1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The IDRC\(^1\) funded ‘Resource Tenure in Community Based Natural Resource Management Project’, hereafter referred to as RTS (Resource Tenure Study), has been operating in the National University of Laos (NUOL) since November 1999. The main aim of this project is to train eleven NUOL teachers\(^2\) from different disciplines in all stages and processes related to conducting academic level research. Drawing on the knowledge, skills and expertise of a diverse range of international scholars\(^3\), the project has taken these eleven teachers through all stages related to carrying out research, from developing a research question, through conducting field research, to writing up and presenting conclusions and findings.

The research focus of the project is on natural resources management by local communities and in particular, aims to generate knowledge with respect to local resource tenure and its relationship to rural food security. Divided into three research teams, the NUOL teachers have each conducted research investigating the impact of the Laos Land and Forest Allocation policy on resource tenure and resource use patterns in three different rural village locations of Vientiane Municipality and Vientiane Province.

As this project enters its final phase, it is important to reflect on the experiences and lessons learned from the project, as this project has been the first of its kind to take place at NUOL. Not only has the nature of the main project activities been unique, but in addition, the multidisciplinary nature of the project has acted as a pilot example of drawing on the different knowledge bases already present within NUOL. This report provides a summary of the experiences, benefits and constraints of the project as seen from the perspective of a range of project participants including administration staff, international resource persons, project leaders and coordinators and the eleven teachers (hereafter referred to as the teachers) trained by the project.

\(^{1}\) IDRC = International Development Research Centre based in Ottawa, Canada

\(^{2}\) These teachers are listed in the Project Structure Diagram found in Appendix 1

\(^{3}\) These scholars are listed in the Project Structure Diagram found in Appendix 1
2. EXPECTED AND ACTUAL RESULTS

2.1 Project Aims and Outcomes

The project had three main goals which were set to be achieved through eight objectives (five objectives for the NUOL and three research objectives). These goals were as follows:

1. To develop research capacity and build a knowledge base in natural resource management issues, in particular, resource tenure at NUOL.

2. To establish agreements for cooperation and exchange of data between NUOL and government agencies with research experience.

3. To develop the capacity at NUOL to undertake participatory research on the linkages between natural resource management and food security.

Overall, the three main goals of the project were achieved to some extent. Goal one was fully achieved, the steps towards achieving goal two were set in place, while goal three was partially achieved. While the main direction of the project remained the same, that is the overall aim to build research capacity, there was an emphasis shift in the early stages of the project. Initially the project planned to focus on gaining rigorous research results to contribute significantly to improving local livelihoods. However, due to the lack of research experience of the teachers, there was a shift to place the main emphasis of the project on the teachers (as opposed to the research villages) and improving their capacity to do research which could potentially benefit local livelihoods in the future.

The achievement of these goals is reflected on further in a brief discussion below of the extent to which each of the specific project objectives were met (sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). The success of the project will also become more clear through the summarised feedback from project participants in the project implementation section (section 3) of this report.

2.1.1 Objectives for the National University of Laos

i. To develop capacity for doing research in natural resource management, resource tenure and food security at the NUOL.

This objective has been achieved through the numerous training sessions offered by the project and through the establishment of a mini-library containing documents related to natural resource management. The teachers acknowledge they have improved their knowledge of resource management issues and the importance of community participation in management practices (see section 3.2.4).

ii. To encourage linkages between the NUOL, government agencies with research experience, and non-government organizations with programs involving resource tenure and food security.

Active cooperation and research collaboration with external research institutions such as the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) did not occur to the extent initially anticipated. Collaboration was more so limited to information exchange in terms of documentary resources. This was mainly due to the research capacity of the teachers being limited. Hence the capacity to discuss research
directions or exchange research results has not been at a standard able to be exchanged. Only now, during the final stages of the project, steps towards more active collaboration with government and non-government agencies conducting activities and research in similar field will be made. At the conclusion of the project the teachers will present their research findings at a final workshop attended by other Lao and international research institutions and organisations. It is hoped from here to establish stronger links with these organisations regarding future work and research directions in the field of natural resource management and its links to food security.

