

LIWG Newsletter

Volume 6

January - March 2019 | VOL.6

Welcome to the 6th issue of LIWG Newsletter. The issue covers activities from January – March 2019. In this issue, we have provided updates on activities implemented by the Secretariat, its members and its network related to land advocacy, natural resource protection, and the promotion of human rights related to land and natural resource tenures.

For more updates, please keep following us on our [Webpage](#) and [Facebook](#), and if you have comments and suggestions, please send us an email at: co@laolandinfo.org

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Key fact:

“**60,000** people from 12,000 families in more than 200 villages across Laos are relocated to make way for **power projects**. Top 4 dam projects relocated people the most are: Nam Tha 1 dam, Nam Theun 2 Dam, Xayaburi dam, and Theun-Hinboun Dam.”

- Source: Vientiane Times and ABC Laos News

Highlight story...



400 year tea trees in Phongsaly district, Phongsaly province. Photo by LIWG

From visiting different communities, we have learnt the importance of land tenure security to local farmers because they rely on land to produce tea or another crop-like cardamom for making their livelihoods and earning incomes.

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I. Meeting and workshop organized by LIWG secretariat

1. Provincial Networking: Phongsali province, Northern Laos

To strengthen and learn more about the work of members at the community levels, the LIWG Secretariat visited the field projects of 2 members: [Comité de Coopération avec le Laos \(CCL\)](#) and Community Organization Participation and Empowerment (COPE), [Helvetas Laos](#) in Phongsali province, Northern Laos.

From these visits, the LIWG Secretariat was able to better understand the work of members who support local communities to improve their livelihood conditions and to protect natural resources. As well as, to understand their roles to build capacity for local villagers to provide them legal knowledge, especially on contract farming.

From visiting these different communities, we have learned about the importance of land tenure security for local farmers because they rely on land to produce tea or a crop-like cardamom to make their livelihoods and earn incomes. However, we have found that the communities with whom we met are facing many issues related to land conflicts between villagers, local government and investors which LIWG members have found very challenging to support villagers with.

Part of the visit, the LIWG Secretariat explained the importance of Legal Calendar as a tool for raising awareness and building capacity for villagers to better understand and use laws that protect their rights related to natural resources and access to justice.

These visits took place in two districts: Yot Ou and Phongsali districts in Phongsalai province from 24 - 29 January 2019.

2. Exchange session from University of Hong Kong: Strategic landscape Planning for the China – Laos Railway



To assess the view of architecture design as part of a strategic landscape Planning for the China - Laos Railway, LIWG, and University of Hong Kong, Faculty of Faculty of Architecture co-organized an exchange session on “Strategic Landscape Planning for the China-Laos Railway”.

During the exchange session, professors and students presented some of their planning strategies together with an overview of major land development issues along the railway corridor. In the presentation, they stated that their planning strategies take many forms, including master plans, infrastructure mitigation, and policy recommendations.

University students also shared their findings on a wide range of topics about Chinese investment in Laos that have impacts on land governance, agriculture, livelihood changes, and the economy of local people in northern Laos.

Through a sharing session, professors stated that the planning strategies are not meant to be implemented directly. Those strategies are an exercise in idea generation to uncover and debate the most urgent environmental and development problems and propose, not solutions, but potential ways forward.

The exchange session was organized on 7th March 2019 and included participation by LIWG members and students from Faculty of Faculty of Architecture, University of Hong Kong.

Watch the video for the [sharing session by LIWG](#)

Watch the video on [landscape planning developed by Architecture students](#)

3. Do Not Harm in Land Tenure Workshop

To introduce the basic "Do No Harm" concepts, especially "connectors and dividers," LIWG organized a one-day workshop for LIWG members who are field staff working with communities affected by land issues in Laos, in order better manage projects dealing with land conflicts

The workshop method was a very interactive session where participants from different organizations could learn from each other through their experiences as well as apply new methods of 'Do No Harm' into their work, especially to deal with land conflicts.

