby broadening the alternatives for CF facilitation.

## 1.2 LUPLA and Village Forestry

The LUPLA policy is not exclusively a policy for Community-Based Forest Management, but it has been the most widely-used tool for implementing CF and land-use management in Laos. The LUPLA approach was initially tested in Vientiane Province and quickly spread to other areas after Prime Minister's Decrees 169 (1993) and 186 (1994) endorsed it as an official government policy. Its main goals were to reduce rates of deforestation, reduce swidden agriculture, increase land tenure security, promote agriculture production through recognizing private land property ownership, and increase the land tax base. LUPLA was also intended to grant communities collective forest rights to manage allocated forest land in a customary manner, including rights and responsibilities to enact and enforce local rules of use and exclusion (Vandergeest, 2003). The program is separated into the allocation of agricultural and forest land within local

village boundaries, and the closely related process of planning or zoning for the use of allocated land. The agricultural land provided to individual families was formalized by the issuance of temporary land use certificates, while the forest land were allocated to a village through a signed agreement on the zoning of different forest types and village user rules for the different areas. Signs with maps for individual villages, indicating village boundaries, forest types and agricultural land were also erected in front



*A member of a CF committee from Nathan Village in Khammouane points out the direction of the CF.*

of each village. After the LUPLA process is completed, communities possess a “user rules book” and an agreement signed by the District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO) that recognizes their community forest land. In these CF areas, communities have the right to collect non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and hunt non-protected

wildlife species (Lao Law on Forestry, 2007). These agreements are not, however, legal titles for the forest land.

It is generally accepted by researchers that LUPLA's goal of increasing land tenure security has not been successfully achieved in forest land areas allocated to villages (Fujita and Phanvilay, 2008). The strength of village tenure rights over these areas was not seriously considered in Laos until investors began seeking land for hydropower developments, the establishment of tree plantations, and the development of mining concessions. In the 1990s, land-intensive investment projects were widely spaced and mainly included hydropower projects, which drew criticism for their negative impacts on community livelihoods and less attention for their impacts on land tenure security (International Rivers Network, Power Struggle, 1999). It was not until after 2000 that land concessions for cash crop and tree plantations began to increase, and the weaknesses of the land tenure system were given more attention. When pitted against these competing demands for land resources in the country, the strength of LUPLA's tenure security provisions has proven to be weak (TERRA, 2008). Large tracts of land which were previously granted to villages for management purposes as part of the LUPLA process have been included in economic land concessions by state agencies to private investors (Baird, 2010). There has been little or no consideration given to forest area classifications and the types of activities that could take place within them. Additionally, little attention has been paid to the village boundaries that were demarcated as part of the LUPLA process (personal observation and communication, Champasak Province 2007; Obien, 2007). While the allocation of upland agricultural land to individual families has been criticized for its substantial negative effects on food security for rural families (Chamberlain, 2006), issues relating to forest land allocation have received less attention. Criticisms of LUPLA in this area point out that the Lao government defines forest land in such a way that enable authorities to impose management regimes controlled by a central authority, while also introducing or reinforcing territorial claims of communities over previously shared forest lands. Statements made by villagers defining what is "theirs" and what is "ours" became more legitimate and tangible after village maps were created as part of the LUPLA process, thus LUPLA is particularly problematic when valuable agriculture land or other desirable natural resources are involved (Dirou, 2006).

The original LUPLA process included five forest land classifications: protected (*pa pongkan*), conservation (*pa anoulak*), production (*pa phalit*), regeneration (*pa feun fou*) and degraded (*pa sout som*). The amended 2007 Law on Forestry reduced the classifications to three: production, conservation and protection forests (Lao Law on Forestry, 2007). In the 2007 version of the forestry law, village use forests or CF (*pa som sai*), can be included in each of the three remaining forest types (article 13, Lao Law on Forestry, 2007). Although not mentioned as a recognized use in the original five (or current three) land classifications, cemetery and sacred forests have been included in most village forest land as part of the LUPLA process, demonstrating the cultural adaptability of the policy to local beliefs. However, this policy adaptability only exists to a limited degree, as there is no acceptance of swidden agriculture as a culturally important livelihood practice, even though it is an extremely important source of rural livelihoods of upland communities.

## **2.0 Research Methods**

This research compares two types of CBFM projects, one of which is closely linked to the LUPLA process and one which is linked to the establishment of village conservation forests (VCF). The projects were carried out in different provinces, by different INGOs, and spanned different time periods. Therefore, not all variables are constant when comparing the two projects. While this research study is not intended to provide an exhaustive overview of community forestry, it is hoped, nonetheless, that it can provide a useful snapshot of how two INGO-supported CF projects are affecting the LIFE variables in rural forest-dependent communities in Laos.

This research represents a joint effort between the Global Association for People and the Environment (GAPE), a Canadian INGO working in southern Laos, and the Faculty of Forestry, National University of Laos. GAPE was represented by Somphong Bounphasy and Richard Hackman, and the Faculty of Forestry was represented by Fongkeo Boualapha. The research was carried out from January - May 2008. One of the goals of the research was to develop the skills of Lao researchers working in the area of natural resources management. There are many technically trained foresters working in academia, research institutes and INGOs, but there is a shortage of foresters that possess social science research skills. In a country such as Laos, which relies so heavily on forest resources for revenue generation and livelihoods, in the past there has not been enough emphasis put on the social importance of these resources. In order to enhance these social science research skills, the Lao researchers conducted and led all the interviews and assisted in the analysis of the research findings.

### **2.1 Selection of Community Forestry projects**

The site selection process began by collecting project proposals and reports from a variety of INGO and bilateral donor-supported CF projects. The literature was reviewed and discussions with various INGOs were held in January and February 2008. These discussions related to the current status of the projects and their interest in facilitating the research, and were designed to determine how the research would be formulated. A particularly useful document used during this process was RECOFTC's "Status of Community Based Forest Management in Lao PDR" (Manivong and Sopathilath, 2007).

In relation to site selection, it was important to determine whether or not to include CF projects which incorporated community involvement in timber management and production activities. Given the time and size of the research budget, and the complexity of timber benefit sharing issues, it was decided to exclude these projects. In addition, projects which include timber production activities have mainly been financed by bilateral or multilateral donors, with their attendant large budgets. Smaller INGO-supported CF projects, such as those included in this study, often do not have the resources for detailed baseline and monitoring studies. Therefore, it was felt that this study could help to fill some previous gaps in research. In the future, a comparative study between larger projects and smaller ones would indeed be useful. Research that compares project size in relation to overall transparency and community participation, access to project information, and the distribution of the results to concerned stakeholders, would also be valuable for better understanding of community forestry in Laos.

Another factor that influenced site selection was the preferred inclusion of sites that had been facilitated by the lead organization, GAPE. By including GAPE's field site in Pathoumphone District, Champasak Province, it will be possible to directly apply research findings to the improvement of the project, as project monitoring is ongoing. GAPE has been working in this area since 2001, although CF has only been explicitly supported since 2004. The target communities for the research were located in Nabone, Houay Ko and Lao Nya Villages. The second CF project site selected for study is located in Khammouane Province in central Laos. It has previously been supported by the Japanese Volunteer Center (JVC), which worked closely with the government on CF and the LUPLA process for over 10 years. In Khammouane, the target villages for research were Veun, Keun Khouay and Nathan.

The number of available villages to study was limited by the number of community forests facilitated by the projects chosen. GAPE-supported areas had a total of three community forests. In order to capture the variation found in the implementation of social inclusion activities, all three villages were included in the study. To strike an appropriate balance, a matching number of sites were selected from the JVC project area (even though many more villages have received CF support there). Therefore, a total of six villages were involved in the study. The CF sites in Khammouane were established in 1999, 2004 and 2005; the GAPE sites in Champasak were established in 2004, 2005, and 2006.

## **2.2 Research Questions**

The research questions used to address CF impacts on the LIFE variables (Livelihood, Income, Forest Condition and Equity) in communities are listed below. The questions were not designed by the research team, but are part of a standard list of research questions being used as part of the global research initiative into the effect of CF on the LIFE variables. This research is supported by the International Development and Research Consul of Canada through the Centre for International Forestry Research.

### *Statement of research questions*

1. How have the CF models improved the livelihoods of the communities, as perceived by the villagers (women and men)?
2. How have the CF models improved the living conditions of the communities, as reported by the project staff and government counterparts?
3. Have the CF models had any impacts on community incomes or benefit sharing of profits from forest products?
4. What changes in forest environment have occurred since the model trials?
5. What impacts on tenure arrangements were made or would have been needed to implement the models successfully?
6. Have recent tenure and market reforms implemented by the Government impacted the livelihoods, income, forest condition or equity arrangements that have resulted from implementation of the models?
7. Did the implementation of the models match the original plans, and how does this impact on replication or scaling up the model and the benefits that could be expected from such action?

8. What are the constraints for further expansion of the models?

It is worth noting that questions #1 and #2 both assume that CF has actually improved livelihoods. However, in a pre-research setting, this should not be assumed and the research team approached the questions with caution. Additionally, the use of the term 'model' should be clarified in the context of this research study, in that LUPLA is more than a model being tested or going through a trial phase. Community forestry mechanisms implemented within the LUPLA framework are part of a long-accepted and broadly applied Lao government policy.

*Summary of data needed*

The data or evidence needed to answer the research questions fell into three categories. Questions #1-4 deal with change over time, questions #5-7 address external factors affecting the structure and impacts of CF as implemented by specific projects, and question #8 relates to the identification of the main obstacles to the success of the CF models as implemented by specific projects, as well as possibilities for scaling up or expanding CF.

*Research strategy*

The research team examined each research question to identify potential sources for data and which methods would be most effective for collecting this data (interview, literature review, direct field observation, etc.). Primary data sources included project or government staff, villagers, and the direct observation of forest resource conditions, community livelihoods, etc., during field visits. Secondary sources included project planning documents, progress reports and evaluation materials produced by the INGOs. Only after the research team gathered all available information from secondary sources did information collection activities involving primary data sources, such as conducting community interviews, take place. Sub-questionnaires (see Annex 1) were used to answer the broader research questions listed above and were the primary tool used to collect information from primary data sources. The questionnaires were translated into Lao language by a translator and the translation was checked by the team. Minor adjustments were made one week later, after the initial research methods training was conducted.

*Explanation of data analysis*

Data were qualitatively interpreted by the Lao researchers immediately after the research team compared the two CF types for general trends and discussed the overall results. Data analysis was conducted again by the foreign research assistant with support from the other team members. Follow-up interviews were conducted with project staff from both GAPE and JVC. Responses provided to the first five research questions were entered into tables for easy reference and analysis (see Annex 2). The primary data were checked for trends and anomalies, with interpretation based on secondary sources and the research team's own observations and experiences during field visits. The responses from each village was reviewed and compared to other villages from the same province, after which comparisons between provinces were made. The results of the interviews were examined mainly at the group level but minority opinions were also included. If there were large differences of opinion within the group, these discrepancies were discussed. In some cases, variations in responses could be explained by the gender segregation of the groups.

### *Finalizing the research*

Before finalizing the research, an extra visit to GAPE and JVC was made to provide the author of the report with the opportunity to speak with INGO colleagues in order to verify dates and other facts. Also, experienced field workers were questioned about data that were not collected or made available on the first visit. INGO colleagues were also encouraged to provide additional insights into the INGO community forestry activities. Essentially, this process provided INGO colleagues a chance to validate or dispute the conclusions of the research.

### **2.3 Pre-Field Activities**

Pre-field activities began with a March 2008 meeting organized between GAPE and the Faculty of Forestry (FoF) at the Dong Dok campus of the National University of Laos (NUoL) to introduce the research concept and select a researcher from the faculty to participate in the study. During a second meeting in March, GAPE met with the selected researcher, briefed him on the research and provided him with a copy of the research proposal that had been translated into Lao language. A third meeting was held in April at the FoF and attended by a representative from the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC), GAPE and the FoF researcher. During this meeting the responsibilities of each party were clarified, such as which researcher would interview and which would record, who would lead forest walks and talks and who would locate village maps.

In April 2008, the research team members from GAPE<sup>2</sup> and the FoF participated in a two-day training session on research methods and design provided by Mike Dwyer, a foreign PhD candidate hired by the project. The training was found to be beneficial by the team members because it broke down the overarching LIFE variables and main research questions into specific questionnaires for use with each identified target interview group. The training session also covered issues such as interview group size and basic interview techniques. Supporting materials were offered to the team for use in the Lao language as part of the training, including translated documents on research methods and a translation of the CIFOR document “The Tenure Box and Community Tenure Profiles”.

Unfortunately, at the end of the training session, the FoF researcher declared that he could not continue to participate in the research effort due to a conflict with other obligations. This was a serious setback, as the training could not be offered again due to financial limitations. With the assistance of FoF, a new researcher was eventually identified and an overview of the previous training session was provided. Field research was conducted in May 2008. The final team that conducted the field research, analyzed the data and contributed to the write-up of the findings was composed of the replacement researcher from the FoF, a Lao researcher from GAPE, and a foreign research assistant from GAPE. All members of the final research team were male. A female GAPE intern who took part in the training was unable to participate in the fieldwork part of the research.

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<sup>2</sup> Somphong Bounphasy, Ms. Sombath, Richard Hackman (GAPE) and Chittana Phompila (FoF)

It is important to note that conducting field research in Laos requires special permission from the Lao Government, an international INGO such as GAPE cannot simply go to the field to independently conduct research. INGOs must first identify a government partner to join the research effort, such as the NUoL's FoF, that has the authority to contact and seek approval from local government officials. Before conducting field research for this study, the research partners at the FoF contacted relevant Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Departments, while staff from GAPE took responsibility for contacting the INGOs involved in supporting the community forestry activities at the selected sites. The FoF also contacted district-level government staff in order to make appointments for the research team with the communities targeted for interviews.

## **2.4 Research Limitations**

The following factors posed limitations on the research and should be considered when interpreting the results.

One of the most important aspects of the research related to the ability to ask clear and thorough questions. Putting interviewees at ease and building a comfortable atmosphere can help ensure responses that are accurate and honest.

- The interview skills of the research team were good, but a lack of experience was readily apparent with one researcher had to let his partner take the lead for the interviews. Responses given to the first researcher were not as clear as those offered to his partner. Additionally, when analyzing the resulting data, it was sometimes difficult to make clear comparisons, as the answers provided to the first researcher did not fully correspond with the research questions being asked. Better follow-up questioning would have helped overcome this. In other cases, the researcher responsible for recording answers was not entirely accurate in recording responses.
- As mentioned before, the change in researchers from the FoF was a serious setback for the team. The person initially chosen to be the FoF researcher attended the training and was involved in designing the questionnaires. His departure meant only the GAPE researchers had a good understanding of the research design process. The replacement FoF researcher had to join the research effort in midstream, thus limiting his overall knowledge and understanding of the process.
- The research organizers made a concerted but unsuccessful effort to find a female researcher who could join the team. A female college intern was able to attend the training, but was then unable to participate in the field research. Had she been able to work with the team, the answers of the village women interviewed may have been more insightful.
- In Khammouane Province, since the CF was established through the LUPLA process and at the same time as other forest and land types were designated, the village members saw the impacts of CF as closely related to the impacts of the LUPLA process as a whole. It was therefore difficult to isolate CF impacts on LIFE variables. The CF projects in Champasak, in contrast, had very little to do

with LUPLA and thus the impacts of CF on LIFE variables could be more thoroughly examined.

