

TABI Mid-Term Review
Draft Report

Vientiane, Lao PDR
6 June 2011

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|---|
| ABD | Agrobiodiversity |
| AEA | Agro-Ecosystems Analysis |
| AEDP | Agro-Enterprise Development Process |
| AG | Advisory Group |
| AWP | Annual Work Plan |
| CAFRI | Centre for Agriculture and Forestry Information |
| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity |
| CC | Climate Change |
| CDE | Centre for Development and Environment (University of Bern) |
| CLT | Communal Land Title |
| COP | Conference Of the Parties |
| CTA | Chief of Technical Advisor |
| CU | Coordination Unit |
| DAAP | District Agrobiodiversity Action Plan |
| DAFO | District Agriculture and Forestry Office |
| DAW | District Agrobiodiversity Workgroup |
| DLMA | District Land Management Authority |
| DoA | Department of Agriculture (MAF) |
| DoE | Department of Environment (WREA) |
| DoF | Department of Forestry |
| DoLF | Department of Livestock and Fisheries |
| DoP | Department of Planning (MAF) |
| DSA | Daily Subsistence Allowance |
| FIPD | Forestry Inventory and Planning Division |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| GiZ | Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit |
| GoL | Government of Lao PDR |
| ICT | Information Communication Technology |
| IUCN | The International Union for Conservation and Nature |
| KETS | Kumban Extension and Technical Service Centres |
| KISS | Knowledge and Information Sharing System |
| KSC | Knowledge and Communication Strategy |
| LFA | Logical Framework for the Agrobiodiversity Initiative |
| LIWG | Land Issues Working Group |
| LNFC | Lao National Front for Construction |
| LNRRIC | Land & Natural Resources Research and Information Centre (NLMA) |
| LPB | Luang Prabang |
| LTA | Long Term Technical Assistance |
| LUP | Land Use Planning |
| LUPLA | Land Use Planning and Land Allocation |
| LWU | Lao Women's Union |
| MAF | Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |

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|-------|--|
| MEAs | Multilateral Environmental Agreements |
| MEM | Ministry of Energy and Mining |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| MoF | Ministry of Finance |
| MPI | Ministry of Planning and Investment |
| MTR | Mid Term Review (Team) |
| NABP | National Agricultural Biodiversity Program |
| NAFES | National Agriculture and Forestry Extension System |
| NAFRI | National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute |
| NAP | National Agrobiodiversity Program (UNDP/FAO) |
| NBSAP | National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan |
| NGO | Non Government Organisation |
| NLMA | National Land Management Authority |
| NPA | Non-Profit Association |
| NTFP | Non Timber Forest Product |
| NUOL | National University of Laos |
| PAFO | Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office |
| PAW | Provincial Agrobiodiversity Workgroup |
| PF | Project Facilitator |
| PLUP | Participatory Land Use Planning |
| PMM | Program Management Manual |
| PRC | Policy and Research Centre |
| PSC | Provincial Steering Committee |
| QA | Quality Assurance |
| SC | Steering Committee |
| SDC | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation |
| SHT | Sustainable Harvesting Technique |
| SMART | Specific Measurable Accurate, Realistic Timebound |
| SO | Support Organisation |
| SP | Sub-Project |
| SPA | Sub-Project Agreement |
| TA | Technical Assistance |
| TABI | The Agro Biodiversity Initiative |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |
| WREA | Water Resource and Environment Administration |
| XKH | Xieng Khouang |
| Y2 | Year 2 |

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The potential for TABI to make a valuable contribution to Lao PDR is high. The project design incorporates a wide range of issues under its 6 components with clear focus on the combined objectives of ABD and poverty alleviation, gives it the flexibility to pilot innovative actions and test approaches in the field which have the potential to be fed into policy making processes supporting its goals. The MTR considers that the Project remains highly relevant for the main beneficiaries (government officials, provincial and district administrations responsible for agriculture and natural resources conservation and sustainable use, farmers and their communities in the northern uplands of Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang Provinces).

Outcome 1 has been the least effective, despite the most notable achievement the contribution to the COP 10 reporting and support to the delegation. CBD compliance reporting and NBSAP implementation is still not achieved. The MTR recommends that a set of actions to support and boost the CBD compliance work and NBSAP preparation is built into the work plan comprising a communication plan supported by Outcome 5.

Outcome 2 has been effective in setting up the SP model of pilot project implementation, but it has not been very efficient and is underspending funds. The sub projects pilots should generate information on sustainable techniques through demonstrable examples which through learning processes should enable TABI to promote best practices within ABD management. In the short term, it is recommended to consolidate the implementation of the current Sub-Project based activities and in parallel seeking (if possible) to scale up into one or two clusters more in each district.

For Outcome 3, most field level activities were only picking up speed at the end of the year 2, thus effectiveness has been low, as well as efficiency. However, this outcome is research oriented and require considerable time in order to provide results. More research is needed on the production capacity of NTFPs in different environments.

The outcome 4 interrelates with other outcomes, in particular Outcomes 2 and 3, and is central to the entire TABI program design and program goal. It is recommended to seek clarification and consensus with NLMA about the validity of communal land titles as a matter of urgency, as delays in the PLUP will affect strongly the program efficiency and sustainability.

Outcome 5 has been quite effective and has produced the TABI Knowledge and Communications Strategy (KCS); Knowledge and Information Database initiated, Server installed at CAFRI to host TABI ICT services, TABI website and intranet, Wikipedia for the Lao NTFP handbook; Inventory of provincial and district level data compiled; First version of a national agrobiodiversity metadatabase compiled; KISS data sets and maps produced in support of other TABI Outcomes (PLUP and AEA). District spatial and attribute data generated by AEA captured by the KISS. Part of the mandate of CDE

concerns capturing learning from TABI activities and from other actors in the field of ABD – this part has proven difficult.

The project has built up good reporting systems with detailed annual reporting of achievements per output presented in matrices with progress indicators, the latest presented in the Year 2 annual report. Capacity building under TABI is a major challenge, because TABI has a complex set-up, and the main implementers are not solely TABI staff by themselves, the implementers are spread out geographically and operating at different levels in different organisations.

Monitoring procedures and methods have emerged during the initial revision of the log-frame and are being further developed in the work planning workshops and supported through the QA. It is expected that the KISS team shall contribute to the definition of indicators – it is likely to expect this task to be undertaken as a joint effort, with indicators more likely stemming from the work done by actors actually generating the information.

TABI would benefit from an overall strategic vision or expected end goal of its intervention – expressed as levels of operation, institutionalisation and sustainability. This would make it easier to monitor and evaluate the programme. For example, stages could be defined for its achievement, defined as e.g.

- A minimum level expressing fulfilment of outputs related to operational structures (e.g. CBD structures + NBSAP prepared; SHT piloted and documented, SP model mainstreamed)
- An operational level, where interventions are institutionalised (assimilated into partner institutions and operational routines)
- Fully integrated and well functioning, contributing to outcomes (and impacts), without donor support (sustainability)

TABI is coordinating with many important stakeholders, which is evolving in an ongoing process as needs arise. There needs to be stronger focus on identifying partners to assist with consolidating the implementation of the current project activities and for scaling up, and in the longer term to take on some of the participatory work associated with a change in SP model strategy to strengthen participation in the kumban planning process and thus improve the sustainability aspect.

TABI has produced tangible results and major achievements under difficult circumstances, with major challenges related to coordination and facilitation of complex issues through many different stakeholders. It is not possible at this stage to determine impacts in terms of poverty reduction, or sustainable production systems, baselines need to be further developed and methods designed to monitor them, particularly indicators for sustainable ABD management and production are elusive. However, the KISS has achieved some remarkable success in its focus on evidence based results as presented on the website, and there is increasing understanding of the importance of developing such tools, which in turn contributes to the understanding of ABD as a pillar for livelihood improvement and long term sustainability. It must be recognised that TABI is indeed a

long term endeavour, and as such it merits more time to operationalise its strategy. For this reason, we believe a second phase is important and necessary.

2 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the result of the Mid-Term Review mission (MTR) that visited Lao PDR, on 25 April – 12th of May, 2011 with the objective to review the general status of the Government of Lao PDRs “Agro-Biodiversity Initiative” (TABI) which is supported by a grant of approx. 3,5 mill. CHF (~4.1 mill. USD) by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) of the Swiss Confederation.

The Government Agreement for the 3-year Programme was signed on 29 April 2009 and the programme will be implemented from May 2009 to April 2012. Ramböll Natura AB has successfully tendered for the implementation of TABI Phase I (comprising one year inception and 2 years of implementation) through contract signed with the SDC. Thus, by May 2011 the programme has been under active implementation for 2 years. The MTR reviewed progress made May 2009 – April 2011. The main body of the report highlights the mission’s assessment of the project performance and the key issues meriting attention, according to TOR (Annex 1).

The MTR¹ wishes to express its sincere appreciation of the assistance provided to it by the GoL and involved institutions and stakeholders as well as the SDC office in Vientiane (please see Annex 2 for people met).

3 ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT DESIGN & RELEVANCE

Project implementation is guided by the Project Document which presents the major challenges to be addressed by TABI as the integration of three policy orientations: *poverty reduction, biodiversity conservation, and the assimilation of a market-based agriculture system* in the Lao PDR. All Lao farm families have a high level of knowledge about the biodiversity resources available to them, as they rely on agrobiodiversity resources to meet food, income, material, fibre, medicine and environmental services needs. Under low population pressure, their farming systems ensure sustainable supplies of agrobiodiversity resources. Increased population, increasing dependence on a market economy, intensified agriculture systems, and a growing demand and market for biodiversity products from outside the local area, lead to excessive pressure on agrobiodiversity resources resulting in habitat destruction and over-harvesting. Consequently, in combination with a lack of awareness of biodiversity management options, there is a resulting loss of important biodiversity resources.

¹ Team composition: Mr. Michael Thurland, Natural Resources Management specialist, Team Leader, Mr. Keoka Khamlouang, Livelihoods specialist.

A fundamental output of TABI, as per the project document, is a better understanding of the specific threats to ABD in various agro-ecological zones, the various uses of ABD within community groups, and the consequences of ongoing social, ecological and environmental change, and support of the development of sustainable field level solutions to these threats, including promotion of supportive policies.

TABI is aligned with the major strategy plans of the Lao PDR, and the National Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 and Action Plan to 2010 (NBSAP), and it also shares its overall goal: "*Maintain and protect Lao PDR's biodiversity as one key to poverty alleviation*". The purpose of TABI is to "*Improve the livelihoods of upland communities based on the productive use and conservation of ABD resources*".

The potential for it to make a valuable contribution to Lao PDR is high. The project design incorporates a wide range of issues under its 6 components and it is clear that Lao PDR is in need of a wide ranging vision in relation to supporting sustainable development, agrobiodiversity and land use planning. Lao PDR is entering into a dynamic and rapidly changing period, with new policies, initiatives and vigour stemming from implementation of its strategic visions and National Socio-Economic Development Plans, and significant new infrastructural developments are likely to affect economic growth and demand for natural resources in the relatively near future.

The MTR considers that the Project remains highly relevant for the main beneficiaries (government officials, provincial and district administrations responsible for agriculture and natural resources conservation and sustainable use, farmers and their communities in the northern uplands of Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang Provinces), because the Project is in line with the strategic policies of the GoL. It is highly relevant for the members of the rural communities, men and women of different ethnicities, whose livelihood depend directly on access to development potential from sustainable use of natural resources within their customary areas. The number of these (direct) beneficiaries was estimated by the MTR team to be around 20,000 per target district. If the Project achieves its goals of sustainable development replicated in more provinces, this number could increase potentially.

In this context, the *strength* of TABI is its clear focus on the combined objectives of ABD and poverty alleviation, and its open-ended approach and strategy to work through GoL and partners - not being a traditional implementer – giving it the flexibility to pilot innovative actions and test approaches in the field which have the potential to be fed into policy making processes supporting its goals. Coordination and facilitation are key to the success of the strategy to link partners and share knowledge and information.

The potential *weakness* of this design in comparison with a traditional project, lies in the need to establish good coordination and cooperation among stakeholders to successfully implement ABD related actions. This requires both a strong vertical cooperation between levels and cooperation among different departments agencies and sectors, in reconciling a

biodiversity conservation focus with economic development stemming from natural resource use.