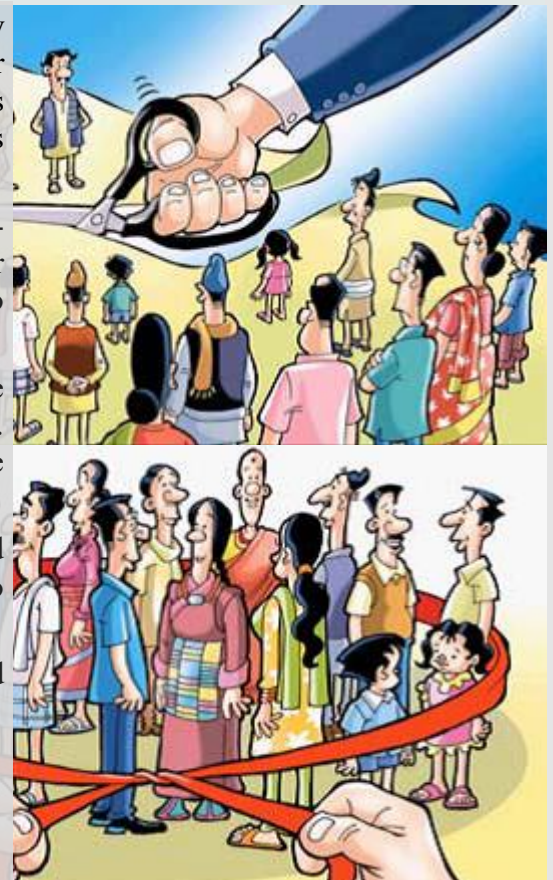
During the workshop, 2 case studies of 'Do No Harm': Fisheries case study from Cambodia and Resettlement in Laos were introduced. These gave clear pictures for participants to understand real case studies related to 'Do No Harm'.

From the small group sharing session, many ideas were discussed where members hope to apply 'Do No Harm' into their fieldwork to deal with land conflicts at the community level.

The workshop was organized on 19 March 2019 and included participations by LIWG members.

To learn more about methods of 'Do No Harm':

Do No Harm Workshop [Trainer's Manual 2016](#)
Do No Harm in [Land Tenure and Property Rights](#)



4. Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2019

To update on the past year's work and the work plan of LIWG annually, the AGM of LIWG was organized and core members of LIWG attended the meeting. This meeting is an opportunity for core members to meet and discuss about the work of LIWG.

Because LIWG had just finished its evaluation, so during meeting the LIWG Secretariat shared the results from the evaluation reports with the members in order to seek comments and suggestion for our to make LIWG a lively and strong network of civil society working on land issues.

Worked from the small groups of LIWG members provided, comments improving LIWG strategy to ensure that the network can represent the members and create the space for members to learn and advocate for land rights in Laos. Moreover, to explore how members can contribute and work alongside the Secretariat to more effectively support each other.

At this AGM, since 2 steering committee members stepped down, LIWG members elected 2 new committee members who will support the Secretariat to strengthen the network.

During the meeting, there was also a presentation of about the LIFE project, specially their achievements, their plans to develop lesson plans for coaching, and their work plan for the year of 2019.

This AGM was organized on 11 February 2019 and core members and steering committee members attended the meeting.

5. Steering Committee Meeting

To frequently stay updated on the performance and work of the Secretariat, steering committee meetings are usually organized every month. The meeting will also organized to discuss if there are urgent matters. During this quarter, three meetings took place.

II. Working Group/Taskforce

1. Advisory Group on Land Law Revision

The Land Law Advisory Group frequently meets to get updates and to discuss the process of the Land Law revision. The group works closely with the secretary of the drafting land law committee to elaborate on some common recommendations and overall, to support the secretariat in the land law revision, especially for recommendations that have been gathered from members in the group and submit to National Assembly to consider those recommendations to put into the Land Law Revision.

The group will work to summarize briefing notes and they will be also presented at the next intersession of National Assembly that is expected in the end of May 2019.