- Pre-CF related economic data in Khammouane (such as data regarding NTFP abundance, tree density, etc.) were not available as a baseline for the research. Therefore it was sometimes difficult to draw quantitative conclusions of the impact of CF in Khammouane. Champasak had more available data.
- The researchers often accepted simple responses as final answers without asking follow-up question; this left some of the research questions only partly answered. Although fluent in Lao language, the foreign research assistant found it difficult to understand all the details during the interviews and could not always gather the information needed to fill these gaps. In addition, the foreign research assistant was only able to visit the Khammouane sites during fieldwork, although he was familiar with the CF projects Champasak due to prior work on these projects.
- Research questions #1 and #3 often resulted in similar answers. The question of improved livelihoods was answered with responses about community incomes, which is the topic of question #3. Before interviews were conducted, the research team should have clarified what constitutes “livelihoods.”
- Through a design flaw, the poorer women and men’s groups were not included in research question #1. However, as pointed out above, questions #1 and #3 resulted in very similar answers by respondents. Therefore the responses of poorer women and men to question #3 can also be used to address issues raised by question #1.

## **2.5 Data Collection**

Interviews were the main tool used in primary data collection, supported by participant observation by the research team. During the research design training, the research team determined the locations where interviews should be conducted and determined the categories of people who should be interviewed. For each target group identified, 5-7 individuals were interviewed by one researcher while the other researcher recorded answers. In order to gather information from different socio-economic groups, target interview groups included general (middle-income) men and women, and poorer (low-income) men and women. These groups were identified by the village authorities according to government poverty criteria. Village CF committee members, project workers and government officials were interviewed separately, as they had specialized roles in the CF process. The table below shows the details regarding interview numbers and groups.

Table 1: Interview details

<b>Interview Groups</b>	No. of groups/people interviewed – Khammouane	No. of groups/people interviewed - Champasak	Total number of groups interviewed	Total number of people interviewed
Poor Women	3 groups	3 groups	6	30
Poor Men	3 groups	3 groups	6	26
General Women	3 groups	3 groups	6	33
General men	3 groups	3 groups	6	35
CF committees	3 people	3 people	6	22
INGO project staff (individual interview)	3 people	1 people		4
Government project coordinators (individual interview)	1 person	1 person		2
<b>Totals</b>			<b>30</b>	<b>153</b>

The GAPE foreign research assistant took notes and asked clarifying questions after the interviews were complete. Each group interview took between 30-50 minutes. Some questions were closed-ended, but these were followed by both open-ended questions and discussions. The interviews can be characterized as semi-structured (see Annex 1 for a sample questionnaire).

After visiting each target village, the team briefly discussed the questionnaires and made changes where necessary. At one point, the team discovered that in one village, half of the members of an interview group were discussing one CF area and the other half of the group was discussing a different area. The team rectified this misunderstanding through further discussion and viewing LUPLA map boards, and took steps to ensure that future interview groups avoided similar confusion.

### **3.0 Description of organisations and CF projects**

#### **3.1 Khammouane Province and the Japanese Volunteer Centre (JVC)**

JVC has been working in Khammouane Province in central Laos since 1992. Their projects have provided agricultural support, assistance with accessing clean water, and support for implementing the LUPLA process. JVC’s rationale for working in the LUPLA context is “that many rural Lao communities rely on natural resources for their livelihoods, and working to sustain and secure these resources is important to future generations” (JVC, 2007). JVC’s other aims in implementing LUPLA policies are to help resolve conflicts related to village boundaries and assist with increasing the understanding of relevant laws. JVC’s assistance in the areas of agriculture and clean water facilitated their entrance into communities in support of the LUPLA process and CF establishment. All the villages studied in this study are located in Mahaxay District, Khammouane Province.

JVC’s approach to supporting CF is through LUPLA in a step-wise process that is divided into the efforts of specialized units during specific phases. The JVC Propaganda

Unit is responsible for discussing regulations, laws, and decrees relating to the management of forest and land resources, to explain the importance of forest resources, to learn about existing forest and land conflicts, to talk about forest management issues, and to discuss the role of women in village development. The LUPLA Forest Unit collects forest and land related information, measures permanent public land areas, discusses conflict mediation techniques with villagers, surveys village boundaries, classifies forest land, creates maps and signs, prepares necessary documents, implements agriculture and water activities, and monitors the overall LUPLA process (JVC, 2007).

The JVC approach to LUPLA has been designed to be more participatory than the standard LUPLA process implemented by the Lao government. JVC's method is more time-intensive and process-driven, while the LUPLA process implemented in most areas of Laos has been conducted rather hastily, and in a rigid top-down manner, in order to meet government targets. In the three research villages, an average of 23 days was needed for JVC to implement the entire LUPLA process. The time taken to specifically develop the CF is not clear as reports recorded the time frame for the entire LUPLA, not each forest type. Due to the use of this participatory approach, the JVC sites likely represent some of the better-planned and accepted LUPLA community forests in Laos, although it should be noted that JVC did not fully challenge many of the most questionable assumptions within LUPLA, such as those related to reducing swidden agriculture.

It is important to note that while JVC was able to facilitate the research team's work in the field, they could not provide the team with detailed project evaluations since only a short internal evaluation was conducted, and it was prepared in Japanese language. The English language translation was difficult to understand. The evaluation covered the entire JVC program and did not provide specific details regarding LUPLA or CF.

### **3.2 Champasak Province and the Global Association for People and the Environment (GAPE)**

GAPE is a Canadian INGO that has worked in Laos since 2001. Their sectors of work include formal and non-formal education, indigenous culture, health, law dissemination and natural resource management support. The organisation works in two districts of Champasak Province in southern Laos. GAPE began working in community forestry in 2004 due to an increase in the number of investors and traders looking for land and NTFPs in Pathoumphone District in Champasak. The district has substantial areas of forests and NTFPs are an important source of livelihoods. Seventy percent of the district is included within two National Protected Areas, Xe Pian and Dong Houa Sao.

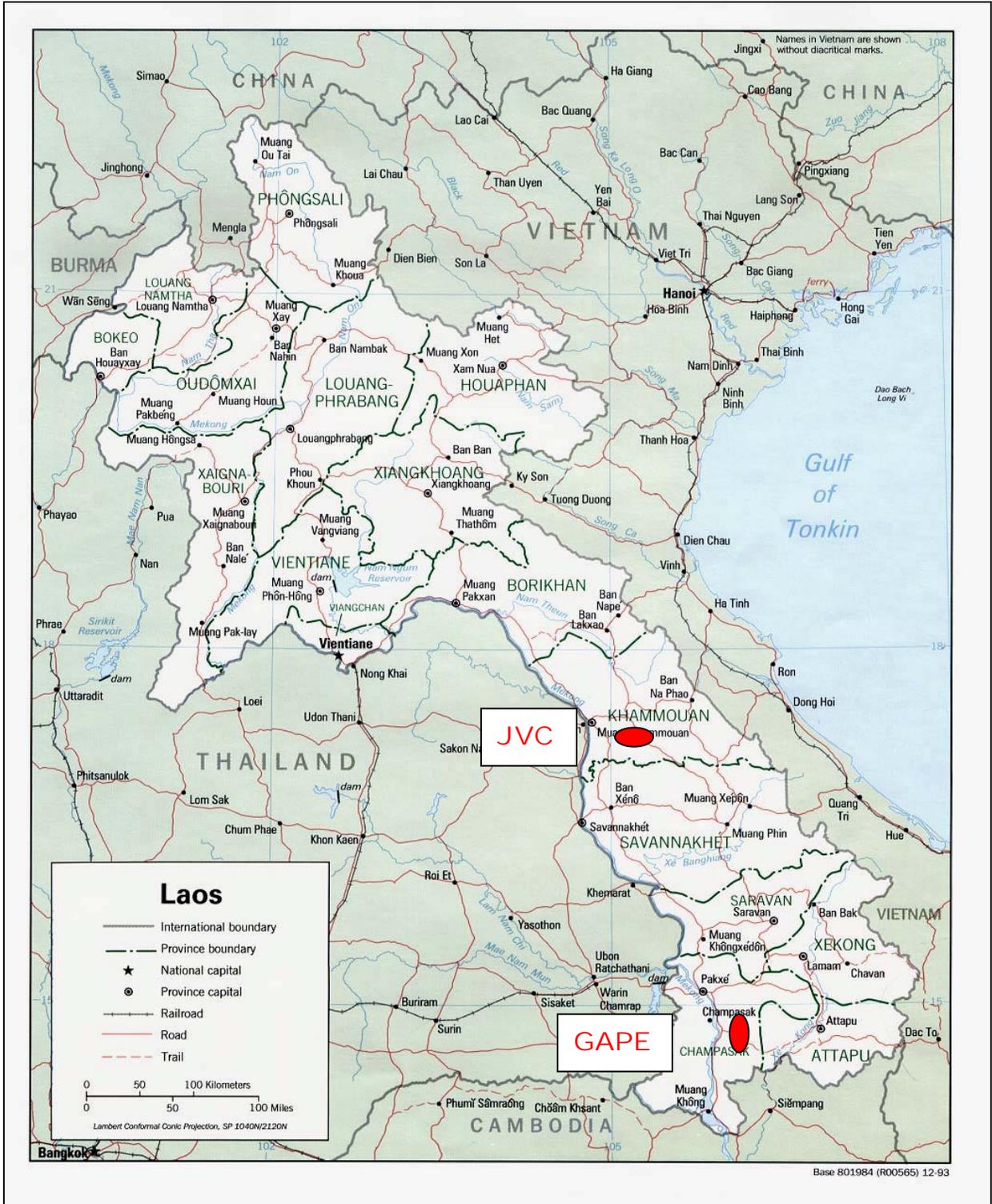
Normally, the communities GAPE works with are visited by local traders who buy various NTFPs which are then transported to provincial and eventually international markets. The number of traders dealing in NTFPs has increased in recent years, including new foreign companies seeking export quotas. However, villages have also reported that marketing of some NTFPs is much more difficult than in the past (Baird and Bounphasy, 2003). Around 2005, the government began granting land concessions for rubber plantation development. GAPE fieldworkers noted these changes, as well as other forestry management problems in the area (including unsustainable logging patterns), and began investigating possibilities for supporting communities to establish community

forests. A significant difference between GAPE's projects in Champasak and JVC's in Khammouane is that LUPLA had already been implemented in the communities before GAPE began assisting with the full establishment of the CFs. GAPE only used Village Conservation Forests as the base for the CF activities, not the entire LUPLA process. Therefore, LUPLA has had much less impact on community decisions that have been made in recent years. The local government in Pathoumphone worked with GAPE to create a framework that included increased village use of the forest, which is a good example of creative cooperation between the government, communities and an INGO.

The three research villages had already undergone the LUPLA process in 1998 but were not following these plans when GAPE began working with them. There were no signs or maps in the villages and no one had copies of the LUPLA agreements. The original village LUPLA committee had been disbanded and the village CF committees were established from new and independent beginnings. The new CF areas were previously non-classified common property with no formal regulations. They were established to serve several functions, which included protection of the decreasing number of NTFPs and wildlife, to act as a wild source for these species and to give the villages exclusive rights over the use and management of the forest. One factor that is different from Khammouane Province is that the communities in Champasak decided that for certain times of the year, and for certain species, access to the CF would be closed to all members of the community. These times include animal breeding and birthing seasons and Buddhist Lent. One species, rattan, is currently excluded from all collection as it is rare and the community plans to use the rattan plants in the CF as a seed source to plant in other areas. In the future, if there is going to be collection of rattan in the CF it must be based on community consensus and equal benefits should be given to all. Crucially, however, villagers are not allowed to cut timber in the CF. Considering how serious the threat of logging has been to forests in the area in the past, this is a significant decision. Villagers claim that timber must be sourced from other forest land.

From the beginning of the project, GAPE ensured that the villagers' interest in establishing CF was the lead factor in facilitating activities. In the beginning, GAPE talked with the villages and district authorities, visited all the surrounding villages to discuss the CF, and then invited village authorities from these villages to meet in the CF target village. The number of field visits needed to facilitate the entire process for establishing a CF was not limited. Some villages required more time for extended inter- and intra- village consultations about boundaries and user rules. Monitoring of the CFs is still conducted on a regular basis and assists in the development of newly-established CF areas. One internal evaluation of GAPE's CF project activities has already been completed prior to this research study. To legitimize the CF process with local government, GAPE also included the village police on all the CF committees and used the preexisting government conflict resolution mechanism in all villages to solve CF-related problems. If infractions are committed by other villages, the village police write a formal complaint and present it to the police of the village which committed the offence.

It took several months to move from initiation of the idea to establish a CF to seeking district approval, but less than two weeks was needed to obtain the approval once planning had been completed. Budgets were not high and consisted mainly of staff salary, meeting costs, and living costs to cover time in the field.



The location of the research sites; JVC in central Laos ( Khammouane) and GAPE in southern Laos (Champasak).

#### **4.0 Background of villages studied**

Village Name	Village Characteristics and Background	Land-related Issues
Nathan Village Mahaxay District Khammouane Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Total population: 563 (Female: 282)</li> <li>- Families: 97 (Households: 91)</li> <li>- Village committee: 10 members</li> <li>- Ethnicity: Kaleung (Mon-Khmer) and Lao (Lao-Tai)</li> <li>- Date of establishment: approximately 300 years ago</li> <li>- Occupations: rice cultivation, fishing, animal raising and migration for work</li> <li>- Religion: Animism and Buddhism</li> <li>- Location: 43km east of the Mahaxay district capital</li> <li>- Accessibility by road: good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CF established: 2005</li> <li>- CF area: 426ha</li> <li>- Village areas have been surveyed by companies who want to plant jatropha, rubber and cassava. JVC staff said the villagers had agreed to a rubber concession.</li> <li>- Collection of orchids for sale to Vietnam</li> <li>- Concession for yellow vine to Chinese company</li> </ul>
Veun Village Mahaxay District Khammouane Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Total population: 568 (Female: 280)</li> <li>- Families: 100 (Households: 96)</li> <li>- Village committee: 9 members</li> <li>- Ethnicity: Kaleung (Mon-Khmer) and Lao (Lao-Tai)</li> <li>- Date of establishment: approximately 300 years ago</li> <li>- Occupations: rice cultivation, fishing, small trade, animal raising and migration for work</li> <li>- Religion: Animism and Buddhism</li> <li>- Location: 30km east from the Mahaxay district capital</li> <li>- Accessibility by road: good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CF established 2004</li> <li>- CF area: 637ha</li> <li>- Village areas have been surveyed by companies who want to plant jatropha, rubber and cassava</li> <li>- Collection of orchids for sale to Vietnam</li> <li>- Concession for yellow vine to Chinese companies</li> </ul>
Keun Khouay Village Mahaxay District Khammouane Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Total population: 198 (Female: 103)</li> <li>- Families: 37 (Households: 40)</li> <li>- Village committee: 9 members</li> <li>- Ethnicity: Kaleung (Mon-Khmer)</li> <li>- Date of establishment: approximately 38 years ago; village moved during the Indochina war</li> <li>- Occupations: rice cultivation, fishing, animal raising, and migration for work</li> <li>- Religion: Animism and Buddhism</li> <li>- Location: 18 km east of Mahaxay district capital</li> <li>- Accessibility by road: very good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CF established: 1999</li> <li>- CF area: 59ha</li> <li>- Surrounding villages collecting mushrooms and cardamom in CF area</li> </ul>
Nabone Village Pathoumphone District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Total population: 479 (Female: 279)</li> <li>- Families: 95 (Households: 85)</li> <li>- Village committee: 12 members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CF established: 2006</li> <li>- CF area: 300ha</li> <li>- Vietnamese rubber company</li> </ul>

Champasak Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethnicity: Lao (Lao-Tai)</li> <li>- Date of establishment: approximately 300 years ago; previously located near Houay Ko river to the south</li> <li>- Occupations: rice cultivation, NTFP collection (resin and cardamom), selling labour, handicrafts, livestock</li> <li>- Religion: Animism and Buddhism</li> <li>- 34km south of Pakse on road 13 and 14km east</li> </ul> <p>Accessibility by road: wet season – poor, dry season – fair.</p>	surveyed 400 hectares of land, but village successfully resisted a land concession
Houay Ko Village Pathoumphone District Champasak Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Total population: 164 (Female: 84)</li> <li>- Families: 33 (Households: 31)</li> <li>- Village committee: 9 members</li> <li>- Ethnicity: Brao (Mon-Khmer)</li> <li>- Date of Establishment: approximately 40 years ago; previously known as Houay Ko Noi, which was located in the same general area. The group probably moved from Attapeu province in the early 1800s.</li> <li>- Occupations: rice cultivation, NTFP collection, selling labour, handicrafts, animal raising</li> <li>- Religion: Buddhism</li> <li>- Location: 48km south of Pakse on Road 13 and 12km east</li> </ul> <p>Accessibility by road: wet season – fair, dry season – good.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CF established: 2005</li> <li>- CF area: 30ha</li> <li>- The abundance of NTFPs in the CF area is attracting the attention of surrounding villages who are infringing on the CF</li> </ul>
Lao Nya Village Pathoumphone District Champasak Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Total population: 593 (Female: 290)</li> <li>- Families: 115 (Households: 96)</li> <li>- Village committee: 7 members</li> <li>- Ethnicity: Lao (Lao-Tai)</li> <li>- Date of establishment: approximately 250 years ago</li> <li>- Occupations: rice cultivation, coffee, fishing, animal raising and migration for work</li> <li>Religion: Buddhism</li> <li>Village location: 48km south of Pakse on road 13 and 22km east</li> </ul> <p>Accessibility by road: wet season – poor, dry season – fair.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CF established: 2004</li> <li>- CF area: 750ha</li> </ul>

## **5.0. Research Findings and Discussion**

1. *How has the implementation of various CF models improved the livelihoods of the communities, as perceived by the villagers (women and men)?*

### Khammouane Province, Mahaxay District

In Khammouane Province historically, as in many parts of Laos, resources were managed through mixed systems of common property systems that included instances of individual property ownership. Management of resources was largely upheld by social and cultural norms and penalties. For the most part, people moved freely within forested areas collecting what they needed when they needed it. However, this was not true for all resources such as honey, cardamom, resin trees or other valuable products. Collection of these resources by insiders or outsiders could result in punishment and conflicts could arise depending on the value of the resource, ownership and the resulting exclusion either within a community or between communities. Other restrictions could exist on the cutting of timber, collection of individually-owned NTFPs or collection in villages' sacred or cemetery forests. Village boundaries were marked by geographic features such as waterways and ridges. The implementation of the CF relied on these to some extent but has now created more defined boundaries and areas that are measured and recorded in agreements and on maps.