**iii. To provide students with experience in doing research in rural communities.**

This objective was achieved. Several students from different faculties had the opportunity to conduct research in conjunction with the research teams. Often the students played an active role in data collection and were able to develop Bachelor theses from their work.

**iv. To develop Lao-language teaching and research resources.**

This objective was also achieved. A mini library with approximately 400 documents has been established. While most of these are in English, there are some 70 Lao documents available as well as some Thai language books and documents. As the teachers have limited English language some of the more relevant English language journal articles were translated into Lao language.

In recognition of the overall lack of readings available in Lao language for the field of natural resource management, the project acted as a catalyst for developing more basic Lao language materials in this field. A small side project, the NaRIM Project (Natural Resource and Information Management Project) has developed out of the Resource Tenure Study. NaRIM’s main aim is to produce a comprehensive Lao language reader providing definitions and information about all aspects of natural resource management. This project is being run by three of the Resource Tenure Study younger office staff, namely Kaisone Pengsopha, Daovorn Thongphans and Somvilay Chantalounnabong and is due to finish in August 2003.

**v. Assess effects of NUOL development and demonstration projects on resource management practices**

If field research was to be carried out in an area where NUOL has some demonstration projects or training exercises such as the Training and Model Forest of the Faculty of Forestry, this objective would have been relevant. However, teachers selected their own research sites, none of which overlapped such locations. Therefore this objective was adapted into a new objective ‘to provide feedback to villages in which research has been conducted’. This objective will be met when teachers present their research findings to villagers in mid-November 2002.

### 2.1.2 Research Objectives

**i. Achieve better understanding of resource tenure practices in Laos to facilitate government resource allocation and community management.**
ii. Improve food security

iii. Improve resource management capabilities, including enhanced participation by local government officials

Overall levels of expectation as to the quality of research outcomes have dropped throughout the project period. The initial project idea was to provide research grants for teachers to be able conduct their own research, but this was reassessed to concentrate on research training for teachers. When the project proposal was being developed it was assumed that the project would have teachers with some research experience and high motivation therefore the project objectives were more focused on research outcomes. However, it was quickly realised that the capacity of the teachers to do research was not high enough.

Therefore, it became apparent that the initial research objectives were too ambitious and could not be achieved and more focus was placed on building research skills of the teachers. The initial objectives were ones that would basically result once the research had been conducted, however it was first necessary to train the teachers in the processes to conduct research to be able to produce such results. Essentially the research objectives became informally converted into the following two new objectives for research:

→ To focus on qualitative research approaches
→ To examine the dynamic linkages between policy, resource tenure and food security

These changes however were not problematic as the flexible arrangement and design of the project facilitated this process well and allowed for the exploration of new avenues. Despite changes the project continued to remain focused towards its ultimate aim of building research capacity.

Both these new objectives have been met. Through the training sessions provided by the international resource persons, teachers have learnt about qualitative techniques and how to apply them to their selected field of study. They have also learnt and subsequently through the teachers conducting and analysing their own research.

3. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The following section summarises feedback provided about the activities and implementation of the project. The majority of feedback has been provided by the teachers, as they are the ones around which the activities of the project were aimed. Where relevant however, there is also substantial feedback from other project participants.

3.1 COORDINATION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

It seems that project co-ordination was simultaneously one of the stronger successes and weaker points of the project. At the international level, co-ordination between NUOL, the donors and the international universities and research institutions worked well. However, at the NUOL level teachers within the same university and even the same faculty often found it difficult to meet.
3.1.1 Co-ordination at the International Level

The main reason given for the success in co-operation between the international institutions, NUOL and the project office was the maintenance of good communication and keeping people updated about project events. This has been due in large part to the efforts of the project co-ordinator, Yayoi. In fact, it is now realised that the presence of a key communicator and co-ordinator capable of communicating between international resource persons as well as local Lao participants is essential to running a project such as this. The use of email and computers were necessary to assist in facilitating communication.