Important: It was also said that Land Law would be tabled at the 7th Ordinary Session of the National Assembly from 5- 25 June 2019

2. Legal Calendar Booklet Collection Project

To develop the 10 years calendar collection by compiling all Legal Calendars from 2010 – 2019 into booklets, the LIWG Secretariat, as the coordination, works together with Legal Calendar Taskforce to draft the Legal Calendar Collection.

After getting comments from the members, the taskforce will organize the consultation meeting in May 2019 to discuss more about the target audiences of the booklet, especially to seek the way how to distribute this collective Legal Calendar Booklet in different levels, especially in the community.

This project is supported by [Luras](#) of Helvetas Laos, and the Legal Calendar Taskforce will be the main group to work and develop ideas for this collective legal calendar booklet.



III. Meetings and Workshops which the LIWG secretariat attended

1. Environment & Agricultural Investment in Lao PDR: Multi-stakeholder Sharing Workshop

Briefing Package: Assessment of Environment and Land-Related Policy, Legal & Regulatory Frameworks, Gaps & Needs of Agricultural Investment Stakeholders in Lao PDR (E-RAI Project)

February 2019



The Multi-stakeholder Sharing Workshop: Environment & Agricultural Investment in Lao PDR was organized to present a gaps analysis of the legal framework related to environmental and agricultural investment regulations, as well as field research into the strategies used by key stakeholders (agricultural investors, communities and government) to plan, manage and mitigate environmental impacts from the investigation. The E-RAI project was implemented by Village Focus International (VFI) with support from the GIZ Land Program in Laos, in partnership with the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), Faculty of Economics and Business Management (FEB) at the National University of Laos (NUOL), Land Information Working Group (LIWG) Secretariat and the LIFE Initiative.

LIWG was also part of coordination with key LIWG members for this analysis.

Read briefing package of this analysis in [English](#) and [Lao](#)

2. Consultation workshop to examine result of compensation calculation for affected people's study

The consultation workshop was organized to gather comment and inputs about the result from research on compensation calculation for affected people, case study: Nam Theun 2 Dam and Nam Nhiep1 dam. The results from this research will contribute to Timber Legality Definition (TLD2); and the outputs will contribute to the [FLEGT VPA](#) process, particularly focusing on the definition of the TLD 2 (conservation area).

This study includes two case studies: Nam Theun 2 Dam and Nam Nhiep 1 Dam to examine the lessons learned and process and calculation of compensation for affected people. These two case studies because were chosen because the study will represent two different scenarios about compensation calculation. For Nam Theun2 Dam access about

compensation calculation is based on degree 192 on Compensation and Resettlement for Affected people by Development Projects; and For Nam Nhiep1 Dam assesses lessons learned of the period when Laos did not have degree 192 (currently it's amended to Decree 84).

The study is being finalizing and will then be submitted to the Lao EU-FLEGT.

The meeting was organized by [Wildlife Conservation Association](#) (WCA) and different organizations and government counterparts in Laos participated.



Nam Theun 2 Dam/Photo by Asia ADF

IV. LIWG's Initiatives and members

1. Land Learning Initiative for food security Enhancement (LIFE) project

1.1). Develop lesson plan for Luras Project on Responsible Investments

LIWG and LIFE organized a consultation meeting for lesson plan development on responsibility Investments and Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC).

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Present the draft of the lesson plan development on responsibility Investments and FPIC that LIFE has developed
- Exchange ideas and gather comments to improve the draft

The meeting was interactive and gained lot of comments to improve the draft of the lesson plan to be more comprehensive.



After this meeting, the team will work together to merge comments into the lesson plan and will report back before using this lesson plan in the field with companies, local farmers and CSOs in Laos.

LIWG members and Luras's partners from both CSOs and Government counterparts participated in the meeting.

1.2). Coaching on Training Methodologies for WWF Laos in Salavan province

The LIFE team organized interactive coaching on ‘Training Methodologies for Facilitation of Trainers and rights of citizens in Laos on customary land and natural resource rights and land conflict resolutions’ for WWF Laos in Salavan province, from 4th – 8th March 2019. To introduce new facilitation methodologies and build capacity for local staff of WWF and its local counterparts.