#### *Women's groups*

In Khammouane Province, the women's groups of Veun and Nathan Villages said that CF had no impact on their livelihoods. In the Lao context, this response could be interpreted to mean that the regulations related to CF were not having a negative impact on their lives. Some women from Nathan did say that the rules were stricter now, and that conservation is now emphasized and that there are more NTFPs; several women from Veun said there was less conflict between villages, which is a good change. Only the women of Keun Khouay Village explicitly stated that CF had improved their livelihoods, as now there were more NTFPs, which has resulting in more NTFP sales and resultant higher incomes. This observation was followed by two of the women from this village commenting that LUPLA made livelihoods more difficult ("we are poorer"), as there was less area to plant crops, and especially to conduct swidden agriculture. As a follow-up question they were asked to name the NTFP collection rules; none could. This inability to name rules supports the project staff's observation that many of the villagers do not know the user rules for CF. In Veun, the women were also asked if they would like to return to management before the CF. They said "no, but now we cannot do swidden," which researchers interpreted as an indirect way of answering "yes, in fact we would like to return to pre-CF management" without appearing to be opposed to government policy. These contrasting answers show that, to the villagers, the benefits of the CF may be overshadowed by the negative impacts caused by the overall LUPLA policy.

As expected, there was no complete consensus within the groups regarding the impacts of CF, but in general it appears that the women feel that the CF has not resulted in a great improvement in their livelihoods. Only in Keun Khouay, where mushrooms are prolific,

does the CF seem to have been beneficial through reducing competition from other villages and allowing for more product to be collected by the host community.

### *Men's groups*

The men's groups in Nathan Village also did not say explicitly that livelihoods had improved, but one man stated that: "the regulations on the management of the CF means people cannot cut wherever they like." Another said, "Formal complaints can be made about other villages cutting in the CF and we protect the area" and that "there is better conservation of NTFPs and everyone must follow rules so everyone is equal." In Veun Village, a number of the men were more direct in saying, "CF has improved livelihoods because of better management of forests and NTFPs." They also said that after roads had improved, more traders and sellers started coming to the village. Several of the men said they had planned to start family tree plantations in CF areas but that they were not allowed to do that. In Keun Khouay Village, the men did not address the interview question directly and had little to say about improvements except that there is now "Better regulations and management on trees and NTFPs." Researchers followed this comment up with the question, "How does this mean better livelihoods for you?" and the men's group did not identify specific changes. They did comment that they collect mushrooms at night and women sell these during the day. Similar to the women's group, the men's group was not precise in stating how the CF had improved their lives. One has to wonder whether these vague responses can be attributed to the villagers' assumptions that INGOS and government officials expect their responses to be positive, and therefore are reluctant to make any criticisms of CF.

### *The impact of LUPLA on livelihoods*

Although not directly linked to CF development, comments recorded from the men's group in Veun Village about the LUPLA process and its conservation aspects are worth noting in a discussion about livelihoods improvement. There was agreement that because villagers could no longer freely clear new areas for agriculture, some were selling their labour to make up for the resulting shortage of rice. Essentially, LUPLA was causing villagers to move from practicing independent farming to becoming labourers, engaged in cutting timber and other work with wood. When researchers inquired about who the labourers were employed by, villagers responded that they worked for other members of the community who were building new houses. The accuracy of this response is questionable as new houses are not often constructed—it is more likely that villagers are hired by logging companies, as in many parts of Laos. However, it could be that villagers are hiring out their labor to other villages.

In Veun Village, the general female group made similar comments. The limitation of cultivation area and related conservation of forest has led to an increase of small animal husbandry efforts and increase in NTFP collection for sale. Mushrooms were of special note in Keun Khouay Village since it was reported that as forested areas have increased, mushrooms have become more widely available. Numerous species of mushroom, such as *het bot* (*Lentinus kuruanus*), *het phouak* (*Termitocytes sp.*), *het khai*, *het din*, *het khone*, *het khao*, *het nam mak*, *het na sai khao khai*, *het pheung* and *het la nhok* have also recorded in Khammouane Province by Shoemaker et al. (2001), with *het pho* being the most economically important. It appears that LUPLA, by reducing areas of cultivation and thereby reducing food security, may be causing villagers to look for alternative employment and forms of income; legal or otherwise.

A commonality between the men and women's groups was the observation that the community forest is allowing for increased control and order in the face of outsider intrusion. Through open discussion, villagers from both groups said that the introduction of rules regulating access and the establishment of clear boundaries for villages and their forest resources was a positive aspect of CF, as this helps reduce conflict between villages as well as protects village resources. It is important to note, however, that the benefits of protection of a resource for one village can have negative effects on other villages via exclusion. This was the case in Keun Khouay Village, where it was reported that wild cardamom had always been more abundant in their CF area than in surrounding villages, and people from other villages had traditionally come to collect it. The establishment of clear village boundaries and the CF essentially cut off other villages from accessing and collecting any resources outside of their village areas, and put in place a system where they had to either pay collection fees to the village with the resource or collect it covertly. In this instance, as stated by the Village Forest Committee, the creation of a system of controlled access to a resource has led Keun Khouay Village to increase their benefit flows, while villagers from surrounding villages now have limited access to cardamom.

#### *Village Forest Committees*

The Village Forest Committees in Nathan and Keun Khouay both said that the main benefit of the CF for livelihoods was increased village ownership and protection of forests. Villages had more authority to act against others who collected or harvested resources in the CF and this meant an increase in resources for their own villages. However, in Keun Khouay, several of the VFC members said NTFP collection had

increased a lot because villagers needed to sell NTFPs to make up for newly-occurring rice shortages caused by limits on the area allowed for dry land rice cultivation. This echoes the above comments from the Veun village women's group. They may be able to harvest more in part because access has been restricted to other villages to NTFPs. Chamberlain (2001) explains how many people in Laos have depleted their NTFPs trying to make up shortages of rice through relying on NTFPs and wildlife as substitutes.

#### *User rule enforcement challenges in Nathan Village*

Not all community members understand or respect CF rules, even in villages which have long-established CFs. In Nathan Village in Khammouane, a young fallow was noted in the CF area. The villagers said the field was cleared because the family thought the land was outside the CF boundaries.



The Veun VFC response to question #1 was that the CF has not had a major impact on livelihoods, and other villages still cut and collect in defiance of village regulations. Further questioning revealed that an adjoining village which traditionally shared Veun's

forests had also undergone the LUPLA process. This village no longer had any useful forest, and was still accessing the Veun forest. They were technically excluded from the CF but Veun villagers felt that this exclusion was unfair due to the fact that the village lacks adequate forest access. This sentiment indicates that villagers from Veun had little real involvement in how LUPLA was implemented in their village. The VFC stated that if the Veun villagers excluded forest access, as required by regulations, there would be conflict between the two villages. Therefore, they did not enforce the rules that were in part given to them by the government. The VFC did say that now that they require the other village to obtain permission from the Veun VFC before collecting NTFPs, but in reality this process does not occur. However, in the case of orchids in Veun's CF, VFC members said that they tried to enforce rules because orchids are now a valuable resource. As surrounding countries' forests have declined, orchids in Laos have become a valuable commodity both in-country and for export (Shoemaker et al. 2001). The Veun villagers themselves collect and sell orchids and try to use the new regulations to control this resource.

#### *Khammouane conclusions*

Overall, the results from the interview groups show that CF, in the LUPLA context, has not improved livelihoods in a noticeable amount. This is not to say that villagers did not identify some of the positive changes since the CF were started, but these changes were not strongly emphasized by respondents or were often offset by comments about negative impacts from other activities of the LUPLA policy. It is possible that the potential benefits for communities from CF are not being fully realized because of the need for people to compensate for LUPLA-induced shortfalls in agriculture production. To expand on the concept of livelihoods, and include more than physical well-being may broaden the limits of what can be deemed 'improved.' The impact of CF cannot be measured solely by observing the changes in, or access to, tangible assets such as timber and NTFPs. The entire process itself should contribute to improved livelihoods. Factors such as increased equity and ownership, better community leadership, community democracy, and the participation and inclusion of marginalized groups all contribute to improved livelihoods or well being.

#### Champasak Province, Pathoumphone District

As in Khammouane Province, management of resources in Champasak Province exists based on common property systems that include individual ownership for particular resources at particular times of year (Baird and Bounphasy, 2003). However, in the CF areas all the resources were communally owned, except those that had traditionally been the property of individuals. Data collected for the Champasak site were not as detailed as for the Khammouane site. This could be attributed to researcher fatigue, and to the fact that the research advisor was not involved in fieldwork in Champasak. The CF areas were also slightly newer and therefore impacts may not have been as identifiable as in Khammouane Province.

The history of the CF sites prior to project involvement started before LUPLA in 1998. At that time the areas were common property with no exclusion of community members or non-community members, provided that they engaged in locally acceptable activities. There was, however, individual ownership over some resources, such as temporary

ownership of honey trees, and permanent ownership of tapped wood resin trees. After the LUPLA process was implemented, the areas became Village Use Forests. However, this classification and the entire LUPLA process were disregarded soon afterwards, and in reality the areas returned to their previous status as common property. Heavy collection of certain NTFPs by outsiders and indiscriminate over-cutting of timber caused one village (Lao Nya) to initiate community action. After learning about this, other nearby villages asked GAPE about establishing their own CF.

#### *Women's groups*

The women's groups in Nabone Village stated that there had been no change in livelihoods since the establishment of CF, as the rules were only two years old. In Houay Ko Village, women said the new rules helped keep other villages from using the CF and there had been a gradual increase in NTFPs. However, other villages still sometimes collected NTFPs in the CF. This lack of adherence to rules is especially noteworthy, as this ethnic Brao village is surrounded by much larger ethnic Lao villages with less natural resources, and there have long been problems with outsiders overharvesting resources in the village territory of Houay Ko. In Lao Nya Village, the women only responded that they knew about the CF but did not indicate any changes in livelihoods.

#### *Men's groups*

Of the men's groups, only Houay Ko Village clearly stated that there had been an improvement in their livelihoods, and this can largely be attributed to their feeling that CF gives them more means for protecting their resources from outsiders through increased official recognition for the management of the CF. In Lao Nya Village, villagers said that the CF had not caused any changes. In Nabone Village, the group said that there were positive changes but could not (or did not) specify what these were.

#### *Village Forest Committees*

The VFC of all three villages said that the CF had improved livelihoods as the amount of NTFPs available for consumption and sale had increased. Nabone said that these increases were the result of the season protect rules. Houay Ko and Lao Nya also said that the regulation gave them strong ownership and the power needed to try and protect the CF, even if they were not always successful they still valued this.

#### *Champasak conclusions*

It might be expected that the responses from the Champasak villages would better reflect the benefits of CF, since CF plans were carried out independently from LUPLA. However, only two of the six interview groups said there were positive changes, and only the Houay Ko men's group specifically stated what the benefits were. This suggests that in general, the CFs are not having a major positive impact on the livelihoods of most communities. However, the lack of clear responses could also have been a product of less efficient questioning and response recording by the researchers.

When asking about improvement in livelihoods, the responses received were similar to answers given for research question #3 regarding income and the amount of NTFPs available for collection. For those with access and use rights to the CF areas, the improvement in livelihoods *was* the increase in availability of NTFPs. The questions essentially drew the same response, or at least the responses recorded were similar. In

effect, the responses to research question #3 are also relevant to research question #1. Since the team did not adequately define what was meant by “livelihoods” for the interviewees, the term became ambiguous and things were left open to interpretation.

Also worth noting is that the Champasak CFs have served more of a conservation function than those in Khammouane. One of the goals of the CFs has been to ensure a source of parent stock for NTFPs, including wild animals. Rules of collection are stricter and the collection seasons are shorter. Therefore, it is possible that villagers are not immediately gaining benefits from the CF or that the benefits are not presently apparent, but that benefits might be gained later by the villagers or by future generations.

*2. How have the CF models improved the living conditions of the communities, as reported by the project staff and government counterparts?*

Khammouane Province

The research team interviewed 5 staff for the Khammouane province CF projects: one Lao government coordinator, one Japanese JVC coordinator, and three Lao JVC staff.

The government female coordinator for the JVC project worked with the project for four years, but has recently left the position. Her work with JVC involved government – project coordination, planning, organizing village meetings, and overseeing the creation of maps and the building of signs for land use zone delineation and demarcation purposes. In her interview, she emphasized the importance of CF boundaries and the fact that villages can now exclude other villages from the CF areas. She also said the increase in NTFPs was due to an increase in forest land. As a result, more NTFPs have become available, which improves the target villages’ livelihoods. She said exclusionary rights increased the sustainable use of the NTFPs and could lead to collection fees from outsiders if a decision was made by the CF committee members. Increased control over resources also applied to timber, which was now more closely monitored. She said that the creation of maps and boundaries decreased the amount of conflicts between villages, and commented further that, in her view, there were no major obstacles to establishing the CF.<sup>3</sup>

The JVC project coordinator, an expatriate Japanese female, also identified decreased village conflict as a benefit of establishing the boundaries of CF. She said that previously, villagers would use land that did not belong to them for agriculture or cutting of wood. The CF and village boundaries had made it widely known where these resources were located and who had the rights to use them. She felt that the concept of conservation of forest resources and their sustainable use had been transferred to the villages and this was very important for village livelihoods. Future generations would benefit, she thought.

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that in some places, such as Khong District, Champasak Province, the district has frowned on the idea that community rules are primarily used to reduce the access of outsiders. They are fearful that using natural resource management rules in this way can lead to conflicts and bad feelings. Instead, district authorities have mandated that villagers have the right to create rules in their areas but not to exclude outsiders from using the resources. They can, however, exclude outsiders from doing things that they are willing to exclude themselves from doing. This has been found to reduce conflicts (Baird, 2001).