Another reason why co-ordination, with respect to the international level, went well was because the international resource persons were flexible in offering their time to provide training according to the needs of the teachers. It was also helpful that Phil Hirsch remained in regular contact both through email and when in the region on other business. Additionally, flexibility in finance arrangements allowed unanticipated activities to be supported.

One of the resource persons raised the issue of the problems associated with having a whole committee of people in charge of the substantive direction of the project. He suggested that while there were trade offs, having “slightly more control from a principal investigator” might better serve the project better.

3.1.2 Co-ordination at the NUOL Level

At the NUOL level there were no problems in terms of logistical support from NUOL and FOF. Arranging facilities for training sessions and workshops were not problematic and overall the presence of the project was welcomed wholeheartedly by the university. The main problems were co-operation between the faculties and most of all between individual teachers.

Contacting teachers from different faculties was difficult due to a lack of, or poor, telephone facilities. The Faculty of Agriculture had no phone and was located at a fair distance from the project office. The Faculty of Social Sciences only had a phone in the Dean’s office and this phone often had to be connected through the central university phone system which often failed to work. The Faculty of Economics and Management had a phone so it was not problematic to contact teachers there. Lack of telecommunications was a hindrance to organising training sessions efficiently. It was commented that more mobility of the project secretary would have been useful in order to pass on messages and co-ordinate training session arrangements.

Co-ordination amongst individual group members and lack of motivation of many of the teachers seem to have been one of the greatest problems of this project. Firstly, since there were teachers from different faculties in each research team, they had trouble contacting each other due to lack of telecommunication facilities. One teachers suggested the project should have bought mobile phones for the teachers who were more difficult to contact. Secondly, individual teachers had several other commitments and therefore found it difficult to find time to carry out research and project activities, especially in conjunction with fellow group members. Thirdly, the teachers were confused as to where their priorities should lie, that is, how much time they should spend conducting research and project activities and how much time should be spent on teaching commitments. In large part this was because NUOL does not yet have a clearly structured framework for research activities and lacks incentive mechanisms for teachers to carry out research. This was recognised by the
vice rector of the university and he suggested that the importance of research needs to be made clear and emphasised to all teachers in the university. Fourthly, there was weak leadership and sharing of responsibilities amongst group members as well as frequent absence of some group members. This discouraged other teachers. Finally, individual teachers lacked motivation to carry out activities and make efforts to communicate with fellow group members. This may have been caused by several factors including poor English language skills, poor computer skills, or their interest in joining the project may not have been motivated by a desire to conduct research.

To resolve some of these problems, communication between individual group members was encouraged and directly facilitated by project administration. Additionally, special training sessions were put on for those teachers with poor English language and computer skills. Documents were also translated into Lao language.

Suggestions for the future have been that
- NUOL needs to develop a system that gives priority to research and makes clear to teachers the importance of research and the role of NUOL as a research institution
- Teachers need to be interviewed when being selected for projects in order to check their prior commitments as well as their capability and motivation to conduct research
- Projects could have a language training component built in for teachers with poorer language skills
- The project needs to have a co-ordinator, such as the role that Yayoi has been playing, that is able to communicate promptly and effectively with all participants

3.2 TRAINING SESSIONS

3.2.1 Time Allocation

Overall there was a general feeling amongst the teachers that the time allocated for training activities was suitable. Three teachers felt that the training sessions were too short, while one teacher felt that some activities were rushed and others were too drawn out.

A comment from one of the resource persons was that training sessions were interesting, but ran slowly due to the time constraints of the participants. It was suggested that it might be good if some experienced lecturers at NUOL could facilitate the work of all the groups prior to the training sessions.

