

CGIAR Research Program on  
Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS)

**Organisational Baseline Study:  
Overview report for Ekxang CSV,  
Lap PDR (LA01)**

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RESEARCH PROGRAM ON  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

The CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) is a strategic ten-year partnership between the CGIAR and Future Earth to help the developing world overcome the threats posed by a changing climate, to achieve food security, improve agriculture and livelihoods. In 2014, CCAFS South East Asia began indentifying and implementing Climate Smart Villages (CSVs). Six CSVs were selected in three countries: Vietnam, Cambodia and Lao PDR. The objectives of the CSV is to increase the adaptive capacity of small-holder famers in light of climate change effects, improve livelihoods by sustainably increasing productivity and resilience, mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gases (GHGs), and enhance national food security and development goals.

This report highlights the results obtained from the organizational baseline study (OBS) which was conducted in the Ekxang CSV located in Phonhong District, Vientiane Province, Lao PDR, in accordance with CCAFS guidelines. The OBS will supplement the quantitative household baseline surveys and the qualitative village baseline studies also being carried out by the Lao CSV Team in Ekxang. The household and village baselines provide information on the recipient-side of services and information. Without considering the external organisations that provide services/information to communities, the picture of current conditions remains incomplete.

The main objectives of the OBS are:

- Understand the current status of provision of information and services at the local level that informs farmers' decision making and livelihood strategies in response to climate change.
- Gain an in depth knowledge of the current projects, long term goals and strengths of the organizations highly valued and respected by the community members.
- Identify organizations for CCAFS to engage and partner with in future interventions.
- Provide indicators to allow CCAFS to monitor changes in behaviours and practices of relevant local organizations over time.

To gather necessary information, we interviewed organizations working in the community whose activities included: natural resources management, environment and climate change, community development, empowering civil society, agricultural production and agricultural product processing.

## **INTERVIEWED ORGANISATIONS**

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014, a male and female focus group (each with 15 randomly selected participants) were involved in the 'Organizational Landscape Activity' on day 2 of the village baseline survey (VBS). During this activity, participants ranked organizations working with the community in terms of importance and describe their roles in contributing to food security, food crisis situations, environmental protection and natural resource management. Nine of these organizations were identified as being highly valued and respected by the community members.

The Lao CSV team consisting of representatives from DAFO, PAFO, NAFRI, MDC, CUSO International and IWMI, proceeded by interviewing a person from each of the nine organizations with the questionnaire developed and provided by CCAFS. A copy of the questionnaire is available the end of this report. Information on the activities currently being carried out by the organization, their ability to provide information and services, their involvement with agriculture and climate change, and their plans for the future was recorded. To supplement the information gathered from the interviews, secondary information (including reports, publications, and brochures) was also collected.

### ***Local organizations***

#### *Village Authority*

The main contacts of the village authority are the Chief, Mr. Mon, and Deputy Chief, Ms. Jon. The community based local authority is responsible for providing leadership in the Ekxang village. All activities and meetings in Ekxang are led by and/or done in consultation with the village authority. These activities include agricultural development projects, infrastructural improvements, natural resource management and land use planning which are often done in collaboration with government departments and other local and/or international organizations. As the village authorities are often deeply involved in community meetings and activities, they play an important role representing the community by expressing the thoughts and opinions of its members. Similarly, they are also responsible for disseminating a variety of information to the community members.

#### *The Village Elders Association/Renting Community Land Group*

The village elders association is highly respected in Ekxang village. They provide guidance to the community on all activities including land use planning, agricultural production, and development in the village and are also responsible for approving loans. For these reasons, the village elders association is highly involved in community meetings, events and activities and often works alongside the village authority. Their first hand knowledge of the history of the community, climate, natural resources and agriculture is a valuable asset for CCAFS.

Although most land in Ekxang is privately owned, there are 3 ha of community land which is managed by 5 members of the village elders association. Currently, this land is being rented out for agricultural production (cassava plantation) to a Hmong ethnic group from the nearby 'km 52' town. The money gained from renting the land goes towards a 'Village Fund'. This fund is often used for community development projects including road repair and school construction/maintenance but can also be used as an emergency fund in times of food crisis and/or natural disasters.