The first Lao JVC staff member interviewed has worked for the project for one year and has visited all the research villages, but was not involved in the actual establishment of community forests. She said that through her discussions with villagers, her assessment was that the CF had not resulted in improvements in livelihoods and that incomes had not changed. She did say that the formal boundaries of the CFs were the most beneficial aspect of the project since they mandated clear ownership over the resources, reducing conflicts that had arisen when only informal boundaries had existed. Formal boundaries had not completely prevented collection by other villages, however. The exception was wood; villagers took the protection of this resource more seriously. In all three villages, timber surveys had been conducted to record species numbers and diversity. These are used to monitor any prohibited cutting by other villages, as well as the annual cutting by the CF villages. As the JVC staff had not been involved in CF establishment, she could not comment on the previous forest condition, or how relations between villages had specifically changed since more fixed boundaries were introduced.

The second Lao JVC staff member interviewed has worked with the project for ten years and is responsible mainly for agriculture activities. He identified the increase in abundance and incomes of NTFPs and the villages' new formal rights to protect trees as the main benefit to the villages; the right to protect trees was also the main change in tenure for the villages.. In the past, more powerful or well-connected people in the villages would privately sell wood, but this could no longer happen. The staff member observed that NTFP increases could be attributed to a reduction in swidden agriculture, and identified the sale of mushrooms from the Keun Khouay CF and other areas as a source of increased income. However, he could not say why these mushroom species had increased since establishing the CF, nor could he identify any NTFP species that were individually owned other than wood resin (*mai nyang* in Lao, (*Dipterocarpus alatus* or spp.), which he said were disappearing due to logging from outsiders. These trees are a valuable resource for communities in Khammouane Province and have been even cut in CFs established by INGOs and government forestry departments (Shoemaker et al. 2001). The JVC staff member verified information provided by villagers, who said that before becoming community forests, the CF were not classified by the village as any particular forest type, and there were some agriculture activities in these areas. The forest condition had improved as there was a limit on the size of trees allowed to be cut in the CF. Small trees could not be cut, which meant a larger number of trees were reaching an older age and the forest had become denser. Although this staff member's assessment that the CF had positive benefits for villagers differs with his colleague's views given above, his responses can be considered the more accurate of the two, given his over ten years of experience. His observations are also supported by many of the villages' comments about increases in NTFP collection and the sale of orchids to Vietnam.

The final Lao JVC staff member interviewed has, for five years, worked specifically on CF and LUPLA. She stated that the main benefit of CF was that after the projects were initiated, all three villages instituted regulations which allow five families per year to cut and sell timber. This is done on a needs basis and only one tree per family is allowed. In the official CF user rules, the wood is supposed to be used for building houses. However, the JVC staff member did comment that some of the wood was being sold, which is not allowed. The money generated was used to buy rice and household materials and to

support child education. She said that families who did not need a house were also permitted to sell their wood allocation as long as they waited their turn and village headmen did not object. She also said that as resources become scarcer, common property ownership was shifting to individual ownership. Although for natural wood resin trees, individual ownership still existed, there were few trees remaining because loggers had cut them. Overall, she said that most of the CF user rules are not followed by the communities.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Khammouane conclusions*

The government coordinator and first two JVC project staff both interpreted the benefits of CF as resulting in increased villager control over forest resources and greater adherence to conservation principles, although these views may have been partially influenced by the staff's participation in project training workshops regarding conservation. Benefit sharing, increased equity and participation or process-driven CF were not concepts that were emphasized by either the project or government staff. Also, neither the project nor government staff concluded that improved land tenure through CF had contributed to livelihood improvements, which is notable, given that one of the main justifications cited to support the establishment of CFs through LUPLA is increased forest tenure.

#### Champasak Province

In Champasak, the research team interviewed the project's government counterpart and the GAPE fieldworker, both Lao.

The GAPE government coordinator in Pathoumphone District, Champasak Province is a Lao man who has worked with the project for four years and was able to describe in detail all the activities related to the CFs. He identified the importance of the CFs as future sources of food and products to sell as the main improvement to villagers' livelihoods. He commented that benefits were more apparent in the CFs established in Houay Ko and Lao Nya Villages, as compared with the established CF in Nabone Village. In Houay Ko, the staff member commented that the success of the CF (increased amounts of wild animals and NTFPs) was actually attracting the unwanted attention of other villages which had begun to infringe on CF boundaries. He estimated that only about 30% of outsiders ever ask for permission from the villages to enter the CF, further commenting that it is difficult to know for sure how many outsiders do enter, as the CF can only be patrolled on a monthly basis. Patrolling was more effective when the village is located near a community forest, enabling all villagers to take part in maintaining security.

The GAPE Lao fieldworker, when interviewed, said that the main benefit to communities was the certain increase in NTFPs and subsequent increase in incomes. He also mentioned that community unity and cooperation had improved, as the process of establishing the CF required people to agree on regulations which blocked them from accessing forest products at certain times of the year. People were willing to give up year-

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<sup>4</sup> Covert cutting and selling of timber by the villages was not mentioned by any of the other JVC project staff or any villagers.

round access at specific times in order to gain benefits at other times when the amounts of NTFPs are higher. He was impressed by the villages' commitment to conservation and future generations. A specific example of a community rule that had improved livelihoods was that no wild pigs could be hunted in the CF; the animals lived and reproduced safely in the CF areas. However, after the villagers planted their crops, the pigs were attracted to the fields, where villagers would hunt and snare them.

He pointed out that the forest condition in the CF has greatly improved compared to forests outside CF boundaries, as indicated by the amount of yellow vine (*Berberis aquifolium*), rattan and other NTFPs there. Older CFs tended to have greater amounts of NTFPs. There had been an incident of tree cutting in the Nabone Village CF, but the staff member stated that cutting outside the CF was more common.

This incident was investigated by the CF committee and project and reported to the district authorities, but the culprit was never found. The staff member observed that this new involvement by the CF committee was very important for conserving and protecting CF resources--previously such cutting would not have been reported by the village.



*A project field worker and villagers examine a site where a tree was illegally cut in the Champasak CF.*

#### *Champasak Conclusion*

Both government and project staff said that CF had improved the villager's livelihoods. They both said that more NTFP and increased incomes were the main benefits. The project staff also said community cooperation and solidarity had improved during the process of establishing the CF.

### *3. Has implementation of the CF models had any impacts on community incomes or benefit sharing of profits from forest products?*

#### Khammouane Province

##### *Poor Women's and Men's groups*

In Khammouane Province, the poorer women's groups had a mixed reaction to this question. In Nathan Village, they said that there were more NTFPs, which meant more collection and higher incomes as the area of swidden agriculture had decreased in the CF. In Veun Village, they said NTFP incomes were decreasing because more people were collecting NTFPs to meet market demand. In Keun Khouay Village, the women said that

in general, income from some NTFPs had decreased because less were available, except for mushrooms, which had increased in number due to improved forest conditions. This increase in mushrooms could be attributed to the changes in forest as regeneration occurs because of less swidden agriculture. Fallow land often has different NTFP species than older forests (Delang, 2007). As the landscape mosaic is changing, so might the NTFP diversity and abundance.

The poorer men's groups' responses were varied as well: Nathan Village men said that there had been no change in incomes. Veun villagers said that because of the new forest regulations, the amount of NTFPs had increased and therefore there were more sales and incomes had increased. They also said that other villages were collecting in the CF area and that Veun Village was not receiving any benefits. In Keun Khouay, the men commented that the new CF regulations had resulted in more forest regeneration, more bamboo and wild animals and in turn, more sales and income.

#### *General Women's and Men's groups*

The general women's group from Nathan Village stated that there were less people from other villages collecting NTFPs now, so there were more for villagers, increasing sales and income. Veun villagers reported both increased and decreased incomes but said other villages collected in the CF with permission. Keun Khouay also reported that there was more demand and better incomes from more sales of NTFPs, but commented that other villages were collecting mushrooms in the CF, causing conflict. The reason given for the higher income was increased product harvesting or the exclusion of harvesting by those outside the village.

The general men's group responses were inconclusive except for in Keun Khouay Village, where they said market demand (i.e. people stopping to buy NTFPs at the main road 1.5 km away) meant an increase in sales for more villagers. However, people from other villages were entering the CF and other forest land to collect NTFPs. They stated, as did the women's group, that mushrooms were a particularly important NTFP.

### *Keun Khouay's mushrooms*

The two women's groups in Keun Khouay Village said more mushrooms are being sold and that incomes have increased, but that outside villagers are entering and collecting mushrooms in their CF. Keun Khouay has the oldest CF area, established in 1999, 5-6 years prior to CF establishment in the other two villages. This longer period may have contributed to the environmental factors needed for increased mushroom abundance. People from this village said that their CF was larger and more "beautiful" than the forests of surrounding villages, so outsiders came to collect in violation of the regulations and did not pay collection fees. Prior to CF establishment, mushrooms were collected openly with no private ownership. Thus, the CF regulations were meant to limit access for other villages, but others continue to collect without Keun Khouay gaining benefits.



The increased demand and incomes might also be explained by the ongoing construction of a nearby large-scale infrastructure project. The Nam Theun 2 Hydropower Project lies approximately 30 km west of the village, on road number 12. At the junction of the village entrance road, the team stopped at a small kiosk where women from Keun Khouay were selling NTFPs (photo at left). During the stop and speaking with local people, the team learned that since the start of the hydropower project, traffic on the road had increased a lot and these drivers have become important customers of NTFPs, including mushrooms.

Another NTFP being sold by the village to non-local Lao people attached to the hydropower project is charcoal. The sale price at the village is one-third the cost of charcoal in Vientiane, so Lao people traveling between the dam site and Vientiane purchase it for personal use and to sell for profit in the capital. Keun Khouay is the only CF research village located so close to a main road. Increased sales may therefore be attributed to the opportunity to tap this new customer base, as opposed to attributed to the CF's success—although arguably the protection of the forest enabled an increase in NTFPs, allowing villagers to seize the sales opportunity.

### *Khammouane Conclusion*

The above responses show that there is no consistent consensus with gender or income groups regarding increased incomes from CFs. Women, as the main collectors of NTFPs, may have a better understanding of changes in the abundance of NTFPs (Foppes and Kethpanh, 2000a and b) and their answers may be more accurate than the men's. The amount of time spent collecting NTFPs, either by men or women, is likely to make people more sensitive to the number of other people who collect the same types of NTFPs. For mushrooms, the men in Keun Khouay said that they had begun collecting mushrooms, whereas in the past it was mainly the job of women.

### *Village Forest Committees*

The VFCs from Nathan and Veun said that the new rules of collection and the control of swidden in the CFs had increased the abundance of and income from NTFPs. They also said that more people are collecting to meet market demand and that regulations were excluding outsiders from collecting, thereby increasing benefits to their villages. The VFC from Keun Khouay gave a mixed response: some said that to make up for rice deficits people had begun collecting many NTFPs to purchase rice and thus the amounts of NTFPs were declining. This has been identified as one of the causes of NTFP and wildlife declines in many upland areas in Laos (Chamberlain, 2001).

Changes in benefit sharing, as addressed by the second part of research question #3, were not clearly identified by the respondents. Discussion with the communities showed that pre-CF conditions gave all community members approximately equal access to the forest, except for individually-owned species, and the creation of CFs did not change this. However, the new CF regulations did exclude other villages from collecting in the CF unless permission was granted from the host village. In theory, if permission was granted by a village, a collection tax was to be collected from the outsiders. However, every village stated that they were unable to collect any taxes from other villages collecting in their CFs and that they themselves never paid taxes when collecting NTFPs in other village CFs. Veun and Nathan villagers said that outsiders had collected yellow vine (a common traditional Chinese medicine which is used as an ingredient in various modern medicines today) and orchids, but the villagers responsible for the CF had received no benefits. When the researchers pursued the issue, it was discovered that villagers themselves were collecting yellow vine and orchids for the quota holder, both inside and outside of the CF. As reported by the villagers, the above two NTFPs are not locally used by communities. In this case, villagers did participate in benefit-sharing, since the companies paid them to collect the NTFPs (unlike instances when outsiders collected the NTFPs themselves and villagers received no benefits). This disparity could illustrate a need to provide training on benefit-sharing models that will help the entire community while not stifling the initiative and hard work of individual households or people from neighboring villages.

### Champasak Province

In Champasak Province, it is difficult to answer the research question “*Has implementation of the CF models had any impacts on community incomes or benefit sharing of profits from forest products?*” conclusively. Out of twelve village groups interviewed in Champasak, six stated that CF activities and conservation resulted in more NTFPs and incomes, four said less, and two said there was no change. However, different groups may have interpreted the question in different ways, resulting in different responses.

### *Poor Men and Women’s groups*

In Champasak Province, the poorer male and poorer female interview groups from the three villages had a split response, with half saying that incomes had decreased and half say they had increased. There was no consistency related to gender between villages. In Pathoumphone District, the causes for the changes in incomes from the CFs are unclear. The district’s forests have been under NTFP collection pressures for a number of years,

and there has been a decline in the overall quantities of some NTFPs (personal communication with INGO fieldworkers and government officials, May 2008). It was becoming more common for outsiders, which include individuals from other villages, local traders and larger companies, to collect NTFPs from the villages' forest land. Another possible reason for the reported decrease in NTFPs may be related to an increase in the number of harvest quotas issued for commercially viable species in the area. GAPE has observed that an increasing number of foreign companies have been collecting yellow vine; these companies hire individual labourers from both inside and outside the village which has collection rights.<sup>5</sup> Project fieldworkers stated that in the past, only four or five companies had been present but that in 2009 there were over 33 which held NTFP quotas or were planting cash crops.

*Houay Ko and competition with other CFs*

It is clear that the concept of village CF boundaries is not strong enough to keep outsiders from entering the CF, especially when there is an abundance of valuable NTFPs. Many villages have depleted their own stocks of NTFPs because they live closer to roads which provide greater access to markets and subsequent a higher demand for NTFPs. The villages with CFs in this study are located further from paved roads than other villages (between 6-14km) and therefore still have relatively intact forest resources within their village boundaries. Villages along the main road have less significant areas of forest remaining and it is well-known by the CF villages that non-CF villages come to collect in the area, regardless of signage in the SF area and informational meetings in villages outlining CF usage rules.

In Houay Ko Village, an ethnic Brao village, the people said that incomes have decreased because they have looked after their CF and other forest land carefully, which then attracted nearby (non-Brao) villages to collect there, thereby resulting in declining amounts of NTFPs and incomes. However, it should be noted that these dynamics with outside villages already existed when GAPE started working in the village in 2001, and this village has a long history of trying to protect its resources from outside overexploitation. After the interviews in the CF villages, the team had informal conversations with people from villages that were located on the main road, confirming Houay Ko Village's information: these villagers did not know or did not acknowledge the host village's CF rules.

*General Women and Men's groups*

The general women's group from Houay Ko Village said that incomes from the forests, including the village's protected forest, had decreased as the expensive NTFPs (cardamom and yellow vine) had been collected by companies and other villagers. In Lao Nya, the women commented that because there is no longer swidden agriculture in the CF, there is less damage to NTFPs and therefore more available to sell. Nabone villagers said that incomes have increased because there are more regulations to protect NTFPs. This observation may be based more on villagers' expectations for the future rather than verifiable data from the recent past, as the CF in Nabone has only been established for a couple of years.

Only the Houay Ko general men's group stated that incomes had increased as a result of the CF being established; the other two villages said there was no change. Again, however, these results need to be considered carefully, as there may have been problems

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<sup>5</sup> Though not directly related to impacts on income or benefit sharing, many of the respondents from Champasak Province indicated that the increase in outsider NTFP collection activities corresponded with an increase in conflict with these outsiders.

with how the respondents perceived the questions. The GAPE fieldworkers explained that the male group is wealthier than the others, and that as men, they collect less NTFPs and therefore in general know the least about NTFPs (except those they collect, like honey).