This is reflected also in the quality and usefulness of the project log-frame. The design implies inherent difficulties in fitting an open-ended results framework into a traditional log-frame. This quickly became apparent after project start-up. The initial log-frame was considered inadequate and the log-frame was revised through a series of planning workshops and finalised in April 2010, to take into account lessons learned during program implementation in Year 1 and to align it with MAF's vision for a National Agrobiodiversity Program under which a range of donors can provide support according to their specific priorities and resources. It is not clear to the MTR exactly what lessons learnt were considered for the new log-frame, nor does there seem to be a SC endorsement / agreement on the final log-frame matrix (it is not mentioned in the SC minutes provided to the MTR). The log-frame now incorporates slightly changed outputs including time-bound indicators, while the outcomes remain largely the same (although there are subtle but in a way substantial changes, e.g. Outcome 1 was changed from "An improved capacity for effective governance of the CBD in the Lao PDR" to "Effective governance of the CBD in Laos". There are major changes in outputs and activities under Outcome 2, see e.g. AWP 1 vs. AWP 2.

A 6th outcome was added in order to better address programme management. Additionally, gender and other cross-cutting issues was added under Outcome 6 as goals by themselves, to highlight and ensure that crosscutting issues were properly addressed. Outputs / activities were added to that effect.

The log-frame review seems to be justified, because it introduced timebound indicators and fewer and less ambitious outputs, but it also scaled back many activities in time and scope. Because the log-frame is part of the project government agreement and thus binds the parties by the agreed targets, it should at least be dealt with in SC and documented accordingly.

Apart from the problem of applying a log frame matrix to an *initiative* with possibly changing goals (rather than a fixed term project with a concrete goal), there seems to be examples of *lack of clear ownership of objectives*, i.e. some objectives cannot be attributed to TABI alone (e.g. the outputs on CBD) or are not accepted by partners, or the institutions simply have not agreed who has responsibility (e.g. MAF vs. WREA on CBD reporting). This fact apparently falls back on the design or the timing of the project as it could have been avoided if the design were different. Changes in the log-frame also changes the "yardstick" by which the project can be evaluated (a proper log-frame with SMART² objectives/outputs is necessary for it to serve as a tool for evaluation).

The MTR team has decided for these reasons not to focus on a detailed log-frame analysis. The log-frame issue will continue to "haunt" TABI also into future phases, given its inherent nature!. There is still a need to review yet again the log-frame to make it more realistic and adapted to the strategy to better serve as a management tool.

² Specific, Measurable, Accurate, Realistic, Time bound,

However, a full-fledged log-frame revision will take up precious project resources, and distract TA resources from other more urgent work required for the remainder of phase I, therefore the MTR recommends that a revision of the log-frame is undertaken. Only outputs, indicators and timing should be revised to make it more realistic in terms of expected achievements, but including risk risks and assumptions. It should retain components / outcomes as far as possible (unless learning experiences from Phase 1 implementation dictate otherwise). The review should be made towards the end of Phase 1. The log-frame review must be based on a set of standard LFA principles, (an example of which are presented in Annex 3). Support should be sought for the actual LFA formulation process, e.g. by contracting a facilitator.

4 PROGRAMME PROGRESS

The project has built up good reporting systems with detailed annual reporting of achievements per output presented in matrices with progress indicators, the latest presented in the Year 2 annual report. In addition, the QA reports also address general programme progress. Reference is made to those reports for a detailed overview of performance related to planned outputs, on which the following summary is based:

- The “Sub-project model” has been the main field level intervention strategy implemented for learning, monitoring and demonstration of sustainable resource use. The Subprojects have been identified from the result of the AEA and through the PLUP. Participatory land use planning processes are on going in both the TABI districts and AEA assessments have been completed and reports are produced. A management system has been developed for follow up of contracting, implementation and reporting of the sub-projects.
- The Knowledge and Information Sharing System (KISS) has been further developed. (TABI web-page, maps, data-base on NTFP, TABI newsletter, fact-sheets and knowledge cards). Communication strategies are developed and processes for learning from the sub-projects are being analysed.
- The provincial facilitators are set up in support offices in both LPB and XKH, within their counterpart institutions. Their roles have been defined for the facilitation and management of the sub-projects, and for coordinating work with TABI stakeholders. They have received initial training and have carried out a series of workshops and trainings at provincial and district level in relation to their tasks (sub-project development and facilitation, coordination, technical assistance)
- The support to CBD governance and the development of a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) is continuing through IUCN with the focus of setting up of national steering committees and working network for long-term sustainability to fulfill government commitments to CBD convention and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).
- Programme management and administration has been considerably strengthened with improved reporting procedures and financial administration.

- A training needs assessment has been carried out and a report including suggested actions including local levels is produced according to plan, including workshop reports.
- The M&E framework is developed and will be used for the annual report for the activity year 2011-12 that is now being prepared.
- Support to the DoF in the establishment of a proper institutional structure has been provided by IUCN to strengthen the CBD governance.

Given the challenges it faces and its complexity, TABI is performing quite well, with some significant achievements, but also a number of constraints that must be addressed before an eventual second phase. The challenges and opportunities encountered under each component during implementation are presented in the following section.

4.1 Outcome 1: Effective governance of the CBD in Lao PDR.

This outcome is expected to emerge from TABI support to the establishment of functional institutional structures and processes for the implementation of the CBD and for reporting to the COP. It should also create a system for relaying information / know-how on CBD to involved actors at national level, and foster coordination mechanisms. The expected outputs (re. revised log-frame) are: 1 A well functioning structure and mechanisms for cooperation and coordination to implement CBD and NBSAP. 2 NBSAP strengthened, updated, agreed and disseminated. 3 Key stakeholder organizations have incorporated CBD/NBSAP into their own mandates, and capacities for Implementation strengthened., 4 Awareness in policy-makers on value of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use for socio-economic development.

During the first year of implementation, IUCN was contracted as strategic partner and became member of the management team to undertake the actions under this outcome. In the work plan 2009 - 2010 (Year 1), focus was on clarifying the mandates of the concerned institutions , participatory updating of the NBSAP, creation of a steering committee for CBD, reporting to the COP and work on identifying operational institutional procedures for CBD compliance. This was addressed through workshops with stakeholders in capacity assessment and institutional mapping exercise. Two options were considered by DoF for implementing CBD compliance. The first option proposed the integrated reporting and implementation of all MEAs related to biodiversity under the CBD umbrella. The second option proposed to focus efforts specifically on effective CBD reporting and NBSAP implementation with MEA coordination to continue as before at the regional ASEAN / GMS levels.

The report for the COP 10 was successfully delivered in October 2010, which had taken up most of IUCN's resources, while delays in most other activities meant that *the NBSAP review and updating was delayed, the stakeholder mapping not finalized and the institutional set-up not concluded*. This was also due to the fact that it was only in November that WREA handed over responsibility for the CBD / NBSAP compliance reporting to MAF.

In December 2009, MAF decided on option one re. the institutional set-up, and a steering committee was then proposed established for CBD compliance management, with Focal Points in DoF. At the end of Year 2, it is however, still only partially functioning. This is also the case for the NBSAP (review and updating). The monitoring and reporting mechanism is not yet developed as it should be done under the CBD institutional set up.

The most notable achievement was the contribution to the COP 10 reporting and support to the delegation. IUCN mentions that it was a challenge for them to complete the 4th National Report before COP 10, as this had to be done with the informal network of stakeholders, as the official institutional structure had not yet been set up. This is an important achievement as it is the first report ever to the COP on CBD.

The work on evaluating the possibility to support the drafting of a biodiversity law had the least progress or priority. Progress on NBSAP (review and update) has not yet materialised – this output was expected to be delivered in 2009 according to the original log-frame. Some of the major constraints to bring the process forward is the strain on DFRC/DoF resources, their technical capacity and possibly the lack of priority setting or missing internal procedures focusing on institutional performance. However, it should be noted that there is now a coordinated network for CBD and NBSAP implementation which can be attributed to the support of TABI.

The delay in the institutional arrangements have meant that coordination and networking, capacity building, developing appropriate monitoring indicators and provision of relevant information through TABI's Knowledge and Information Sharing System (KISS) has therefore not moved forward as foreseen. Also, research and data providers such as e.g. NAFRI have not been involved in this work sufficiently.

In an attempt to address these issues, TABI is supporting the secondment of a CBD liaison officer to be placed in DoF with the Focal Point for CBD, under coordination by IUCN (effective as of January 2011).

However, in order to improve effectiveness, TABI should direct much more effort in the remaining year of Phase I in support of Outcome 1. TABI QA has recommended that an action plan should be developed, or a set of actions which can assist the DFRC officer in charge (of NBSAP and of CBD) and for the institution as a whole related to the successful handling of the tasks associated with the plans and conventions. This means defining exactly what support that TABI should provide in order to ensure that the officer/institution actually takes up the tasks and performs according to his/her expected role. If commitment and ownership on behalf of the officer/institution is lacking, options should be analysed to increase the interest and motivation of the involved stakeholder.

In order to ensure competence and skill, training needs to be provided. Training could also motivate through learning; skills through increased knowledge is normally best achieved through longer term in-service training and coaching. Understanding the roles of the actors is a core area of component 5 – based on their work with the communication

strategy, this outcome can assist the DoF (CBD officer) in strengthening the coordination and working group functioning for compliance with CBD reporting and management of NBSAP implementation, by converting the knowledge from that into concrete communication plans and actions such as working with biodiversity data providers to ensure data flow and information for NBSAP (and KISS). The CBD officer seconded through IUCN could then assume the role of coach and trainer.

This will help in operationalising the institutional set-up proposed for CBD compliance. It is suggested to contract a specialist for NBSAP development, who could provide various inputs over time (training aspect). Perhaps there will be a need to provide more disciplines, in which case more than one consultant would be needed.

Such support from outcome 5 should also enable TABI to *strengthen the lobbying power* at the higher levels of the institutions (DoF in particular) which is important for reaching the goals of policy development.

The MTR recommends that a set of actions to support and boost the CBD compliance work and NBSAP preparation is built into the work plan comprising a communication plan supported by Outcome 5 (especially relevant for MEA coordination), and TA for NBSAP preparation and specific training (during year 3 and up to COP 11).

4.2 Outcome 2 Sustainable agriculture systems, which improve livelihoods and enhance and conserve biodiversity are practiced by women and men farmers

This component was initiated with substantially different log-frame indicators before and after the log-frame revision. The actions in Year 1 concentrated on the AEA, preparation of the SP model, including guidelines & procedures, training in AEA for Province / District staff, while DAAPs, village schools and other originally programmed activities were abandoned.

The revised outputs (in AWP 2) are 1) Appropriate technologies for farming systems and agrobiodiversity management & enhancement are documented and disseminated to farmers; 2) Farming communities have greater capacity to manage and sustainably utilise agrobiodiversity farming systems and resources; 3) Strengthened capacity of staff and stakeholders to collaborate in and support the development and implementation of District level Agrobiodiversity Action Plans. ; 4) Education systems have incorporated practical, needs-based agrobiodiversity curricula and activities.

SP implementation is ongoing and expanding in numbers, showing positive achievements in terms of income generation and in conserving various native plant and animal species e.g. native pig and chicken husbandry, and crispy river weed. Many SPs show that women and ethnic people benefited e.g. the pig raising required less work for women as feed is grown nearby the household. Rice seed production is now encouraged for men,

but traditionally was women's role. Women have more experience than men in selecting and conserving rice varieties because they are the ones who pound, cook and therefore know better which variety is best for their chores.

The SP model is based on making agreements with the implementers for a certain project. This requires the preparation of a proposal and a subsequent agreement (SPA) describing the project, including implementation plan and monitoring (which is linked to Outcome 5, which is recording information and learning from each project).

TABI staff is involved in training of district and provincial staff in proposal writing. However, it has proven difficult for the implementers to actually prepare the proposals themselves. Up to 50 % of the PF time is devoted to SPs, a large part of that for proposal assistance/writing. Currently, in average, around 2 to 3 months is needed to complete a proposal with much assistance from the project facilitator, and the CU/SO. Our findings show that many provincial staff still need to improve their skills in project formulation. Even with central institutions submitting proposals e.g. 24 SPs submitted by NAFRI only 2 were approved due to them not being aligned with the TABI's project selection criteria. A total of over 50 SP's concept notes submitted to TABI, but only 15 were approved – again, rather than being seen as negative, this may reflect the failure to comply with the ABD criteria. NAFRI as well as district staff mentioned also that they did not get feedback on their submissions and are losing interest in preparing SPs – this seems to be a more serious issue. It is not clear if this is a one-off occurrence or if it is a trend due to limited CU/SO resources (who screen and approve the SPs.). In any case it is important to ensure minimum turnover times to speed up the SP approval process.

