



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

TCP/LAO/3403

## **A Strategic Implementation Plan for the fisheries sector in Lao PDR: Process of development and content**



TCP/LAO/3403 Project Report

**A Strategic Implementation Plan for the  
fisheries sector in Lao PDR: Process of  
development and content**

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## The purpose of this document

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This report provides information on the development of a Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) for fisheries and aquaculture in Lao PDR. The Plan was developed over a two-year period (2014-2016), as a collaborative project between the Department of Livestock and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (DLF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The report is a reference document written to assist in the interpretation of the SIP, which was developed as a Lao government document, in the Lao language.

The report is not a translation  
of the SIP

The notes contained in this report provide background information on both the process of SIP development and the content of the Plan. However, the notes are not a translation of the SIP, but provide a description of how it was developed and an interpretation of the key issues it addresses.

To maximize the usefulness of this Plan, especially to government staff working with communities, FAO supported DLF to lead the project, and create a “locally-owned” document in the Lao language. It was drafted by senior DLF staff after a process of detailed provincial consultation.

*The SIP is designed to assist  
government staff working at  
provincial and district levels*

*(DLF staff in Savannakhet  
province designing an  
extension poster)*



The SIP does not include any  
new government policy or  
strategy

The SIP does not include any new government policy or strategy, but interprets and *translates*, existing vision, laws, policy and strategy related to the fisheries sector, into a narrative more useful to DLF local-level staff.

It aims to mobilize and motivate these staff and provide practical suggestions, appropriate to their working environment and the

It aims to mobilize and motivate local-level government staff

challenges they face. It aims to clarify a complex working environment and its language and style, respond to the cultural, institutional and political dimensions of this environment.

The notes in this report aim to provide an insight into the this working environment and an understanding of the institutional context in which the SIP was developed.

This report is a reference document for the SIP

The report is intended as a *reference* document, and should be read in conjunction with the SIP, in Lao or as an English translation.

#### SOME KEY FEATURES OF DLF'S STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- The Plan clarifies high level government objectives and interprets visions of development described in strategic planning documents in a way that is more accessible to local-level staff. It highlights that achieving food and nutrition security is a priority of the government and that aquatic resources development has a major role in achieving this security in rural areas where most Lao people live. It encourages DLF staff at all levels working on aquatic resources sector to have a greater focus on measuring progress through contribution to these broader strategic objectives, rather than on more immediate measures of fish production and technical development.
- The Plan promotes actively establishing a “Partnership Approach” for the development of this sector and prioritizes initiatives which build more effective working relationships between DLF local-level staff and other key stakeholders working in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. This includes other government agencies (e.g. from the environment and energy sectors) as well as the private sector, training and education institutions and local and international NGO's. Indicators have been established to measure the development of DLF's Partnership Approach.
- The Plan highlights the importance of aquatic resources which are not fish and the important role these resources play in achieving some of the key objectives of the government relating to food and nutrition security. Interventions are prioritized which more effectively manage and conserve crabs, snails, shrimps, frogs and insects and other non-fish aquatic organisms including aquatic weeds.
- The Plan highlights the importance of building staff capacity especially at local levels and through an increased focus on practical workplace skills rather than academic knowledge. The plan also proposes a clearer agenda for more effective measures to address research through greater community involvement and (particularly in fisheries management). Actions to address a gender imbalance among DLF staff are promoted in all areas of the Plan and there is a close alignment with central government policy to decentralize development authority to district and community levels

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## The content of this document

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**Part 1** of this report describes the collaborative projects between DLF and FAO that produced the SIP. It describes what the project set-out to achieve, its implementation approach and some of the lessons learned from this approach.

**Part 2** describes the process of provincial consultation which directed the SIP drafting process. The consultations ensured the SIP addressed issues relevant to DLF staff at the local level, but also importantly, developed its wider institutional ownership.

**Part 3** describes the process of SIP development and provides an interpretation of key issues addressed in the document. It is not a translation, but an explanation and commentary on the SIP narrative which was developed in the Lao language and within a highly specific institutional and political context. This part of the document should be read in conjunction with the SIP, in Lao or as an English translation.



Freshwater crabs –  
important to the  
nutrition of many rural  
communities



**Part 1 – The project**

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## Project summary

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The Lao PDR is situated in the Lower Mekong Basin and consequently has abundant aquatic resources. Fish and other aquatic organisms such as frog, snails and crabs are a central component of the Lao diet and are particularly important to the food and nutrition security of rural communities which constitute over 60% of the population.

National strategy for the fisheries sector already exists

As Lao PDR develops, the demand for these resources is rapidly increasing and the government has published a National Strategy for the management and development of fisheries and aquaculture. The government is keen to accelerate the implementation of this strategy and developing the tools and capacity for the government to do this, is the main objective of this project.

The development of a Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) for fisheries and aquaculture management and development in Lao PDR, was the focus of this project. This Plan has now been delivered and as specified in the Project Outcome, it has been officially approved and is already being used. It addresses the challenges of weak technical and managerial capacity as well as contributing towards national government policies to decentralize authority.

DLF lead the development of the Strategic Implementation Plan

A review of implementation arrangements undertaken during the early stages of the project, identified opportunities to increase local ownership of the project's Outputs and make them more relevant to local-level stakeholders. With additional support and facilitation from FAO, but operating within the existing budget, the Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF) could lead the development of the Strategic Implementation Plan and produce a document in the Lao language. It provides relevant and appropriate planning guidance for the management and development of fisheries and aquaculture at the provincial level.

Capacity development was an important objective of the project

Extensive consultations at both national and local levels were conducted to develop the Strategic Implementation Plan. Capacity development objectives were integrated into this process and the project main partner, could reach-out to more than 100 government staff in all 18 provinces of the country. Provincial government staff were lead staff through a process of strategic thinking and planning, using examples of on-going projects and programs. The project provided an important opportunity for provincial staff to explore new ways in which their current implementation approaches could be made strategic and ways in which they could make a greater contribution towards national

government priorities, particularly those relating to improved food security and poverty reduction.