#### *Village Forestry Committees*

The Pathoumphone CF committees all felt that there had been an increase in availability of NTFPs and incomes. The GAPE fieldworkers explained that the CF committees generally have an accurate understanding of the NTFPs, since they are responsible for doing regular patrols of the areas. CF committees were also involved in the initial survey of NTFPs and timber that was carried out before establishing the CF. They observed that increases in yellow vine, rattan and various edible plants had taken place naturally (GAPE had supported some enhancement planting as well, especially of rattan). The CF evaluation done by GAPE staff supports this and says that there were more NTFP based on the field survey. The committee in Lao Nya said the cause of the increase was that companies were excluded from collecting in the CF. Previously, local traders bought small amounts of NTFPs from the villagers who collected them but now companies from Laos and Vietnam need harvest quotas from the district and will pay anyone who can provide the products. The yellow vine that is collected by the villagers is processed in the district at one of three new facilities. The marketing chain for some products extends into neighboring countries and there is competition between companies to collect in new areas. The companies hire villagers to collect yellow vine and the collectors are aware of the CF boundaries and regulations and respect them when collecting—whereas in Khammouane, villagers collect outside of the boundaries of the CF.

The difference in adherence to user rules may be attributed to the variances in participation levels and knowledge of the rules themselves. In Champasak, CF development was more time-intensive and rules were created by the community. This is one of the characteristics of successful CF as found by Friends of the Earth (2008). In one Khammouane village, an interview group said the user rules were given to them by the district, but that villagers agreed with the rules.

#### *Champasak Conclusion*

The Champasak villages, as in Khammouane, show a mixed response with no complete consensus on increased incomes.

#### *4. What changes in the forest environment have occurred since the model trials?*

##### Khammouane and Champasak Provinces

When speaking with people about forest condition, the term first had to be defined and then a comparison over time be made. When speaking with villagers they were asked about abundance and diversity. Abundance being the density or amount of existing NTFPs and trees growing and diversity the increase in the number of species represented. People first identified the increase in the amount of existing NTFP, possibly because

these were the ones they were interested apt for visual. Changed in diversity were not mentioned except in Keun Khouay where the return of some wildlife occurred.

Interestingly enough, in Khammouane Province, the regenerating forest is occurring in areas that were once used for agriculture. Now, according to the LUPLA rules, people are limited in the amount of land available for agriculture and are collecting more NTFPs to compensate. However, if communities strictly follow the LUPLA rules, they can only collect in the community forest where once they collected anywhere. From this perspective, LUPLA can be seen “squeezing” communities from two directions, less land for cultivation and limited NTFP collection areas which, also explains why some communities don’t remember the process or don’t want to remember it.

Unanimously, all groups in both provinces said that the condition of the CF areas had improved since their establishment because there had been less cutting of timber and less swidden agriculture activities in the CF areas. The improved forest conditions resulted in more NTFPs, a regenerating forest and a denser forest. When compared to forested land outside of the CF, most respondents said these areas were in poorer condition than the CF because of the agriculture activities taking place there. These results are in line with results in other Southeast Asian countries which show that CF can result in increased forest cover, regeneration, biodiversity conservation, and biomass production (Ravinhranath et al., 2006).

NOTE: Questions #5-8 are answered through a combination of literature review, project documents, informal group and individual interviews with villagers and general experience regarding LUPLA and CF in Laos. Village-level questionnaires were not designed to specifically address these questions.

5. *What changes in forest tenure were made or would have been needed to implement the models successfully?*

To answer this research question, it was separated into two parts:

- a. What changes in forest tenure were made? *and*
- b. What changes in forest tenure would have been needed to implement the models successfully?”

Khammouane Province

To answer the first part of the research question, it is necessary to understand what the tenure arrangements were before the CF was introduced at the sites. In Khammouane, prior to the implementation of the LUPLA, there were no formal classifications of forest. VFCs said they used a local classification system which included sacred forests and cemetery forest; they also refrained from cutting trees near water sources. People did not disturb forests near sacred cliffs near karst areas or important refuges for fishes due to beliefs that spirits (*pa khet*) reside in these areas. The natural forests in the research area have declined and continue to be under threat. In some parts of Khammouane, this has

been attributed to extensive logging and expansion of grazing areas and rice fields (Shoemaker et al., 2001).

Prior to the adoption of LUPLA, all the Khammouane communities had some level of communal property. Communal property rights, as defined by the villages, is “it belonged to whomever” but, as in the case of wood resin, these rights may be assigned to individuals based on collective agreement within the village, which is a common characteristic throughout Southeast Asia (Colchester and Fay, 2007). However, “whoever” does exclude certain groups of people. The villagers’ discontent in Nathan Village regarding the damaging practice of yellow vine collection via uprooting by outside Chinese companies clearly illustrates that villagers do not consider the company to be party to communal property. In general, “whoever” only includes community members or others from nearby villages. There are rough delineations between communities, often marked by geographic features such as streams or ridges. NTFP collection by one community could be done beyond these boundaries, but could result in conflicts especially as collection became more driven by monetary gains or if the species was under individual ownership. This is now more common as the commercial trade in NTFPs has increased.

There are also traditional annual ceremonies to pay respect to protective forest or cave dwelling spirits (*moi souk*) and establish taboos for cutting trees during the 3-month Buddhist Lent (July-October). The annual ceremonies are meant to bring good fortune to entire villages. Before cutting any trees, villagers must pay their respects to the inhabiting spirit (*liang saeng*) to avoid retribution. These ceremonies may also act as a way for communities to express their tenure over an area. None of the people interviewed mentioned any impacts on their religious ceremonies or beliefs related to forest by the CF. Keun Khouay and Veun villagers in Khammouane and the GAPE worker in Champasak said that ceremonies to pay respect to forests spirits continue in the present day, as they have always done.

In establishing the CF through the LUPLA process, communities were introduced to a radically different way of viewing forests. The classification and mapping of the forest meant that villages had to acknowledge the differences in forests as recognized by the policy. After LUPLA, people were aware that a definitive change regarding their village’s boundaries and access to the forest had taken place. Villagers were no longer able to freely collect certain species in any location, and failure to recognize this could technically result in unwanted attention from the authorities or fines. In Khammouane Province the villagers reported that rules were often violated but the collection of fines for an infraction was not easy, and were often not paid.

Additionally, as interviews with the JVC fieldworkers indicated, as long as a resource has no private ownership and is abundant, villagers continue to collect beyond their village boundary. Again, the case of mushrooms in Keun Khouay Village in Khammouane Province is instructive. Mushrooms are not privately owned and are abundant, and previously villagers did not have conflicts related to mushroom collection. It was not until demand and incomes increased that the village began to view the mushrooms as a communal resource, intended only for those with community membership.

In speaking with the villagers, the question was phrased as, “Did the establishment of the CF have an impact on your rights of management and use and if so how?” All interview groups and the CF committees from each village indicated that there had been new regulations introduced. Of particular note was the response that timber cutting was now controlled. Out of fourteen responses, nine said that the communities’ rights to cut timber had been impacted. Previously, no formal permission was needed from higher authorities to cut timber, but now village or district approval was required. The poorer women’s group from Veun Village were aware of the fines for illegally cutting timber and the general men’s group from Keun Khouay were aware of the quantity of wood allowed per year per family and had told the researchers that people had been fined. The change in rights had negative impacts on villages near Veun Village, as previously they cut timber in the Veun CF area. After the establishment of the regulations, these villages caused conflicts by attempting to continue cutting timber; Veun Village has complained to the district authorities. The poorer women’s group from all three villages also said that there were now controlled collection seasons of some products but this had not impacted them, as these rules had been followed in the past as well. These collection seasons were not explicitly outlined in the CF user rule book, yet communities still adhered to them.

Interestingly, in Khammouane Province, most groups interviewed answered this question by stating that there were no impacts or change of user rights after the implementation of community forestry. Yet all groups also stated that in the past, there was common property of some resources and now there were regulations on what, where and when villagers could collect\cut resources. Why did villagers answer that their rights had not been impacted, when in fact they all were aware of the changes after the CF was established? The contradictory response may show that the villages understand that their rights have changed, but have not been eliminated.

### Champasak Province

The situation in Champasak Province differs from Khammouane in that LUPLA had already been implemented by the government in the communities before the INGO was asked to assist with the full establishment of the CFs. The initial LUPLA process was done in 1998; the process was reported as not being participatory and did not result in community ownership. During this time, LUPLA had little impact on forest use, as there were less outsider threats on the communities and there was no monitoring done by the district. It was not until later, when some species such as rattan and yellow vine became scarcer and economically important, and started to be collected by outsiders, that CF became of interest to more villagers. Therefore, the

#### *Nabone village resists land concessions*

Nabone villagers believe that their tenure over village forests has been strengthened by their refusal to concede land to investors who wanted to establish rubber tree plantations on their land. Six months prior to the research being conducted, the community’s lands were surveyed by a company hoping to locate 400 hectares for rubber plantations. The company made several visits to the village, with government staff following up on the initial request for land. However, the proposed plantation development included the CF areas, which was unacceptable to the villagers. The villagers expressed their discontent to GAPE and district authorities. The World Bank’s SUFORD project, working in the area, was also against the concession. The village leader would not sign the land over and the local authorities did not offer strong support to the company, which eventually gave up.

Champasak CFs are outside of the LUPLA sphere.

In order to control collection of valuable species by outsiders and assert their user rights, the communities asked for assistance in formally establishing and managing their CF areas. The CFs had previously been classified as Village Use Forests by the LUPLA, but the villages did not follow this classification. User rules for collection and exclusion were created and involved consultations with surrounding villages. These were approved using the power of the district governor (Article 82, Lao Law on Forestry) to declare a revised CF (Village Conservation Forests or *pa sa-ngouan*) within the village boundaries. The GAPE project facilitated the establishment of the new CF with the entire community, conducted timber and NTFP surveys, initiated NTFP gardens, and began enhancement planting in and outside of the conservation area. The community and project felt that these activities would increase their tenure security over the areas. Tenure was indeed strengthened, not due to any new laws, but due to an improved CF process that has helped solidify community ownership and management over the CF area, especially in the eyes of the government, which is crucial for villagers.

In Pathoumphone District, at the landscape level there is no private tenure of mature forests, but there are some cases of private tenure over valuable tree species in the forest. With wood resin trees, ownership actually shifts from community ownership of naturally occurring trees to individual ownership if a person invests time in cutting a hole in the trunk for tapping. Before others can tap the tree, permission is needed by the owner. Rights to tap the tree can also be inherited. The most commonly tapped wood resin tree in Pathoumphone is *Dipterocarpus alatus* (*mai nyang* in Lao). For honeybee trees, villagers become temporary private owners early in the season, but the trees become common property after the end of the honey harvesting season (Baird and Bounphasy, 2003).

Overall, the strength of tenure for both sites increased after the introduction of CF. In Champasak, land tenure strength was evidenced by the ability of the community to resist outsiders seeking community land for plantations. A new post-CF change, as reported by the GAPE fieldworker, has been the inclusion of the villagers in decision-making about NTFP collection quotas and potential land concessions. The villages and GAPE were able to amend the original agreement to state that they must be informed and consulted by the government. In Khammouane, increased strength of tenure was not as obvious but the villagers still showed that they had a strong sense of ownership and responsibility over their newly-defined village areas and CFs. In many cases in Laos, tenure established through LUPLA has been disregarded by the government and investors seeking village land for tree plantations (TERRA, 2008). There are no known cases of communities using the LUPLA process and the CF rights given to them in a court of law against investors as a claim of tenure or compensation. Tenure strength comes from ownership and unified resistance by the community supported by formal recognition of the CF. Customary and formal rights both have some legitimacy in Laos, but both must exist simultaneously to ensure greater tenure security.

It is useful to consider the post-CF changes in tenure using a “bundle of rights” approach, made up of five indicators:

Access: Right to enter a defined area but no extraction

Withdrawal: Right to obtain units or products of a resource system  
Manage: Right to regulate use  
Exclusion: Right to determine access and how it is transferred  
Alienation: Right to sell, lease or give management and exclusion rights.

Each item in the “Bundle of Rights” corresponds with either a “holder of rights” (state, community or the individual).

- The right to **access** the CF areas was previously not controlled as the area was not delineated. After the CF implementation, villagers from the village which established the CF were allowed to access the area (as could outside villagers if permission was given by the host village). Therefore small changes occurred regarding the right to access.
- In both provinces, the right to **withdraw** (or harvest or collect) was originally not limited by the “rights holder”, at least not for all resources. Products that were not owned by families could be withdrawn by anyone from within the community and surrounding communities, provided that traditional methods of extraction were used. After the introduction of the CF, the right of withdrawal moved from an individual level to a community level (for common property products only; right of withdrawal for certain individually-owned resources remained the same). If formulated in a participatory manner, the new rules of withdrawal could include outsiders, as decided by the CF community. Therefore, it can be said that the right of withdrawal does not change but the recognition of the right is formalized by the community.
- Originally the right to **manage** and regulate use was a combination of traditional and formal management. In the past, informal customary use had been the norm: individuals decided what they would extract and in what amounts. This, however, applied more to NTFPs than to timber, which the state has tried to control. After the CF was created, the right to manage shifted from the individual and community level to the state level. In Khammouane, the villagers said that some user rules had been outlined by the government or VF committees, while in Champasak they were largely determined by the communities. Therefore, in Champasak, the right to manage continued or increased in favor of the communities. A community’s right to manage can in part be connected to facilitation and participation of the CF by the INGOs and the acceptance by the local government.
- **Exclusion** is more difficult to address, as previously communities did not have the government-sanctioned power to exclude others from their forest land, which resulted in conflict over some resources. There are, however, some social controls that functioned as a way of excluding others, both in the past and in the present. For example, people from another village might avoid harvesting in a particular forest because he or she did not want to upset a relative living in the village. Now communities have the power, supported by the state, to partially exclude others. However, social power can sometimes be more effective. Therefore, in both provinces, the pre-CF right to exclude depended partly on if the resource was

common or individual property, as well as on other social factors like community membership. After the CF was created, the right to exclude did not change for individually-owned resources, but for communal ownership the state formalized the communities' power to exclude others. It is important that exclusion always be considered in the context of the specific resources, as some species could be owned by families who could exclude others and transfer the resources to descendents and relatives.

- The right to **alienate** others, through selling, leasing or giving the resource to another, again must be considered in the context of individual ownership versus common property ownership. The wood resin trees in Champasak Province were owned individually and could be transferred to family members, thereby alienating others. Thus the establishment of CFs has not altered the right to alienate others in the case of individually-owned resources; the practice of alienation has always existed. For common property resources, however, the right of alienation does always not exist at the community level: in the case of yellow vine in Khammouane, CF user rules did not give anyone in the community the right to sell, lease or give them away. However, the resource was in fact being sold, because the district government had given a concession to the companies.

It can be seen that there is a difference between the two provinces in the shift from user rights (right to withdraw) to decision-making rights (right to manage). In Khammouane, the district government had a larger role in determining the rules governing the CFs. Thus communities in Khammouane have only strengthened their rights to withdrawal. They have less power to manage use because of the greater government involvement exerted through the LUPLA process. In Champasak, the regulations were mainly decided upon by the communities. The villagers were given the right to regulate, making them decision makers (although government approval for rules was still needed). The fact that companies were collecting NTFPs in the area made the people more aware of resource ownership and conservation. The presence of outsiders has contributed to the communities' sense of ownership. The Champasak sites also were implemented over a longer period, with many visits made to each village, while the Khammouane sites were established over one short intense period. This appears to have resulted in the greater ownership shown by the Champasak sites, and a subsequent strengthening in tenure rights.

