

Newsletter

Land Information Working Group

January - March
2021



The Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment (MONRE) needs to be more prepared for the climate change situation so that people are informed and prepared to response the disaster that might happen in a timely manner. In addition, MONRE should continue implementing laws and regulations on environmental protection strictly and pay attend to manage land, natural resource and environment more systematically.



Mr. Phankham Viphavanh,
Prime Minister of the Lao PDR

Addressing in the inaugural session of the
9th National Assembly, 22nd March 2021.
Read [more](#)

Stories inside:

◆ LIWG meeting and activities

Meetings and activities organized by secretariat during this quarter especially AGM

◆ LIFE project

Key activities from LIFE project for coaching for partners on land rights and natural resources

◆ Readings and Watching

Stories and recommended videos to watch on land and natural resources

◆ What in the news!

Highlights news on land and natural resource issues in Laos

◆ Upcoming activities

Upcoming activities of LIWG and its initiative and members

LIWG Meeting and activities



LIWG Annual General Meeting (AGM)

On 26th Feb 2021, LIWG secretariat organized the AGM to update key activities implemented in the year 2020 as well as the activity plan for 2021. The highlights from 2020 include:

- The result from LIWG M& E 2020 shows that percentage of connection between members in LIWG increased as well as members feel more connected with the secretariat. In addition, the engagement of members with LIWG is highly relevant.
- Comparative analysis between the new Forestry and Land Laws (it will be available on the website soon)
- Main workshops that the secretariat organized or was part of such as [Women Land Rights](#), [Youth sharing workshop of Voice project](#), Interactive sessions for CSOs and government staff on land and natural resources.
- Co-organized Land Sub-Sector Working Group meeting with the Department of Land & other partners by involving WB and KfW [via a video call meeting]
- Development of a briefing note on the [Women land rights Study](#)
- Development of the LIWG calendar and trainings on the use of the legal calendar both in Vientiane and provinces
- The legal calendar use assessments including study and [video of good practice](#)

At the meeting, we also had LIFE team to present their work, especially on developing the new training curricula on Collective Land Titling, Responsible Agricultural Investment, Customary Land Rights (advanced) and Environmental Protection (for VOICE project). These curricula will be used for trainings to different partners of LIFE; and LIWG members can make a request to ask for coaching from them.

LIFE team also presented good practices from community feedback on the LIFE coaching on the topic of contract farming which helped villagers know better for the conditions of doing contract to prevent from being taken advantage of by investors.

The meeting had presentations from an independent researcher to share the preliminary findings on the study of Women Access and Tenure security in the forest in Phongsaly province (the study is on the process of being finalized); and also a presentation from MRLG to share their work experiences on the Initiatives Supporting Recognition of Customary Tenure Rights in Forests which it's now being piloted in Khammuane province. Learn more about MRLG's work in Laos at: <https://www.mrlg.org/laos/>

Legal Calendar 2021 distribution and booklet on the use of Legal Calendar 2021

After the launching event, the Legal Calendar 2021 has been distributed by members and partners by geographic locations in Laos.



Nearly 13,000 legal calendars have been distributed to communities and other stakeholders.

The booklet on the use of the Legal Calendar 2021 was also developed to use for organizing the training and raising awareness activities in communities by LIWG members. For this, in the beginning of December 2020, LIWG members received the training on the use of Legal Calendar to disseminate laws related to land and natural resources to communities.

The booklet (Lao version) can be accessed at: <https://bit.ly/2P1e3sF>



Project on the Public Information and Awareness Services for Vulnerable Communities

Helvetas and LIWG are on the process of discussion with the World Bank on the project 'Public Information and Awareness Services for Vulnerable Communities in Laos'. The project's development objective is to improve access to legal information and counseling services on natural resources and livelihood rights to selected poor and vulnerable persons. The project is aiming to have **3 components** as following:

- Public Information and Awareness Services
- Counseling Services
- Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation and Knowledge Dissemination

More details about the project will be shared in the next issue of our newsletter.

Women's Access and Tenure Security in Customary Forest Tenure Systems in Laos Study

A recent study on [women land rights in Laos by LIWG](#) found that in the content of increased investment and agricultural transition, overall women have lost access to and control over land and natural resources.

From the result of this study and the dependence on natural resources, especially those in forest areas, of the women showed that there is a need to better understand how women access, use and manage customary forest land and forest resources, how this is affected or impacted by customary tenure practices and governance and what are the potential pathways to increase tenure security for women in these local community.