3.2.2 Materials Used

All of the researchers agreed that the materials, especially maps, used during training sessions were appropriate and very useful, particularly for fieldwork. However, while materials were useful, some of the teachers felt they lacked experience in using items such as maps and aerial photographs effectively. They felt they did not know how to make full sense of them and would have liked some more training in this area. One of the teachers felt there was not
3.2.3 Lessons Learned

3.2.3.1 Problem Identification
The teachers listed a variety of skills they gained in the area of problem identification. The most common being the ability to identify key issues to conduct research about as well as key issues within the research topic itself. One teacher mentioned they had learnt how to identify key issues from readings and field visits. Related to this, the teachers identified they had gained skills in how to write about key issues that will be discussed in a research paper, how to select appropriate research activities and how to identify the scope of the research. Other skills learnt relating to problem identification was that research has to be clear, interesting, relevant and topical (of current interest to society).

3.2.3.2 Field Visits during the Training
Overall the teachers found field visits very useful. Primarily this was because they were able to reflect back upon their training field visit experiences when conducting their own field research. They found that field visits were relevant to their research topics, effective in helping them to understand the situation of rural villages and taught them how to work closely with villagers. They were also able to learn several methods for conducting field research. However, some teachers felt that the field visits were too short and one teacher suggested that the information collected during the training field visits should have been summarised.

3.2.3.3 Methods
Overall, teachers felt they had gained skills in data collection and data analysis. They mentioned that they had learned to use qualitative research approaches and were able to assess the effectiveness of different methods of data collection. Some teachers however, still felt they needed to improve their understanding of different data collection methodologies and their effectiveness as well as improve their data analysis skills.

3.2.3.4 Literature Review
The teachers sited a number of benefits gained from the literature review sessions. These were:
- how to relate and compare other research with their own
- how to read documents analytically
- learning the importance of reading
- learning from the ideas of others
- developing and increasing their knowledge on certain subjects and issues
- finding research to support one’s own research

A few teachers mentioned that they or other teachers still needed to improve their literature reviewing skills. They still find it difficult to use the research of others effectively. One teacher mentioned that the peer review session was very useful.

Ajan Chusak mentioned that language was a barrier in the project as most teachers could not read materials in English. He suggested that the project could have a built-in language training package for the teachers. He felt that this would benefit not only the project, but also the teachers' opportunity to pursue higher education or further research on their own.

3.2.3.5 Writing Research Papers

A number of different points were made by teachers in a reflection on the lessons learned from writing a research paper. Two teachers wrote that they had learned the process of writing a research paper. They had learned that it is not just a matter of writing one final paper but actually a series of steps from writing a research proposal, through writing up research methods, data and findings, to writing up and summarising the research.

Other points mentioned by teachers were that they had learned:
- new and different ways to write research papers
- how to summarise research findings and experiences
- that changes in environment, society, economy, culture, politics and social structure have an effect on natural resources
- about policy, its actual implications and the real state of rural areas
- the different data collection and overall research approaches of social sciences as opposed to a purely scientific approach where research is based on experiments conducted in laboratories
- that seeking feedback in the form of peer review and comments from resource persons were useful in improving one’s research paper
- to improve their writing skills and this was very useful for their teaching, particularly when advising students on how to write their thesis
- about the importance of scientific writing based on what was actually observed in the field

One teacher mentioned they still felt they had weak writing skills and would like some more training. Another mentioned that a lack of discussion and agreement amongst group members caused difficulties when writing their groups research paper.

3.2.3.6 Lessons from the study tour to Chiang Mai University
It seems that the field visit to Chiang Mai was quite successful in highlighting some key learning points for the teachers. Chiang Mai University and the research being conducted in the Social Sciences department highlighted well the scope of issues that the project aimed to cover, that is, to improve knowledge of natural resource management issues in rural areas, and more importantly to understand the role of academics and their research in contributing to knowledge on this topic. As cultural and language differences between Thailand and Laos are not so great, Chiang Mai University acted as a very effective practical example for the teachers of how qualitative and participatory research approaches can be useful, relevant and valuable and how academics can place themselves within society.