In response to research question 5b: *“What changes in forest tenure would have been needed to implement the models successfully?”*

In Laos, a more successful CF model would include increasing the legal strength of land tenure arrangements provided to the communities by the government. Currently communities have user rights but relatively few decision-making or management rights. Stronger tenure rights would involve revising the LUPLA policy and the Land Forestry Law upon which LUPLA is based. The state would have to give communities decision-making authority and allow villages the right to decline proposed land concessions or other “cooperative land use agreements” involving various types of plantation development or cash cropping. Of course, there are risks in relying on only (new and old) legal tenure, as enforcement of the laws would be needed in addition to any establishment

of tenure. Without the political will to enforce the laws, regulations would likely not be followed or properly implemented. Another improvement to CF would be to increase the strength of customary tenure, which is already recognized legally by the government. A balance between customary and legal tenure which satisfies communities and their livelihoods must take into account economic, social and political factors, which are usually in flux. Therefore this balance will never be static, and stakeholders must use a flexible approach when using customary and legal tenure to regulate CF.

6. *Have recent tenure and market reforms implemented by the Government impacted on the livelihoods, income, forest condition or equity arrangements that have resulted from implementation of the models?*

The six communities visited as part of this research have been impacted by market reforms but have not lost land to large concessions. Instead, they have experienced multiple smaller impacts introduced by the gradual spreading of the market economy to rural Laos. To some extent, the degree of the impacts of market reforms depends on the resource richness of a village and its accessibility.

Before CF or LUPLA were introduced, forests were largely common property, with some state influence. Implementation of the CFs through the LUPLA process impacted all aspects of LIFE in Khammouane, and since then market reforms have impacted CF arrangements in many parts of the country, not only the sites examined as part of this research. Market reforms began in 1986 with the “New Economic Mechanisms” (the commitment to markets, liberalizing of investment rules in order to attract investors, laws, etc.) and continue to the present. A serious reform with an impact on CFs has been the government’s support to land concessions for commercial agricultural crops and tree plantations. Mining and hydro-power developments are also affecting large tracts of community land. These reforms are part of the government’s efforts to turn land into an asset that can generate revenues. However, in many cases the government has missed opportunities to maximize benefits from these arrangements for rural people, and allowed many of the benefits to largely slip past the communities that are impacted. One example of this is the low rates that the government has historically charged investors for concessions for using state land. There are also many instances of communities not being properly compensated for loss of lands that are taken for development projects. This is due to a lack of knowledge about compensation laws or to government avoidance of regulations for fear of losing investors.

In the case of the Khammouane sites, the above reforms, including the LUPLA policy, have had impacts on the LIFE factors. In all three of the villages in Khammouane, it was reported by both women’s and men’s groups that LUPLA had restricted their swidden agricultural systems. In one village, Keun Khouay, the CF itself had restricted swidden agriculture. Another interesting example from Veun Village involves an agreement for the harvest of yellow vine. In February 2007, a company was given a quota not based on harvesting amounts but based on time. District authorities gave the company one week to collect as much vine as they could, with most collection done in the village conservation

forest, a LUPLA forest area classification that should have been off-limits for such activities. Many villagers were hired by the company to collect the vine. In many cases, not only was the above-ground portion of the vine collected, but also the root, thereby killing the vine and ensuring no re-growth. In this case, the district violated the LUPLA agreement and the intended use of the conservation forest and CF. The government staff accompanying the research team was unable to explain why this occurred. The villages knew that the collecting was against the rules, but some saw an opportunity to make money. The village authorities said that if they had protested, nothing would happen and other villages would come to harvest for the company (or at least this is what the company probably led them to believe). This is not the only case of companies hiring villagers for collection. A Vietnamese company has been given full collection rights for orchids in the village forests; villagers collect these for the company. In the past, local NTFP traders would arrive annually to collect NTFPs. Now the collection of these NTFPs is done primarily by foreign companies, which are increasing in number. This change in NTFP policy and access has negatively impacted the availability of some NTFPs as well as resulted in competition between companies and the increase of unsustainable collection practices.

Regarding forest conditions, only in Champasak did government market reforms improve forest conditions in the CF. Because of demand, yellow vine and rattan have been planted by communities in the CF area, but this has had a minimal impact given the overall diversity or structure of the forest. These NTFPs are communal property and are not allowed to be collected, at least at present.

Equity arrangements introduced or formalized by the CF have ensured all community members have access to CF resources, while excluding outsiders if the CF village deemed it necessary. Although exclusion rules have been applied mostly to timber, NTFPs are still often collected by outsiders although enforcement of regulations is difficult. Market reforms by the government, in the form of increased NTFP quotas (yellow vine in both research provinces had been collected in CF areas) and concessions to Lao and foreign companies (mainly Vietnamese and Chinese), have shown that equity between government and community favors the government.

*7. Did the implementation of the models match the original plans, and how does this impact on replication or scaling up the model and the benefits that could be expected from such action?*

The above research question is two in one:

1. Did the implementation of the models match the original plans?
2. How does this impact on replication or scaling up?

*Implementation*

In both Champasak and Khammouane the implementation of CF was similar to the original plans. In Khammouane, government and the project followed the process of CF establishment laid out in JVC's "8-Step LUPLA Guide" for implementation. The Champasak CF used a more adaptable method with no direct connection to LUPLA and

no manual. However, some previous materials developed for co-management of fisheries resources in Khong District, Champasak Province were used to help provide lessons for the CF work in Champasak. Implementation at the Champasak sites generally took longer than planned, as the consultations needed to be adjusted to the communities' availability over a number of weeks or even months. Project plans were only available for the Champasak sites, but the general goals for the Khammouane sites were conveyed by the JVC project coordinator. Both projects set high expectations for the CF developments and on paper, reported reaching their goals. However, in all likelihood, it will take years to identify the results and long-term impacts, both negative and positive, of community forestry.

The one notable obstacle to greater realization of the goals is potential lack of community attention to CF. Villagers have multifaceted livelihoods and cannot be expected to concentrate on one area if others areas (i.e. agriculture or fisheries) are important to them as well. In fact, some critics would argue that CF alone is not the best way to approach resource management, but that it should be multi-faceted and include fisheries, agriculture, forestry, water and other resources. Possible challenges for CF projects may have been that the projects expected too much input from the villagers, overlooked a tendency to return to traditional management systems, and expected greater tenure security from Lao laws and government official support.

#### *Replication and/or scaling up*

LUPLA implementation, as facilitated by JVC, is replicable, since LUPLA is a government policy and has strong support. Scaling up depends on many factors which vary between communities. Due to pressures to meet implementation targets, budget and staff shortages, and under-trained staff, LUPLA implementation by government authorities is generally different than the process supported by INGOs such as JVC. Government-implemented LUPLA is characteristically a short process and not participatory, which results in little community interest or ownership in the process (Ducourtieux, 2005). Many communities in Laos have little recollection of ever going through the LUPLA process even though they have done so. They cannot define forest types or where the types are located; large wooden maps have fallen into disrepair or have disappeared.

It should be pointed out that the JVC-facilitated CF was not a typical LUPLA process. The INGO took considerable care to ensure that the process suited the communities' needs and times. Consultation is another key to INGO-implemented CF. Both projects included a wide audience of villagers, not only the village committee led by the headman. In the Champasak sites, between 3-4 preparation meetings were held with the communities before formally approaching the authorities to start implementation.

In Champasak, follow-up visits to the villages are on-going even after several years of implementation. These visits have shown that the CF is not a closed system and changes within or outside the village can affect the "health" of the CF. New district infrastructure, investment policy, and tax collection schemes can all affect the CF, and therefore CF rules need to be flexible. Also, rules which may have previously been appropriate will need to be revised over time, especially those concerning village consultations regarding logging quotas and concessions.

Successful implementation must also include a role given to surrounding villages, as CF projects cannot exist in isolation. Both the GAPE and JVC projects visited surrounding villages and invited them to CF establishment meetings. Nearby non-CF villages must have some participation in establishing the CF and agree with rules in principle. If possible, standalone CF should be avoided and a landscape level, multi-village conservation approach should be used, at least in cases when many villages have historically shared the same forest. This would increase support for CF, protect wildlife and NTFPs, and increase a community's ability to resist external pressures.

The question of “can these models be scaled up?” then becomes a question of quality. If done poorly, then scaling up can do more harm than good, but if done correctly with positive impacts, then scaling up is advantageous. One question to consider is whether a project which supports CF development but does not increase the legal tenure security should be scaled up. Before scaling up, a project should define the specific characteristics of a high quality CF, which can give the strongest tenure security possible. This research, in part, has shown that customary community ownership increases with participatory implementation of CF. Other supporting characteristics include preparation, community organizing, inclusion of various stakeholders, allocation of time and the importance of meeting community expectations.

In Champasak Province, GAPE is carrying out replication of CF development into other communities near areas of rubber plantation expansion, following methods previously used. As in the first villages, it is expected that the CF will act as a focal point to initiate communal ownership and give villages a chance to resist the concession of their forestland resources. There is, however, a risk that communities will successfully defend their CF areas but lose all other village land areas. Can this be considered success? By focusing only on CF and not the entire landscape, what may remain will be fragments of CF interspersed with agricultural land and trees. GAPE is surveying other villages that have the interest and potential to become involved and is receiving support from the district. The project is now researching the possibility of moving the approval processes up from the district to the province level, as supported by provisions in the Lao Forestry Law. It is hoped that this will increase tenure strength and provide villagers with an enhanced sense of CF ownership, since recognition of their CF rights will come from higher levels.

#### 8. *What are the constraints for further expansion of the models?*

There are several constraints for the expansion of CF through well-executed INGO processes. One is the lack of interest in the benefits of participatory CF establishment among INGOs and others working in Laos and the region. If they are not active in CF implementation, INGOs and other organisations should be encouraged to advocate for better land tenure security arrangements. INGOs often only focus on their sector of specialization and do not give attention to the importance of links between forest land tenure, incomes and school attendance, for example. If these links were made clearer, INGO interest might increase.

Funding is another issue that constrains expansion of the models. At present, the Lao government is not putting a lot of funding into supporting LUPLA; instead, they rely on funding from a few select donors. The materials costs needed for LUPLA are not high; the quality of work is determined largely by the process of discussion with communities, which is time consuming. Furthermore, conducting LUPLA requires a team with multiple skills (facilitation, mediation, gender awareness, understanding of local languages and cultures, mapping and community organizing). Skilled individuals are in high demand by INGOs, donor projects and the private sectors, as well as the government, all of whom face challenges in finding and retaining staff who possess these skills.

Another constraint is the potential that exists for communities to be faced with competing demands for the land resources in question, such as the development of agricultural and tree plantations, mines or hydropower projects. The question that begs to be asked is, if more of these developments lead to land concessions in areas where LUPLA and CF have been completed, what is the benefit in continuing to implement the CF process? If the land tenure security offered by the LUPLA process and development of CF areas is weak, if the land can be easily acquired for other development purposes, and if the government continues to make investment-based development a priority, is donor and/or government money being wasted on CF projects? Another question that must be asked is, if there is no threat from competing land resource developments, does CF establishment benefit communities? It may be wiser for INGOs to focus their efforts on land tenure issues before pushing forward with CF implementation.

The apparent weaknesses in CF tenure in Laos may yet be overcome. The key lies in the planning process, not only providing legal power, though change in the legal and regulatory framework that supports LUPLA and village forestry CF in Laos will also strengthen tenure<sup>6</sup>. Well-planned and implemented LUPLA can increase community participation and ownership over established CF areas. However, community agricultural land and food security needs must be taken into consideration or the positive effects of CF could be lost. Accompanying activities such as training in legal rights and responsibilities, conflict management and government relations, community organizing and NTFP supplementary planting, can contribute to stronger land tenure and increase a community's bargaining positions vis-à-vis compensation, petitions and other forms of participation. The 6 villages in the research study did show signs of increased community participation during and after the CF implementation process.

Further research into the specifics of LUPLA ownership and resistance to land concessions would be valuable, although Dirou (2006) found that there was no correlation between community participation and adoption of LUPLA rules. Her findings, from Louang Namtha Province in Northern Laos, do not appear to support what was found during this research, especially in Champasak. This, however, brings the discussion back to the relevance of LUPLA to communities and what they gain by it. Projects which are beginning work in CF and land tenure issues in Laos should carefully

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<sup>6</sup> The current LUPLA policy is undergoing revisions. However, it must be noted that this is only a policy which is supported by laws. For greater legal tenure the laws must be amended and respected. One possible positive change in the policy may be the inclusion of communal land as a land classification. This has been supported by a directive issued by the National Land Management Authority.

consider the methods used by past CF-related development projects that were working within the LUPLA framework, and seek ways to improve the process. LUPLA should not be viewed as the only option for CF in Laos, as alternative models have been used in Champasak Province. INGOs need to be creative and work using existing legislation, but also be willing to trial new methods or build strategic partnerships with communities, other INGOs, research institutes, universities, and so on.

## **6.0 Conclusions and relevance to LIFE variables**

This study has examined how community forestry, applied through the LUPLA policy (Khammouane Province) and through a non-LUPLA approach (Champasak Province) has affected the four variables in the LIFE framework in Laos. In some respects, the study has been an evaluation of the INGOs that were involved in facilitating the CF.

The research has shown that CF is complex and needs strong commitment and full participation in order to be integrated into communities' traditional management systems. Rapid, top-down implementation may result in a lack of ownership, lack of understanding, or an outright rejection by the community. Furthermore, communities must be able to experience tangible benefits from CFs, otherwise CF will not be actively supported and managed by the community. In many cases in Laos, even to some extent in the research villages, the LUPLA process and establishment of CF have been forgotten and people have either reverted back to their previous management system or have integrated the two systems.

Given the negative impacts of the land allocation portion of LUPLA in relation to agriculture, how does CF fit into communities' livelihoods and landscapes? The results of this research show that CF can have beneficial effects for communities and on the LIFE variables, but it can also damage livelihoods when it is associated with cessation of swidden agriculture, or excluding access of poor people to important resources. It is also challenging to only focus on CF, when in fact CF co-exists alongside four or five other forest classification types.

In Champasak, the non-LUPLA approach did not involve agricultural land but the time-intensive process which led up to the completion of the CF required solid community cohesion and effective facilitation, which have resulted in strong ownership of the CF. To some extent the CF in Champasak have conservation aspects, as the communities are self-regulating themselves in the collection of some key species, and are also enhancement planting in the CF to speed along recovery of over-harvested NTFPs.

The research does conclude and agree with an established standard in CF work: that the success of CF projects is largely in the quality of the process itself. The research has also shown that when CF is embedded within larger complex policy initiatives, positive results run the risk of becoming diluted. A more focused approach seems to allow for the time and processes needed to build the relations and understanding needed for success. The research has also shown that in Laos, rural land tenure (communal and individual) needs to become internalized by government at all levels. This would go far in setting a constructive course for CF.

Why and how CF establishment results in positive impacts on the LIFE variables for communities is dependent on many of the factors already mentioned and can vary between communities, due to factors such as the value of resources contained in the CF, access to roads, quality of forest resources within the boundaries of surrounding villages, effective enforcement of CF regulations, etc. The LIFE variables are broken down for the studied communities and summarized below.

**Livelihoods** – Of the twelve groups asked, eight clearly responded or were clearly understood by the researchers. Five groups said there were improvements to livelihoods as a result of CF, two said there were no improvements, and one group said that there were negative impacts. The latter was the poorer women’s group from Keun Khouay Village in Khammouane Province, which stated that LUPLA was the cause of negative effects because it limited the area for planting rice. They also said that previously there was some planting in the CF area which is no longer allowed. In both project research areas, the livelihoods question was challenging to define and obtain clear answers for. Although some of the responses show that livelihoods have improved, the research shows that at this time the improvements have not been major. It is important that time be provided for CFs to mature so that it is possible for the positive impacts on livelihoods to be more easily measured. The question of livelihoods, however, is clearly linked to the next life variable: income.