The study on **Women's Access and Tenure Security in Customary Forest Tenure Systems in Laos** is part of the [workstream](#) of the 'Recognition of Customary Tenure Workstream' of MRLG and will contribute to the overall objectives to ensure that customary tenure rights in forests are recognised, formalised and protected through the implementation of the Land Law and Forestry Law.

This case study will highlight realities from the field and make recommendations for how the implementation of the Land and Forestry Laws can be more gender equitable through implementing guidelines or by other means.

Land Sub-Sector Working Group and Focal Groups



Land Sub-Sector Working Group (LSSWG) meeting

To update the key activities of 2020 and the workplan of 2021, Department of Land (DoL) -MONRE organized the Land-Sub Sector Working Group (LSSWG) meeting on 19th January 2021. In the meeting there were many topics presented and discussed:

- The 5-year (2021-2025) work plan of the Department of Land – MONRE.
- Updated the work done and plan of 4 focal groups: (i) Sub-legislation focal group; (ii) Sustainable Land-Based Investment; (iii) Customary Tenure Rights in Forests; and (iv) Land Information System and Data Sharing.
- Introduction to the land titling registration project with a loan from the World Bank (MONRE's project).
- Discuss and exchange on land titling registration project via video call with World Bank and KfW representatives.

The meeting also discussed the work plans and proposals of all the focal groups; along with the expected goals and outcomes of the land sub-sector.

This is the first meeting of the year, the second meeting will be organized in May 2021. The invitation to join this meeting will be shared to members of the LIWG network.

Focal Group on Customary Tenure Recognition (CTR) in Forest

To follow up on the LSSWG that was organized in January 2021, the Induction Workshop of the Focal Group on Customary Tenure Recognition (CTR) in Forest was organized on 11th February 2021. This focal group is led by DoL and MRLG.

This is the first workshop of the Focal Group on CTR in Forest. It was organized for sharing of relevant activities by projects/agencies working on customary tenure in forest in to synergize the efforts and foster cooperation/collaboration between different stakeholders.

At the meeting, DoL presented on the progress of the Customary Tenure Recognition in Forests pilot project that they are implementing in Khammouane province as well as the way forward of the project. There was also a discussion about how question of titling in forest is interpreted?

At the end of the meeting, all participants discussed and brainstormed for possibilities for synergizing of activities across relevant organizations.

The focal group meeting will be regularly organized and as usual the invitation of this meeting will be shared to members of the LIWG network which it's a good opportunity for members to be part of the discussion.

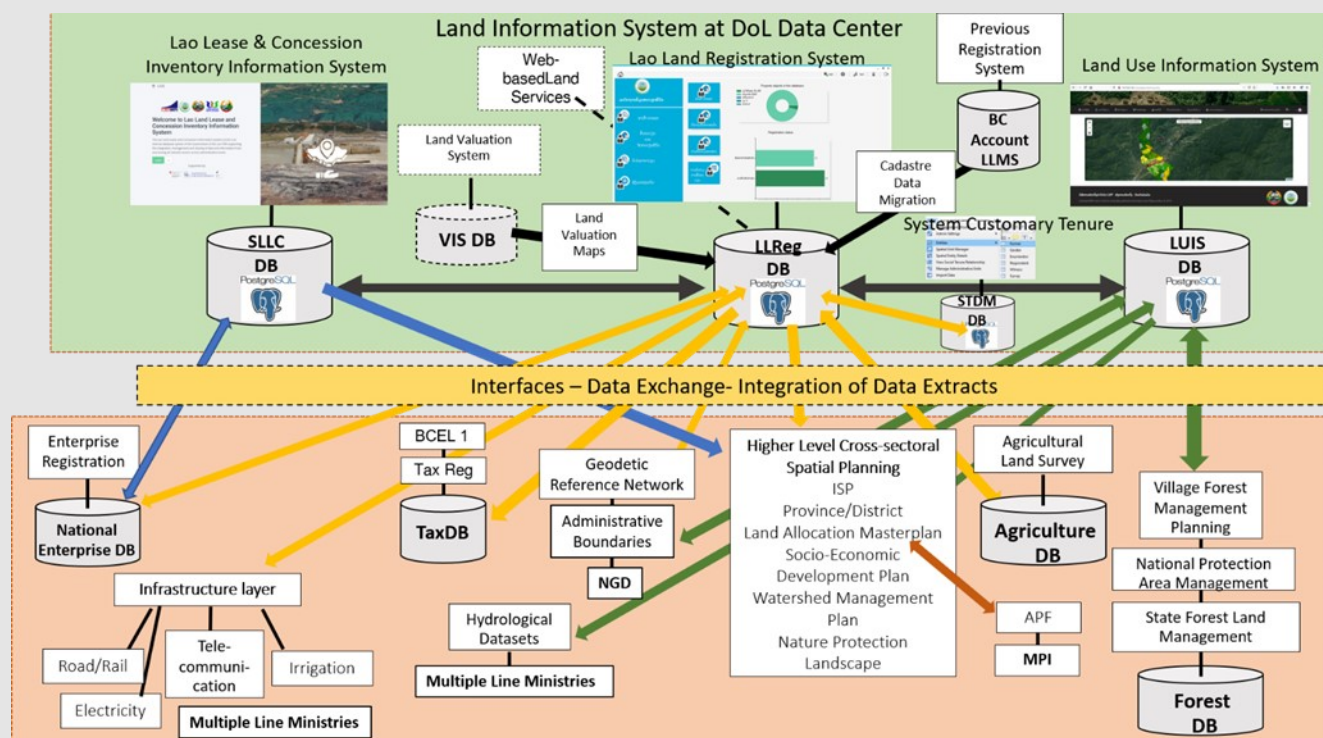
Focal group on Land Information System/Data Sharing

