

Newsletter

Land Information Working Group

April - June
2021



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- ◆ Provincial networking with members in Savannakhet province
- ◆ Kickoff meeting of the Legal Calendar 2022 development

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Highlight Note:

LIWG has conducted a comparative analysis on the new Land Law and Forestry Law in 2020. The findings were presented during the core member meeting last year. To go deeper into the subject, LIWG organized a series of online sessions on the land rights issues from the new legal framework that LIWG has been advocating for many years... *Continued to P. 1*

LIWG Meeting and activities



Series of online sessions on the new Land Law and Forestry Law

LIWG has conducted a comparative analysis on the new Land Law and Forestry Law in 2020. The findings were presented during our core member meeting last year. To go deeper into the subject, LIWG organized a series of online sessions on the land rights issues from the new legal framework that LIWG has been advocating for many years. There were four sessions of this online series:

- Customary Land Rights/Land rights over shifting cultivation
- Compensation and expropriation /participation of communities
- Women Land Rights
- Sub-legislation to the Land Law

Through this series of online sessions members were informed about the new legal context and the new opportunities and challenges for communities to have their land rights recognized and protected. Members were also informed about the process and the content of the sub-legislation planned for revision from the Department of Lands who joined as speakers during some of these online sessions.

The recording of those online sessions are available. For members who are interested to access the recording (only Lao language), please contact the LIWG secretariat.

Kickoff meeting of the Legal Calendar 2022 development

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, this year the kickoff meeting for the Legal Calendar taskforce was organized from 2-4 June 2021 via an online platform to share and discuss the lesson learnt from the past calendar development and the use in communities as the tool to raise awareness on land and natural resources. This meeting was also to brainstorm ideas to develop the new topics for the 2022 legal calendar.

After the meeting, the LIWG secretariat shared the list of new proposed topics to LIWG members to seek comments and suggestions. After that, the taskforce will meet again to discuss the new topic selection. The taskforce will hold meeting regularly as part of the developing process for the new calendar. The taskforce will discuss about the final selected topics after getting comments from Department of Lands, Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment.

As part of public sharing information, we regularly update topics from the current Legal calendar on our website which can also be read at: <https://laolandinfo.org/en/category/resource/legal-calendar/>

Provincial networking with members in Savannakhet province

To enhance the connection and learn about member's works, LIWG secretariat visited member's projects who are currently implementing activities on natural resource protection in Savannakhet province. We visited two communities with whom our members are engaging with:

WWF Laos: Community's participatory on Fishery Management in Mekong River

World Wide Fund for Nature in Laos (WWF Laos) is currently implementing the project **"Fishery Community Co-Management in Mekong River in Savannakhet province"**. The goal of the project is to contribute to the Lao National Socio-Economic Development Plan, particularly in the agricultural and forestry sector. This is the second phase of the project and will run from February 2021 until December 2022.

The team in Savannakhet said that during this phase the project focuses on community's participation for establishment of fish conservations in 10 target villages of Xaybuli and Xayphouthong districts. The project intends to reduce ongoing extinction threats to aquatic species and continue habitat protection in order to increase fish population. This would ensure villagers in the 10 targeted communities to have a more sustainable food security as well as to increase the richness of biodiversity.

During our visit at Naphan village (one of the target villages), we learnt both from project staff and villagers about the project. We learnt especially the importance of community participation in decision making related to the project. Indeed, in the very beginning, before the project started, the team implemented the [Free Prior and Informed Consent \(FPIC\)](#) to ensure that the communities receive full information. By doing so, they make altogether a collective decision to accept or reject the project.

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The consultation process is the key element for us to implement this project to ensure that villagers participate well and understand the project that we are going to do together.

A field staff of WWF Laos said



From visiting Naphan village, we learnt that villagers have a positive view on the project's implementation because they understand the importance to protect the fish habitat in the Mekong river.

“We used to see many fish species in the past, but now they are disappearing. When the project team from WWF Laos came to our village and raised awareness on the importance to protect those existing species, we all agreed to be part of this project to do in our village territory. We really hope that from doing it we can protect the existing fishes and increase the fish population so that our children can have a sustainable source of food security in the future.



The village head of Naphan emphasizing the importance of doing the fish conservation.

The project is implemented in collaboration between WWF Laos and Provincial Agriculture and Forestry office of Savannakhet, Department of Livestock and Fisheries, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Since 2006, [WWF Laos](#) has supported the government of Laos to establish more than 300 fish conservation zones.

Green Community Alliance (GCA): Adaptation Models in Xe-Champhone Wetland Complex and Improving Community Resilience

The [Xe Champhone Wetland](#) is the largest of Lao PDR's two Ramsar sites and contains core habitat for a globally important population of the critically endangered Siamese Crocodile (*Crocodylus siamensis*) which once occurred throughout Southeast Asia and Borneo. Xe Champhone Wetlands has important value for conservation due to its high biodiversity value and it also supports the livelihoods of people living around the wetlands area. However, climate change and unsustainable fishing practices have severely impacted both the Siamese Crocodiles habitat and the livelihoods of the communities.