“Participants were impressed by new methodologies that were used during the coaching, such as interactive games, posters, group discussions, and videos which helped participants understand the content of the lesson much more better. Participants also shared openly the issues they faced in the field related to land and natural resources.”

- A LIFE trainer -

After the coaching, participants said that they learned many new techniques that can be adopted at the village level, especially the knowledge of customary land rights, access to justice, and Land Law.

The most effective methodologies that trainers observed from participants’ learning were the Measuring level of understanding before and after the coaching, Plus Minus Interesting (PMI), data analysis, World Café, SMART Plan, the River Of, and many interactive games.

Local staffs of WWF Laos and its local counterparts in southern Laos participated in the coaching.



Participants joined LIFE coaching. Photo by Lenol Khantamaly



After coaching with LIFE, participants delivered workshop by adapting LIFE tools to use for disseminating information to villagers at the village. Photo by Lenol Khantamaly

Learn more on our website about [LIFE project](#)

2. Land Information Learning Center (LILC)



Various documents on land at LILC. Photo by LILC

After a one year pilot project, the Land Information Learning Center (LILC)’s outreach activities ended. However, since there is a physical space for learning about land and natural resources in Laos, the physical space of LILC is open for the public to come to learn. Like a library, LILC has many sources of online and offline land information.

For members, who would like to come use the physical space for learning, LILC is open Monday - Friday (8:30 – 16:30) at Village Focus International Office (see the [map](#)).

- Follow LILC on [Facebook](#) for updates of publications on land and natural resources
- Visit LILC [website](#) to get latest publications about land and natural resources

3. COPE, Helvetas Laos: Lao Tea farmers in Phongsali district

The Community Organization, Participation and Empowerment (COPE) project is designed based on experiences gained and best-practices developed through past Helvetas Laos projects. The COPE project empowers women - who make up a large number of tea growers – and other disadvantaged groups by improving the tea value chain, raising the capacity of local service providers, and facilitating policy dialogue to create an enabling policy environment for smallholder producers. As a result, local communities are more equipped to engage with markets and can make a better living.

The overall objective of COPE is ‘Rural men and women smallholder producers are empowered to improve their productivity and livelihoods and benefit from fairer trade practices’.



A group of women working in the local tea company, Phongsali district, Phongsali province. Photo by LIWG

As part of the provincial networking of the LIWG Secretariat, the LIWG Secretariat visited communities COPE supported, especially to learn more about 4000 years of Tea production and to tour the Tea factories. The LIWG Secretariat also learned about the achievements and challenges of COPE faces in their works with local communities, companies, and local counterparts in Phongsali province.

Learn more about: [COPE project](#) & [COPE achievement of 2016](#)

4. CCL: Wild Tea and Cardamom Plantation



Cardamom plants in Yot Ou district, Phongsali province. Photo by LIWG

Comité de Coopération avec Laos (CCL) is a French non-governmental organization based in Vientiane, Laos. CCL's main goal is to enhance rural development and contribute to poverty alleviation in Lao PDR. CCL has been running rural development programs in the northern uplands of Laos since 1980 in order to improve the livelihoods of Lao people, especially targeting ethnic minority groups and remote women.

Over the past 30 years, CCL has been providing financial support and training on nutrition, health and sanitation issues, food processing, value chain development, and sustainable agriculture practices as well as capacity building and gender equity, to many rural communities of Xiengkhouang, Phongsaly and Oudomxay, to improve their living conditions.

As part of the provincial networking of the LIWG Secretariat, the LIWG Secretariat visited communities in Yot Ou district that CCL supported, to learn how Wild Tea and Cardamom are part of improving local villagers' conditions.

From the LIWG Secretariat learned that sometimes it is difficult to work at the local level through visits different villages where CCL works to understand problems, especially land conflicts and contract farming.