The project has addressed all of the administrative bottlenecks related to the approval and implementation, but several revisions by the CU/SO are normally required, disbursements rely on many steps, projects are small, resulting in high transaction cost. The MTR recognises that the end-goal of TABI is not to implement SPs, but to pilot ABD actions, learn from them and utilise the knowledge gained strategically. Thus a high transaction cost is acceptable initially.

The PSCs involvement in the SP supervision process has proven challenging to make workable in the case of LPB – here the PSC is not convened on a 3 monthly basis as originally foreseen for follow up on progress with SPs (through the line ministry sections), rather the normal provincial government and sector staff meetings are utilised for the purpose of the PSC, in order save time of scarce staff resources. This may well be positive and could contribute further towards mainstreaming of ABD issues into the provincial and district development plans – on the other hand it could jeopardise the PSCs role if the ABD priorities are not considered top-priority – which is not clear to the MTR in this case. In XKH, the PSC is functioning as originally foreseen, with PSC meetings held quarterly.

The difficult start of implementing and institutionalising the SP model have caused delay in SP submission, approval and implementation, resulting in under spending of the outcome 2, 3 and 4 (outcome 2 spent approx. 25% during year 2).

However, the project's achievement is an excellent case if focusing only on income

Mr. Sivone a project beneficiary of Ban Donxai, Phonxai district, Luang Prabang has started to borrow money from the bank and received technical assistance from TABI. He started with three pigs and within a nearly two-year period (according to Mr. Sivone) he has been able to overcome the family's annual rice deficit which he had prior to joining the project. He still continues to raise pigs. He now owns a permanent house (37 million Kip) and has more than 10 buffaloes and has become a rice business man at his village through the direct sale and rice lending with 200% interest per year. When asked if this had enabled him to avoid doing shifting cultivation, he mentioned that he had expanded the shifting cultivation areas through hiring of village labour. He was quite proud to tell us that he has most upland rice area in the village.

generation and poverty eradication aspects. Most implementers are positive and have increased incomes. On the other hand, most projects are designed and implemented in isolation with little integration, although designed with objectives linked to ABD and sustainable resource use in mind. There is a risk that their implementation does not contribute to ABD or has unintended effects on other parts of the agroecosystem. An example is the native pig project in Phonxai district which has the primary objective to conserve native pig genes and create increased income as an integral part of the farmer's system. However the increased incomes earned by the pig-farmer was used to expand unsustainable shifting cultivation areas in the uplands.

There is always also the risk of only a some villagers benefiting, likely the most powerful and entrepreneurial while others are left out.

There seems to be much more focus on poverty reduction in some projects, but not enough on ABD conservation or it evades the goal of some of the SPs, even though the SPs are based on AEA and PLUP. The AEA documents themselves have been revised in order to increase village participation, but the present AEA documents are very academic and would need to be "translated" in order to be of broader use at district and village level in an extension context. An AEA manual development is a great idea. PLUP is also undergoing changes in this direction.

With respect to scaling up of activities, there are limits to growth determined by the low staff number, small project size, high workload associated with the approval process and monitoring, the skill of the district staff, and the absorption capacity of the villages, in the short term. The MTR concurs with the decision made by SC to postpone the AEA in 2 new districts. Logically it is good to plan for carrying out the AEA in 2 new districts and scaling up the project activities as proposed in the current district in Y2, but it is too risky to split scarce TABI resources thinly.

Overall, the MTR observes that SPs, depending on their type, may be insufficient to achieve TABI's goal – at least the ABD part of the goal. They may also be of too short duration to provide real learning opportunities on sustainable use. TABI could therefore focus more on village sub-programs that join together a number of activities in a village cluster and are more closely linked with PLUP – with solid anchoring at the village level.

In the short term, it is recommended to consolidate the implementation of the current project activities and in parallel seeking (if possible) to scale up into one or two clusters more in each district. PAFO and DAFO staff at current districts continue to learn and consolidate their experiences in project implementation and management.

In the longer term, the MTR recommends a change in the SP strategy to better accommodate kumban level ownership, and PLUP should play a stronger role to improve the sustainability aspect. While the project cycle focus (preparation of SPs, implementation, evaluation) is a good idea (useful skill to master for all actors at all levels), TABI should explore ways to improve involvement of the communities, which would imply working more closely, visit more frequently as well as stay at the communities longer. Stronger coordination with partners (NAFES, LEAP), linkages with NGOs and/or contracting of “kumban project facilitators” come to mind.

The resulting sub-projects should be larger, focus more on the agroecosystem as a whole (considering both poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation and equitable benefits for all villagers) and see SP more as part of strategy development for learning and policy development.

4.3 Outcome 3: Sustainable supply and increased benefits from processing and marketing NTFPs and agriculture products based on the principles of economic viability, social equity and biodiversity conservation

The outputs expected under this Outcome relate to NTFP and Agriculture product marketing, improved linkages with traders, AEDP Capacity Building, and the NTFP sector strengthened by alliances, shared approaches, and associated legal aspects.

There are difficulties in establishing concrete conclusions about the outcome 3 performance as most field level activities were only picking up speed at the end of the year 2. The revision of laws and regulations on NTFP harvesting, dissemination and public awareness raising were not undertaken, because of the complexity and number of agencies of the Government involved in laws and regulations relating to NTFPs. It will require considerably more time for revision of administration policy and also to enhance the understanding of the NTFP laws and regulation to move forward in this field (e.g. quotas, taxation, concessions). There has also been a slow take off of the AEDP.

This outcome involves sensitive and complicated issues and solutions are mainly longer term processes. E.g. taxation is a perverse incentive to overexploit resources and favours allocation of concessions by districts as they receive income through concessions –

control is more limited with individuals and villages. At the same time, law enforcement is weak e.g. sole right to private Chinese companies in trading NTFP and agriculture produce in Phonxai district were granted; at least 2 concessions for NTFP extraction, one for wild tea and the other one for pine resin extraction; and land for cassava plantation to foreign companies in Xiengkhouang.

Some of the elements worked with are strengthening of the linkage between product marketing and agro-biodiversity conservation; ensuring equitable benefits to men and women, poor and ethnic groups; better use of local knowledge and applying research on NTFP domestication; identifying market opportunities and value-added for some valuable NTFPs; and seeking cooperation with local and national trade partners, particularly in the area of trade governance and policy development.

Some achievements included:

- training on Agro-Enterprise Development Process (AEDP)
- market chain assessment for products was conducted.
- Kumban marketing networks were established,
- strategies for domestication of NTFPs were analysed
- cross visits by external resource persons. (e.g. bamboo shoot production and crispy water weeds production.)
- identified promising international trade opportunities for a number of locally available NTFPs e.g. elephant foot yam (high demand of Japanese market) and broom grass as well as orchid products (high potential for Chinese market).
- Sustainable harvesting techniques (rotational harvesting plan of bamboo shoots in Mien village) demonstrated.

Excellent ST inputs have been made in this field and some recommendations were implemented and achieved certain levels in Y2, e.g. to support agro-biodiversity is 1) large plots cultivation of NTFPs in upland fields; 2) cultivation of NTFPs inside forest areas; 3) scale up the current subsistence production to a tradable scale; 4) improve linkage between traders and farmers; 5) streamlining trade procedure and enabling trade environment; and 6) facilitating new market. The process of selecting NTFPs, identifying market opportunities and investigate possibilities to grow them sustainably in e.g. upland cultivation to support agro-biodiversity, is a process that takes about 2 years before being able to incorporate lessons learnt and generate best practices for promotion in SP activities.

The outcome 3 has strong linkages with both Outcome 2 and 4, PLUP is fundamental for developing sustainable harvesting techniques (SHT).

Some challenges in this area involve:

- To deliver equitable benefits to all groups, engaging in new livelihoods activity is risky, requires trust and confidence. For the poorest people any failure in a livelihood activity may have the direst of consequences. If poor families do decide to participate, they probably have to overcome within themselves well-entrenched social and psychological pressures. In consequence, wealthier or more

influential people of the villages benefited at least one or two project activities as seen in Mien village.

- Trading systems are monopolised, solutions are linked to legal aspects
- Depletion of NTFPs related to inappropriate quota systems and/or incomplete knowledge of sustained yield of different products

More research is needed on the production capacity of NTFPs in different environments, more collaboration with ongoing pilots in this area, such as with WCS would be interesting. This area would benefit from strong PLUP and more integrated SPs as recommended for Outcome 2, while more support to farmer to farmer cross-visits, study tours (Thailand, Vietnam or China), for sharing their experiences. Regarding SPs development based on selected NTFPs in developing SHT, it would be important to include all costs related to their implementation e.g. difficult road access, TABI transportation cost and facilities, gallon procurement (gallons not easy to find in the province market and costly for transportation in and out). TABI should therefore focus on enhancing the marketing capacity of key district staff and villagers. MTR suggests TABI to approach the Lao-India Entrepreneurship Development Center (LIEDC)³ for this purpose.

Based on PLUP, TABI is developing methods that have high potential to show how shifting cultivation can be developed in a sustainable way. This outcome is fundamental for ensuring the sustainability aspects of other outcomes, outcome 2 in particular..

4.4 Outcome 4: Community access to land and agrobiodiversity resources are secured.

This outcome aims to strengthen capacity of district staff and to cooperate with all stakeholders to better plan and negotiate land investments with adequate safeguards. It encourages villagers, both men and women and ethnic groups, to actively participate to safeguard their land and resources use rights - it is an essential pre-requisite to the sustainable use of agro-biodiversity resources. A strong point of TABI in working this outcome is to integrate ABD and indigenous knowledge into PLUP (PLUP-TABI) to better understand and reflect the current situation with land use and forest cover, which is lacking in the current PLUP (Participatory Land Use Planning).

To avoid duplication of poor data storage and lack of management systems done previously with LUPLA, TABI collaborated closely with other partners such as NAFES, NLMA, GIZ and others relevant institutions to develop robust digital data management system linking district, provincial and national levels. Partnering with NAFES LUP Unit and DLMA to implement PLUP-TABI at field level permits the provision of details of the current resources situation in the villages through the use of ALOS satellite imagery, up to date topographic maps, in a process involving villages in the whole process.

³ The Deputy Director Mr Tinh Panpaseuth at Lao-Thai Road, Ban Watnak, Sisattanak District, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR; Phone & Fax: 856 21 353 141; email: liedevte@yahoo.com; Web: www.liedc.org

PLUP-TABI is currently piloting and developing a methodology and a more effective tool for resource planning, local empowerment and monitoring in 14 villages in Sopchia and Keung Longhang Kumban of Luang Prabang and Xiengkhouang provinces. Through this exercise forest and agriculture land use zones were developed and the community conservation agreements produced and ratified by the district authorities. This provided effective tools for ABD conservation and also for solving land use conflicts, as well as safeguarding communities against inappropriate land concessions. However the PLUP procedures took time and can only complete 5 of 9 steps in the process.

The most challenging factors in PLUP are the limitation of human resources, both in quantity and quality (skills levels), and time for properly carrying out the “true” LUP with full participation of villagers, so as to ensure a high quality end product. Another challenge is the uncertainty of the legal status of the title resulting from communal land titling after LUP. A third is the linking with district socio-economic plans.

DLMA will be stepping up communal land titling (CLT) in the coming year, but again it may be confronted with the lack of appropriate technical capacity & skills. DLMA is a new institution and most of its staff have been transferred from DAFO or are newly recruited. The technical background thus varies and capacity in land administration is usually low. Therefore there is a risk that without a proper methodological training and technical support to implementing agencies, the good principles of PLUP will be lost at field level. Scaling up by moving to new districts would therefore not be the best option for TABI.