**Income** – From the thirty group interviews conducted, nineteen gave clear answers or were clearly understood by the researchers. Thirteen groups said that incomes from NTFP sales had increased, five said they had decreased and one said there was no change. Changes in income are difficult to confirm, as baseline data were not available. People based the answers they gave on their recollections of the time period prior to the establishment of CF or Conservation Forests up until the time of their interview. The trend in the numbers suggests an improvement in incomes, but this is not conclusive.

**Forest Condition** – There is a very high level of agreement by all groups that the forest conditions in CFs improved after the CF was established. Interviewees identified the density of timber and regenerating forest as the characteristics most indicative of improved forest conditions.

**Equity** – The distribution of benefits from community-based natural resource management is the most common measure of equity (Mahanty, 2006). In the case of the 2 research sites, equity has changed from a wide multi-community distribution of benefits and a largely common property resource management system, to one of single community benefits deriving from a defined area of resources where access is regulated. Communities now have greater equity in that the distribution of benefits are more confined to community members, which is upheld by the new village boundaries and the exclusion of other communities from this areas through the use of CF regulations (i.e.: they do not share the benefit of their forests with others). For communities rich in resources, equity has increased, but in resource-poor communities equity has decreased. As the village does not benefit from products collected and sold from the CF by collectors (i.e.: no taxes paid), the CF has not affected equity. A change in equity involves quotas granted by the state for harvesting of NTFPs to outsiders, which again

affects equity as communities do not get the direct benefits from selling these—they only receive benefits from selling their labor. The sites established through the conservation forests have had a more favorable effect on equity but this has come through processes and not through the establishment of legal tenure. Communities feel stronger ownership and have exerted this therefore pushing equity in their favor.

Equity (or lack thereof) between the general and poorer groups, as evidenced by the distribution of forest products or income was not shown in the data collected. Pre-CF data was not available, so changes in equity as a result of the CF could not be measured. It was noted, however, that those using the CF came from both income groups. The CF did not change access rights. Nor were there any special arrangements in the user rules that gave the poorer group any advantage over others. It is unlikely that the CF had any impact on intra-community equity.

## **7.0 The Future of Community Forestry in Lao PDR**

The future of formal NTFP-inclusive community forest management in Laos is at a defining moment in history. INGOs involved in CF have opportunities for working with communities, but it is important that for them to think “outside of the box.” Passive acceptance and support of the most popular CF methods, which may not always be the best for communities, should be challenged and improved upon; new and/or alternative legal measures must be pursued. INGOs need to draw on the vast wealth of CBFM knowledge available from around the globe and adapt and trial it in the Lao context.

To date, the government has not proposed new alternatives to LUPLA other than the revised LUPLA implementation manual. The new National Land Management Authority (NLMA), which has an important role in registering land defined by LUPLA, has expressed interest in community-based management. The NLMA was established in 2006 and is trying to find a niche for itself within the Lao government bureaucracy. The NLMA has shown progressive thinking by piloting the concept of communal land tenure, which they claim will be untouchable by outsiders (personal communication with Minister of the NLMA, Khamouan Boupha, November 2008). It is not certain if the new LUPLA process will increase the tenure security of communities over land, this may only come when there is an improved rule of law in Laos. The recognition of customary rights is on paper in Laos and the potential issuance of communal land titles for entire village forests would support customary land use and could take CF to new levels. Ultimately, CF would not exist as one forest type inside of a larger policy, but would replace the allocation of various forest classifications altogether with complete community management within village boundaries. However, for these changes to occur, a tectonic shift in thinking is needed within the government.

The government must *learn* to trust the people they govern to sustainably manage the forest resources they are allocated and to share more of the benefits derived from the forests and forest lands with local communities. However, local communities themselves would be amongst the first to acknowledge that while they should be given more power, checks and balances involving the state are still important. At present, participation by communities in natural resources management in Laos is largely superficial, with the

government retaining most of the responsibilities and decision-making authority, but there are signs of change. One example of this is the new Fisheries Law, which had considerable input from outside the government and allows for greater levels of community participation than community forests. However, as land and forests involve much greater stakes and profits, increasing participation is not always in the interest of all members of the government. The very low level of civil society involvement in drafting the 2007 Law on Forestry and a complete exclusion of community input demonstrates this. There is hope, however, and during 2008 and 2009 there were consultations and forums on proposed revisions for the new LUPLA policy, during which the government accepted recommendations offered by INGOs. There is a continued need for civil society to advocate for greater levels of participation and joint decision-making in forest resource management issues.

Finally, further research into the level of transparency associated with bilateral donor-funded CF projects versus those supported by smaller INGOs would demonstrate that transparency enhances participation and learning by all parties. INGOs can also be creative by setting examples and creating models which work inside and outside the formally sanctioned systems. Traditional management practices need to be integrated with state natural resource management regimes. When a balance in CBFM is found that is acceptable to both the communities involved and the government, then the benefits for all involved will be maximized.

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## Annex 1: Questionnaires

### Group: NLMA District staff:

Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer:\_\_\_\_\_

Province:\_\_\_\_\_

District:\_\_\_\_\_

Name:\_\_\_\_\_

Position:\_\_\_\_\_

Involvement with project:

1. Before establishment of the CF what were the rights and practices in the project village? (6)

Follow up: specify rights and practices.

2. Did the CF activities impact these rights and practices? (6)
  3. What other factors have impacted land use rights and practices in the target village? (6)
  4. What other factors have impacted the land use rights and practices outside the target village? (6)
- 

### Group: Government staff:

Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer:\_\_\_\_\_

Province:\_\_\_\_\_

District:\_\_\_\_\_

Name:\_\_\_\_\_

Position:\_\_\_\_\_

Involvement with project:

1. What CF activities have been implemented? (1)
2. Have those activities improved livelihoods and what are the indicators?(1)
3. Have any activities decreased the livelihoods and what are the indicators?(1)
4. Have other projects or other things improved the livelihoods of people?(4)

No

Yes

If yes, what are the indicators?

Follow up: Have these impacts been different for men and women?

5. Have other projects or other things decreased the livelihoods of people?(4)

No

Yes

If yes, what are the indicators?

Follow up: Have these impacts been different for men and women?

6. How has the forest environment inside the CF changed since the CF was established?(7)

7. How has the forest environment outside the CF changed since the CF was established?(8)

8. Changes in forestry law and policy that impact the CF? (6)
- 

**Group: project staff:**

Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer:\_\_\_\_\_

Province:\_\_\_\_\_

District:\_\_\_\_\_

Name:\_\_\_\_\_

Position:\_\_\_\_\_

Involvement with project:

1. What CF activities have been implemented? (1)
2. Have those activities improved livelihoods and what are the indicators?(1)
3. Have any activities decreased the livelihoods and what are the indicators?(1)
4. Have other projects or other things improved the livelihoods of people?(4)

No

Yes

If yes, what are the indicators?

Follow up: Have these impacts been different for men and women?

5. Have other projects or other things decreased the livelihoods of people?(4)

No

Yes

If yes what are the indicators?

Follow up: Have these impacts been different for men and women?

6. How has the forest environment inside the CF changed since the CF was established?(7)
7. How has the forest environment outside the CF changed since the CF was established?(8)

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**Group: village (CF) committee**

Village: **1)**\_\_\_\_\_ Date: **2)**\_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: **3)**\_\_\_\_\_

***Village characteristics & history***

Population: **4)**\_\_\_\_\_ people **5)**\_\_\_\_\_ women

**6)**\_\_\_\_\_ families **7)**\_\_\_\_\_ households

Village administration committees:

**8)**\_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic group(s):

**9)**\_\_\_\_\_

Village age: **10)**\_\_\_\_\_ Origin of settlers: **11)**\_\_\_\_\_

Reason for coming (relocation history):

**12)**\_\_\_\_\_

Main job: **13)**\_\_\_\_\_ Other jobs: **14)**\_\_\_\_\_

1. How have NTFP incomes changed between \_\_\_\_\_ and now. (3)

Increase  
Decrease  
No change

Follow up: Why?

2. In addition to villagers harvesting NTFPs is anyone else harvesting anything from the CF areas? (company, other villages, government). (3)

Yes  
No

Follow up: If yes, what benefit is the community getting?

3. How has the condition of the forest within the CF management area changed since establishment? (4)

4. How has the condition of the forest outside of the CF management area changed since establishment of the CF? (4)
5. What are the rules of access? (written down?) (4)
  - a. What products are included?
  - b. Are access times included?
  - c. Does access depend on who you are?
6. Before CF projects what were the previous land use rights and practices? (5)
7. Did the CF impact these? If yes, why? (5)
8. What other factors have impacted land use and practices in nearby villages and in the project village? (5)
9. Level of knowledge of law and policy changes since the CF establishment? (7)
10. What have been the obstacles to CF implementation in general? (8)

Follow up: Why\how?

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**Group: general villagers**

Village:\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer:\_\_\_\_\_

Gender:\_\_\_\_\_ Number of interviewees:\_\_\_\_\_ Time:\_\_\_\_\_

1. How have women's\men's livelihoods changed as a result of: (1)
  - a. CF activities
  - b. Other project activities
  - c. Other projects
2. Before CF projects what were the previous land use rights and practices? (5)
3. Did the CF impact these? If yes how? (5)
4. What other factors have impacted your land use rights and practices in the project village? (5)
5. What other factors have impacted land use and practices in nearby villages? (6)
6. How have NTFP incomes changed since starting the CF project? (7)
  - Increase
  - Decrease
  - No change
7. Do villagers from other villages collect NTFPs in the CF area? (8)

No  
Yes  
If yes, does your village receive any benefits?

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**Group: poorer people**

Village: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of interviewees: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How have NTFP incomes changed between \_\_\_\_\_ and now? (3)

Increase  
Decrease  
No change

Follow up: Why?

2. In addition to villagers harvesting NTFPs is anyone else harvesting anything from the CF areas? (company, other villages, government). (3)

Yes  
No

Follow up: If yes, what benefit is the community getting?

2. How has the condition of the forest within the CF management area changed since establishment? (4)

3. How has the condition of the forest outside of the CF management area changed since establishment of the CF? (4)

4. Before CF projects what were the previous land use rights and practices? (5)

5. Did the CF impact these? If yes, why? (5)

6. What other factors have impacted your land use rights and practices? (5)

## Annex 2: Research Questions and Responses

### 1. How has the implementation of various CF models improved the livelihoods of the communities as perceived by the villagers (women and men)?

Table 1: Khammouane Province

	Nathan Village:	Veun Village:	Keun Khouay Village
<b>Groups Interviewed</b>			
General Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There have been no impacts on livelihoods from the CF</li> <li>- Conservation has been a major change but the rules were brought in from the outside</li> <li>- People are strict about village ownership over resources, there are less people collecting in CF area now.</li> <li>- More NTFPs after CF but also depends on family effort to collect</li> <li>- rattan, rice bank</li> <li>- IRD project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No changes after CF</li> <li>- CF and rules have made cutting wood more difficult</li> <li>- There are fewer conflicts between villages now.</li> <li>- JVC fruit tree and rice planting</li> <li>- Other projects; surveying jatropa and cassava plantation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>The CF has made things better, as there are more NTFPs</b></li> <li><b>BUT</b></li> <li>-land and forest allocation (LFA) has made life more difficult as there are less areas to plant crops</li> <li>Women said more NTFPs because of less swidden.</li> <li>- Women are poorer because less land</li> <li><b>Follow up question:</b> Would they return to pre-CF?</li> <li><b>Answer:</b> No, the regulations about NTFPs make things easier.</li> <li>- They only plant rice and no other crops and follow regulations</li> <li>- JVC plant fruit tree</li> <li>- Other projects: None</li> </ul>
General Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The regulations on the management of the CF means people cannot cut wherever they like</li> <li>- Formal complaints can be made about other village cutting in CF and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>CF has improved livelihoods because there is better management of forests and NTFPs</b></li> <li>- After road improvements, more</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Better management means better forest condition</b></li> <li><b>Follow Up:</b> How does this mean better livelihoods?</li> <li><b>Response:</b> Unsure</li> </ul>

	<p>protecting the area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is better conservation of NTFPs and everyone must follow rules, so everyone is equal.</li> </ul>	<p>traders and sellers started coming to the village.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-One man wanted to start a plantation in CF area but was not allowed to.</li> <li>- no other JVC activities</li> <li>- no other projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Men collect mushrooms at night to get ahead of others and women sell during the day.</li> <li>- JVC also did rice bank and well</li> <li>- Other projects: Red Cross drilled one water well</li> </ul>
Village Forest Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Less people from other villages go to CF area which means more NTFPs for our village</li> <li>- Conservation was important and meant more NTFPs</li> <li>- LFA was done in three days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The CF and the new rules have not made any improvements to livelihoods</li> <li>- Other villages still cut wood illegally as they have no forest. The CF has cut them off.</li> <li>- More potential for conflict but difficult for committee to act as the other village has no forest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Livelihoods are better because our village's resources are better protected from others.</li> <li>- They stated the CF was started in 1997 when in fact, it was started 1999.</li> <li>- NTFPs are decreasing because more people are collecting them in order to buy rice</li> </ul>
Notebooks (team)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Men say stricter control on wood cutting.</li> <li>- Women note that conservation is a major change</li> <li>- User rules from outside imposed</li> <li>- Women could not readily name the NTFP-related rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Women's group: before communal property was available for use but now regulated which is good for protecting from other villages</b></li> <li>- Men's group: before no borders and more conflict; CF means better control and livelihoods</li> <li>Follow Up: Would like to return to old system?</li> <li>Answer: No, but now we cannot do swidden.</li> <li>- Women say Dept. of Forestry comes to check about rules.</li> <li>- The VFC says they can collect in the conservation forest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All women knew of forest allocation</li> <li>- Two of five people indicated where CF was</li> <li>- Men had difficulty in remembering LFA; said life was better but could not relate it to LFA</li> <li>- Some thought government was going to take all the land.</li> <li>- User Agreement was difficult to locate.</li> </ul>
Project reports	None available	None available	None available

Table 2: Champasak Province

	Houay Ko	Lao Nya	Nabone
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General female	- <b>gradual improvement because of CF activities and new regulations because more NTFPs</b> - GAPE project same as men - Other projects same as men	-Not clearly answered.	- Living conditions are still difficult and still poor  - No changes as a result of CF establishment.
General Male	- Positive change but how is not clearly stated - other GAPE activities: school buffalo bank, village well -other projects: BCI (fruit tree and planting in CF), PRF bridge) and SUFORD (pig and poultry)	- <b>No improvement to livelihoods</b>	-Livelihoods have improved but not clear why
VFC	- NTFPs have increased since the establishment of the CF so livelihoods are better  - Villagers decided on the regulations	- NTFPs have increased since the establishment of the CF so livelihoods are better  - Regulations give community more power to manage	- Protection of the NTFPs (seasonal) has increased the overall amount of NTFPs
Project reports	- Better forest condition in the community forests has meant an increase in NTFPs and increase in family incomes	- Better forest condition in the community forests has meant an increase in NTFPs and increase in family incomes	- Better forest condition in the community forests has meant an increase in NTFPs and increase in family incomes

2. **How has the implementation of the CF models improved the living conditions of the communities as reported by the project staff and government counterparts?**

Table 3: Khammouane Province

	Nathan Village:	Veun Village:	Keun Khouay Village
Government staff	<p>- <b>JVC LFA has improved livelihoods as indicated by villagers' increased understanding forest conservation and link to NTFPs</b></p> <p>- CF Activities: LFA and rattan planting</p> <p>- Other activities: rice bank, fruit tree, rice farming which have all improved livelihoods.</p> <p>- VIP project: buffalo and goats promotion help rice shortage but not JVC activity.</p>		

JVC Project staff	<p><b>- Improve livelihoods as indicated by less conflict between villages and more control (exclusion) of NTFPs</b></p> <p>-Activities: LFA and regulations and village volunteers, rattan growing, rice growing (more rice)  - number of poor families decrease (13 – 3)</p> <p>-VIP goat raising fund (not JVC)</p> <p>- Dry season home garden by French INGO.</p>	<p><b>Improve livelihoods as indicated by less conflict between villages and more control (exclusion) of NTFPs</b></p>	<p><b>Improve livelihoods as indicated by less conflict between villages and more control (exclusion) of NTFPs</b></p>
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Table 4: Champasak Province