The first meeting of the focal group on Land Information System/Data Sharing was organized on 30th March 2021 to introduce the group as well as for sharing of relevant activities by projects/agencies working on land related-database systems and data collection/processing. The meeting was led by DoL and GIZ Laos.

At the meeting, there was a presentation of the Land Information System in Laos such as

- Lao Land Registration (LLReg): This is the Lao land registration system of the Lao government. Learn more [here](#)
- Land Use Information System for Lao PDR (LUIS): the platform enables the Lao government and the public to access the Land Use Plans. Learn more about this system [here](#)
- State Lao Land lease and concession (SLLC): The system is under developing. Meanwhile, the information about land lease and concession in Laos can be also found [here](#)

The meeting also had a sharing from UN-Habitat on their work with VFI for the Social Tenure Domain Model Laos (STDM) which will be established local land information systems at the district level. This tool is now being used to demarcate land parcels to speed up land registration process and improve documentation of customary land tenure for rural households in the provinces of Xieng khouang and Luang Prabang. Learn more about this project in Laos [here](#)



Overview Land-related Data Management System in Lao PDR. ©DOL/GIZ Laos

The meeting was attended by different stakeholders across ministries to share their work and discuss on how to harmonize the data and to share information among the partners or stakeholders to ensure the harmonization of the data and support each other for the use of the data.

Similar to other focal groups, the group will be regularly organized to update and plan for the work of the group and the invitation of the meeting will be also shared to members of LIWG network to participate the discussion within this group.

LIFE Project



Inception Meeting of Strengthening Agricultural Land Management Project

After VFI that hosts the LIFE project on behalf of LIWG, signed a new MoU with DaLAM under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for the implementation of VFI's agricultural programme for 'Strengthening Agricultural Land Management Project' in the end of 2020, LIFE and DaLAM organized the project's inception workshop in the target province, Khammouane, in February 2021 with the participation of LIFE's donor, the European Union.



For this project, LIFE will implement up to 10 coachings to DaLAM and its counterparts from PAFO and DAFO as well as from MoNRE and Lao Women Union in Mahaxay and Yommalath districts in Khammouane as well as develop coaching curricula and case studies together. For these activities, LIFE will work together with its partner, PSNUA, a local Lao CSO, and engage with government partners to distribute knowledge from LIFE's coaching on rights on land and natural resources to 12 target villages.

More update for this activity will be probably shared in the next issue of our newsletter or on our [website](#).



Impact Evaluation for coaching on customary land rights in forest areas



Since 2020, the LIFE project is supporting MRLG and DoL to implement the capacity building component of the workstream on recognition of customary tenure of Lao people in forested areas. For this project, LIFE provided coaching on the respective laws and regulations related to customary land use to strengthen the capacity of Lao Women's Union (LWU) and the Lao Front for National Development (LFND) to implement awareness raising activities and mobilizing active participation of communities and people in the land titling process of the forest categories which is a key component of the recognition of land rights of Lao citizens in the three (3) forest categories.