There are many government institutions working with LUP and most operate in an uncoordinated manner and have specific targets related to their priorities and mandates. These are MAF, NLMA, Forestry Inventory and Planning Division (FIPD), NAFRI, NAFES, DOF, WREA, Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM), Ministry of Transport and Public Works and Ministry of Planning and Investment. Only MAF/NAFRI and NLMA have a nationwide coverage of LUP. TABI is coordinating work with the above mentioned institutions, however TABI would be able to strengthen its PLUP methodology by supporting the establishment of provincial and perhaps district level support offices in the field of GIS and mapping. It is suggested that TABI investigate and propose plans with budgets for such support offices.

Many other organizations are working on land issues (LIWG) including TABI. All are seeking ways to concretise the legal status of the CLT, because they believe that community ownership of land will promote better and more sustainable land use, greater level of investment, and fewer disputes with neighbouring villages or outside investors over land resources. It is recommended that TABI should play a more active role in the existing network, because TABI is in a better position to promote the CLT one step forward, particularly in Phonxai and Phoukoud districts.

Box 2: Rights and Restriction to Communal Land

Rights

- Right to protect the land
- Use the land in the sustainable way and manage the resources in a collective or communal interests
- Develop land for individual and personal use according to the potentiality and suitability of that land for house construction or reserved land for agriculture production or communal agriculture production land, but only in agreement with entire community

Restrictions:

- Cannot be sold
- Cannot be transferred
- Cannot be used as security for a loan
- Cannot be leased or giving concession

The outcome 4 interrelates with other outcomes, in particular Outcomes 2 and 3, and is central to the entire TABI program design and program goal. It is recommended to seek clarification and consensus with NLMA about the validity of communal land titles as a matter of urgency, as delays in the PLUP will affect strongly the program efficiency and sustainability. Subsequently TABI needs to strengthen villages' and district staff's understanding of rights and restrictions of communal land and procedures for applying and issuance of CLT (see box 2).

4.5 Outcome 5: Knowledge and information is systematically shared and translated into evidence-based policies and approaches

This outcome focuses on the establishment of a system to better analyze, share and disseminate ABD and livelihoods issues, top support and strengthen cooperation across partner agencies and establish a platform for policy level discussions on ABD. The (revised) outputs are: *1) Information is captured and knowledge is generated on opportunities for securing livelihoods while conserving biodiversity; 2) Impact monitoring systems on ABD and livelihoods are evidence based; 3) TABI partners have access to and share data, information, and knowledge.*

The KISS as it is now known was established by a team at NAFRI research centres (PRC, CAFRI and ALRC) assisted by CDE through a contract signed in august 2009.

The major activities started in Year 1 were:

TABI Knowledge and Communications Strategy (KCS) completed; Knowledge and Information Database initiated, Server installed at CAFRI to host TABI ICT services, TABI website and intranet, Wikipedia for the Lao NTFP handbook; Inventory of provincial and district level data compiled; First version of a national agrobiodiversity metadatabase compiled; KISS data sets and maps produced in support of other TABI Outcomes (PLUP and AEA). District spatial and attribute data generated by AEA captured by the KISS.

The Knowledge and Communications Strategy (KCS) for TABI has been completed, the value of which should not be underestimated, as this forms the basis for developing communication strategies among TABI partners, enables sharing of information, and help make TABI visible through information media and in turn is used for developing concepts into workable technical information system solutions. The KC strategy was initiated using *power-interest grids* and communication plans, a methodology very adequate for the context in which TABI operates (considering stakeholder influence and their potential to affect / give value to TABI).

Part of the mandate of CDE concerns capturing learning form TABI activities and from other actors in the field of ABD, including to contribute in the establishment of indicators both for CBD reporting but also for impact monitoring. To this end, The KCS's

Knowledge and Information Sharing System (KISS) comprises three components:

- a) Process for sharing, capitalization and learning (through Sub-project INFOs, Sub-project agreements, and INSIGHTs, and TABI FORUM, as well as more policy oriented synthesis work called TABI FOCUS);
- b) Communication tools for a broad interested audience (through INSIGHTs, TABI UPDATE, offline provincial data hubs, Voices from the Field Video and web-site)
- c) open access databases and online tools for supporting evidence-based and context-specific decision- and policy making (meta-data database, "mapper" applications e.g. georeferenced shifting cultivation, NTFP Wiki, document repository etc.).

The MTR encourages the KISS Team to expand this strategy and recommends to use communication strategy tools more actively in the institutional development and coordination process in the linkage particularly with Outcome 1.

There has been significant demand for particularly maps for PLUP and AEA processes, in part spurred by the KISS Teams own demand driven approach, a testimony of its popularity. All outcomes are now using KISS one way or the other, and it seems to be strongly anchored in CAFRI, ensuring good ownership and high commitment from staff.

Some challenges noted are: difficulties in actually drawing learning experiences from activities and capitalizing on these, slower than anticipated inputs from some components (Outcome 1), some information products may not be adapted sufficiently to the target groups, language barriers, IT technology not available for use at district level and below, the component is inherently expensive, requires specialist inputs, posing risks for sustainability – again, as focus now is on visualising and demonstration, this fact may not be of great importance.

4.6 Outcome 6: Effective Program Management, and GoL structures, processes and capacity are established and effectively main-streaming ABD across all relevant sectors and programs.

This outcome was added during the revision of the original log-frame. The outputs under this outcome are; 1) TABI project management systems are in place and functioning effectively. 2) Awareness and understanding on the role of agrobiodiversity in livelihood security is developed in stakeholders at all levels. 3) Upgraded capacity in agrobiodiversity management, and ethnic, gender, poverty mainstreamed across the program

The division of tasks between project management, HQ backstopping and QA is specified in TOR prepared with the initial consultancy contract. Programme management is guided by the Program Management Manual, prepared on the basis of the government agreement, consultancy contracts and project document, and as such is the reference document for all management issues, covering all management related aspects and procedures of the program, such as reporting, steering management, coordination, programme M&E, financial management. It is a living document updated periodically (latest in April 2011).

Follow-up on project activities are reported in the annual and semi-annual reports submitted by CU to the steering committee.

The QA system implemented by Ramböll is commendable. It relates closely to the Program Management Manual addressing quality of consultancy services provided to TABI. QA reports are prepared once a year and focus on the quality of the TA support and the general quality of programme implementation, the latest report being QA report #3 of April 2011. The QA report addresses three types of issues, strategic, management

and financial. Under programme management, it was recommended to introduce more detailed activity planning, as the current activities are regarded more as sub-outputs. This is already being done in Year 3 planning. An aspect of insisting on more detailed planning is the risk for actually making it more cumbersome to report on, adding additional tasks on the CTA. However, this is being dealt with as actions are grouped under “tasks” which are then used for monitoring. There is also a recommendation on maintaining the established practice of regular management meetings. This is desirable, although in practice it has proven difficult to bring together all staff and stakeholders involved. The value of these meetings would be significantly enhanced if they considered also evaluative aspects for outcome monitoring, apart from day-to-day management and follow up of the implementation.

Other issues addressed have concerned the reporting and documentation. This is an important issue which the MTR team has also noted. There have only been produced 2 minutes from Management meetings, and 1 minute of SC meetings (2 held). The content of the minutes of the national SC from September 2010 reveals that many members still had difficulties understanding TABIs facilitative role, which implied a risk of the quality of the actual steering of the programme. Availability of key documents has also been an issue. It is evident to the MTR that the reporting issues have already been addressed. There is still however a need to focus on stakeholder awareness in all TABI actors. The first meeting of the Steering Committee clearly demonstrated the difficulty in explaining the complexity of the TABI program, and underlined the need for the production of clear and simple information materials explaining TABI goals, concepts and functions. Although it has improved considerably, the MTR notes that there is still a long way to go in achieving good ABD awareness at all levels and in all actors.

The QA also addresses the TA input in quantity and quality as part of its objectives. We concur with the impression that the TA inputs seem to have been of high quality, judging from the reports produced. A list of TA inputs so far is presented in Annex 5.

As for the TOR for the CTA and TOR for backstopping, a recommendation was made to revise these, particularly because it was considered that the TOR for the CTA were too ambitious and difficult to cover for one person. This need has changed over time (with new CTA). The TOR for the CTA now only need minor adjustments related to the role of team leading at provincial level.

On the other hand, the roles and division of tasks between backstopping and CTA could be adjusted to take some workload off the CTA tasks. The MTR **recommends** that QA focus more on programme management itself while the technical backstopping mandate of SO⁴ is used for actually assisting program management to boost the actual implementation effectiveness.

The capacity building output supports activities aimed at raising awareness and understanding, both about the TABI program itself and agrobiodiversity in general. It has

⁴ For a description of the role and mandate of the SO in TABI, please see Program Management Manual p and Ramboll Tender Jan. 2009

been addressed through a number of activities to establish understanding for the National SC, Provincial and District ABD Working Groups + in technical forums and meetings. In year 1 development of a mainstreaming strategy was initiated, which was implemented partially in Y2, and should be fully operationalised in Y3.

Technical Assistance (short term consultancies providing training) and Advisory Group services play a key role in providing better understanding of TABI. According to AWP 2, capacity building themes are on (i) the basics of ABD and examples of good practice, (ii) sub-project proposal development and drafting, (iii), sub-project management, (iv) the use of the KISS, and networking and presentation skills, and (v) mainstreaming ethnic, gender, poverty issues. Technical issues are covered in connection with each Outcome while TABI has included the awareness oriented training under component 6.

Capacity building under TABI is a major challenge, because TABI has a complex set-up, and the main implementers are not solely TABI staff by themselves, the implementers are spread out geographically and operating at different levels in different organisations.

To address capacity building in TABI, the project has during Year 2 made an assessment of integrated capacity at different levels of TABI, prepared a strategy and action plan for capacity development, and a training plan for TABI provincial and local stakeholders. The overall approach has been to identify training needs at 3 levels: individual capacity; organisational capacity and institutional functioning (internal arrangements). Training themes have been proposed across hierarchical levels and TABI outcomes, and some modules proposed accordingly.

The QA recommendation for enhancing capacity building in the current year is to revise and implement the action plan on training, and that this should be built into the log-frame activities and thus the work plan.

Until now, the training programme has been delayed, as the approach for delivering the training has not been agreed upon - should training be planned in advance and rolled out to ensure that all local implementers go through the different modules, or should training only be conducted on an as needs basis?. (APR Year 2).

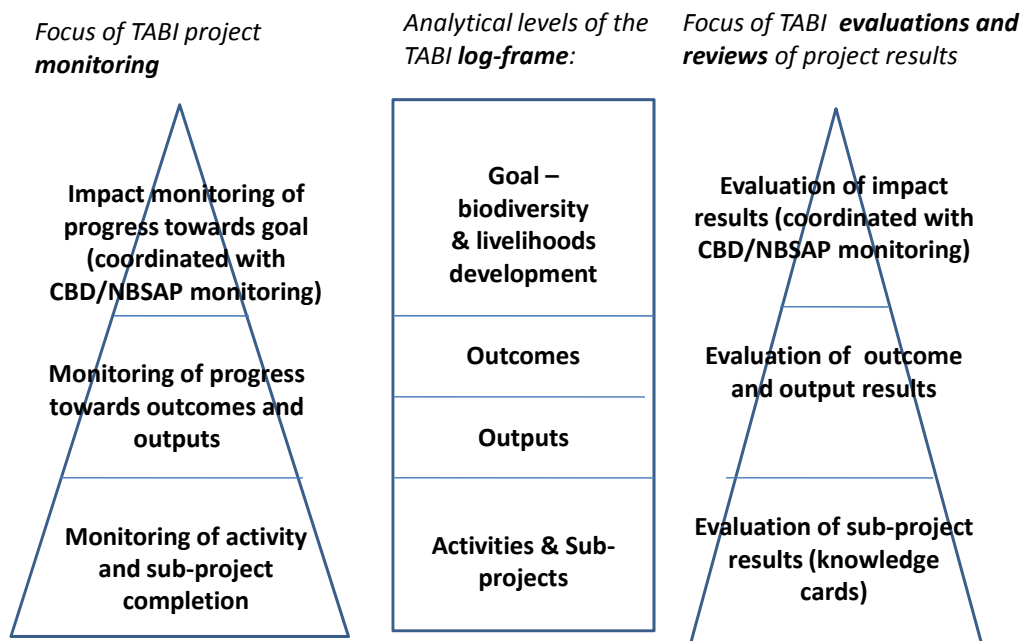
The MTR believes that both approaches are valid – but they should be used according to the situation – in the case of supporting skills in implementing the SPAs, there is a need expressed by the PF and SP implementers to redo the training modules at province and district level. In the case of the CBD and NBSAP development there is a need for tailored training. In general, there is a need to move from awareness raising to targeted capacity building and training in phase 2.