	Houay Ko	Lao Nya	Nabone
GAPE Project staff	<p><b>- Livelihoods have improved as the villages have more control of the forests and the NTFPs inside.</b></p> <p>- NTFP, rattan and yellow vine nursery and gardens, NTFP regulations</p> <p>- Other activities; fruit trees, buffalo bank, veterinary fund, school, health centre, trainings</p> <p>- Livelihoods have improved as indicated by less poor families, more rice</p> <p>- Other projects help village</p>		
Government staff	<p><b>- The concept of conservation for sustainability has been accepted by the community and forest resources will last a long time.</b></p> <p>- Other CF activities are rattan and yellow vine nursery and gardens, NTFP regulations</p> <p>- Other project activities; fruit trees, buffalo bank, veterinary fund, school, health centre, trainings</p> <p>- Livelihoods have improved as indicated by less poor families, more rice</p>		

	- SUFORD project provides livestock and rice seed
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3. **Has implementation of the CF models had any impacts on community incomes or benefit sharing of profits from forest products?**

Table 5: Khammouane Province

Interview Group	Nathan Village:	Veun Village:	Keun Khouay Village
Poor Female	- NTFP incomes have <b>increased</b> Why? Because less swidden and more forest  - No other groups harvesting	- NTFP incomes <b>decreased</b> because of the number of people in village and more market demand  - Other villagers collect in CF and not benefits gained	- <b>Some NTFP incomes have decreased because of more selling</b>  - Overall amount of NTFPs (especially mushroom) increase because of regulations and improvement in forest
Poor Male	- <b>No change</b> in incomes Why? <b>Because there are still many places to find food.</b> -No other groups collecting	- NTFP incomes <b>increased</b> because of regulations and more forest  - Other villages collect illegally and no benefit gained	- <b>Increased NTFP incomes (animals and bamboo) because of better regulations and improved forest condition</b>  - No others harvesting NTFPs in the CF area
General Female	- Less people from other villages collecting so more NTFPs and better sales	- Other villages collect but no benefits gained	- No other villages and companies are harvesting NTFPs
General Male	- No other people collecting	- Other villages collect but no benefits which causes conflict	- NTFP income have increased b/c of the increased collecting to meet market demand and more forest - Other villages are harvesting NTFPs in the village CF and no benefits gained  - There is conflict with other villages regarding mushroom collection in the CF
CF Committee	- <b>Increased incomes b/c more regulations, before anyone could</b>	- <b>Incomes have increased because of better management</b>	- <b>Income from NTFPs has increased. Why? More collection of NTFPs but</b>

	<p><b>collect, now there is order</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No other groups collecting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Others collect and they don't pay, if they ask they must pay</li> </ul>	<p><b>some kinds are now decreasing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Other villagers harvest NTFPs in the CF but no benefit gained</li> </ul>
Notebooks (team)	<p><u>Women Poor Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some say increase, others say decrease</li> <li>- CF\LFA no impact on livelihoods</li> </ul> <p><u>Men Poor Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More NTFPs but not sure about incomes</li> <li>- No other groups collecting now b/c of LFA and threat of fines</li> </ul> <p><u>Men General Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More NTFPs but no changes in income</li> <li>- Open access, others collecting</li> </ul> <p><u>Women General Group</u></p> <p>More NTFPs farther from village BUT depends on family effort (no. of children)</p>	<p><u>Women Poor Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decreased income from NTFPs b/c more people collecting</li> <li>- Other villages collect, don't pay</li> <li>- Yellow vine was collected in conservation forest in 2007, all gone</li> <li>- Open access for orchids</li> </ul> <p><u>Women General Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No changes to income. Why? they do not know</li> <li>- Before open access, now Office of Forestry monitors them</li> </ul> <p><u>Men Poor Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More NTFPs and income because of less forest cutting</li> <li>- Others collect but no payment</li> </ul> <p><u>Men General Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NTFPs increase b/c less swidden and others collect but no benefits</li> </ul>	<p><u>Women Poor Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some NTFPs have decreased</li> <li>- More animals because less guns</li> <li>- No other villages</li> <li>- No big trees left, logged.</li> <li>- Difficult to sell bamboo shoots</li> <li>- Selling more mushrooms more important</li> </ul> <p><u>Women Group General</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poorer because less land</li> <li>- 2 of 5 knew location of CF</li> <li>- NTFPs increase b/c less swidden in CF area</li> <li>- mushrooms are main NTFP now</li> <li>- No change in benefit sharing</li> </ul> <p><u>Men Poor Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NTFPs have increased but so has collection and incomes</li> </ul> <p><u>Men General Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overall more NTFPs and more sales</li> <li>- Do not remember LFA that well</li> <li>- Thought government was coming to take the land</li> <li>- For some NTFPs other villages can collect</li> <li>- other village cannot cut timber</li> </ul> <p><u>Village Committee</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decreasing NTFPs because of selling to buy rice.</li> <li>- Open collection but no benefits</li> </ul>

			- I took several hours to locate LFA agreement
Project reports	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 6: Champasak Province

	Houay Ko	Lao Nya	Nabone
<b>Interview Group</b>			
Poor Female	- <b>Incomes have increased b/c we strictly observe the regulations</b> - Other people, traders and companies collect\steal but nothing paid	- <b>Incomes from the CF (NTFP) have decreased b/c the forest condition is worse</b> - Others collect NTFPs but do not pay. Fines have been given.	- <b>Incomes from NTFPs have increased since the CF</b> - Other villages collect NTFPs and cut trees but do not pay
Poor Male	- <b>Incomes have decreased b/c there is more conflict</b> - Other villages steal and don't pay	- <b>More NTFPs and more income b/c of better forest condition</b> - Other collect NTFP but do not pay	- <b>Incomes from NTFP have decreased b/c of past damage to the forest</b> - Other collect NTFP but do not pay
General Female	- NTFP incomes have decreased as some expensive NTFP have decreased such as cardamom and yellow vine. - Other villages collect and have been taxed, trees cut	- The CF has increased incomes as no swidden is done there and there is less damage to malva trees, honey and yellow vine. - Surrounding villages steal NTFP from CF	- Other collect NTFP but do not pay
General Male	- Increased incomes because regulations restrict some outsiders - Other villages collect, have been taxed	- No change in income as a result of the CF. The main change is weather which affects NTFPs  - Surrounding villages steal NTFPs from CF	- Others collect NTFPs and we try to tax them but it is difficult
CF Committee	- <b>Increased incomes b/c of regulations</b> - Other villages with some taxes	- <b>Incomes from NTFPs have increased b/c better management (companies not over collecting)</b> - Other collect NTFPs but do not pay	- <b>Incomes from NTFPs have increased b/c better management (companies not over collecting)</b> - Only a small amount of people steal NTFPs
Notebooks (team)	None		
Project reports	Increased NTFPs and sales	Increased NTFPs and sales	Increased NTFPs and sales

#### 4. What changes in the forest environment have occurred since the trials?

Table 7: Khammouane

	Nathan Village:	Veun Village:	Keun Khouay Village
Poor Female	- Denser forest in CF - Where there is no LFA the forests are in worse condition	- The forest condition in the CF has improved  - The forest outside the CF has improved	- In general the forest has improved but some species (Pterocarpus macrocarpus) have decreased - The forest outside of the CF has improved also
Poor Male	- The forest is much denser than before. - The area outside is degraded	- The forest condition in the CF has improved b/c of strict regulation - The area outside the CF is not in good condition	- Forest condition has improved as less people are cutting wood - Forest outside CF is worse
CF Committee	- Much improved b/c of regulations - Areas outside are in worse condition b/c of agriculture and hunting	- The forest condition in the CF has improved - The forest condition outside the CF is worse	- Forest condition has improved as swidden has decreased - Area is in worse condition b/c there is no management
Project staff	<b>- Forest has been cleared for agriculture in some villages as LFA was not clearly explained to communities</b>	<b>- Forest has been cleared for agriculture in some villages as LFA was not clearly explained to communities</b>	<b>- Forest has been cleared for agriculture in some villages as LFA was not clearly explained to communities</b>
Government staff	- Improved forest condition as there is patrolling and controlled logging - Denser forest and abundance of NTFPs increased - Areas outside CF are getting worse	- Improved forest condition as there is patrolling and controlled logging - Denser forest and abundance of NTFPs increased	- Improved forest condition as there is patrolling and controlled logging - Denser forest and abundance of NTFPs increased
Notebooks (team)	- Field observation showed a healthy stocked forest with some signs of agriculture. It was denser than the forest closer to the village	- Forest visit showed a dense forest in better condition compared to surrounding areas.	

Table 8: Champasak Province

	Houay Ko	Lao Nya	Nabone
Poor Female	- The management has improved, condition not sure.	- Better forest condition than before	- In general the forests were in better shape before the war and illegal

	- Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly	- Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly	logging. The CF is better than the other areas. - Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly
Poor Male	- Slow but noticeable change	- Better forest condition than before	- Better but some people did not respect the regulation and cut the forest for agriculture - Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly
CF Committee	- Better forest condition - Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly	- Better forest condition - Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly	- Too early to tell - Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly
Project staff	- The older CF have improved forest condition - Less or no cutting of big trees makes it better than other areas. - Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly	- Overall better forest condition since the CF  - Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly	- Too soon to note any change but cutting has been done in the CF by villagers  - Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly
Government staff	- The older CF have improved forest conditions but for the newer one it is too soon to say - Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly	- Better NTFP condition and no cutting in the area  - Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly	- Too soon to note any change  - Areas outside the CF are degrading more quickly
Notebooks (team)	- Noticeable difference between CF and surrounding forest	- Noticeable difference between CF and surrounding forest	- CF and surrounding forest are similar

### **5. What changes in forest tenure were made or would have been needed to implement the models successfully?**

What changes in forest tenure were made to implement the project (as perceived by respondents)?

Table 9: Khammouane

Group	Keun Khouay		Veun		Nathan	
	Pre - CF	Post - CF	Pre - CF	Post - CF	Pre - CF	Post - CF
Poor Female	-Common property and no formal rules	- Regulations of the government followed - Exclude other people	- CF did not impact our rights but we now must follow	-Limited collection by time and species - Partial exclusion on	- No formal rules or regulations - Collected	- Wood use is controlled. - No permission

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set collection seasons</li> <li>- Must ask for permission to cut tree</li> <li>- No permission needed for NTFP collection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>regulations.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>some species (yellow vine)</li> <li>- Cash fine system in place (30,000kip for cutting a tree)</li> <li>- <b>No impact from CF but people must now follow rules and pay fines</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>throughout the year</li> <li>- Communal ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>needed to collect NTFPs</li> <li>- Now have set collection times (June and July)</li> <li>- Rules include shrimp, fish and snails</li> <li>- no agriculture in the CF area allowed</li> </ul>
Poor Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Traditional use and ceremonies to pay respect to spirits</li> <li>- No cutting during Buddhist lent</li> <li>- Communal ownership over some products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Same ceremonies as before</li> <li>- New regulations from government</li> <li>- Limited timber use</li> <li>- CF is closed to others except outsiders who have rice paddy in the village</li> <li>- No impact to user rights by the CF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communal ownership with some species owned by individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New rules</li> <li>- <b>Yes, there is an impact on the rights to use the forest, there are regulations</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Traditional use and ceremonies to pay respect to spirits</li> <li>- Communal ownership with some species owned by individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Same ceremonies</li> <li>- New government regulations</li> <li>- Limited timber use</li> <li>- No impact to user rights by the CF</li> </ul>
General female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No formal regulations, only community rules</li> <li>- Could cut wood only for house, not sale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited agriculture area</li> <li>- No swidden</li> <li>- Like order use of forest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More conflict</li> <li>- Logging was scattered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cutting is controlled for housing only</li> <li>- Taxes on cutting for houses and village temple and school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Before cutting wood for houses was easy</li> <li>- No regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Must follow regulations</li> <li>- Now NTFPs are sold</li> <li>- No impact from CF</li> </ul>
General Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No CF regulations</li> <li>- Cut as many trees as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can only cut softwood, no hard wood</li> <li>- Can only cut 5m3</li> <li>- People have been fined for cutting wood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indigenous traditions were used, no cutting near water b/c spirits</li> <li>- Forest use was</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collective land now so rules must be respected</li> <li>- Owners of private land can do whatever they like</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do as each person likes to and no permission needed for most resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Permission and fine system</li> <li>- Feel more community ownership over the forest</li> </ul>

			based on individual needs	- Other villages have bad impact as they must come to Veun, now more conflict		- People think about conservation
CF Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No formal regulation</li> <li>- Not much separation or classification of forests</li> <li>- Cut trees after rice harvest for houses</li> <li>- No cutting at Buddhist Lent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Now more district regulations, none from village</li> <li>- Now there are harvesting dates, species and exclusions of other people</li> <li>- Difficult to uphold regulations</li> <li>- People in next village have no wood and cannot cut in this village</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No formal regulations</li> <li>- No limits on collection but sold less</li> <li>- Forest conditions were getting worse</li> <li>- Now villagers cannot do as they like</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Now harvesting times, areas, species</li> <li>- Try to protect and keep other out</li> <li>- New rules were difficult to implement at first, no one listened</li> <li>- The CF is for public use not individual control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No formal regulations</li> <li>- Forests were getting worse and there are less NTFPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Villagers impacted because they cannot do as they like</li> </ul>
Notebooks (team)						

Table 10:Champasak

Group	Houay Ko		Lao Nya		Nabone	
	Pre – CF	Post – CF	Pre - CF	Post - CF	Pre - CF	Post – CF
Poor Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Few formal regulations from government.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Seasonal rules on NTFP collection</li> <li>-Mature NTFPs can be collected.</li> <li>-Exclusion of some species</li> <li>-No land concessions allowed in CF</li> <li>-No land use rights impacted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Few formal regulations, more communal ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exclusion of others from CF area</li> <li>- Mature malva nuts only</li> <li>- No impact on user rights</li> <li>- Community ownership has increased</li> <li>- We must be aware of new regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Fewer regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Other village not allowed to collect</li> <li>- Mature malva nuts only</li> <li>- No impact on user rights</li> <li>- Community ownership stronger</li> </ul>
Poor Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Few regulations, many people collect in the CF area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Other villages excluded from CF, they can ask</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regulations are related to tradition and less to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Other villages must ask before using CF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Few regulations and many outsiders collect valuable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very strict community regulations now</li> </ul>

		permission. - More rules to follow	government	- Collect mature malva nuts only - More rules	NTFPs, including government staff	
General Female	- Agriculture could be done anywhere	- Not much impact on rights - No land concessions, village refuses	- Did not have to ask permission to cut wood	- No change - Border conflict continues with Nam Om Village	- No regulation, use the forest as much as wanted	- No impact from CF
General Male	- Random cutting of trees, no permission needed	- New borders between villages - No impacts on land use - Others can still collect if permission is given.	- Scattered logging in CF area and no regulation on NTFP collection	- No change	- Many people come to collect at different times. - We collect more freely.	- Timber is controlled, 5m <sup>3</sup> /family
CF Committee	- No rules and difficult to control timber cutting	- Seasonal rules - Mature NTFPs only -Exclusion of others from the CF -No land concessions allowed -No land use rights impacted - Timber cutting is controlled	- Difficult to control timber cutting - Many people cut and collected.	- Seasonal rules - Mature NTFPs - Exclusion of others from CF - Timber cutting is controlled	- No regulations on use and management. - A lot of shifting cultivation in CF area	- Still border conflicts with other villages as CF is not clear.
Notebooks (team)	- communal property with some individual ownership	- new regulations limit where, who, when, what and how much	- communal property with some individual ownership	-new regulations limit where, who, when, what and how much	- communal property with some individual ownership	-new regulations limit where, who, when, what and how much