Political Ecology of Livelihood and Land Use in Rural Laos
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Mainland Southeast Asia
- Myanmar (Burma)
- Vietnam
- China
- Thailand
- Cambodia
- Laos
- LLDC
- Population: 6.5 million
- Subsistence Agriculture: 50% of GDP and 80% of total employment

Income Generation Activities in Rural Laos
1. Off-farm activities (agri-forest products trading, selling commodities)
2. Farm activities (cash crops and livestock)
3. NTFP (non-timber forest product) gathering

Forest plays a significant role in generating income for people in rural area, especially for the poor.

Forest Decrease and Swidden Agriculture
Forest cover: 70% in 1950s → 42% in 2002 (a minimum area of land of 0.5ha with tree crown cover of 20%)
- Swidden agriculture
- Rapid population increase
- Wide-spread poverty

Implementing the Land and Forest Allocation Program (LFAP) for forest conservation and poverty eradication

Forest conservation and poverty eradication

Process of the LFAP
1. Classifying village area into 3 categories
2. Classifying forest land into 5 categories
3. Allocating agricultural land to individual household and giving land title

The actual implementing the LFAP is supporting by Intl. NGO because of a lack of governmental funding.

Purpose of the Study
- Land Use and Livelihood Changes by the LFAP
- Monitoring and evaluation of the LFAP has not often been completed.
- We have little known as to
  - what agriculture the farmers have switched from their current swidden agriculture
  - what effect and impact the farmers have had
- Purpose of the Study
- This presentation discusses people's livelihood and land use changes that have occurred due to the LFAP.
Mai Nathao Village

Ethnic group: Khmu
Population: 192
No. of household: 33
LFAP Year: 2004

International NGO Activity:
From 2004 to 2006
Main Activities:
- Implementing the LFAP to successfully stop swidden agriculture
- Developing and promoting natural farming

Peoples’ Plant Uses in the Village Area in 2004

- Villagers gathered 138 useful plants from village area, of which 37 useful plants were gathered from swidden fallows
- Using the dynamics of vegetation changes

Land Use before LFAP in 2004

- Basically free to use for agricultural purpose

Land and Forest Land Classification in 2004

- Technically inaccessible for any purpose

Land Use after LFAP in 2007

- Basically free to use for agricultural purpose

Newly Introduced Farming by NGO

- Hardly obtaining cash income from new crops which were introduced by NGO
- Peoples’ livelihood got worth as compared before the LFAP
The support of NGO finished in 2006. Then villagers made up a contract farming of green pepper and watermelon to Chinese firms, even if the NGO had refused this type of contract farming which uses pesticides.

The benefits of the contract farming for villagers: (1) no initial investment and (2) earning cash easily.

Making profit from exploiting local villagers and bringing all agricultural materials such as seeds, pesticides, chemical fertilizers and agricultural films from China.

Rapidly vanishing forest in Laos by replacing into various field crops and para rubber tree plantation by obtaining a land concession from Lao government.

Villagers are selling green peppers to Chinese traders in front of NGO’s signboard.

Natural farming introduced by NGO was not accepted.

Reasons for rapid changes in peoples’ livelihood and land use:
- The LFAP of government
- Rural development of International NGO
- Expansion of Chinese economy

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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