From the visit to Chiang Mai, teachers stated that they learnt about:
- the livelihoods of upland people and ethnic minorities, in particular the Karen
- development and how natural resources can be integrated and used in agricultural production
- grassroots based research (how to learn from the local people) and that such research takes time
- relevant and useful qualitative research techniques to use in rural areas.
- the usefulness, importance and value of information collected by qualitative techniques such as informal interviews and observations
- university research and the purpose of conducting field-based research that has policy implications
- how to use a high-tech library and the usefulness of such a library

One teacher, while claiming that the Chiang Mai experience was very informative, stated it was not clear how the visit and experience in Chiang Mai could be useful for their own research. Interestingly, another teacher stated exactly the opposite claiming that the experience was very useful for their own research, particularly as they were able to compare their research topics and research sites with those in Chiang Mai.

### 3.2.3.7 Lessons Learned Transferred to Teaching

Most of the teachers mentioned in general that their skills and experiences gained from the project would be transferred when teaching. Some mentioned more specifically that skills gained from the project would help them when advising their students to write their thesis. Others hinted that skills gained would be reflected overall in their teaching such as understanding the usefulness of research and new knowledge of natural resource management issues gained. Some teachers did not actually mention how they would apply lessons learned in their teaching, they only mentioned that they had gained new skills and knowledge. These were:
- the links between theory and real situations
- identifying issues and planning research
- conducting group research

### 3.2.4 Raising Interest in CBNRM

For all the teachers, participation in the project heightened their interest in resource use and management. Two of the teachers felt they had gained a greater understanding of the importance of sustainable resource use and the concept of protecting natural resources for future generations. One teacher stated they had become more interested in the legal definitions of resource management and that through readings and training sessions had become more aware of resource management issues in other parts of the world. Two of the teachers highlighted the problems they had learned about in relation to resource management practices, including the problems of equitable land distribution and resource access, the commercialisation of agriculture, and unsustainable and exploitative resource use.

Overall, however, most of the teachers stated that they now recognised the importance of involving local communities in natural resource management processes, with one teacher writing that they felt that local people should be the ones to plan, protect and manage natural resource use themselves. Some of the teachers mentioned they learned that local people have a lot of experience in and knowledge of resource management, and that such indigenous knowledge, along with recognition of rights to resource use, can be very useful for the effective management of natural resources.

### 3.3 Conducting Field Work

#### 3.3.1 Data Collection

**3.3.1.1 Methods Used**

The following table lists techniques that the teachers mentioned they used for data collection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Technique</th>
<th>Number of times mentioned as being used by different researchers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys (e.g. field and food surveys)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary data collection</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionairres</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading of documents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.1.2 Problems Collecting Field Data

The table below indicates the problems that the teachers had in association with collecting field data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>No. of Times Mentioned as being a problem by different teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing historical data</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranging time amongst group members to conduct field work</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing field questions amongst group members</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different levels of experience between group members</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different format for field data collection for the 3 groups</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The objective of field work was not clear</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranging time to meet villagers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of field experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.1.2 Types of Information Collected

The teachers mentioned that they collected the following types of information:
- primary and secondary data
- oral histories at the household and village level
- statistical information
- maps
- photographs

Information and data was collected about:
- the socio-economic situation of households (income, education etc.)
- agricultural production
- agricultural technology
- natural resource use
- customary land and forest use
- land holdings
- changes in land cover
- information before and after land allocation
- the impact of the land and forest allocation policy on households
- food security

3.3.1.3 Reliability of Data Collected

When assessing how reliable their data was, seven teachers spoke in terms of percentages. These are expressed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliability of Data</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-80%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other three teachers offered the following comments as to the reliability of their data:
- "More or less reliable. All data were checked and analyzed."
- "Data after land and forest allocation is somewhat reliable but those before land and forest allocation is less reliable."
- "Present data is relatively reliable (2001), while any information prior to land allocation in 1996 is less reliable"

3.3.2 Interviews

3.3.2.1 Organising Meetings with Local Communities

When asked how often each group organised meetings with local communities and at the district and provincial levels there were several different responses from members of the same research team. It is not clear whether the question was misinterpreted or whether the different responses were due to a lack of communication and collaboration between research team members. In any case, it seems that some of the groups conducted meetings at the district and provincial levels as well as with local communities.