To address the challenges communities face, GCA took initiative by collaborating with other partners and district counterparts to implement the project 'Adaptation Models in Xe-Champhone Wetland Complex and Improving Community Resilience' aiming to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change and the importance of environmental protection, especially to children, and also to support the community to adapt with changes.

During our visit, we briefly talked with villagers of Tansoum village where [Crocodile Watching](#) is located to learn about their involvement to protect the endangered Siamese Crocodile and livelihood changes due to the development and climate changes that have impacted on natural resources management and their future concerns due to changes.

Learn more about GCA at: <https://www.facebook.com/gca.laos/>

We also visited Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC) Laos's office, a member organization, to have a brief discussion with JVC team about their works on agricultural activities and legal awareness on natural resources in different communities in Savannakhet province as well as to update on upcoming activities.

Learn more about JVC's activities at: <https://www.ngo-jvc.net/en/ourprojects/activities-in-laos/>

LIWG's initiative, members and partners



The 3rd Mekong Regional Land Forum

The 3rd Mekong Land Forum under the theme “**Land tenure in Mekong forest landscapes: advancing the recognition of customary rights and responsible investment practices**” was co-organized by the Mekong Region Land Governance (MRLG) project, the Land Portal and FAO from 26-27 May 2021. The Forum provided in-depth discussion and debate into land tenure security and community resource management, focused on two key themes: the recognition of customary and collective forest tenure in the Mekong Region.

All the summaries of each session are accessible at:

<https://landportal.org/node/99780>

The replays of summaries and plenary sessions of this forum are also available [here](#).



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Update Land Tools for Customary Land Right Recognition

Village Focus International (VFI) under project collaboration between the Department of Land and the Global Land Tool Network organized a Sharing workshop on “Update Land Tools for Customary Land Right Recognition” on 30 June 2021. The workshop aimed to share the updating of land tools that have been adopted in Laos by stakeholders in response to new land law and forest law 2019.

VFI shared about the result of this project especially the tool that has been used called ‘Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM)’ Laos which will establish local land information systems at the district level. As briefly introduced in the previous issuance of the E-newsletter, this tool is used to demarcate land parcels to speed up the land registration process and improve documentation of customary land tenure for rural households target project areas. This STDM webpage is currently being developed and it will be open for public to access once completed. Learn more about STDM [here](#).

For more information about this project, please contact [VFI](#).

LIFE Project

Online Coaching on Conflict Resolution to a partner's organization

From 23-25 June 2021, the LIFE team implemented its first online coaching on **“Conflict resolution in agricultural land conflicts by using a legal approach”** to the project team of [MCC Laos](#) and government counterparts in Xiengkhuang province.

The participants were invited to share real situations and problems in the project area and the LIFE team taught them on mediations skills and introduced the legal background.

It took a while to develop the training as LIFE did not want to miss the participatory approach of the coaching that the project is well-known for. In the end, the project team of MCC team prepared by using various participatory tools and games before the actual online training with the LIFE team. Already this month, the MCC project team will start implementing trainings at village level.

Even if it was the new approach of organizing the coaching, participants shared that the coaching was very interactive and they still could learn effectively through this new platform.



New activity of LIFE together with RRDPA on “Enhancing capacities of CSO Staff to be able to support ethnic communities in protecting their land and natural resources”

In May this year, the LIFE project and [RRDPA](#), a local Non-Profit Association, received a grant from the 2021 CARE-Danida Funding for the project proposal on **“Enhancing capacities of CSO Staff to be able to support ethnic communities in protecting their land and natural resources.”** Under this funding, LIFE will implement 4 coachings related to forest and customary land rights to the RRDPA team and its counterparts in Piang and Paklay districts of Sayabouly province. RRDPA will organize community legal awareness raising in up to 12 villages in Sayabouly province. A case study on good practice will also be done which will show the effectiveness of the training and its impact on solving land-related problems in the project area. The project will be implemented until the end of 2021.

The update of some of LIFE's activities will be shared on the LIFE webpage at: <https://laolandinfo.org/en/category/life/>

Blog's stories



Public participation in land lease and concession projects

Community participation in land lease and concession projects is important to ensure the full participation of all parties including villagers living in the project area and those who will be directly affected by the project.

