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7 Conflict resolution is part of co-management



Natural resources are assets with high monetary and livelihood values. Hence, conflicts and disagreements regarding the management of these resources come up: Who benefits from them and who has what responsibility? Conflicts in the co-management of NPAs can be minimized if all stakeholders organize processes transparently, share information and comply with agreements. In case of disagreements, well-structured conflict resolution mechanisms need to be in place.

8 NPA co-management needs a strategic plan



Co-management needs a strategic 5-year plan in which all stakeholders together formulate common goals for land tenure and the use of resources in a specific NPA. The plan deals with roles and responsibilities, access and harvesting rights, cost and benefit sharing etc. It regulates NPA and forest management, e.g. zoning, land-use rights and conservation. Conservation includes patrolling, species monitoring, fencing, fire control and sustainable agricultural practices. Rules for logging, hunting, and the use of forest products as well as for mining and infrastructure projects are also incorporated into the plan.

9 Ownership, land and usage rights secure livelihood



Rural communities depend on natural resources, and land in particular. They rely on natural resources for hunting, fishing, non-timber forest products, housing material or medical plants, either for their own use or for sale. Land ownership is associated with wealth, inheritance, social status and spiritual value. The individual or collective right to land secures the stability of rural livelihood and income generation. Co-management of NPAs will only be successful if land ownership and usage rights are clearly defined. All stakeholders involved in the use of natural resources need to agree on their rights and responsibilities.

10 Local knowledge helps manage NPAs



Traditional or local knowledge on natural resources, animal and plant species is as important as formal or scientific knowledge. People not only observe their surroundings but also experiment and adapt practices to fit their changing environment. Hence, traditional knowledge of the local population at or near an NPA should not be underestimated as a crucial element in the co-management and conservation of natural resources. In addition, scientific research is necessary to further develop knowledge on biological processes, plant and animal species, e.g. soil fertility, diseases, or plant resistance.



10 FACTS

ON CO-MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL PROTECTED AREAS IN LAO PDR

1

Nature and biodiversity are a source of life



Human well-being depends on nature. Nature needs biological diversity - the diversity of animal and plant species and of sound ecosystems such as forests or wetlands. Laos is a very biodiversity-rich country. But many plant and animal species are declining. Forests, biodiversity and wildlife are people's assets that sustain livelihoods. As Lao citizens today should care about tomorrow's resources, 24 National Protected Areas (NPAs) and corridors between them have been established so that species can move freely and future generations can enjoy ecosystems and biodiversity.

2

National Protected Areas safeguard the environment



The government establishes NPAs within geographical boundaries to maintain natural ecosystems for plants and animals of high biodiversity value. Biodiversity conservation is essential for managing ecosystems and species which provide goods and services that sustain human livelihood. NPAs limit human occupation and development activities harmful to the area's environment. Decree 164/PM states that NPAs are to protect biodiversity in forests, plants and wildlife, promote research, cultural and tourism purposes, and sustain the use of forest resources by villagers.

3

NPAs need adequate management



National Protected Areas need adequate management to achieve their main objectives. The areas are divided into different zones where specific activities can and cannot be implemented. This helps the management of natural resources, resident and visitor use, and the access to and maintenance of the area. Management activities include zoning, patrolling, species monitoring, maintenance, research etc. Laws and regulations support NPA management through specific rules and guidelines. Protected area management is not implemented in isolation but is part of the Lao PDR's Socio-Economic Development Plan.

4

Collaborative management is a new approach in Lao PDR



Collaborative, or co-management of NPAs means that the government together with the rural population living close to or in the protected area negotiate, define and guarantee a fair sharing of management functions, rights and responsibilities. Co-management arrangements differ from area to area. But they all combine conservation objectives and community utilization rights, and offer benefits for biodiversity conservation, wildlife protection and local livelihoods. In return for protection and management work villagers receive benefits, e.g. from forest products or eco-tourism which add to income generation.

5

Co-management depends on trust and agreements



Environmental governance policies are moving from regulatory control to collaborative management where mutual trust and agreements among stakeholders are crucial. Involving government agencies as well as all parties that live at and from protected areas is the key to success in NPA management. Entrusting villagers with NPA management increases their sense of responsibility for forest resources within and near village lands. Co-management works when all parties apply a proactive and constructive attitude. It is understood that trust and working towards the common good take time but is worth striving for.

6

Shared responsibility creates shared benefits



Sharing NPA management responsibilities between government officials and the local population can create positive effects on both sides. Villagers are engaged in monitoring, maintenance and law enforcement. Their remuneration is based on performance and they are assisted through income-raising activities. Village institutions benefit from financial mechanisms. Co-management is rooted in participatory planning. It takes community requests into account that conflict with NPA objectives, e.g. land use or firewood needs. The NPA management benefits from local support in areas that lack staff and budget.