3.3.2.2 Interviews at the Central Level
Eight of the teachers mentioned that they did not conduct any interviews at the central level. One teacher mentioned they had an interview with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Another mentioned they held an interview with someone at the departmental level within a Ministry, however it was not clear which ministry.

### 3.3.2.3 Problems Faced when Conducting Interviews

The main difficulties mentioned by the researchers when conducting interviews were language difficulties when trying to communicate with Hmong villagers and also finding time to conduct interviews. Two teachers mentioned that they faced difficulties when asking villagers about past events. One teacher mentioned this was because it was difficult to understand the notion of time of the villagers. One teacher complained of having too much irrelevant data.

### 3.3.3 Group Coordination

#### 3.3.3.1 Field Work Coordination

It seems that teachers were split between feeling that their fieldwork coordination went well and feeling that it went badly. In general more teachers felt that fieldwork coordination was not so good. Reasons sited for fieldwork going badly were:

- Villagers not being available for discussions and meetings
- Objectives of fieldwork not being clarified
- Questions were not prepared in advance
- When returning from the field, no one summarised data or entered it into a computer. Therefore data was lost
- Contacting villages was difficult
- Group members found it difficult to meet up

Reasons sited for field work coordination going well were:

- Ideas were exchanged, plans were made and responsibilities designated to each group member prior to field visits

#### 3.3.3.1 Planning of Field Activities

When asked whether the teachers felt their field activities were well planned and coordinated, nearly all the teachers felt that planning of activities had gone well. There were mixed opinions however, as to how well implementing the planned activities had gone. While most felt that they had not gone too badly, others felt that coordinating and implementing plans had not gone well nor according to plan.

### 3.3.4 Important Lessons Learned from Field Work
Data collection skills, group work skills, planning skills and increased knowledge of local livelihoods related issues were all cited by the teachers as important lessons learned from conducting field work for their research. In greater detail, increased knowledge and understanding were gained about:

- different research methodologies
- interview techniques (e.g. how to ask questions in an indirect manner)
- the value of non-numerical data in assisting to understand the actual situation in a village
- planning and preparing before conducting field work in order for objectives to be clear and relevant to the research question
- working together with other researchers and villagers
- the key importance of clarifying the purpose one’s research to the villagers and working closely with them to learn from their ordinary life
- the livelihoods of rural people
- the livelihood of a Hmong ethnic group
- local use of natural resources
- participatory resource management
- changes in land use practices