5 SPECIFIC ISSUES

5.1 Monitoring and evaluation

The Project document states that the main purpose of monitoring in TABI is to provide evidence that it is possible to reduce poverty through economic development while at the same time reducing the loss of biodiversity i.e. it focuses on impact monitoring. It does not specify how this is to be done, it only mentions the need to develop baselines. Apart from this the monitoring serves “crucial purposes” to be addressed by the KISS, but these purposes are only vaguely described (relate to partner implementation monitoring and policy dialogue promotion). Therefore TABI has had to define its own monitoring procedures for internal progress monitoring against the log-frame, because this was not described or defined in the project document.

Monitoring procedures and methods have emerged during the initial revision of the log-frame and are being further developed in the work planning workshops and supported through the QA. The monitoring elements were conceptualised in connection with the log-frame revision (see fig. 1, Source: revised log-frame Dec. 2010).



As the goal is the same for TABI and NBSAP, the MTR agrees that it makes sense to coordinate the NBSAP / CBD progress with TABI at the at the highest level (national level aggregation of data / synthesis of impact level indicators), as this will be the type of information that will be used for policy decisions and also disseminated internationally to COP.

The above elements have been further refined by TABI in terms of actors, timing and target audiences (see Annex 4), which is starting to be referenced in the latest work plan. The MTR agrees that it is important to view monitoring at the different operational levels at which TABI is operating and to ensure that indicators are selected and are relevant for the field level, district level, provincial level and national level, and that each type of indicator can be further aggregated as it monitored at higher levels.

The revised log-frame outcome and output indicators are good but at this time it can be seen that they do not seem achievable by 2012 – already now it can be seen that timeframe is too short (e.g. outcome 1: “By 2012, terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity in NPAs and the agriculture landscape ..is included in the NSEDP and the yearly sector plans.....” presupposes the functioning of the NBSAP. Another example at the output level (Output 3.1):” By 2011, local and national policies and laws on NTFP collection, marketing, taxation and regulation are documented and available to stakeholders at district and kumban level”. This does not seem realistic to expect at this time, it is more likely that this level of implementation could be expected after Phase II.

The challenge is to establish valid baseline indicators for each level that will permit measuring changes and thus enable TABI to document that its actions actually lead towards the goal. This type of data could very well derive from the AEA, which could serve well in providing initial baseline data in each district, but there seems to be little concrete information and/or the AEAs have not taken this into account specifically. There is very little *numerical* information presented under each type of analysis (flow diagrams, spatial analysis, temporal analysis, livelihood analysis, etc.). E.g. the AEA in Phonesay p. 26 talks about “large outflow of NTFPs” etc. but there are no figures which would permit this indicator to be monitored.

At the SP level, numerical data should be captured through the monitoring included in the SP design, while impact indicators will require analysis and synthesis of several of the same type of SP in a village cluster. E.g. in the case of NTFPs which are of critical importance to local income and livelihoods, it is necessary to know what was the level of NTFP flow initially and after project intervention and how did this affect livelihood (income of the implementers), and can the activity be sustained.

It is expected that the KISS team shall contribute to the definition of indicators – it is likely to expect this task to be undertaken as a joint effort, with indicators more likely stemming from the work done by actors actually generating the information. The INSIGHTS should contribute to this but how the learning expected to emerge from the SPs is actually is not entirely clear. In the case of Outcome 2, it is the combined responsibility of the SP implementer, the provincial facilitator and KISS team. In the case of Outcome 1, the main responsibility lies with the Focal Point.

The KISS team has prepared an excellent document “Knowledge and Information Sharing System Guidelines”, providing methods and procedures for monitoring in collaboration with the partners of TABI, and how to capture relevant information and

knowledge. It is based on reporting forms of achievements and constraints of the implemented projects. Project coordinators are responsible for submitting their properly completed report to the CU and to the KISS Team.

Another instrument to generate learning is the “Outcome task forces” that foster the thematic linkages of Outcomes in order to advance coherent and evidence-based policy and decision-making but also effective implementation”. They function as networks, each dedicated to one of the Outcome themes: Effective governance, sustainable agriculture systems, sustainable marketing, and integrative land use planning. The Outcome task forces focus on the thematic coordination and linkages between the different issues of the Outcomes. Members of the Outcome task force contribute their experiences and lessons learned in capitalisation processes and participate actively in specific TABI Forum, which plays a key role in learning processes among TABI stakeholders.

The aim is that “information will be transformed into knowledge that eventually triggers decisive change of attitudes, decisions and actions towards sustainable management of agrobiodiversity.” As is also mentioned in the Guidelines, “Highly competent and committed moderators are crucial in fostering the dialogue between actors of TABI Outcomes.” The TABI Focal Points play a key role in this regard.

In the case of the SP strategy, considerations on how to facilitate monitoring should be part of the strategic adaptation of the SP model to a stronger village based process, in which monitoring should be formalised.

In order to structure the development of valid baselines and monitoring indicators at all levels, it is **recommended** during Year 3 to strengthen and formalise the monitoring system through analysis of the indicator type, the means of verification, the source of data (owner of objectives) and the associated risk. This should be done for each operational level (village to national level) and type of intervention (SP types, capacity building..). The SP monitoring procedure should be evaluated and the KISS Outcome task force effectiveness should be tested.

There is no risk assessment in the original project document and log-frame, only assumptions have been presented in the log-frame. The MTR therefore **recommends** to include a risk assessment in the Year 3 annual work plan, including an assessment of the estimated risk impact on the project (which can be grouped into levels in a range from significant to negligible), and mitigation measures / interventions of the project which are addressing the identified risks. This could well be dealt with at the time of the indicator analysis process mentioned above.

5.2 Linkages between outcome areas

In the QA report no. 3, the importance of focusing on the integration of the links between the components has been highlighted through examples where the linkages should be more visible. There is no doubt however that the individual components or outcome areas

play a crucial role in the implementation of TABI and that neither can be disregarded, or omitted, each have an important role to play. Seen from the TABI management team, the linkages are obvious, and self explanatory – the interaction between the different components is present in the daily operational planning and execution of activities. Because the linkages are perhaps not so obvious for TABI partners and more peripheral stakeholders, and because it may strengthen focus of implementation and monitoring, it may be worthwhile to make the linkages more explicit.

This can be done by preparing a matrix with outcomes as row/column, and indicating the links between each outcome, e.g. between PLUP (Outcome 4) and Sustainable agriculture and NTFP domestication (Outcome 2 and 3). Such a matrix has in fact been prepared and presented in APR2, see Annex 6. This should be updated on a continuous basis and could well serve as a tool in clarifying roles and increasing coordination between stakeholders.

5.3 GEF Mainstreaming Biodiversity in LAO PDR project

The upcoming GEF “*Mainstreaming Biodiversity in LAO PDRs Agricultural and Land Management Policies, Plans and Programmes*” project will affect TABI strongly, as it targets the same districts and overall goals. Collaboration will be critical in order to make the marriage fruitful. Some challenges lie in operational differences, which will be highlighted if TABI and GEF will be sharing offices. The opportunities lie in the possibility to combine and strengthen focus on integrating ABD into policies, enhancing institutional capacity for ABD, increased understanding among key stakeholders etc. but also a stronger focus on conservation than is present at the moment in TABI. GEF also target specifically formal training in support of the agricultural colleges.

5.4 Disbursement of Budgeted Funds

The following indicative summary was presented to the MTR team as the latest operational funds expenditures per Outcome (“Administered Project Funds”) at the end of Year 2 (Source: Annual progress report Year 2). It shows planned vs. used funds and project funds usage for Year 2. (Ramboll will present the authoritative financial statements for Year 2).

| (USD) | Year 1 | Year 2 | | | Year 3 | | |
|--|--------|---------|--------|------------|----------|-------------|---------|
| Outcome | Used | planned | Used | carry over | original | With c/over | Total |
| Outcome 1: CBD Governance | 51,380 | 121,778 | 97,589 | 24,189 | 83,123 | 107,312 | 256,281 |
| Outcome 2: Sustainable Agriculture Systems | 23,461 | 543,801 | 90,000 | 453,801 | 428,720 | 882,521 | 995,982 |
| Outcome 3: Sustainable NTFP & agriculture marketing | 27,697 | 130,901 | 25,000 | 105,901 | 114,396 | 220,297 | 272,994 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---------|-----------|----------------|----------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
| Outcome 4: Participatory Land Use Planning | 24,902 | 99,620 | 70,000 | 29,620 | 84,357 | 113,977 | 208,878 |
| Outcome 5: Knowledge & Information Sharing System | 223,039 | 282,424 | 412,506 | | 259,898 | 259,898 | 765,404 |
| Outcome 6: Program Management | 56,616 | 106,244 | 90,000 | 16,244 | 89,982 | 106,226 | 252,842 |
| Outcomes sub-total: | 407,138 | 1,284,768 | 785,095 | 629,755 | 1,060,476 | 1,690,231 | 2,752,381 |

There is no doubt from the indicative operational funds overview that there is considerable under-spending in all but Outcome 5, which seems to be over-spending. The under-spending in outcomes 1-4 is likely to continue to the end of Phase 1. The under-spending in Outcome 2 and 3 is of particular concern as it indicates that the sub-projects do not yet have a volume or size to absorb the allocated funds, the reason of which have been dealt with under the Outcome progress sections above. However, it also indicates a lack of realism in the expectation that the SP outputs could actually be delivered according to the log-frame. The complexity of setting up intervention models in the field through provincial facilitators and partnerships is not an easy task – it has required much work to define the SP project models and procedures.

The indicated over-spending in Outcome 5, if the figures are valid, is of concern – however, given the ambition level of IT development in this component, it would be expected that funds may be depleted faster than in other areas. The concern lies perhaps more in the sustainability perspective in the medium and longer term. With 100% over-spending it seems important to take this issue up in a steering committee meeting to agree on accepted cost levels.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The potential for TABI to make a valuable contribution to Lao PDR is high. The project design incorporates a wide range of issues under its 6 components with clear focus on the combined objectives of ABD and poverty alleviation, and its open-ended approach and strategy to work through GoL and partners - not being a traditional implementer – gives it the flexibility to pilot innovative actions and test approaches in the field which have the potential to be fed into policy making processes supporting its goals. However, this design requires both a strong vertical cooperation between levels and cooperation among different departments agencies and sectors, in reconciling a biodiversity conservation focus with economic development stemming from natural resource use and this hampers efficiency, as many actions have to be tested in learning by doing processes.

The MTR recommends that a revision of the log-frame is undertaken, retaining components / Outcomes as far as possible (unless learning experiences from Phase 1 implementation dictate otherwise), and focuses on making it more realistic in terms of expected achievements and timing, and including risks and assumptions.

The MTR considers that the Project remains highly relevant for the main beneficiaries (government officials, provincial and district administrations responsible for agriculture and natural resources conservation and sustainable use, farmers and their communities in the northern uplands of Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang Provinces),

In terms of effectiveness, Outcome 1 has been the least effective, despite the most notable achievement the contribution to the COP 10 reporting and support to the delegation. CBD compliance reporting and NBSAP implementation is still not achieved. The MTR recommends that a set of actions to support and boost the CBD compliance work and NBSAP preparation is built into the work plan comprising a communication plan supported by Outcome 5 (especially relevant for MEA coordination), and TA for NBSAP preparation and specific training (during year 3 and up to COP 11).

Outcome 2 has been effective in setting up the SP model of pilot project implementation, but it has not been very efficient and is underspending funds. There seems to be more focus on poverty reduction in some projects, but not enough on ABD conservation or it evades the goal of some of the SPs, even though the SPs are based on AEA and PLUP. The sub projects pilots should generate information on sustainable techniques through demonstrable examples which though learning processes should enable TABI to promote best practices within ABD management.

In the short term, it is recommended to consolidate the implementation of the current Sub-Project based activities and in parallel seeking (if possible) to scale up into one or two clusters more in each district. PAFO and DAFO staff at current districts continue to learn and consolidate their experiences in project implementation and management

In the longer term, the MTR recommends a change in the SP strategy to better accommodate kumban level ownership, and PLUP should play a stronger role to improve the agroecosystem focus.