From the coaching, LIFE, together with a team from MRLG and DoL implemented a 10-day evaluation visit in the target districts of Hinboun, Nakai and Xebangfai in Khammouane province to evaluate the training impact of the coaching in 2020 to local LWU and LFNC and villagers and their knowledge on customary land rights.

Currently, the LIFE team is developing a case study out of the results to show obstacles and opportunities of the land titling process in the three forest categories and impact of LIFE coaching on knowledge of government counterparts and villagers on related topic.



Coaching on the use of Legal Calendar 2021 for LIWG members in Oudomxay



In January of this year, the LIFE team was invited by LIWG members to implement a coaching on the legal calendar 2021 use to LIWG members in Oudomxay province. The coaching was hosted by CCL, LIWG member. There were 18 participants from many LIWG members such as CCL, CORD, World Renew, CDEA, GCA as well as their government counterparts from provincials and district levels.

This 4-day coaching focused on capacity building for participants on how to apply tools and explain related land articles to the legal calendar distribution activities in their target areas.

In the final day of the coaching, participants implemented their own training in one of CCLs target villages to 56 villagers by using knowledge gaining from coaching. The practical part at the end of each coaching by LIFE is good opportunity for participants to practice what they learned from the coaching by applying interactive tools and knowledge into their own legal calendar distribution activities in their target villages.

Blog's stories and Recommended videos to watch



Blog Stories

Customary land right: What does it mean by 'law'?

Article 130 of Land Law 2019 stimulates that the acquisition of customary land use right is the acquisition by Lao citizens of their occupied and used lands through clearance, development, protection and regular use of the land for more than twenty years before this Law becomes effective and without document certifying the acquisition of the land but subjected to certification from village administrative authorities and the owners of adjacent land parcels regarding the continuous land occupation and use without any disputes or with disputes which have been already settled. *Read more:* <https://bit.ly/3oDnsm8>



Land registration and titling: Legal Calendar Jan - Feb 2021

Land registration is an essential process concerning ownership, possession, or other rights in land which can be recorded to provide evidence of title, facilitate transactions and, prevent unlawful disposal. The information recorded and the protection provided will vary by jurisdiction. This year, we also presented this information in our legal calendar, for January - February 2021. *See the illustration and read more:* <https://bit.ly/3guY5Tb>

In Laos, 945,000 ha of forest were lost between 2000 and 2015

The study 'Commodity-Driven Forest Loss in Southeast Asia' by USAID shows that 945,000 ha of forest in Laos were lost between 2000 and 2015; about 500,000 ha of that land was converted to agriculture. 50% of forestlands converted to agriculture (245,000 ha) includes herbaceous crops, such as maize, cassava, and sugarcane; the remainder were converted to tree crops, including pulpwood and rubber. *Read more:* <https://bit.ly/3tQm5Ub> and [here](#)



Nia Tero (Our Earth): Securing Indigenous guardianship of vital ecosystems

One of the dominant trends in conservation over the past 20 years has been growing recognition of the contributions that Indigenous peoples have made toward conservationists' goals of protecting biodiversity, wild places, and ecosystem functions. Lands stewarded by Indigenous peoples and local communities sequester at least a sixth of forest carbon and house 80% of terrestrial species. *Read more:* <http://bit.ly/2OsLDHH> and [here](#)

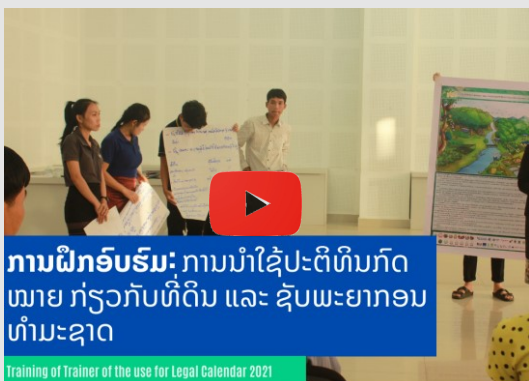
Recommended videos to watch



Legal Calendar: A learning tool to learn about land and natural resources

To capture the good lesson learn for the use of the legal calendar, LIWG produced the video that included voices from LIWG members, government partners and communities sharing about the positive impacts on legal awareness on land and natural resources.