### 3.4 Interdisciplinary Group Work

#### 3.4.1 Benefits and Constraints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Interdisciplinary Group Work</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Constraints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field Data Collection</td>
<td>- Gained knew knowledge to pass on to students</td>
<td>- Time shortage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Learnt new approaches to methodology</td>
<td>- High workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Able to exchange experiences, ideas and perspectives</td>
<td>- Lack of coordination e.g. when scheduling field work activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Able to divide tasks</td>
<td>- Lack of agreement in data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Able to draw on different skills and fields of expertise of the teachers</td>
<td>- Lack of mutual understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Different skills and capacities made it difficult to divide tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Lack of clear objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Living different distances from field or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>office locations meant those closer did more work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td></td>
<td>- There was never enough time for all group members to discuss data together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Able to exchange and integrate people’s different ideas and skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Able to examine the problem carefully in detail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Introduced to different data analysis skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Able to pass on new data analysis skills to students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Able to help each other think</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Members often failed to take responsibility for the work and this affected progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Summarising was difficult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Little diversity in the way the problem was approached</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- There was limited knowledge of how to go about analysing data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- It was confusing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Knowledge on the economy was not covered widely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Results and Findings</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group could not agree on some ideas and issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Learned different ways to view issues and problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Able to divide writing responsibilities according to the skills and capacity of each individual group member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- People who had more time were able to work on the writing</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Perspectives of individuals was often different</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Lack of experience in citing references</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Not enough time to write together as a group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of Findings</td>
<td></td>
<td>Data analysis and summarising findings still very difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Able to divide responsibilities of presentation among group members</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Presentations enabled members to learn from each other and of their own shortcomings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Learned ways to present ideas in a</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Prioritising important issues and problems is still very difficult to do</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Members lacked computer skills to present findings</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Tended to rely mainly</td>
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</table>
3.4.2 Lessons Learned from Interdisciplinary Work
The teachers gained a number of benefits from conducting research in an interdisciplinary situation. One of the most commonly mentioned benefits was the fact that teachers could learn from each other and exchange ideas. Being from different faculties the teachers were able to draw on each others strength, skills, experience and knowledge. Teachers also mentioned that they learned how to work in a group in terms of planning and coordinating activities and how to adapt to and utilise each members different work styles.

3.5 Student Involvement
3.5.1 The Role of Students
Students were involved in the project by working closely with one of each of the three research teams. The main role of the students in each team was to collect data in the field, for example, conducting interviews. However, some research teams seemed to engage their students even more. In these teams students were also involved in collecting information from the university such as documents, recording and entering data, drawing maps, making 3d models, interpreting aerial photographs, and exchanged their ideas with the teachers.

3.5.2 Issues with Student Involvement
Some of the problems, as mentioned by the teachers, with involving the students in research activities were that both teachers and students lacked time in order for teachers be able to explain fieldwork clearly and in detail. Other issues mentioned were:
- Deciding which students to select and take on field visits
- Students lacked experience
- How to conduct and allocate time for interviews, how to identify research issues, and how to analyse data needed to be clarified
- There was a limited budget for student involvement
- Students were not as dedicated as expected
- Teachers were not experienced enough to supervise the students correctly and in an effective manner

3.6 Usefulness of the Project for Teaching
3.6.1 Most Significant Learning Experiences
Most of the teachers felt that the some of the most significant learning experiences gained from the project were:

- knowledge gained from conducting fieldwork
- learning how to write and the importance of a research paper
- learning how to collect and analyse data
- learning about building a knowledge base and developing teaching skills
- learning about the socio-economic situation, agricultural production and livelihoods in the research locations

3.6.2 Lessons Learned Passed On

Most of the teachers mentioned in general that their skills and experiences gained from the project would be transferred when teaching. Some mentioned more specifically that skills gained from the project would help them when advising their students to write their thesis. Others hinted that skills gained would be reflected overall in their teaching such as understanding the usefulness of research and knowledge of natural resource management issues. A few teachers mentioned specifically that they would teach their students about natural resource management issues, land use, food issues, local economies and the actual situation in rural areas, natural. Some teachers did not actually mention how they would apply lessons learned in their teaching, they only mentioned that they had gained new skills and knowledge. These were:

- the links between theory and real situations
- identifying issues and planning research
- conducting group research

3.7 Administration

3.7.1 Problems with Organisation of Project Activities

No concrete problems were clearly mentioned by teachers, most in fact, felt that organisation of activities had gone well with time allocation and budgets being appropriate. One teacher reiterated that coordination between teachers from different faculties was a difficulty. Another teacher mentioned that some services were not completely available nor suitable for some researchers, however it is not clear which services they were referring to. A teacher felt that there were not enough activities.