For Outcome 3, most field level activities were only picking up speed at the end of the year 2, thus effectiveness has been low, as well as efficiency. However, this outcome is research oriented and require considerable time in order to provide results. More research is needed on the production capacity of NTFPs in different environments. Based on PLUP, TABI is developing methods that have high potential to show how shifting cultivation can be developed in a sustainable way. This outcome is fundamental for ensuring the sustainability aspects of other outcomes, outcome 2 in particular.

The outcome 4 interrelates with other outcomes, in particular Outcomes 2 and 3, and is central to the entire TABI program design and program goal. It is recommended to seek clarification and consensus with NLMA about the validity of communal land titles as a matter of urgency, as delays in the PLUP will affect strongly the program efficiency and sustainability. Subsequently TABI needs to strengthen villages' and district staff's understanding of rights and restrictions of communal land and procedures for applying and issuance of CLT.

It is recommended that TABI should play a more active role in the existing Land Issues Working Group network, because TABI is in a better position to promote the communal land titling particularly in Phonxai and Phoukoud districts. It is recommended to seek clarification and consensus with NLMA about the validity of communal land titles as a matter of urgency, as delays in the PLUP will affect strongly the program efficiency and sustainability.

Outcome 5 has been quite effective and has produced the TABI Knowledge and Communications Strategy (KCS); Knowledge and Information Database initiated, Server installed at CAFRI to host TABI ICT services, TABI website and intranet, Wikipedia for the Lao NTFP handbook; Inventory of provincial and district level data compiled; First version of a national agrobiodiversity metadatabase compiled; KISS data sets and maps produced in support of other TABI Outcomes (PLUP and AEA). District spatial and attribute data generated by AEA captured by the KISS. Part of the mandate of CDE concerns capturing learning from TABI activities and from other actors in the field of ABD – this part has proven difficult.

The project has built up good reporting systems with detailed annual reporting of achievements per output presented in matrices with progress indicators, the latest presented in the Year 2 annual report. There have only been produced 2 minutes from Management meetings, and 1 minute of SC meetings (2 held). The content of the minutes of the national SC from September 2010 reveals that many members still had difficulties understanding TABI's facilitative role. The QA system implemented by Ramböll is commendable. It relates closely to the Program Management Manual addressing quality of consultancy services provided to TABI. The MTR recommends to include a risk assessment in the Year 3 annual work plan, with assessment of risks affecting the project including their expected impact levels, and mitigation measures / interventions of the project which are addressing the identified risks. The MTR recommends that QA focuses more on programme management while the technical backstopping mandate of SO focuses more on assisting the CTA in finding entry points and operational opportunities to boost the actual demonstration and implementation effectiveness.

Capacity building under TABI is a major challenge, because TABI has a complex set-up, and the main implementers are not solely TABI staff by themselves, the implementers are spread out geographically and operating at different levels in different organisations.

Monitoring procedures and methods have emerged during the initial revision of the log-frame and are being further developed in the work planning workshops and supported through the QA. It is expected that the KISS team shall contribute to the definition of indicators – it is likely to expect this task to be undertaken as a joint effort, with indicators more likely stemming from the work done by actors actually generating the information. The INSIGHTS should contribute to this but how the learning expected to emerge from the SPs is actually is not entirely clear, but the KISS is providing methods and procedures for monitoring in collaboration with the partners of TABI. In order to structure the development of valid baselines and monitoring indicators at all levels, it is recommended during Year 3 to strengthen and formalise the monitoring system though

analysis of the indicator type, the means of verification, the source of data (owner of objectives) and the associated risk

TABI would benefit from an overall strategic vision or expected end goal of its intervention – expressed as levels of operation, institutionalisation and sustainability. This would make it easier to monitor and evaluate the programme. For example, stages could be defined for its achievement, defined as e.g.

- A minimum level expressing fulfilment of outputs related to operational structures (e.g. CBD structures + NBSAP prepared; SHT piloted and documented, SP model mainstreamed)
- An operational level, where interventions are institutionalised (assimilated into partner institutions and operational routines)
- Fully integrated and well functioning, contributing to outcomes (and impacts), without donor support (sustainability)

Relating performance to such a set of indicators would make it simpler to also devise monitoring and evaluation indicators, and it is recommended to link the M&E development proposed above to such a strategic vision of 3 stages. At the end of Year 3 this would also make it possible to come up with more realistic outcome indicators. It is recommended to link the M&E development to a strategic vision of levels of achievement (3 stages)

TABI is coordinating with many important stakeholders, which is evolving in an ongoing process as needs arise. There needs to be stronger focus on identifying partners to assist with consolidating the implementation of the current project activities and for scaling up, and in the longer term to take on some of the participatory work associated with a change in SP model strategy to strengthen participation in the kumban planning process and thus improve the sustainability aspect.

There are many external factors which might influence TABI implementation, such as hydro power schemes, land concessions e.g. for cassava plantation, pine resin harvesting concessions (by Chinese companies), mining and monopoly of NTFP (e.g. to Chinese merchants in Phonxai district), interventions of higher level etc.

It is important that TABI follows up on risks & assumptions based on the revised log-frame, or rather takes on the risk analysis as outlined above (the original Project document does not contain a proper risk assessment), in order to better plan for a Phase 2. The identified risks and assumptions should enable TABI to improve the log-frame and make it more realistic. Focus should be on activities largely within the control of TABI, which will greatly reduce dependency on overall legislative reforms (such as in the land sector or related to NTFPs). On the other hand, overall risks can be reduced by the reduction of TABI scope – if need be.

TABI has produced tangible results and major achievements under difficult circumstances, with major challengers related to coordination and facilitation of complex issues through many different stakeholders. It is not possible at this stage to determine

impacts in terms of poverty reduction, or sustainable production systems, baselines need to be further developed and methods designed to monitor them, particularly indicators for sustainable ABD management and production are elusive.

However, the KISS has achieved some remarkable success in its focus on evidence based results as presented on the website, and there is increasing understanding of the importance of developing such tools, which in turn contributes to the understanding of ABD as a pillar for livelihood improvement and long term sustainability. It must be recognised that TABI is indeed a long term endeavour, and as such it merits more time to operationalise its strategy. For this reason, we believe a second phase is important and necessary.

Some other important aspects which merit attention and discussion in relation to a Phase 2 are:

- The PSCs in second phase could be completely integrated in the national administrative system
- Outcome 3+4 could be merged into one outcome
- There is a need to focus more also on forest product market analysis
- Laws, regulations and concessions – focus has not been sufficient on the legal aspects of e.g. taxation of NTFPs, perverse incentives in connection with concessions to big operators and foreign companies, overlapping and/or contradictory laws guiding actions within and between outcome areas
- Land use planning must be significantly scaled up

Terms of Reference
for
Mid Term Review (MTR) of the
The Agro-Biodiversity Initiative (TABI)
(April 25th to 13th May 2011)

1. BACKGROUND

A land-locked country, Lao PDR is an historical, culturally and environmentally rich country with diverse landscapes and ethnic populations. It is located at the heart of the Indo- Chinese Peninsula and is surrounded by CHINA, VIENTNAM, CAMBODIA, THAILAND and MYANMAR, providing a potential for a strategic base and land-link in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

The Lao PDR is well endowed with productive and ecologically unique forests and farming landscapes, rich in biodiversity. These resources are not only vital for providing essential ecological services, but they also play a key role in adapting to global economic or climate changes. Agrobiodiversity is crucial to the national economy, with some 66 percent of GDP depending directly on natural resources. Over 80 percent of the Lao people live in rural areas and are highly dependent on the local environment for subsistence farming, family nutrition and livelihood activities. Consequently, biodiversity also has a key role to play in the quality of rural life, ethnic cultures and poverty reduction.

Conventional conservation efforts in Laos and world-wide have focused on establishing Protected Areas to conserve biodiversity. More recently, it has been recognized that protected areas are necessary but not sufficient for effective biodiversity conservation, and focus is now turning also to the role of agricultural and multiple use landscapes as important contributors to the management and conservation of biological diversity. In addition, the role of this biodiversity in food and livelihood security is now given more importance. This is the rationale for, and the reason behind TABI.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Agro-Biodiversity Initiative (TABI) is planning to undertake a Mid Term Review (MTR) in April 2011. TABI is a long-term commitment of the Lao Government (GoL) and the Swiss Government. TABI is funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The implementation is conducted by the Department of Planning of Ministry of Agriculture (MAF-DoP) and Forestry with the technical assistance of Ramboll, a consultant company. Besides, IUCN and CDE (University of Berne) are responsible for the achievement of outcomes 1 and 5, respectively.

TABI is not a conventional project, but rather a programme that aim to coordinate the integration of agrobiodiversity into relevant GoL programs, and a 'facility' that provides funding and technical support to ongoing programs, projects and local initiatives.

The project has been implemented since May 2009 and the 1st phase is expected to complete by April 2012. The budget for this phase is CHF 4,950,000. The object project is aligned on the National Biodiversity Strategy and therefore shares its overall goal: maintain and protect Lao PDR's biodiversity as one key to poverty alleviation. *More project information can be found via the link www.tabi.la.*

3. The project's expected outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Effective governance of the International Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Laos.
- Outcome 2: Sustainable agriculture systems, which improve livelihoods and enhance and conserve biodiversity are practiced by women and men farmers
- Outcome 3: Sustainable supply and increased benefits from processing and marketing NTFPs and agriculture products based on the principles of economic viability, social equity and biodiversity conservation.
- Outcome 4: Community access to land and agrobiodiversity resource are secured
- Outcome 5: Knowledge and information is systematically shared and translated into evidence-based policies and approaches
- Outcome 6: GoL structures, processes and capacity are established and effectively mainstreaming ABD across all relevant sectors and programs.

4. Purpose of the Midterm Review (MTR).

The purpose of the MTR is to i) assess the relevance, feasibility, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project to date, and ii) provide recommendations for the remaining time of the current phase.

Specifically, the review team will assess the following aspects:

- i. assess the relevance of the project in the context of its position in the sector sector (including the viability of the planned intervention logic and programme logic);
- ii. the relevance of the project goal and strategy in light of current and future need of projects related to agrobiodiversity , and the evolving policy and institutional framework.
- iii. review of the overall progress of project implementation and the feasibility of the project implementation schedule
- iv. review the suitability of the project strategy and approaches in light with the challenges and opportunities that have been faced to date and likely to exist in the future;
- v. review of institutional, administrative, organizational, technical, environmental, social, economic, and financial aspects of the project based on the assumptions and risks included in the design and monitoring frameworks.
- vi. undertake detailed analysis of the original targets, progress achievement of the project including the effectiveness of the project implementation arrangements in producing the outputs and outcomes stated in the project document and the efficiency with which the project partners have produced the desired outputs
- vii. Make an appreciation of the sustainability of project of outcomes (Outcomes 1-6)

In relation to the above-mention aspects, the review team will pay particular attention to the following project issue:

A. Technical assistance is provided to support the MAF-DoP in both technical and management aspects at regional , provincial and district level. The MTR will :

- assess to what extent the project has effectively made use of the TA ; and identify the main challenges, difficulties and constraints and assess how these could be addressed in the future.
- Assess the quality of gender mainstreaming in the programme. Does it fulfil the respective expectations of the project , of the GoL, of SDC, of Ramboll?.
- Assess how ethnicity issue (including local knowledge) is addressed by the project

B. The goal of the project is to maintain agrobiodiversity in a sustainable manner. It is consisting of two parts: 1)mainstreaming agrobiodiversity into GoL's programs, projects and local initiatives dealing with agriculture, forestry and livestock production, and 2) supporting the GoL to implement the Convention Biological Diversity (CBD) and NBSAP. Thus the MTR will bring answers to the following questions:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of mainstreaming agrobiodiversity into GoL's programs, projects and local initiatives ?
- Will the current CBD institutional set-up be able to implementation of the CBD at national level ? If not, MTR will provide a outlook for the future implementation of CBD in Laos
- To what extent TABI can support the Government to implement CBD in Laos ?.
- What role and added value is TABI currently delivering to GoL services and institutes, international stakeholders and projects dealing with agriculture, forestry and livestock production towards mainstreaming agrobiodiversity ?.