**Table 1.** Organizations operational sphere and involvement in CCAFS related activities

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Community Based</b>	<b>District Based</b>	<b>Provincially Based</b>	<b>Internationally Based</b>	<b>Natural Resource Management</b>	<b>Climate Change Mitigation</b>	<b>Crop Production</b>	<b>Livestock Production</b>	<b>Information Services</b>	<b>Empowering vulnerable community groups</b>	<b>Farmers Groups/ Associations</b>
Village Authority	X				X				X		
Village Elders Association/Community Land Renting Group	X				X		X		X		X
Village Security Group	X										
Women's Union	X								X	X	X
Phonesoung Agriculture Development Center			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
DAFO		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Oxfam				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IWMI				X	X		X		X	X	X

### *Village Security Group*

Overall, the village security group is responsible for maintaining order in the village. For example, during celebrations, ceremonies and community events the group will provide public security. With regards to agriculture and environment, the village security can help minimize livestock theft, prevent the use of banned pesticides/herbicides/fertilizers, and ensure that resources are not being polluted or abused

### *Women's Union*

The Women's Union is a highly respected and important organization in Ekxang village. During the VBS organizational landscape activity on day 2, the women's focus group ranked the Women's Union as the second highest important organization operating in the village. Although not ranked as high, the men's focus group also found the organization to be important.

The Women's Union in Ekxang village, led by Ms. Keo, does many things for the community. First, the women's union is a platform for disseminating information to the local community members. Information including plans, policies and directives from higher level government departments and other NGOs and are passed down through this organization. They are often involved in planning and catering large community meetings, ceremonies and events and thus are well informed on community news. Secondly, the Women's Union plays an important role empowering women. Not only do they help inform women in the village, they also encourage them to actively participate in community meetings, development activities and training workshops. Thirdly, they formed a savings group which can be accessed as loans by other women in the village at low interest. The organization earns money from the interest fees collected from loans and also during traditional ceremonies and community events.

### *Greenhouse Group*

The Greenhouse Group is a group of local farmers who are participating in the Oxfam/Phonsoung Agriculture Development Center 'Greenhouse Program'. The goal of the Greenhouse Program is to help small holder farmers increase agricultural production and improve livelihoods by promoting the use of greenhouses for vegetable production all year round. Since 2009, the members of the Greenhouse Group take part in training offered by the Greenhouse Program. First, farmers learned how to build a greenhouse out of low cost materials. Then, they use these greenhouses to produce high valued crops, mostly vegetables, all year round, thus increasing household food security and income generation. In addition to the techniques required to build a greenhouse, farmers were also trained on organic vegetable production including the use of organic fertilizers, pest and disease control methods, market access, and seed varieties. The formation of this group encourages social learning and strengthens the community as farmers learn from the experiences of others in the group; they help each other in times of need; and are responsible for passing on this knowledge to other members of their community. To date the program has been successful in establishing 27 farmers groups of which some have received certification for producing organic vegetables.

## *District/provincial organizations*

### *District Agriculture and Forestry Office*

The District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO) is the major locally based government department focused on agriculture and forestry in Phonhong District. They have been working with farmers in the district since 1992 through extension work. Their main activities are to disseminate and collect information for the agriculture and forestry sectors in the district. As a result, they are experts in their fields when it comes to the local context of natural resource management and agricultural production. DAFO accomplishes their work through providing technical training at farmer workshops, establishing farmers groups, conducting field research and disseminating information via posters/pamphlets. DAFO has been focused on increasing agricultural production in the district through more sustainable methods. They provide training and information on integrated pest management; soil fertility management; new seed varieties; greenhouses; weather; livestock vaccination programs; and the reduction of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides.

As DAFO extension workers are local experts in agriculture and forestry, they often work alongside other organizations operating in the district. Mrs. Chantha Souvanhnaxayavong, head of DAFO's livestock and crop unit, has been acting as the community organizer and local expert of the Ekxang CSV Team since 2014. Her strong network and connections with farmers groups, other government officials, and local authorities has been facilitating the implementation of CCAFS activities thus far.

### *Phonesoung Agriculture Development Center*

From 1994 to 2013, Phonesoung Agriculture Development Center was supported and funded by Oxfam Belgium. Since 2014, the center has become a local government organization operating in Vientiane Province under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. During the VBS Organizational Landscape activity in Ekxang, this organization (used synonymously with Oxfam) was ranked highly by both men and women's focus groups as being important for supporting food security, agricultural production, natural resource management, and environmental protection in the community.

Currently, the center has 2 project managers, 9 extension workers, 3 livestock specialists and 2 admin staff. Despite being a relatively small organization they have been successful, thus far, at implementing a variety of agricultural development projects throughout the province. The techniques, principles and practices behind sustainable agriculture were disseminated to a wide range of farmers in Vientiane Province through many trainings and workshops hosted by the organizations over the past 17 years. The participants of these training workshops learned improved practices and techniques behind livestock management, integrated farming systems, fruit tree production and organic vegetable production. The farmers who adopted these principles, practices and techniques on their farm were designated as 'model farms' and/or received 'GAP' certification. This prestigious designation has been successful at encouraging sustainable agriculture development and farmer to farmer learning. Additional training aimed at increasing income through the

creation of value-added agricultural products included workshops on food processing and the production of bio/herbal extracts. One of the more successful projects started by Phonesoung Agriculture Development Center was the development of community savings groups. This savings group enables farmer's to access loans for increasing and expanding agricultural production without high interest rates and complications from private banks. There is much that CCAFS can learn from Phonesoung Agriculture Development Center regarding the successes and challenges of the various projects implemented in the region over the past 17 years.