'**Public participation in land lease and concession projects**' is a legal calendar topic of March - April 2021 that introduces two legal documents related to the topic: Guidelines regarding the Consideration of Investment Approval and Mechanism governing Land Lease and Concession for Agricultural Plantation (2019) and Decree on Environment Impact Assessment (2019). Read more (Lao language): <https://bit.ly/3lW1a1a>

Procedure of Land Dispute Settlement

The settlement of land issues with administrative characteristics is about settling issues related to State Land acquisition without authorization, using land in contradiction of its objectives, not using land after being transferred, failure to pay taxes or land use fees, land boundaries and other issues having administrative characteristics and other matter with Administrative Characteristics in by Laws and Regulations.

"**Procedure of Land Dispute Settlement**" is the topic of May-June on legal calendar 2021 that introduces three legal documents related to topic: Land law (2019), Law on Complaint Handling (2016) and Decision on the Organization and Operation of the Village Dispute Resolution Committees (2016).

Read more (Lao language): <https://bit.ly/33kBUqS>

If We Don't Protect 30% of the Natural World by 2030, Earth May Be Unfit for Life

The natural world is in a state of crisis, and we are to blame. We are in the midst of the Sixth Extinction, the biggest loss of species in the history of humankind. So many species are facing total annihilation.

The rapid decline in species has occurred in recent years: 60 percent of the planet's wildlife populations have been lost in just the last 50 years. Scientists warn that in the coming decades, if we don't take action, more than 1 million species may vanish from the Earth forever.

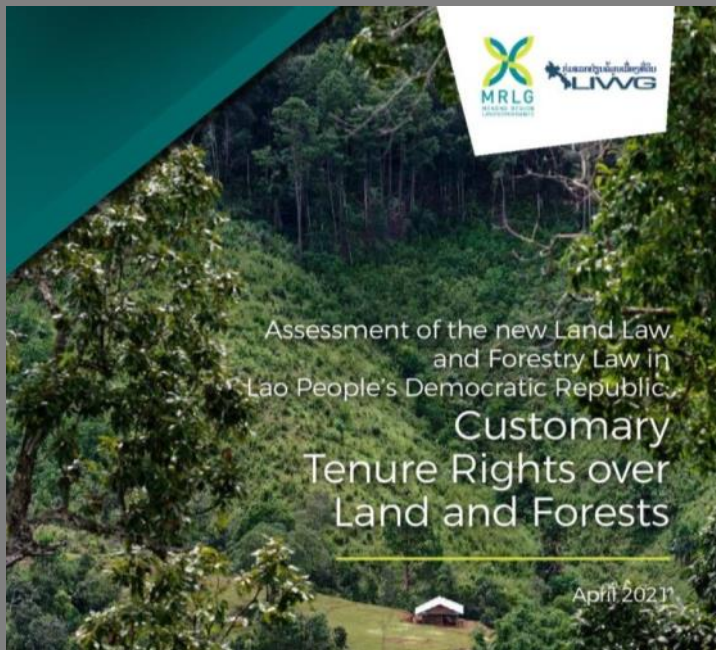
Read more: <https://bit.ly/3vGjopr> & [here](#)

Publications and videos



Publications

Assessment of the new Land Law and Forestry Law in Laos



The new report “**Assessment of the new Land Law and Forestry Law in Laos: Customary Tenure Rights over Land and Forests**” specifically details the differences between the newly promulgated Land Law and Forestry Law and their predecessor laws, the Land Law 2003 and the Forestry Law 2007, respectively, noting both their improvements and shortcomings. It compares the new Land Law with the new Forestry Law to highlight any differences and potential problems arising from gaps and overlaps. Overall, the report proposes the needed courses of action for further input by civil society to the development of implementing decrees, regulations and procedures through a set of recommendations.

This is the report collaborated by the Mekong Regional Land Governance (MRLG) and the Land Information Working Group (LIWG).

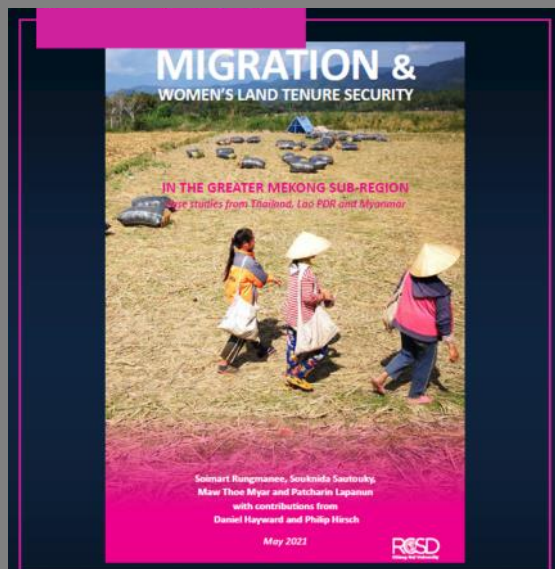
The report can be downloaded at: <https://bit.ly/3x5N8g3> & see more [here](#)

National Green Growth Strategy of Laos by 2030

This National Green Growth Strategy of the Lao PDR is the translation of the Resolution of the 10th Party Congress, the Vision 2030, the 10-Year Strategy (2016-2025) and the 8th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016-2020) into details.