C. Improve rural livelihoods through enhanced use of agrobiodiversity . The MTR will

- Assess the appropriateness of agrobiodiversity enhancement, introduction of market system and agrobiodiversity management technologies (including land use planning) to local conditions, taking into account the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the beneficiaries(disaggregated beneficiary categories.)
- Review the effectiveness of the extension activities (training, coaching, advising, information providing, etc....) in reaching targeted beneficiaries, in particular women and disadvantaged groups ?
- Assess how the service delivered by the various project implementation partners at district and province level are driven by an effective and coordinated effort to address local communities needs
- Review the condition necessary to sustain best practices in agrobiodiversity enhancement and conservation and to transfer to other villages not covered by the project
- Review the relevance, planning, implementation and management for the sub-projects and assess how they are affectively articulated with the main TABI's aim (mainstreaming agrobiodiversity..)..

D. Organizational/managerial quality of implementation(steering, coordination, communication and financial requirements).

- Does the steering and decision-making process function appropriately ? Are problem identified in time and are practical, feasible solutions proposed and applied effectively by implementing partners, by Coordination Unit (CU/SO).
- Absorption capacity: are local capacities and competencies sufficient for effective programme implementation ? Have sufficient human resources been allocated to carry out and complete the tasks ? What are critical bottlenecks in implementing the logframe ?
- What are the weaknesses and strengths in communication among TABI implementing partners at national, provincial and district levels taking into account the cross-level set-up of TABI ?,
- Are cost schedules (allocate resources, annual budgets) and financial reports appropriate to drive implementation and fulfil monitoring, reporting and planning requirements ?.
- Are the assumptions regarding the existing reporting structure in the implementing partners fulfilled, and do regular official reports meet the reporting requirement of the project partners and the donor?
- Is the Monitoring & Evaluation (including the results and outcome indicators) appropriate in terms of capacity of implementing partners to periodically collect necessary data and information?
- Is the Monitoring and Evaluation system appropriate to support managerial and steering decisions ?
- How are capacity building issues at all levels addressed to increase performance ?
- Review the planning, implementation and management of TABI and suggest some ways of improvement.

In addition to above mentioned tasks, the MTR team will provide orientation on the following items:

- Is there any additional approach that TABI could adopt in order to help the GoL for a more effective implementation of the CBD ?
- What could be the future challenges for mainstreaming agrobiodiversity into GoL's programs and projects ?
- Changes that are needed in either the project scope (outcome, outputs), the strategy and approach, the choice of implementing partners and implementation arrangements, and/or the areas of focus and priorities during the project remaining time of the current phase in order to ensure satisfactory achievements, their consolidation and sustainability.
- Key lessons and issues to be considered by SDC and MAF for the current phase and during the design of the next phase, subsequent projects and/or related programmes that aim to improve the agrobiodiversity in Laos.

5. Review Methodology.

The review will use a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to meet the objectives of the review and review questions.

While the scope of the intervention and resources allocated to the review do not permit the use of quasi-experimental design, the review will, using the project design document and many

collected baseline data, attempt to build a meaningful picture of the results of the project intervention, relative of the situation at start of the project.

The MTR team will interview and meet with key project stakeholders, project beneficiaries and key actors to get their views on project implementation.

The review team will be expected to operate clearly the review objectives (issue), particularly the accountability and sustainability criteria. The project design document and baseline data and other will be used in this regard.

Reference documents are:

- Current Project Document.
- Progress reports and Annual reports and annual work plans (2010-2011)(2011-2012)
- Latest version of MAF plans and strategic vision,
- SDC Mekong strategy,
- Checklists for gender and sustainability
- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2006-2020
- Fourth National Report to the Convention Biological Diversity.
- AEA report

6. Composition of the review team

The Review Team will be made up of **an international and a national consultant with experience** in the field of Agrobiodiversity, Biodiversity and a good knowledge of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Knowledge about NTFP, Land use planning and Agriculture Market is an advantage. The following qualifications are required:

- 10 year s of evaluation experience
- Proven experiences in evaluating biodiversity projects and implementing biodiversity related development interventions
- Familiarity with the application of quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods;

Holder of a certificate from the international programme for Development Evaluation training or a similar international evaluation body or training course will be advantage.

Qualified candidates will be expected to submit a CV and writing sample (preferably an MTR report) as part of the request for proposals. Candidates will further demonstrate their suitability by achieving item 3 under the Schedule and Deliverables as part of their proposal.

7. Schedule and Deliverables

1. Request for proposal 28 February 2011
2. Engagement of the reviewer or review team 30 March 2011
3. Prepare of an inception note (including reconciliation of review objective /draft review matrix with the project design document, MTR meeting and workshop report)
4. A draft of the Review Report shall be submitted to SDC and Ramboll **by the end of May 2011** in electronic form.
5. Final report 30 July 2011. The MTR report must contain an Executive Summary and will not exceed 30 pages main text, plus annexes. All documents shall be written in English language.

Translation into Lao language will be arranged by TABI .

8. Coordination

The team leader will be responsible for coordinating the work of the review team and liaising with SDC, Ramboll, MAF and the Coordination Unit (TABI CU). He/She will submit a provisional budget as part of their proposal (consultant's accommodation, per diem and transportation cost incurred during the mission, etc).

He/She is also responsible for the expected results of the MTR mission and for presenting the final report to SDC according to the agreed schedule.

9. Logistics

TABI will be responsible for preparing a draft of the mission programme and for managing all preparations and arrangements once the programme will be approved by SDC and the MTR team leader. These arrangements include accommodation, domestic transport and interpretation. TABI will also be responsible for confirming all meetings and visits. A draft programme will be submitted to SDC and the Team Leader at least two weeks in advance of the start of the mission. SDC will cover all the cost of the MTR. TABI will cover some contingencies related to organizing the feedback meeting and other items.

10. Debriefing and presentation

The team will start its work on 25 April 2011. A **briefing** between the members of the MTR team, SDC, Ramboll, IUCN and CDE and the project management will take place on 26th April at SDC office. After the MTR mission will be completed, there will be a **debriefing based on the draft report**.

A presentation of the findings and recommendations of the MTR will be made to the TABI Steering Committee(SC) members on 13th May 2011. The Review team will present the findings of the mission to SC members and the project management, who will comment and give feedback .

People met

| Name | Position |
|---------------------------|---|
| Dr Phouang Parisack | DOP Director General, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) |
| Mr Khamphanh Nanthavong | DOF Deputy Director General, MAF - Focal Point |
| Mr Pheng Souvanthong | TABI Coordination Unit Director (Program Management) |
| Mr Oukham Phiathep | Director of Administration and Personnel Division, TABI Project Coordinator, MAF |
| Mr Somxay Sisanonh | Deputy Director General of NAFES, MAF |
| Mr Phetsakhone | TABI focal Point - NAFES- MAF |
| Mr Boualy | Head of Shifting Cultivation Eradication Unit and PLUP - NAFES, MAF |
| Mr Somphong Padichith | PAFO Director General Luang Prabang - Vice President of Provincial Steering Committee for TABI project |
| Mr Sithone | Deputy Director of Provincial Land Management Authority, Luang Prabang TABI PSC |
| Mr Bounlouan | Deputy Director of Provincial Planning and Investment Department - Luang Prabang |
| Mr Phounsavanh | Secretary, TABI Provincial Steering Committee, Counterpart to Provincial Facilitator Luang Prabang |
| Ms Viengvilay | Deputy Head of Lao Women's Union Luang Prabang |
| Mr Soulaponh | Deputy Head of WREA Luang Prabang Province |
| Mr Viengsavanh | Deputy Head of Public Health Department, Luang Prabang Province |
| Mr Houmchitsavath | NAFRc Luang Prabang |
| Ms Somchanh Kousoansavath | Technical Staff of Provincial Livestock Division, Luang Prabang - TABI Native Pig Project |
| Ms Chanka Soukaseum | Lao Women's Union Luang Prabang - Crispy Water Weed Tabi Project |
| Mr Kongsavath | Technical Staff Planning Division - PAFO Luang Prabang - Biodiversity Use and Conservation of Rice Varieties TABI project |
| Mr Sichanh | Deputy Head Phonsai District, Luang Prabang |
| Mr Phougnavong Sitthisay | Deputy Head of Cabinet Phonsai District, Luang Prabang |
| Mr Khamphout Keobounma | Head of DAFO Phonxai, Luang Prabang - TABI District Coordinator |
| Ms Vilayvanh | Head of Lao Women's Union, Phonsai District, Luang Prabang |
| Mr Somthalith Chittakone | Head of Lao Front for Construction, Phonsai District, Luang Prabang |
| Vilaysene Khounphanith | Technical Staff of District Planning and Investment Office, Phonsai District, Luang Prabang |
| Mr Khamla | Deputy Head of District Hospital, Phonsai District, Luang Prabang - Head of TABI Medicinal Plants Project |
| Mr Sivone Vanthachack | Native Pig Project Beneficiary, Ban Donsai, Phonsai District, Luang Prabang |
| Mr Khanpiane Sinouanthong | Vice Governor of Xieng Khouang Province and President of Provincial Steering Committee - TABI Program |
| Mr Khamsy chanthavonsy | Deputy General Director, Xieng Khouang, TABI Provincial Steering Committee |
| Mr Somkhouane Mittasy | Counterpart to Provincial Facilitator, Xieng Khouang Province |
| Mr Somdeuane Somsamay | Technical Staff of Provincial Education Department |

Annex 2

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Ms Vangnomek | Deputy Head of Education Department, Xieng Khouang Province |
| Mr Khamphone Oudomsouk | Vice District Governor, Phoukoud District - |
| Mr Khamla Vilaysouk | Head of DAFO, Phoukoud District, Xiengkhouang Province |
| Mr Khampha | Head of District Land Management Authority, Phoukoud District, Xieng Khouang Province |
| Mr Khamssi | Head of Industry and Commerce Office, Phoukoud District, Xieng Khouang Province |
| Mr Somphet Inthavong | Deputy Head of District Public Health, Phoukoud District, Xieng Khouang Province |
| Mr Phoui Sombatphone | Head of Planning and Investment Office, Phoukoud District, Xieng Khouang Province |
| Ms Douangchanh Nanthavong | Deputy Head of Lao Women's Union, Phoukoud District, Xieng Khouang Province |
| Mr Phonsi Sinahalath | Technical Staff of Education Office, Phoukoud District, Xieng Khouang Province |
| Mr Savang Phanthavong | Head of Lao Front for Construction, Phoukoud District, Xieng Khouang Province |
| Ms Somboun Thipsida | Deputy Head of National Committee for Advancement of Women, Phoukoud District, Xieng Khouang Province |
| Dr Lilian Ortega | First Secretary, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Vientiane |
| Ms Viengxong Chitthavong | TABI Program Officer, SDC, Vientiane |
| Mr Carl Mossberg | Ramboll Residence Representative, Lao PDR and CTA/Team Leader URDP, NAFRI |
| Mr Christ Flint | TABI Chief Technical Advisor/ Team Leader |
| Ms Khamhuck Keobounheuane | TABI Short Term Advisor (Cross Cutting Issues) |
| Mr Choy Chiem | TABI Provincial Facilitator Luang Prabang |
| Mr Thongsavanh Khammanichanh | TABI Provincial Facilitator Xieng Khouang |
| Ms Latsamy Silavong | IUCN Country Representative, Lao PDR |
| Mr Banethom Thepsombath | IUCN Program Officer MEAs - TABI Advisor CBD Governance |
| Mr Touleelor Sotokee | IUCN staff - CBD Governance Liaison Officer - based at Division of Forest Resource Conservation, DOF |
| Ms Eliza Berry | IUCN, Environmental Governance Officer |
| Dr Andreas Heinemann | Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), TABI Advisor, Knowledge Information Sharing System |
| Ms Vicky Houssiere | CDE, TABI Advisor - KISS |
| Michael J. Jones | CTA Laos Extension for Agriculture Project, Helvetas |
| Georg Buchholz | Sustainable Climate-Friendly Management of the Environment and Natural Resources (SusCliME) Program Director - GIZ |
| Jean Christophe Castella & Staff | CIFOR Project (NAFRI) |
| Mr Serge Verniau | FAO Representative |
| Mr Ilari Sohlo | FAO Natural Resource Management Advisor |
| Mr Bruno Cammaert | UNDP-UNEP Head of Environment Unit |
| Mr Thongdam Phongphichith | SAEDA Co-Director |
| Mr Houmphanh Lattanavong | Lao Biodiversity Association Director |
| Michael | WCS Country Director |