3.7.2 Improving Project Coordination and Management

Suggestions by the teachers for improvements to project coordination and management were to:

- improve coordination between and within different groups and faculties
- have teachers working close to each other, working in the same research team
- outline the project objectives and roles clearly
- provide clear guidance for group work
- divide people into research teams according to their field of study
- clarify the role of the project leader and project assistants
- have the project leader present during training sessions to follow up on the progress of individuals
- allocate more time to work together on research work
- provide more language and computer training for teachers
- pay per diems according to the initial agreement
- allocate a budget for the amount of hours spent in the office writing research papers
- provide more financial support to the researchers (offer competitive rate of pay so that teachers remained focused on the project)
- account for fluctuations in the value of the Kip when receiving per diems
- buy mobile phones for people who are harder to contact
- purchase a vehicle for field activities and for those located at far campuses

3.7.3 Facilities, Equipment and Assistance

Overall teachers found resource persons, facilities, equipment and financial assistance provided by the project to be appropriate and very useful. Only one teacher mentioned that there were some limitations. Although they did not make it clear what these were. The majority of teachers also felt that the amount of reading materials and equipment were sufficient. One teacher expressed disappointment in not having enough time to make better use of the documents available. Two teachers felt there were not enough computers, but also admitted they had no time to use them and that most of the researchers were not interested in using the computers that were available.

When asked what materials were most useful, only two teachers mentioned anything of value. These were the availability of readings on resource use, shifting cultivation and research methodologies.

It was important that Ajan Houngpeth was involved as a key player in terms of project administration. As he was also head administrator at the Faculty level, he was able to assist with certain arrangements for example booking vehicles, booking rooms.

3.8 Progress of Teachers and Group Work

More training and coaching sessions had to be introduced which meant that researchers had less time for their own research and collecting data in the field than initially expected. (Khamla)

Tubtim suggested participants needed to take their work more seriously. One way of achieving this was through a need for better support from the departments of each of the teachers. It was suggested that the head of each department should have a clear understanding of the importance of the project and there should be more incentive for the departments to work with the project. For example, linking in
increased knowledge gained from the project with curriculum improvement and acknowledgement of their effort and work of the researchers.

Chusak felt that one of the biggest problems with the project was that the individual researchers lack dedication to carry out their research work. He also recognised that this was not entirely the fault of the teachers as they had other commitments. As one solution to help encourage the teachers, Chusak suggested “NUOL needs to have a system that gives priority to research. It may take sometimes to create such the system and tradition as most teachers look at research as a residual work. Their main job is teaching. The recruitment of the teachers to participate in the project may need to have mechanisms that assure that qualified and dedicated people are selected.”

4. IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

Overall, the project with its large degree of success has had a significant influence for NUOL research administration directions. The project has provided some good ideas and illustrated some useful approaches about how the university might set about fulfilling its aim, as set out in the Prime Ministers decree, to become a research institution. The project has provided an example in which teachers can become more actively involved in research activities as required by the government’s mandate.

Moreover, it has provided an international research experience for teachers that may not have had the opportunity to travel overseas to study at such a level, it has provided research training in a locally specific and relevant context which is relevant to the teachers and is better able to identify their research needs and situation.

5. CONCLUSION

Overall, it seems the project was quite successful. While the original objective to develop high-level research results in the field of CBNRM and resource tenure was not achieved, a number of very important outcomes were achieved nonetheless. In addition useful research results were obtained and importantly these were developed from start to end from Lao researchers about Lao. The greatest problems with the project seemed to arise from administrative and coordination aspects.

Teachers were exposed to a variety of in-classroom as well as field-based training sessions which helped facilitate their learning in all aspects of conducting academic level research. Teachers gained problem identification skills, writing skills, improved their analytical skills, learnt to relate other research work to their own, learnt the importance of having topical and relevant research and to frame it in a manner which can be useful for other researchers and policy makers. A strong international network has been formed for research based work in the field of natural resource management and a stepping stone for a future research framework for NUOL has been put in place.