Learn more about CCL from the [CCL website](#) & [CCL Facebook Page](#)

IV. Story of the month

1. International Women's Day: How do women play role in natural resource management?

In March, the month of Women, the LIWG Secretariat talked with some members to hear their perspectives on the important role of women in natural resource management and knowledge transfer to new generations regarding on natural protection. Read opinion quotes from LIWG members (Lao language) at: [women role on natural resource management](#)



A group of women come back home from work at rice field in the evening, Ngoi district, Lungprabang province. Photo by LIWG

2. Five articles in Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia on Land governance in Laos

The Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University presents the new issue (25) of [Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia](#) (March 2019) titled "Land Governance in Lao PDR". This issue is devoted to examining various aspects associated with land governance in Laos. Read each article below:

- 1) [Changes in Understandings of Land in Laos](#): From State Sovereignty to Capital Mobilization, by Ian G. Baird
- 2) [Turning Land into Capital for Whom?](#) Crises and Alternatives of Land Commodification in Laos, by Miles Kenney-Lazar
- 3) [The Geography of Security](#): Coercion, Comparative Advantage and Population Management Work in Contemporary Laos, by Michael Dwyer
- 4) [Forest-Land Commons in Laos in the Twenty-First Century](#): Agrarian Capitalism and the 'Non-Commodified Subsistence Guarantee', by Keith Barney and Alex Van Der Meer Simo
- 5) [Making Possibilities out of the Impossible](#): Rural Migrant Workers' Backdoor Economies and the Pitfall in Lao PDR, by Kelly Wanjiang Chen

V. Communication and News updates

1. Highlight Update on [LIWG Facebook page](#) :

The LIWG recently updated highlights news and events to ensure that Lao audiences can get updates and follow specially what happening related to land, natural resources and environment, and investment projects in Laos and in the globe,

Follow us on Facebook page to get daily update at: [Land Information Working Group/ກຸ່ມແລກປ່ຽນຂໍ້ມູນເລື່ອງທີ່ດິນ](#)



2. Highlight [News Update](#) on LIWG website:

The LIWG Secretariat summarizes news twice per week, including sources of news internally and externally of Laos, so Lao audiences can get different views on news about land and natural resources in Laos. The LIWG news summary is available in both Lao and English. See more at: [LIWG Weekly news update](#)

3. New publications from LIWG website:

The LIWG Secretariat regularly update documents and publications by LIWG and its partners on website. From January - March 2019, we published:

- Briefing Notes to the Land Law Revision at the Land Law Session, NA inter-Session on 7th November, 2018', See them on [number 17](#)
- Responsible Agricultural Investment in Lao PDR: [Overview and implications for policy making](#)

4. Suggestion online resources on Land Knowledge:

- [Lao Decide Info](#) is a platform of the Government of Lao PDR which integrates key information from the social, economic, environmental, and agricultural sectors to facilitation informed planning and decision - making. Access to its publications are on [their website](#) .
- The [Heinrich Böll Foundation](#) is part of the Green political movement that has developed worldwide as a response to the traditional politics of socialism, liberalism, and conservatism. Its main tenets are ecology and sustainability, democracy and human rights, and self-determination and justice. This is a Green think tank and an international policy network. Access to its [resources in Southeast Asia](#) .
- The [Rights and Resources Initiative](#) (RRI) is a non-governmental organization working to encourage forest tenure and policy reforms and the transformation of the forest economy so that business reflects local development agendas and supports local livelihoods. RRI works at the country, regional and global levels, collaborating on research, and advocacy and convening strategic actors. Download its resources at [PRI publications](#) .
- [Open Development Laos](#) (ODL) is an open data platform hosting information and data sets on development in the Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic, in both Lao and English. ODL is designed to meet international open data standards. ODL is part of the Open Development Mekong initiative. Access to [Land information Page](#)

LIWG next quarterly topics (April – June 2019)

- ⇒ Study on 'Women Land Rights'
- ⇒ Intersession (Land Law Revision) and 7th Ordinary Session at the National Assembly
- ⇒ Legal Calendar 2020 Taskforce Meeting
- ⇒ LIWG website improvement
- ⇒ Coaching visit for Village Assessment on establishment of Forest Conservation Area by LIFE
- ⇒ LIWG Core member meeting
- ⇒ Regular Steering committee

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