### ***International Organizations***

#### *Oxfam*

Oxfam International has been working in Laos since the late 1980's and partners with various government agencies and local authorities in various livelihood programs for vulnerable communities. Oxfam Laos is currently working in 4 main areas:

- 1) Promoting gender and social equity through greater participation of women and other vulnerable communities in the political, economic and social spheres.
- 2) Active citizenship through the formation of citizen groups and associations, collective bargaining and the mobilization of labour rights and informal workers rights.
- 3) Disaster risk management through training of local staff and emergency response planning.
- 4) Improved resilience and livelihoods by strengthening farmers associations, promoting sustainable agricultural production, fair trade, and linking farmers groups with markets.

From 1993 to 2013 Oxfam funded and supported the work carried out by Phonesoung Agriculture Development Center in Vientiane province. Since 2014, Phonsoung Agriculture Development Center has become a government organization operating under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Their work in Ekxang, as described above, consisted of giving various training workshops which promoting sustainable agriculture practices such as composting, organic production, livestock management, agroforestry and food processing. They also helped the development of village savings group and farmers groups.

#### *International Water Management Institute*

The International Water Management Institute (IWMI), a member of the CGIAR, is a non-profit, scientific research organizations focusing on the sustainable use of water and land resources in developing countries. It's headquartered in Sri Lanka with regional offices across Asia and Africa, and has been working in Laos since 2010. IWMI works in partnership with governments, civil society, and the private sector to improve water resource management though technical piloting, socio-economic studies, increased transparency/accountability of project implementation, and policy analysis.

IWMI has been working in Ekxang on "enhancing the resilience and productivity of rainfed dominated systems in Lao PDR through sustainable groundwater use" which is funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) from July 2012 until December 2015. Ekxang village was chosen as an appropriate site for this research

on the basis of a perceived need for alternative agricultural water supply options in the Vientiane Plains and because the village has limited access to local surface water while being unsuited to large-scale water imports without expensive lift irrigation. Locally derived groundwater from boreholes offers a potentially appealing low-cost alternative and so IWMI, together with other partners, have thus far constructed three boreholes in Ekxang for supplementing irrigation. This research trail aims to identify opportunities and constraints for agricultural groundwater use, improve groundwater governance through the formation of a water users group and also build local capacity through training and institutional enhancement. In addition to the groundwater trial, Dr. Diana Suhardiman (the IWMI senior researcher interviewed for the OBS survey) has conducted socio-economic surveys and interviews in Ekxang village. The survey includes data on demographics, crop and livestock production, labour, and household assets which can be used to inform CCAFS when implementing agriculture and livelihood research activities.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR CCAFS**

The OBS was successful at gaining more information from the perspectives of the organizations identified during the Organizational Landscape Activity on day 2 of the VBS previously conducted as part of the CCAFS CSV baseline survey. The organizations featured in this report are valuable to CCAFS in many different ways. Table 1, below, identifies the operational sphere of the nine organizations and their involvement in various activities related to CCAFS work.

The inclusion and empowerment of community based organizations in Ekxang, such as the Village Authorities, Village Elders Association, Women's Union and Youth Union, is integral for the success of CCAFS's future work in the Ekxang CSV. These local organizations are highly respected by the community and should be consulted by CCAFS prior to project implementation. Their direct involvement with CCAFS will likely increase local support for CCAFS work and aid in the wide spread adoption of certain climate smart technologies and/or practices by local farmers. Additionally, these community based organizations can be used as a platform for networking and communication for CCAFS.

DAFO and Phonesoung Agriculture Development Center are organizations that CCAFS should engage with for activities related to agriculture, food security and the environment in the region. They are local experts on agricultural production, markets, practices and norms and are thus an important source of information for CCAFS. DAFO and Phonesoung Agriculture Development Center have been working with local farmers through extension work since 1992 and 1993, respectively. Their long term presence in the region, and specifically in Ekxang village, has gained them local respect and helped them form strong connections with local communities and organizations. CCAFS can learn from the challenges and successes of their work in the region over the past few decades and use this to better the planning, implementation and outcomes of CCAFS's future work.



An INGO such as Oxfam International is involved with various large scale projects at the provincial, national and international levels. Their substantial networks and connections with various farmers associations, government departments, organizations, and the private sector can be useful to CCAFS for upscaling, outscaling and mainstreaming CCAFS activities. These include the wide spread adoption of climate smart technologies and practices, connecting farmers to large scale and/or emerging markets and the strengthening of civil society and empowerment of vulnerable communities through the formation of associations and groups beyond village level.