List of 30 Priority Projects developed

Developing a realistic implementation plans which utilizes existing capacity and resources was a priority. The identification of future investors and other support was also addressed including closer collaboration with the private sector and more active engagement with international Development Partners. A list of 30 Priority Projects has been costed and prioritized in the SIP and dialogue with the European Union, has developed a tangible opportunity for the DLF to secure additional funding support. The Department is now working to develop a multi-stakeholder platform to promote nutrition-sensitive, small-scale fisheries and aquaculture.

Communication materials to support SIP use

To support implementation of the SIP at provincial and district levels, DLF prepared a set of more than 10 leaflets, manuals, handbooks and CD's for distribution to provincial staff. The set is based on existing DLF communication materials and 10 copies of each set has been sent to all 18 provinces and they are being integrated into the design of a new DLF website.

Issues of environmental sustainability and poverty reduction are highlighted

Environmental sustainability was a major concern of many stakeholders and the importance attached to this issue exceeded expectations. The contribution that this sector can make towards poverty reduction was also highlighted and has become a central theme of the Strategic Implementation Plan. The SIP emphasizes the significant employment opportunities small-scale aquaculture and fisheries management provide to rural youth and women. It also underlines how aquatic animals make a major contribution towards food security, and very small-scale aquaculture enterprises can significantly reduce working hours for women in the very poorest communities.

Wild aquatic animals and plants are an important part of the Lao diet, especially for rural communities



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## The project's relevance

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### *Problem addressed*

As Lao PDR develops, the demand for fish and other aquatic animals is rising and securing an adequate supply of aquatic animals especially for the rural poor, is critical to sustaining the country's development. Lao PDR aims to move beyond its Least Developed Country status by 2020 and effective strategies to develop fisheries and aquaculture are essential for it to meet targets for poverty reduction and improved nutrition.

FAO has a long history of partnership with the Lao government in the development of fisheries and aquaculture and since the opening of the country in the early 90's, FAO has been able to provide a consistent stream of Technical Assistance to this sector. The support has helped the country to gradually establish a growing aquaculture industry (mostly small-scale farmers), and explore ways to more effectively manage and conserve its wild stocks of fish and other aquatic organisms.

The attainment of a basic technical capacity in this sector has led to the government drafting national fisheries laws and more recently, the publication of a National Strategy for Fisheries [and aquaculture] management and development. The document provides strategic guidance to all stakeholders in Lao PDR on how to sustain and manage these important resources.

*The SIP aims to provide guidance to support and encourage more effective local-level planning*



The publication of a National Strategy for fisheries management and aquaculture was however, only a first step in developing a more strategic approach to the sustainable management of these resources. The government was keen to move towards Strategy implementation, and developing a process for them to do this, became the objective of this project. This Technical Cooperation

Project (TCP) aimed to bridge a critical gap in the communication and understanding of government policy in this important sector.

### ***Response developed***

The development of a Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) for fisheries and aquaculture management and development in Lao PDR, is the focus of this project. The Project Outcome (or Specific Outcome), predicted the Plan would be in use by the end of the project and specified that the plan would address key issues of national government policy. These include addressing weak technical and managerial capacity as well as contributing towards efforts to decentralize authority for national development (the government's "Sam Sang" policy).

#### **Project outcome**

The government of Lao PDR has developed and begins implementation of a coherent, effective strategic implementation plan for the sustainable development of the fishery and aquaculture sectors which includes capacity development, resource mobilization and takes into account the national decentralization policy and national strategy 2020.

The project Outcome was expected to contribute towards a wider objective of creating a more enabling environment for the development and management of fisheries and aquaculture in Lao PDR. Complementing other development efforts in this sector, the project was expected to help build working processes, capacity and motivation which would also contribute towards wider government objectives such as creating sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction, improving food security and addressing environmental conservation.

#### **Project goal**

An enabling environment created, conducive to the sustainable development and management of the fisheries and aquaculture sector with emphasis on its contribution to economic growth, poverty alleviation, food security and environmental conservation.

#### **A project review was undertaken before implementation**

The project Goal and Specific Outcome statements have remained unchanged during project implementation, but a project review during the initial stages of implementation, concluded some minor modifications were required to the definition of project deliverables (Outputs), as well as the implementation modalities described in the original Project Document.

The review was jointly undertaken by FAO and its government partner, DLF. More than two years had elapsed since the initial

design and formulation of the project and while the overall objectives remained highly relevant to the Lao context, new opportunities had emerged to improve both the effectiveness and sustainability of the project. These were:

- DLF capacity had developed its capacity at central-level and the organization is ready to take a more active role in implementation. This opened the opportunity for a reduced reliance on external experts and an increase ownership of the project's Outcomes and Outputs.
- More opportunities for closer links with new government strategies and action plans currently being formulated (e.g. national government strategies and action plans relating to poverty reduction, decentralization and nutrition security).

*It was important the project could be easily understood by local-level development workers*



**Developing process indicators to measure project progress**

One of the main conclusions of the project review was the need to simplify and clarify the project's Logical Framework, including the development of an easily understandable version in the Lao language. For the project to be successful and develop increased ownership among partner institutions, it was necessary to more clearly describe the anticipated products of the project (project outcomes and outputs), and how these will be measured. It was also decided that progress indicators should be developed (Objectively Verifiable Indicators – OVI's), which are realistic, can be effectively measured and reported against by FAO's partner agency (DLF). Revised indicators were developed to track achievements and measure the process of project implementation (e.g. processes of local consultation)

To guide development of the project's Logical Framework as well as arrangements for project implementation, a list of "Guiding Principles" was developed which summarized important aspects of project strategy and approach. This was a useful addition to the official project documentation, as it provided all stakeholders with a "quick and easy" reference to the principles agreed during

the project review and helped guide further development of implementation arrangements.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION (FEB 14)

- DLF owns and manages the project
- Existing MAF/DLF expertise will be used as far as possible (consultants hired to help)
- DLF capacity development is a key component of this project
- Develop a useful aquaculture and fisheries implementation strategy for DLF which can be further modified and developed
- Ensure there is sufficient capacity to implement and further develop the DLF aquaculture and fisheries implementation strategy
- DLF aquaculture and fisheries implementation strategy document should be developed as a “living document” (can be easily revised and updated)
- Aquaculture and fisheries implementation strategies and plans developed under this project should be realistic (financing arrangements scoped and identified)
- Aquaculture and fisheries implementation strategies and plans should easily be understood at local levels (community/district/provincial levels).