Annex 2

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| WWF | Country Director |
| Mr Vongvilay | TABI focal Point - Deputy Head of Planning and Cooperation Division NAFRI, MAF |
| Mr Vayaphat Thattamanivaong | Head of NAFRI-ICT |
| Mr Manolack | Head of TABI team for IT - NAFRI-ICT |
| Ms Dr Somchanh Bounphanmy | Dean Faculty of Sciences, Department of Biology, National University of Laos |
| Mr Singkham Bounluetai | Deputy Director General of Market Economic, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, TABI Steerign Committee Member |
| Mr x? and villagers | Village Chief, Mien Villag, Phoukoud district Xieng Khouang Province |
| Mr Björn Hansson | Technical Director Ramboll Natura, Sweden |

Checklist for a LFA project formulation exercise

The formulation process

1. The actual or future owners of the project participated in the formulation process and are fully committed to the project
2. The project reflects strong priorities of core stakeholders rather than being a compromise that nobody is committed to
3. Viewpoints of groups that may be positively or negatively affected by the project were collected and considered
4. All sensitive issues and potential conflicts were dealt with during the formulation process

The context

5. Important stakeholders and their positive and negative influence on the project are identified
6. Assumptions, risks and preconditions are thoroughly addressed at the various logical levels of the project design

The problems

7. The project addresses specific problems, not imagined ones
8. There is a proper relation between the magnitude of the problems and the size of the project
9. Barriers to project success, in so far as they can be strongly influenced by the project, are being addressed by specific interventions of the project

The objectives

10. Objectives represent a vision of a future situation, and not the activities leading to an undefined situation
11. Objectives have owners to whom the objectives are important
12. Objectives are expressed with a level of specificity appropriate to the decision point

Choice

13. Several alternatives were explicitly considered and weighed before a conclusion was reached

The actions

14. The if/then relationship between development and immediate objectives is logical and doesn't skip important steps
15. The development objective level indicators are objectively verifiable in terms of quantity, quality time and source of information
16. The project has only one immediate objective or if more, the objectives are compatible, complementary and at the same level

Annex 3

17. The immediate objective is not a reformulation of the output but a higher level objective
18. The immediate objective is to some extent outside the management responsibility of the project
19. The immediate objective or the verifiable indicators are SMART
20. The immediate objective and the attached assumptions describe the critical conditions for contributing to the development objective
21. The indicators at the immediate objective level are independent from the outputs. they are not a summary of outputs but a measure of the immediate objective.
22. All the outputs are necessary for accomplishing the immediate objective
23. The outputs are tangible and SMART
24. The relation between the outputs and the immediate objective is realistic
25. The outputs define the management responsibility of the project and they can under reasonable assumptions, be achieved with means under the control of the project management
26. The activities indicate the methodology for producing each output
27. The inputs are necessary and sufficient to perform the activities and they are under the authority of the project management
28. The inputs described define the resources required for accomplishing the immediate objective, and there is proper relation between inputs and scope of objectives
29. The vertical logic among inputs, activities, outputs, immediate objective, and development objective is realistic as a whole
30. Project management issues are dealt with as appropriate to the stage of the project.
31. When reviewing the matrix, an evaluation plan for the project can be defined

Monitoring framework

| Timing | Monitoring | Evaluation | Response (by Management or Planning) |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
| LFA level: Impact (goal) | | | |
| Year 3 | TABI-NBSAP joint monitoring | TABI-NBSAP joint evaluation SDC final evaluation | <u>Planning:</u> M&E pilots in TABI provinces will provide lessons learned and recommendations for further development of NBSAP / TABI M&E system and its implementation from central to local levels. <u>Planning:</u> SDC final evaluation will give recommendations for the possible 2nd phase of TABI. |
| LFA Level: Outcome | | | |
| x | - Int'l monitoring late 2011 (?) | - CU/SO evaluative comments - SDC final evaluation | <u>Planning:</u> Internal monitoring and evaluative comment will feed into SDC final evaluation. |
| LFA Level: Output | | | |
| yearly | - Internal monitoring | - CU/SO evaluative comments APR Y2 | <u>Planning:</u> Internal output monitoring feeds into AWPB development process, modification of activities and budget allocation as needed to achieve outputs. Y2 internal monitoring and evaluative comment will feed into SDC mid-term review. |
| | | - SDC Mid-term review | <u>Planning:</u> Mid-term review recommendations will feed into - finalization of Y3 AWPB, and - development of project document TABI possible phase 2 |
| Activities & SPAs | | | |
| Activities | | | |
| on-going | Progress reports according to contracts, and Mgt't meetings. | --- | <u>Management:</u> Progress reporting and discussions in management meetings can lead to adjustments of timing, focus and budget allocation to activities. |
| SPAs | | | |
| on-going | Progress reports as per contracts. Management meetings. | - Knowledge capture (part of full SPA report) | <u>Planning:</u> Knowledge capture from SPAs will inform: - adjustments of selection criteria for future SPAs; - focus and content of ABD/livelihoods communication and advocacy activities. |
| | | | <u>Management:</u> Progress reporting and discussions between CU/SO and SPA implementers can lead to adjustments of timing and focus of sub-project activities. |

SPA: Sub-Project Agreement

Annex 5

SUMMARY OF TA PROVIDED TO TABI

| | TA input | Time, steering document | Outputs | No. days |
|---|--|--|---|--------------|
| | Year 1 | | | |
| 1 | Socio-economic Cross-cutting specialist - John Chamberlain | May 2009 – May 2010, 6 weeks working time. 3 outputs defined in ToR (in contract annex) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender and ethnic minority background paper.(27pp) • Vetting and Monitoring instruments (2 pp) • Cross-cutting issues strategy(35pp) | 30 days (Y1) |
| 2 | Cross-cutting issues - Panh Phomsombath | 9 April – 14 May 2010, 20 days | (jointly with Chamberlin,, above) | 20 days (Y1) |
| 3 | Account Systems for Project Administered Funds - Malaithong | May 2009 - April 2010 6 weeks | An “established and functional ACCPAC system for financial accounting of SPA”. | 30 days (Y1) |
| 4 | Participatory Land Use system in AEA – - Peter Jones | October 2009 – Feb 2010, amended 3 weeks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PLUP Report, Sop Chia, Nov 2009 - Report: (PLUP): Land Management Planning Pak Hok Village , Jan 201 | 15 days (Y1) |
| 5 | Agro-biodiversity Market Chain specialist - John Connel | May 2009 – April 2010 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission report 1 (October 09) • Mission report 2 – Review of Marketing Activities and NTFP Round-table (Feb 2010) • MR 3 – AWP Workshop (April 2010) | 20 days (Y1) |
| 6 | Capacity Development – - Frida Arunsavath | Year 1 ? According to specific ToR | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CBD Stakeholder Mapping - TABI Capacity Needs Assessment, September 2010 | 30 days (Y1) |
| 7 | Local Office Management support – Frida Arunsavath | Year 1 ? ToR according to annex in Contract | Continuous management support | 42 days (Y1) |
| | Year 2 | | | |
| 1 | Advisor to TABI financial management ACPAC- - Malaithong Kongprachith | October 10 – April 11 Continued support to financial management | An “established and functional ACCPAC system for financial accounting of SPA”. | 5 days (Y2) |
| 2 | Capacity Development – - Frida Arunsavath | September 2010 – 30 April 2011 According to specific ToR | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring and evaluation overview and strategy - TABI Training programme on ABD knowledge & Sub-Project management skills - Integrated Capacity Development Strategy and Action Plan | 35 days (Y2) |
| 3 | Local Office Management support – Frida Arunsavath | August 10 – 30 April 11, ToR according to annex in Contract | Continuous management support | 21 days (Y2) |
| 4 | AEA and D ABD action planning - Iain Craig | June 2010 April 2011. Total 6 tasks stated in ToR | AEA and ADB Action Plan for (ii) Phoukodd and (ii) Ponsai. | 40 days (Y2) |
| 5 | National cross-cutting adviser - Khamhuck Keobounhuane | November 10 – April 11, ToR annexed to contract | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revised strategy for cross cutting issues, in Lao then English. ▪ Ensuring CCI addressed in SPAs, PLU and AEA. ▪ Assisting with CCI monitoring and evaluation of SPAs. | 56 days (Y2) |
| 6 | Participatory Land Use system in AEA – - Peter | June 2010 – April 2011, ToR in Contract | Notes on discussion with NAFES, 31 May 2010. | 15 days (Y2) |

Annex 5

| | TA input | Time, steering document | Outputs | No. days |
|---|---|---|--|--------------|
| | Jones | | notes on observations of LUP in Phen village, 14 Oct'10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft SPA for support to NAFES GIS (LUP) Unit | |
| 7 | Agro-biodiversity awareness and sub-project management – John Connel | November 2010 – April 2011 TOR in Contract ” NTFP and other product market consultant” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft SPAs re NTFP quota regulations, and competitive marketing. ▪ Draft SPA on NTFP domestication. ▪ Draft SPA on enhancing local trade management. | 15 days (Y2) |
| | | | | |
| | QA | | | |
| | Quality Assurance Report I – Lill Lundgren | May 2009 | QA I - Report | 15 days (Y1) |
| | Quality Assurance Report II – Lill Lundgren | | QA II - Report | 15 days (Y1) |
| | Quality Assurance Report III – Björn Hansson | February – March 2011 | QA III - Report | 15 days (Y2) |

| | | NEED OF KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION | | | | |
|---|-----------|---|---|---|--|--|
| | | Outcome 1: CBD Governance | Outcome 2: Sustainable Agricultural Systems (SAS) | Outcome 3: Sustainable Management & Marketing of NTFPs | Outcome 4: Land Use Planning (LUP) | Outcome 5: Knowledge and Information Management |
| CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION | Outcome 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inventory of laws and policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Agrobiodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and CBD requirements transparent for Agroecosystem Assessment (AEA) and District Agrobiodiversity Action Plan (DAAP) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance analysis /legal framework of NTFP Farmer groups have clarified role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community access to land in balance with NBSAP requirements/goals LUP take into account implications by CBD and NBSAP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capitalisation of experiences. for olicy briefs & reporting (based on testimonies) Inventory of legal documents |
| | Outcome 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable agricultural and livelihood strategies contribute to CBD goals. Experiences reflected in CBD reporting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous knowledge documented | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination of agriculture and marketing farmer groups / networks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coherence of planning between AEA /DAAP and LUP and across GoL levels Land use disputes and conflicts considered (gender, ethnicity, etc) Traditional land use management and sustainable technologies considered in LUP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAS experiences capitalised and scaled up for reporting & policy Documents on legal recourses; stories on conflicts accessible Experiences related to gender and ethnicity capitalised |
| | Outcome 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NBSAP/CBD policies includes marketing and management of NTFP Marketing and sustainable management experiences included in reporting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing options and domestication of NTFP part of SAS Marketing potential of agricultural products known Coherence of AEA/DAAP with marketing issues Nutritional issues in both NTFP and SAS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inventory of policies and laws on NTFP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing perspectives and opportunities included in LUP in terms of land and actors Coordination of marketing and land issues (concession) for guidelines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint governance analysis of ABD/NTFP laws and institutions Collaboration on multi-level market chain analysis, Documentation on indigenous NTFP knowledge included Experiences related to gender and ethnicity capitalised |
| | Outcome 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Lao experiences reflected in CBD reporting and policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to agricultural land considered in LUP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to and benefit of NTFP ensured in LUP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous knowledge on land use planning External claims (eg. Concessions) reflected in PLUP Legal recourse mechanism for local communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capitalisation of exper. for policy & action Experiences related to gender and ethnicity capitalised |
| | Outcome 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined set of indicators for CBD reporting taking into account Lao-reality Common roster of ABD actors, institutions CBD and NBSAP implications for ABD accessible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maps on land use zones and plans accessible Maps and information on land allocation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation on indigenous NTFP knowledge accessible Georeferenced market information, NTFP producers and traders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to data for higher levels (district-national) for participatory LUP. Capitalised participatory LUP experiences scaled up | |