

LAO PDR

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) January 2017



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

LAO UPLAND RURAL ADVISORY SERVICE (LURAS)



The Lao Upland Rural Advisory (LURAS) project, which is a program of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), supports the on-going transformation of the rural economy by bringing smallholder farmers into contact with a much wider range of service providers through a multi-stakeholder market-based approach. The project facilitates demand driven service provisions to small upland farmers and strengthen the capacities of farmers' organizations.

BACKGROUND

Lao PDR is a nation of smallholder farmers, with over 75% of the workforce employed in the agriculture sector. During the past two decades, impressive improvements in agricultural production have been achieved, which has contributed to declining poverty rates.

Yet, part of the Lao population is still prone to poverty. This is especially true for farmers in rural areas, female-headed households and ethnic minority members. These groups are challenged by the ongoing shift from sustenance to commercial agriculture, increasing competition over land and other resources and a rapidly growing number of private sector actors in agriculture.

Farmers' organizations, which can help equip their members to better navigate the commercial market and otherwise enhance their businesses, are beginning to emerge and are further adding to the complexity. One consequence of a new rural economy in which the private sector plays an increasingly larger role is a need for a new kind of agricultural extension.

Rather than instructing farmers in basic techniques or providing production inputs such as seeds, extension services must now help farmers organize, develop their businesses, negotiate with the private sector and adopt environmentally sustainable practices. These changing needs also imply a shift toward service delivery by actors other than the government.

The need for pluralism in extension service provision is fully acknowledged and promoted by the Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. In particular, the Department for Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives (DAEC) recognizes the growing importance of the private sector, farmer organizations and non-profit associations as agricultural extension service providers.

OUTCOME SOUGHT

LURAS facilitates the establishment of an effective demand-driven pluralistic extension service delivery system, including self-determined and independent farmer organizations, to support gender inclusive agriculture value chains which improve upland farmers' food security, opportunities and income.

PROJECT AT A GLANCE:

Title

Lao Upland Rural Advisory Service (LURAS)

Budget

Current Phase:
(12/2014-11/2017)
CHF 5,080,000

Accumulated SDC Budget: CHF
5,080,000

Partners

Department of Agriculture Extension and Cooperative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, with the technical support of Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation and SNV

Project Locations

Oudomxay and Xieng Khuang provinces, Lao PDR

APPROACH

The LURAS project has been designed to take into account the experiences and achievements of previous Swiss-funded projects in agricultural extension and value chains development. These experiences have provided the Swiss Cooperation with expertise on small-scale agriculture and granted it excellent working relationships with the Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Based on its previous experiences, the Swiss Cooperation believes that empowering farmers, their organizations and networks, is a relevant entry point for supporting development of commercial agriculture in the Lao uplands. At the same time, empowering farmers and farmers' organizations will enhance democracy in rural areas, another objective of the Swiss Cooperation.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

The LURAS project seeks to establish a pluralistic and demand-driven agricultural extension system through employing six interconnected strategies:

1. Involving the government system. The LURAS project will be implemented in close collaboration with the Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, more specifically the Department for Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives, but also through the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Division of Women Advancement in Agriculture and the Ministry line agencies at provinces and districts levels.
2. Selecting an experienced and internationally recognized partner. A consortium of Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation and SNV will implement the project.
3. Strengthening the voice, choice and decision-making capacity of farmers. Enabling farmers to make demands will prompt technological innovations and higher-quality services.

4. Contributing to sector policy dialogue. Adding to policy dialogue will enable the project to facilitate the development of an agribusiness code of conduct that considers smallholder farmers.
5. Encompassing a wide geographical scope. Project interventions will take place at the local, provincial and national level as relevant.
6. Linking with regional and global initiatives. Participation in events such as the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services allows Lao PDR to share experiences and exposes Lao government representatives to current trends and good practices in rural advisory services.

IMPACT

The LURAS project strives to achieve four outcomes by the end of its first phase in 2017:

1. Upland smallholder farmers will have increased their agricultural productivity and income through advisory services that meet their requirements and choices.
2. Self-determined and independent farmers' organizations will be providing demand-oriented services to facilitate transparent and fair market engagement of their members.
3. Demand-driven and gender-inclusive advisory services will be delivered by state and nonstate actors, offering accountable services and promoting good agricultural practices.
4. The policy framework will be more conducive for integration of smallholder farmers into value chains, contributing to an open and pro-poor rural economy.

CONTACT

**Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry,
Department of Agriculture Extension and Cooperative**

Tel.: + (856) 21 790 253