#### Establishment of multi-sectorial, senior-level Project Steering Committee to ratify the SIP

An important modification to implementation arrangements described in the project document, was the establishment of a multi-sectorial, senior-level Project Steering Committee. In-line with the original project document, DLF established a Working Group to oversee project direction and coordination during the initial start-up period of the project (Jan 14). However, following the project review, it was agreed the roles and responsibilities of this Working Group should be further developed into a higher-level Project Steering Committee which would include stakeholder representatives from a range of government agencies. These included agencies responsible for environmental issues and hydropower development. It was also agreed the Steering Committee be formally established under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF).

The DLF proposal to establish the Project Steering Committee at Ministerial level is significant. It increased partner ownership of the project and provided a clear mechanism for it to engage at a policy level with stakeholders in other sectors. The committee also helped to ensure the project’s Outputs would receive formal Ministry-level endorsements/approval, as they were developed.

#### The project Logical Framework had to be simplified and translated into Lao to engage with local stakeholders

A revision of the Logical Framework was started after the project review. To save time and resources, the revision process was integrated into other consultation activities (e.g. stakeholder consultations to develop an initial outline of the Strategic Implementation Plan). The process focused on simplifying and clarifying the existing Logical Framework at the Output level. This included developing Lao language interpretations (not direct

translations) of the Narrative Statements, that could be easily understood by stakeholders at both national and provincial levels.

***Most provincial and district government staff have received training in the Logical Framework Approach. Making sure they are easily understandable is important for local stakeholder engagement***



The logical Framework revision also modified Output-level progress indicators to ensure they measured the development of process within FAO's partner institutions, as well as delivery of more tangible achievements (such as documents and government approvals). Developing process indicators at the Output level helped stakeholders more easily measure staff capacity development (a key concern of the Lao government), and enabled the project to develop linkages with international Development Partners.

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## The project's achievements

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**A Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) for the sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture authorized by MAF which includes plans to address capacity development and climate change**

### **Output 1**

This is the main Output of the project and the development of an officially ratified Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP), was the focus for project implementation. This Plan has been delivered, but the main achievement of the project is that it was drafted and delivered by FAO's local partner, the Department of Livestock and Fisheries, and not by external experts.

By developing and drafting the Strategic Implementation Plan themselves, the Department of Livestock and Fisheries has a high degree of institutional ownership of the Plan. Achieving such ownership of project outputs is a key principle of international agreements to improve Aid Effectiveness and in the context of the Lao PDR, is a necessity if such a document is to be useful at all institutional levels.

The SIP was developed in the Lao language and has moved the rhetoric of strategy, from national to local levels. It has made an important contribution to the process of decentralization recently launched by the national government (the "Sam Sang" policy).

A national Climate Change specialist was recruited by DLF to assist in drafting the document and issues of Climate Change adaption and mitigation are addressed in every section of the Plan as a "cross-cutting" theme.

### **Output 2**

**An increased capacity of DLF to develop and manage plans for implementing government strategies including wider linkages with other sectors and non-government stakeholders**

By developing the Strategic Implementation Plan in the local language and through facilitating active participation from both provincial and national level stakeholders in the drafting process, the SIP represents the culmination of a national capacity building initiative. This capacity building reached-out to more than 100 government staff in all 18 provinces and was implemented as an integral part of the SIP consultation process.

The project significantly improved understanding of the wider development goals and objectives related to this sector at the provincial level. Provincial staff could explore new ways in which their current implementation approaches could be made strategic (e.g. through developing more effective partnerships with other government agencies and the private sector).

The project developed DLF collaboration with Agricultural Colleges and the Department's Nam Suang Aquaculture Development Center has been the focus of project efforts to improve capacity at the village-level (village volunteers).

*Developing the capacity of local-level DLF staff to better plan and manage their own small development projects in partnership with local communities*



### **Output 3**

**An investment plan for the implementation of the SIP which includes contributions from government and non-government partners as well as the private sector.**

Discussions on the identification and definition of appropriate projects were the focus of provincial consultations and they produced a wide range of new development opportunities. These ideas have been systematically integrated into the SIP's Priority Projects list, together with initiatives proposed by central level stakeholders aimed at addressing critical weaknesses (e.g. a project which aims to clearly identify provincial and district focal areas for fisheries and aquaculture development). A list of 30 Priority Projects has been developed during the consultation process and the Projects have been costed and prioritized in the Strategic Implementation Plan.

DLF's engagement with international DP's has mainly been on a bilateral basis (e.g. European Union - EU, World Wide Fund for Nature -WWF). There were few opportunities for DLF to develop its participation in the Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) Sector Working Group (part of the national Round-Table process), as planned.

### **Output 4**

**DLF Policy Briefs, extension materials and guideline documents to support provincial authorities and other local development agencies in the execution of the Strategic Development Plan**

To support implementation of the SIP at provincial and district levels, DLF prepared a set of more than 10 leaflets, manuals, handbooks and CD's for distribution to provincial staff during 2016. The set is based on existing DLF communication materials and 10 copies of each set has been sent to all 18 provinces.

The set includes manuals on fisheries conservation zone establishment, information of the new legal framework for fisheries and a CD on aquaculture methods. Plans have also been developed for posting these materials on the new DLF website, being developed under a wider MAF initiative to improved internet-based communication services. The Department has used capacity developed under the project during the first round of provincial consultations to further develop its dialogue with provincial stakeholders. Resources allocated to the development of SIP "handbooks" were used to support follow-up workshops scheduled after SIP Ministerial approval.

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## Lessons learned

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### *Elements of success*

- National government agencies have the capacity to effectively develop and draft their own agricultural sector strategies and action plans, with appropriate external facilitation and support. Developing strong local ownership of national strategy and planning documents is essential for effective implementation at the local level.
- To support the development and implementation of government policies and strategies, Development Partner assistance works best if it facilitates a process of locally-driven project implementation, based on utilizing local working systems and local technical expertise.
- Improving government strategy and policy requires complementary capacity building activities which are best undertaken through “on-the-job” training and support. Better systems of training accreditation and formal recognition of professional competency are required to improve the capacity building effectiveness.
- Technical staff in government line agencies require training and support to interpret government policy documents. They require an external facilitator to develop collaborative non-technical policy guidelines and planning documents.
- New opportunities exist to work with national government agencies on developing more sustainability approaches to food production, particularly in the context of food and nutrition security. Environmental sustainability is becoming increasingly important to government policy at every level.
- Effective project implementation requires flexibility and reviewing implementation plans during the inception stage, provides opportunities to improve both project relevance and effectiveness.