Watch the video at: <https://youtu.be/2Xmv7cfC3jk>



Training of Trainers: Using Legal Calendar to disseminate laws on land and natural resources in the community

To build capacity for the use of the legal calendar, the LIFE project organized the coaching for LIWG members on the use of legal calendar to disseminate legal information on land and natural resources. This coaching helps them to learn how to apply interactive tools and methodologies into the legal calendar dissemination activity in communities.

This video includes feedback from participants and trainers of this coaching. Watch video at: <https://youtu.be/9eKIF2cvUWw>



Launching event of the Women Land Rights in Laos Study

On 14th October 2020, LIWG in a partnership with the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences co-organized the Launching Event on Women and Land Rights Study in Laos that focused on Rural Transformation and a Dream of Secure Land Tenure.

This video is a snapshot for some highlights during the launching event.

Watch video at: <https://youtu.be/vFyPqhvwU>



LIFE project: An innovative approach to legal awareness raising on land and natural resources in Laos

The LIFE project has organized many coaching to partners from international organizations, LIWG's members and government partners for capacity building to enhance land tenure security.

This video reflects the good practices that the project implemented together with many stakeholders and partners.

Watch video at: <https://bit.ly/3o3HE0d>

What in the news!

Government issues notice suspending certification of forest areas

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) issued a notice to suspend certifying and rechecking the documents for using forest land by individuals, legal entities or organisations in areas of preserved, protected and production forests throughout the country.

As it says in the notice, the notice is issued to strengthen the forest land governance and ensure the effectiveness of law implementation of relevant government sectors. *Read more:* <https://bit.ly/3xd9EEu>

Chinese firms seek for 4,800 ha of land to grow durians in Laos

Chinese companies are seeking to lease 3,200–4,800 hectares of land around Vientiane to establish durian plantations, with the ultimate goal of exporting the fruit back to China once official export approval has been obtained.

It's said the reason for the growth of Laos's durian exports include low land rent and labor as well as many free trade agreements exempting tariffs from 16 countries which one of those countries is China.

According to the Chinese media, China has become the largest agricultural investor in Laos. As of October 2020 In September, a total of 239 companies invested in the agriculture and forestry fields in Laos.

Read more: <https://bit.ly/3sswsfK> and [here](#)

Laos issues new decree on dams aimed to minimize harms

This new 18-page decree defines the circumstances in which hydropower plant operators are required to provide notification. These include the point when water inflow is such that the level in a reservoir reaches the maximum storage level or critical point.

In the event of loss or damage caused by water storage or discharge, hydropower plant operators are required to provide solutions and make financial contributions in support of local people's mental and physical wellbeing as well as compensating them for any property that has been lost.

Read more: <https://bit.ly/2QhthKL> and [here](#)

Laos plans to develop its first 'Smart cities' in Northern provinces

Government of Laos will allow AMATA Corporation, a project developer, to conduct a feasibility study on the development of a smart city in the name of 'Amata Smart and Eco City' project that will initially cover 7,000 hectares and allows for an additional 20,000 hectares expansion in the future.

Under the agreement, AMATA will receive land concessions to develop Namor district of Oudomxay and Luang Namtha district of Luangnamtha into a smart city and logistics hub in line with the government's sustainable and environmentally friendly policies to modernize communities and strengthen local livelihoods.

Read more: <https://bit.ly/2RSzkGh> & [here](#)

Laos to build two Coal-Fired plants in Xekong Province this year

The first plant will be built by Phonesack Group in Kaleum district, with an installed capacity of 1,800MW; and the second plant will be built in Lamam district by a Chinese company with an installed capacity of 700MW. Officials say these two coal-fired plants will become operational and begin transmitting electricity to Cambodia in 2025 based on an agreement signed between the developers and the Lao government. *Read more:* <https://bit.ly/3v5jifeo>



Upcoming activities (April – June 2021)

- Provincial networking: LIWG secretariat and members in Savannakhet province
- Workshop for LIWG Core Members on policy influencing on the 2 new laws (Land Law and Forestry Law)
- Study session on Sharing information on results of integrated analysis of commercial investments in land in Lao PDR
- Legal Calendar 2022 development meetings
- The 2nd Land Sub-Sector Working Group
- LIFE coaching on land rights and natural resources for partners and new curricula development



Thank you for reading our newsletter.

Stay Safe and Healthy!

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