

Forestland management based on  
Hmong customary law  
Long Lan village, Luang Prabang district/ province

Presented by: Mr. Chi Ly  
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# Introduction

- Long Lan is an upland village, 40km northeast of Luang Prabang heritage city
- Natural area: 8,439.75 ha
  - Forest: 5,034.84 ha (59%)
  - Agricultural land: 3,399.4 ha (40%)
  - Construction land: 5 ha
- There are 68 households, 457 people, of whom there are 239 women
- The whole population are H'mong ethnic group belonging to 7 clans: Yang, Ly, Ho, Mua, Tho, Song, Vang



# Map of Long Lan on GoogleEarth



Land use planning of Long Lan village



# Historical development of the village

- H'mong people came from Udomxay and Xiengkhoang to settle in the highland of Luang Prabang for hundred of years
- Before 1975 the H'mong lived in the high mountain of Tosia, and the Khomu lived in the current residential area of Long Lan
- During 1973-1975: the Khomu moved down; and the H'mong resettled at the current location
- 2004: CHESH Lao support land allocation
- 2005: Land use planning and setting up regulation for forestland management
- 2009: Nao Song ceremony organized in Long Lan village, with involvement of 25 villages
- 2012: Build up Farmer field school (FFS) at the village



# H'mong customary law relating to forest



- On the basis of the belief that spirits reside in every forests, trees, big rocks, so villagers often offer worship to forest spirits during community festival or big events. They may combine to attach strings for solidarity.
- Identify traditional land and clarify border base on Nao Song and customary law
- Not cut trees, not hunt animals at sacred forests, cemetery forests, watershed and forests with big trees
- Clarify a forest area at the west side of the village for daily use
- Only allow households living and contributing for the village for more than 10 years to access and use forest. Each household may take maximum 5 cubic meters of wood for house building. They may collect bamboo shoots and herbs for family, not for sale



# Land use planning

- Village elders identified traditional land areas
- Villagers involved in discussion, drawing maps and identifying each areas
- Technicians supported to calculate, clarify borders and complete maps
- Forests are classified:
  - Preservation forest: 1,136.86 ha
  - Protection forest: 2,888.6 ha
  - Production forest: 1,009.37 ha
- Agricultural land are classified:
  - Cultivation land: 1,812.4 ha
  - Animal raising land: 1,587 ha



# Regulation on management and protection of forest land



- Elders collected and based on traditional regulations on management, use and protection of each types of land and forest to set up the draft regulation
- The draft was introduced to all villagers for further discussion and contribution. Then it was sent to surrounding villages and district authorities for idea contribution, recognition and certification
- The regulation clarifies border, area of each type of land, forest, possible action, prohibition, and treatment against violators on each types of land
- A forest protection team was set up for regular check, discovery and treatment of violations
- Villagers are not allowed to sell out land, but they may purchase more

# Application of community regulation (1)

Resolve the case of land encroachment by Bohe villagers

- Some households from Bohe village cut trees for new field, and damaged tombs within Long Lan border
- Elders, village leaders of Long Lan came to work with Bohe leaders and the violating households. The violators were required to compensate according to H'mong customary law, otherwise they would be entirely responsible for any coming risks
- The violators had to organize one ceremony to worship forest spirits and ancestor spirits according to the community customs
- The encroachment of land was then prevented and solved



# Application of community regulation (2)



Refusal of the proposal of land lease by Mr. Kenh's company

- Mr. Kenh came and suggested a lease of land in Long Lan village for the first time in 2006, but villagers did not agree, and that area was allocated to herbal medicine group
- Then Mr. Kenh asked some provincial and district officials to make pressure, so that to take land from Long Lan again in 2008
- Elders, village leaders and villagers based on their land and forest planning, their certified regulations to make official letter to send to district, provincial authorities, required to prevent Mr. Kenh from grabbing Long Lan land
- An official letter was also sent to central government
- The provincial authority had to reconsider and stop Mr. Kenh's proposal

# Application of community regulation (3)

Resolve the outside violators who cut 14 big trees in Long Lan forest in 2011

- The village checked and discover the violation in time, then informed to village leaders
- Village leaders sent request to district authority, then they came to the field to check, record and make minutes
- Village leaders suggested district authorities to treat against the violators, and the village also get permission to use those wood for community use



# Challenges



- Private companies and outsiders continuously try to take land and forest from Long Lan
- Though customary law, regulation is well used internally, but they cannot be applied for all outside violators
- Further pressure on Long Lan land and forest due to land selling out, landless, shortage of forest and natural resources faced by the surrounding villages

# Recommendation

- Support Long Lan to build up the village as a community-based, customary law-based biosphere, to become a good pilot model of community forest protection, so that to obtain lesson learnt, to share and replicate at larger scale
- Local government and other development agencies support the surrounding villages to set up and enforce regulations on land and forest protection, to improve their own situation as well as to reduce pressures to Long Lan



Thank you!