### *Impediments/constraints*

- The rhetoric of strategic planning and policy development is poorly understood among technical staff in government line agencies, particularly at the local level. It is important to firstly develop an understanding these issues before engaging them in dialogues to develop policies and plans.
- Time and resources should be allocated in implementation plans for government agencies to develop the institutional capacity required to manage development projects. Specific measures should be included in project plans to develop local ownership of projects.
- Technical specialist in government line agencies require support and facilitation to draft non-technical policy and planning documents. They are also not familiar with the principles of strategic planning. Technical staff greatly benefit

from training in planning principles and capacity building activities to improve facilitation and team writing techniques.

- The lack of technical and managerial capacity at the provincial level requires increased attention and a long-term strategy to build and formally recognize professional competency. A lack of capacity at this level is a main constraint to improving government services.

*A fishing expedition in Southern Lao*  
**PDR**



A man in a blue polo shirt is smiling and holding a large, dark-colored fish in a rice field. The background shows a lush green landscape with a small hut and mountains in the distance. The text "Part 2 – The consultation process" is overlaid in white on the man's shirt.

**Part 2 – The  
consultation process**

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## Introduction and overview

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### *A record and analysis of process*

During the first six months of 2015, the Lao PDR Department of Livestock and Fisheries undertook a process of provincial consultation to draft a Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) for the management and development of fisheries and aquaculture in Lao PDR. The SIP is the focus of a project partnership between MAF/DLF and FAO which started in 2014 and was finalized in July 2016 (TCP/LAO/3403).

Part 2 of this document aims to provide a record and analysis of some of the key elements in the *process* of these provincial consultations. It complements other project reports in the Lao language describing the agreements reached in each of the consultation workshops. The section acknowledges the importance of *process* in projects aimed at supporting effective government planning. It includes evidence that the partnership developed between DLF and FAO has been effective in addressing key constraints in current government planning processes. The process of FAO/DLF partnership has also enabled DLF to lead the collaboration with FAO in the fisheries and aquaculture sub-sector, despite significant limitations in their technical and organizational capacity.

*Participants from the Southern provinces in the Salavan workshop*



### *Organizing the consultation events*

MAF/DLF arranged three regional workshops to consult with DLF provincial staff on content and format of the Strategic Implementation Plan. DLF staff from all 18 provinces participated in one of three workshops arranged in Luang Namtha – for provinces in the Northern region; Borikhamxay – for provinces in the Central region and Salavan – for provinces in the Southern region. As well as provincial DLF staff, representatives from other provincial government agencies also participated in the workshops. These included representatives from other sectors such as Energy and Mines, Environment and Rural Development.

The Department established a Facilitation Team to organize and facilitate these workshops, composed of senior central-level DLF staff and 4 National Experts (recruited by FAO to support DLF). The FAO International Advisor on Policy and Institutional Development provided additional advice and backstopping support to the Facilitation Team during the process.

### ***Consultation participation***

Facilitating the participation of representatives from stakeholder groups outside of DLF, was an important part of SIP consultation planning. DLF recognized the importance of better engaging with other stakeholders (such as the private sector as well other government agencies such as the Ministry of Energy and Mines and the community-level network of Technical Service Centres), but the Department was cautious about including too many stakeholder groups.

When planning the consultation process DLF felt they required “a clearer understanding” of their overall strategic direction before they could have effective dialogue with some stakeholder groups, particularly the private sector. The Department was aware that many of its staff were confused about the basic responsibilities of the DLF and the SIP consultation process offered an opportunity to develop a more coherent framework for the Department’s operation as an institution. Once this had been established, DLF would have a more effective foundation for developing a more inclusive approach.

Subsequent consultation workshop discussions about widening DLF’s partnerships, led to the development of the Department’s new *Partnership Approach*. This was developed as a central theme of the SIP (see Part 3 of this document) and has also been incorporated into new proposals with international Development Partners (e.g. EU – see Appendix 1).

***Members of the DLF Facilitation Team working with participants in the Borikhamxay workshop to group suggestions for future projects***



## *Developing an adaptive facilitation process*

The Facilitation Team prepared detailed plans and agendas for each of the consultation workshops, but these were designed to be flexible and were revised several times, including during the workshops themselves. This flexibility was important, as the Facilitation Team could adapt and develop the dialogue process in accordance with the demands of a challenging institutional environment.

*Members of the DLF Facilitation Team preparing for the next workshop session in Salavan*



## *The importance of developing a flexible approach towards local consultation*

The Team developed a systematic approach to modifying and adapting planned sessions as each workshop progressed. They organized workshop planning meetings not only before each event, but also during the workshops to adapt the facilitation process and ensure the best use of available time and resources. Short Team meetings during the workshops (e.g. during coffee breaks and at the end of each day), proved an effective way to bring-in new facilitation ideas and evaluate participant understanding and contribution.

This adaptive approach meant that the agenda of each consultation workshop was different and the content of the SIP was gradually developed over the three workshops. However, each workshop started with a discussion on the core strategic directions of the aquaculture and fisheries sub-sector and then moved on to explore specific elements of the SIP Outline, drafted by the facilitation team in preparation for the provincial consultation. (see Appendix 1 for a summary list of documents prepared by the project).

The process started with the Northern provinces and then moved South. The first Luang Namtha workshop was very much a learning event for DLF and guided their approach to the organization of the other two workshops. It helped develop their confidence in the use of some new facilitation techniques and see the three regional consultations events which could successively build on each other, rather than merely repeating the same basic event in three different contexts.

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## Summary of agreements and conclusions

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### *Local ownership developed*

The agreements and conclusion reached during the three consultation meetings provided DLF central-level staff with a clear framework for the development of the guidelines and recommendations for inclusion into the SIP. The meetings succeeded in developing local ownership of the SIP and its process of development. The consultation process also significantly improved strategic dialogue with key provincial government agencies on the management and development of aquaculture and fisheries. The meetings reviewed existing government policy and legal frameworks relating to fisheries and aquaculture and provided an opportunity for a frank and open discussion on how these frameworks can be realistically interpreted at the local level in a way that responds effectively to local needs and priorities.