The strategy is available to download at: <https://bit.ly/3oqFjhp>

Migration and Women's Land Tenure Security in the Greater Mekong Sub-region



The book “[Migration and Women's Land Tenure Security in the Greater Mekong Sub-region](#)” draws on country-level and ethnographic research, based on a collaboration between FAO and Chiang Mai University. The book explores how migration affects women's land tenure security, and in turn the ways in which women's control over land shapes patterns of migration, through case studies in a Hmong community in northern Lao PDR, a Karenni community in eastern Myanmar and a village in north-eastern Thailand.

The book was launched virtually on the May 19, 2021 and the live recording of this event can be assessed [here](#).

This book was published by RCSO, Chiang Mai University and it's available for download at:

<http://www.mekonglandforum.org/node/2770>

Videos

Empowering Ethnic Youth to become agents of change in protecting land and natural resources in their communities

This video was produced by LIWG together with the [LIFE project](#) and [Stella](#) in collaboration with Faculty of Law and Political Science with support from [Voice Laos](#).

This video presents the result of the project and how youth have improved their skills and knowledge from joining this project as well as the feedback from communities.

Watch the video at: <https://youtu.be/L9U6imcDMP8>



Questions raised at first NA session about impacts of mining projects in Huaphan

The first session of the 9th National Assembly (NA) of Laos wrapped up on March 26 in Vientiane after five days of working. During this session one NA members from Huaphanh province raised questions to the Minister of Planning and Investment about mining projects currently operating in Huaphan province that are causing impacts to environment and livelihood of local people.

Watch the video (Lao language) at: <https://bit.ly/2Vx9NUL>



What in the news!

A Chinese company eyes 5,000 hectares of land concession in Attapeu province

Chinese company and the government of Laos signed the MOU to study the prospects for development of 5,000 hectares of land in Sanamxay district, Attapeu province, southern Laos. This MoU, signed on April 7, allows China's Jia Run Company to carry out feasibility studies over the next six months on the land in Attapeu's Sanamxay district.

Read more: <https://bit.ly/3ALVqfz>

Lao Government Approves Pakse Expressway Route Selection

The expressway is expected to link the national capital of Vientiane with Pakse city in the south of the country. The 578.6 km Vientiane to Pakse Expressway Construction Project comes under the National Socio-Economic Development Plan and is valued at approximately USD 5.1 billion.

It will link Vientiane Capital with southern Laos, is expected to be connected with the northern expressway, which currently links Vientiane with Vang Vieng and is to be extended to the border with China.

Read more: <https://bit.ly/3pYO3Vi>

Vientiane rezones over 20 villages into a new district

According to a notice issued by the Mayor of Vientiane Capital, authorities have finalized steps to establish the new district, set to be the tenth district in the capital. It's planning to rezone some of 24 villages in Xaythany District to the new district (so far unnamed).

Authorities are now gathering further information to produce a new town map and assign each type of land following the city's development strategy.

Read more: <https://bit.ly/3dcGqx5>

The Ministry issues a new guidance to tackle corruption, bureaucratic malpractices

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) issued the Notice for prohibition and measures for officials within the division of Natural Resources and Environment, No. 2458/MONRE, dated June 3, 2021. This aims to ensure that officials from this division do their roles well and are more transparent. At the same time, it outlines what will happen to officials who not follow the law or act illegally.

Read more: <https://bit.ly/35hndpk> & [here](#)

New houses' construction for dam collapsed survivors in Sanamxay will not complete as planned

Deputy Provincial Governor of Attapeu and PNPC & SK Company reported that the rehabilitation and livelihood improvement plan for dam collapse survivors will not be completed as planned due to the Covid-19 outbreak, especially the plan to complete building of 700 new houses in Sanamxay district, Attapeu province. According to the company, construction of new houses is now 61% of the plan and it's expected to be completed within this year.

The policy to support villagers who were affected by this dam collapsed has also changed, especially the amount of rice and allowance will be less than what they used to receive and will only focus on groups who still have difficulty to support themselves.

Read more: <https://bit.ly/3cHerFj>

Upcoming activities (July – September 2021)

- Legal Calendar 2022 development meetings
- Publication of the study on Women's Access and Tenure Security in Customary Forest Tenure Systems in Laos
- LIFE coaching and case study on good practices of the training
- Online training on digital security
- LIWG core members' meeting



Thank you for reading our newsletter.

Stay Safe and Healthy!

Get in touch and be social with us:

Tel: +85630 9815657

Email: co@laolandinfo.org

Website: www.laolandinfo.org

Facebook: Land Information Working Group