The main outcomes of the three regional consultations which provided the basis for subsequent SIP drafting, can be summarised as follows:

- The SIP has three basic objectives which can be described simply as (a) developing food security; (b) generating income; (c) developing sustainability (environmental and institutional). These basic objectives are overlapping, but provide an easily understood and useful framework for the development of DLF projects at all levels. Importantly, these three basic objectives also help reinforce understanding that the Department and its partners must address all three objectives in its work, and not just one or two.

### The SIP's 3 basic objectives

### *Reaching a consensus of the three basic objectives of the SIP in Luang Namtha (Northern Lao PDR)*



### Main areas of DLF's work

- To guide project development over at least the next five years, 8-9 "Paen Wiek" (the DLF *Work Areas* – see Part 3 for more information) were identified. The "Paen Wiek" were developed

to provide a focus for DLF implementation (e.g. future project development) and more clearly establish the *scope* of DLF’s work, as well its main responsibilities. Their identification was based on discussions about projects currently being implemented by each province as well as “what should be done” and “what can be done”, over the next five years. These discussions were undertaken within the context of existing national policies, existing constraints and the likely future opportunities for additional investment (e.g. by government, private sector and farming families).

#### Lists of current and future projects

- A list of current and possible future projects was generated from each regional meeting, focusing on DLF implementation at provincial, district and community levels. Although this discussion produced a “wish list” of suggestions, provincial staff were more confident discussing the details of *projects*, and their suggestions discussions helped identify the “Paen Wiek” (DLF’s main Work Areas or scope of responsibilities). The dialogue also led into a discussion about the basic information required for identification of *projects*, and reinforced the need for all future DLF projects to include (a) ways of measuring progress (progress indicators) and (b) details of funding/investment opportunities.

#### Reviewing the list of suggested projects from provinces in Southern Lao PDR



#### Classification of project types

- During discussions on current and possible future projects, DLF Central-level staff also facilitated agreements on the types of projects under each “Paen Wiek” (DLF Work Area). These agreements were used as a basis for DLF Central-level staff to develop a list of *generic* DLF projects which were included in the SIP (see Part 3 for further details of the SIP [generic] Projects).

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## The need to build capacity for effective consultation

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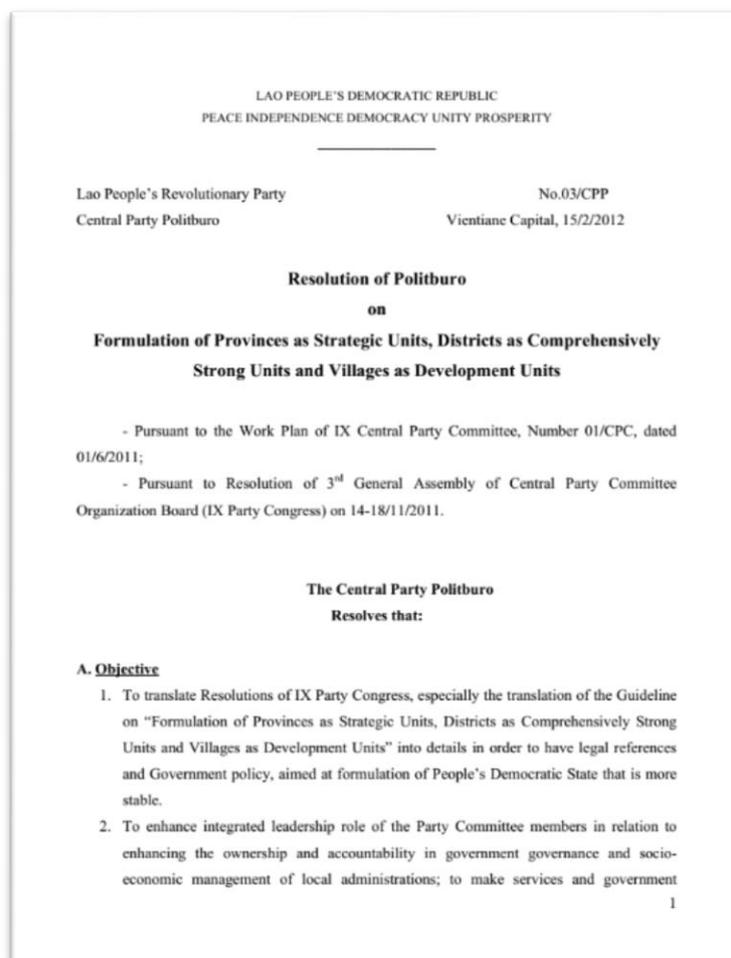
### *Addressing confusion over strategic terminology*

Preparations of the DLF Facilitation Team focused on arranging a structured process of discussion with provincial representatives. This included presentations to guide discussions and ensure they were framed by wider government visions, objectives and targets.

Initially, it was assumed provincial staff would engage in a *strategic* dialogue, but during the first workshop in Luang Namtha it became clear this initial approach, had to be modified.

While some senior provincial staff were familiar with the rhetoric of *strategy*, most were confused by the terms such as “vision” and it was clear the workshop participants required orientation on the basic principles of strategic planning and strategic thinking. The DLF facilitation team adapted their approach and time was allocated in each workshop to help them *think* strategically.

The government’s recent “Sam Sang” policy (the *three-builds* policy - 2012), aims to gradually shift responsibility for strategic development to the provinces



Most DLF staff at both central and provincial levels have not been formally trained in planning and until relatively recently, their

professional expertise was largely judged on their knowledge of technical issues relating to fisheries and aquaculture.

In addition, DLF staff at provincial levels have little experience of strategic planning and it is only with the recent introduction of government's decentralization policies (the "Sam Sang" policy), that provincial staff have been encouraged to develop their understanding of strategic planning processes.

To address this lack of capacity and assist workshop participants to more effectively contribute towards *strategic* discussions, the DLF Facilitation Team provided examples of strategic planning and strategic thinking in the context of fisheries and aquaculture management. The examples were grounded in the realities of provincial DLF work and a discussion was facilitated that encouraged provincial staff to openly discuss the professional challenges they face.

The Team then assisted the participants to consider the most *effective* action in the examples being discussed and encouraged them to analyse their choices through reflection on the wider objectives and targets established by MAF.

***Orientation on strategic planning for the participants from the central provinces in Borikhamxay.***



Provincial DLF staff enthusiastically participated in these *capacity building dialogues*, and the DLF facilitators were careful to keep the tenor analytical and not critical. They encouraged the participants to employ their professional experience and re-assess the relevance of established norms and implementation modalities.

Senior DLF staff made important contributions to these dialogues which reinforced support for the development of a more target orientated approach to aquaculture and fisheries development.

**Comments made by participants during the consultation workshops**

*“People who currently write most government strategy documents understand them, but the people responsible for implementing the strategies do not. Therefore, the strategy cannot be implemented.”*

*“We need another mechanism for developing government strategies – a mechanism which includes the people responsible for implementation and is written in a way that can be understood by all”*

*“We need a way of expanding strategies into projects. People are more familiar with “projects” and we need to make a clear link to our strategic plans”*

### **Contributing towards national decentralization**

Through these capacity building dialogues, the provincial consultation process made an important contribution to the wider government decentralization process. SIP consultation workshops have directly contributed towards building local staff capacity for this decentralization and they have also installed an increased confidence among provincial staff to “think again” about implementation modalities.

It is now clear that the traditional DLF narratives on “how to do things” which to some extent previously defined the organization, need to be re-assessed. The workshops have introduced a more results-based culture and this will have a long-term impact on aquaculture and fisheries development in Lao PDR.

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## Clarifying roles and responsibilities

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### **The changing role of DLF**

During the first provincial consultation workshop in Luang Namtha, it became clear there were some important differences in understanding between central and provincial level DLF staff regarding approaches towards strategy implementation. Over the last few years, the role of the Department has been gradually redefined and differing perspectives on this change have emerged within the organization.

**Provincial DLF staff have a different perspective on the DLF organization**

These differing perspectives are illustrated in central-level DLF staff rhetoric on the implementation modalities of its projects and programs. Ideas have changed significantly in recent years with an increasing emphasis on partnership approaches with other government agencies and the private sector. The traditional role of DLF as a development line agency which has sole responsibility of all issues relating to livestock and fisheries has been replaced. To deliver the Department’s targets and goals, most central-level staff

recognize the need to “team-up” with other government departments and other key stakeholders (such as banks and the private sector).

*Participants engaged in group work during the Borikhamxay workshop.*



In contrast, many provincial staff do not have a clear understanding of how the DLF has changed and is now changing. Over the last few years, opportunities for strategic dialogue between central and provincial level DLF staff have been limited and many provincial staff still see themselves as part of a more traditional government line agency, where development is largely planned at central level and implemented by sector.

However, the situation is quite complex as although at the provincial level less importance is attached to working with other stakeholders, there are more opportunities to promote cross sector collaboration. Central-level staff more clearly understand the policy of sectorial collaboration, but the real opportunities to make this work in practice are at the local level.

### *Addressing differing perspectives*

The SIP provincial consultations addressed these differing perspectives and the dialogue made an important contribution towards DLF’s institutional strengthening. The DLF Facilitators understood the importance of establishing a “common vision” of the organization as a basis for SIP development, and workshop sessions were organized for (a) senior DLF staff to communicate their strategic visions and (b) for provincial staff to explore these ideas in the context of their local provincial and regional environments.

To assist this strategic dialogue, DLF facilitators suggested some example scenarios of possible DLF projects and how they might be implemented at the provincial level. The following two scenarios were used in all three workshops. They focus on promoting a more active partnership approach to development and greater emphasis on a more targeted or results-based approach.

**1. Provincial staff working to improve fish seed supply.** While traditionally the Department has focused on developing facilities at government-run fish hatcheries, provincial staff were encouraged to consider alternative strategies for meeting government targets which include establishing networks to support small-scale private sector producers. Activities to monitor (and possibly regulate) the supply of fish seed from neighbouring countries could also be included.

By adopting a broader partnership-based approach to implement strategies for fish seed improvement, the absence of a government fish hatchery or insufficient funds to develop existing hatcheries did not mean that DLF staff were unable to address this issue and contribute towards government targets.

**2. Reaching out to remote areas and districts with no DLF representation.** While the Department is one of the key Line Agencies within the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and has staff based in each province, this representation does not extend to most districts. Many District Agricultural Offices have no staff with aquaculture and fisheries expertise and in most of the country, provincial staff do not have the manpower or resources to cover all districts. Traditionally, DLF tended to focus its efforts on aquaculture and fisheries development where they were most needed, where funds are available and in places where their extended network can reach (e.g. through DLF district staff and the Village Volunteers). Undertaking any substantive work outside of these areas is generally considered problematic unless a more active partnership approach to DLF intervention is considered.

In terms of contributing towards poverty reduction and food (and nutrition) security, being able to “reach-out” into these more remote areas is critical. The government has established national targets for reducing poverty and improving food security for which it is important DLF can measure its contribution. Working to establish collaborative projects with other key stakeholders at the provincial level (e.g. local departments of health, education and development banks), could be a way for DLF to extend its reach and widen its impact.



# Part 3 – Document drafting and content

- ກົດລະບຽບທີ່ຂໍ້ຫ້າມຕ່າງໆ ໃນການບາດປ່າຢູ່ ໃນອ່າງຫ້ວຍສູງ
- ບາດແກກບາດຊະນິດ ປົກປ້ອງທຳມະຊາດ, ເບິ່ງຢູ່ເທິງເທົາພິກີ ບໍ່ມີຟ້າ
- ຫ້າມ ຈັບປ່າດ້ວຍກະແສໄຟຟ້າ ຫ້າມຟ້າ, ທາດເດີມຕ່າງໆທີ່ເປັນຂານນົດ.
- ບໍ່ໃຫ້ເຂົ້າຊົມ, ໃສ່ກັບ, ໃສ່ຈັມ, ກັດຕາງ, ຕົ້ມເຜືອກຕາມລະຫວ່າງທິທາດກິນໃສ່ອ່າງເດັດຂາດ.
- ຫ້າມກຽມປ່າໃນລຽບຕາມບໍ່ ລິດນຂະບອງ 500 ມ ແລະ ປ່າໄມ້ບໍ່ກົດຕາມແດນພື້ນ, ພື້ນນ້ຳ.
- ຫ້າມຈັບລູກປ່າທຳມະຊາດ, ໃສ່ໂຕງຕົ້ນສາບຫວ່າຍຕ່າງໆທີ່ທາດກິນໃສ່ອ່າງ.
- ຫ້າມຈັບປ່າທີ່ທາງຫ້າມ ແລະ ຄຸ້ມຄອງເຊັ່ນ: ປ່າປັກ, ປ່າດຸ້ມ, ປ່າເລີນ, ປ່າເອີນ, ປ່າພອນ.
- ຫ້າມບາດປ່າ ໃນເຂດວັງສະຫງວນຕະຫຼອດປີ.
- ຫ້າມບາດປ່າ ໃນລະດູປ່າຂີ້ນ້ຳໃຊ້ (ເດືອນ 5 -8 ສາກົມ) ຢ່າງເດັດຂາດ.



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## Introduction to Part 3

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Part 3 describes the process of SIP development and provides an interpretation of key issues addressed in the document. It is not a translation, but an explanation and commentary on the SIP narrative which was developed in the Lao language and within a highly specific institutional and political context. This part of the document should be read in conjunction with the SIP, in Lao or as an English translation.

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## SIP: The Forward section

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**The SIP is not a new strategy document**

This Section of the SIP was included to help ensure the aims of this document are clearly understood. It is the first time such a document has been developed by a MAF Line Agency and is not a standard part of MAF's strategic planning process. The SIP has been developed to provide stakeholders working in the fisheries sector with clearer guidance on how to implement the existing strategies and policies relating to this sector. The SIP is not a new strategy document - a government strategy for the fisheries sector already exists.

**Address agricultural commercialization as well as food security**

It provides an overview of the document and the rationale for its development. This section emphasizes the importance of agriculture to the overall development of the country and the need for fisheries development (as part of the agricultural sector), to address both the improvement of agricultural commercialization as well as tackling poverty and food security.

**Fisheries are an integral part of the agricultural system**



It reminds the reader of the special importance aquatic animals have in the diet of the Lao people (in both urban and rural areas),

as well as the significant potential of the country to develop this sector due to its abundance of water resources.

The section also emphasizes that the definition of “fisheries” in this document includes both aquaculture and capture fisheries. It also states that “fisheries” includes other aquatic animals such as crabs, snails, frogs and shrimps

FAO regional statistics:

Between 64 and 93% of rural households in the Lower Mekong Basin are involved in fisheries

It is estimated that at least 30% of the Mekong “fishery” is not composed of fish

People in Lower Mekong Basin most dependent on aquatic resources, are the poor who consume most of the non-fish products

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) estimates official statistics significantly undervalue the Mekong fishery between 2.6 and 21 times



The SIP has been created as a handbook for provincial DLF staff

DLF’s new Partnership Approach for the Fisheries sector

The Forward explains the SIP has been created as a “handbook” for the various stakeholders involved in the development of the Fisheries sector and aims to provide practical advice and guidance for people working at the implementation level (especially at the provincial level). It emphasizes the SIP is not a “strategy document”, but rather aims to translate or interpret the existing government policies, strategies and visions. It provides advice and guidance on how to implement these existing strategies and polices from 2016 to 2020 as well as providing an interpretation of the broader visions developed for this sector from 2020 to 2025.

The section also states refers to a “Partnership Approach” being developed by DLF for the Fisheries sector. This Approach prioritizes initiatives which build more effective working relationships between DLF local-level staff and other key stakeholders working in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. This includes other government agencies (e.g. from the environment and energy

sectors) as well as the private sector, training and education institutions and local and international NGO's.

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## SIP: The Introduction section

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### *The significance and importance of this document*

Summary translation/interpretation of key issues addressed in this section

- The document has been developed by the Department of Livestock and Fisheries with support from FAO. The collaboration has aimed to improve the sustainable management of fish (and other aquatic animals) in Lao and aims to provide the country with a realistic and practical plan for development of the fisheries sector.
- This section emphasizes the importance of providing safe food for the Lao people and recognizes the role that both government and the private sector must play in the development of fisheries commercialization (mainly through the development of farmer groups) and in programs to reduce poverty.
- The document is an important step in explaining and realizing existing government targets. These include development targets established at national and regional levels as well as targets established for different agro-ecological zones (e.g. upland, lowland areas)
- SIP aims to explain in detail existing government strategies and policies. It has been developed through a process of explaining and discussing these strategies and policies with a range of stakeholders working in the fisheries sector.
- SIP has been developed through a process of careful consultation at both national and provincial levels. This consultation process has included capacity building activities for DLF staff working in Vientiane and in the provinces.
- The SIP has been drafted to support the recently expanded decentralization policies of the Lao government (the “Sam Sang” policy), and aims to support and encourage the development of local-level capacity and in particular, capacity for provincial-level strategic planning in the fisheries sector
- The development of the recommendations included in the SIP for action at the local level includes a thorough assessment of the real opportunities and challenges that exist for fisheries development in Lao PDR at the local level. This assessment includes an analysis of the risks and an analysis of the various investment opportunities (both within Lao PDR and from the international community). Also included is an assessment of the emerging opportunities for closer regional integration (e.g. Asian Economic Community) and collaboration under regional agreements (e.g. 1995 Mekong Agreement and the Mekong River Commission).

## ***Contents of the Strategic Implementation Plan***

Summary translation/interpretation of key issues addressed in this section

- The SIP aims to present a plan for the fisheries sector which provides a detailed framework for the implementation of government development strategies from now until 2025 and the broader vision for the countries growth up to 2030. This includes the development of technologies and plans to adapt to the challenges of climate change. The establishment and strengthening of farmer groups and value chains for aquatic products is an important part of this plan. The SIP aims to generate additional income for farmers and make a significant contribution to the country's food security.
- Increasing national fisheries production is a main objective of the SIP, both through increasing the production of the natural fishery and through the promotion of aquaculture. The Plan addresses increasing production in both urban and rural areas as well as developing export markets. The production of safe and nutritious aquatic food products is a priority.
- The SIP aims to make an important contribution to national socio-economic development plans as well as international development goals (MDG's).

## ***Goals and objectives***

Summary translation/interpretation of key issues addressed in this section

- The main objective of this Plan is to increase the capacity of stakeholders in the fisheries sector to implement the policies and strategies for the management and development of this sector which already exist. The focus is on stakeholders at the implementation level and particularly those people working at the provincial level. The document emphasizes a "partnership approach" to the development of this sector and proposes new mechanisms to strengthen collaboration between the various stakeholders.
- The SIP has been developed as a "handbook" for practitioners responsible for the management and development of this sector. It aims to be particularly relevant for DLF staff working at the provincial level and includes specific recommendations for the implementation of projects and activities. It also aims to explain and interpret the existing visions, policies and strategies for this sector so that stakeholders at all levels can work closer together and share a common vision and a common approach. The SIP aims to help *mobilize* people working in the fisheries sector and proposes a series of strategic actions and interventions for which there is already a broad consensus and which will also contribute towards national international development objectives.
- It also aims to act as a point of reference for agencies working in other sectors and development partners at both regional and national levels. The document aims to promote and encourage more effective linkages between government and private sectors and assist all stakeholders to prepare the country's closer regional integration.
- Developing more effective ways to conserve and manage the natural environment and aquatic biodiversity are important components of the SIP.

## *The process of SIP development*

Summary translation/interpretation of key issues addressed in this section

- The development of the SIP was an initiative taken by Department of Livestock and Fisheries with the support of FAO and was aimed at strengthening the capacity of DLF staff to implement the existing policies and strategies of the fisheries sector.
- The SIP is a capacity building document which aims to provide DLF staff especially at provincial and district level with clear guidance and direction on how to more effectively carry-out their duties. As well as suggestions for activities and projects, the SIP includes summaries and explanations of relevant government policies and provides an overview of the Lao fisheries sector which includes its historical context.
- The document was developed from an extensive process of consultation with key stakeholders at both national and local levels. This process included a review of all relevant literature (e.g. legal documents, policy and strategy documents, international agreements and project documents), and a thorough analysis of the risks and opportunities for the future development of the fisheries sector.



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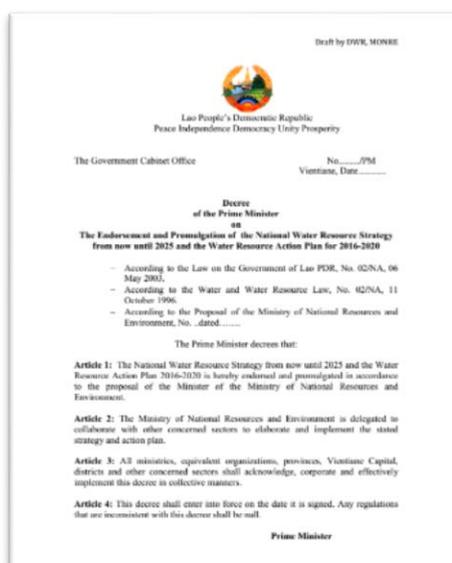
## SIP: Chapter 2 - The status of aquaculture and fisheries in Lao PDR

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### *Key documents*

During the development of the SIP document, DLF National Experts conducted a thorough review of documentation relating to the management and development of fisheries and aquaculture in Lao PDR. From this review, a short-list of “Key Documents” were identified that relate to policy in this sector and establish the broad framework for their implementation. They also contain key reference information on the status of fisheries and aquaculture in Lao PDR and indicate potential areas for development. These Key Documents are listed in the main text of the SIP to encourage their use and reference by DLF staff and other stakeholders.

DLF staff collected and review a range of documents relating to the fisheries sector



### *Status and potential*

78% of all farming families regularly catch fish and other aquatic animals

The SIP highlights the importance of fish and other aquatic animals to the diet of the Lao people. It is a major source of protein especially for rural communities and according to government statistics, all farming families in the country regularly spend time on either fishing or raising fish. In the last Lao Census of Agriculture 2010/2011, 78% of all farming families in the country (738,000 families) regularly caught fish (and other aquatic animals), and 22% of farming families were engaged in farming fish (and other aquatic animals).

The average Lao person consumes 22Kg of aquatic animals each year

Data on the economic value of aquatic animals is also included and illustrates the importance of this sector to the Lao economy. Government statistics show that the average Lao person consumes 22Kg of aquatic animals each year, but consumption is significantly higher in some of the Southern provinces and for many poorer communities, much of this consumption is composed of animals such as crabs, snails, frogs and toads which may not be recorded.

Accurately measuring aquatic animal harvest and consumption in Lao PDR is difficult and official figures probably are an underestimate. However, government statistics recorded that the fisheries sector contributed 11.7% of the total value of agricultural production in 2012/2013 and this has risen to 13% in 2015.

*From FAO RAP publication  
2015: The consumption of fish  
and fish products in the  
Asia-Pacific region  
based on household surveys*



As well as communicating the importance of the fisheries sector, the Strategic Implementation Plan also provides a historical summary of its development and references some of the key projects implemented since the early 90's. An understanding this historical context is important for the development of future plans.

**SIP includes a brief history of the Fisheries Sector development**

In last decade, the fisheries sector in Lao PDR has developed rapidly and there are now many successful examples of aquaculture operations at large, medium and small scales. Culture in both pond and cages is expanding and there is a rapidly growing demand for fish especially in urban areas.

**The capacity to support the gradual intensification of aquaculture is limited**

Progress has been made to support this expansion of aquaculture, but the capacity to support the gradual intensification of aquaculture is limited. Increased capacity is required to produce fish seed, address issues of fish disease and inspect fish feed composition and the safety of commercial aquatic animal products.

Increasing emphasis  
conserving and managing  
indigenous species of fish

In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on the importance of conserving and managing indigenous species of fish and identifying high value species with aquaculture potential. There is considerable potential for developing a high value export market around the commercial production of indigenous fish and the government is working to encourage national and foreign private sector investment in this area.

Government policies and strategies have developed to support conservation and in 2009, the first Fisheries Law was approved. The Law aims to protect and conserve this important resource and establishes a clear legal and regulatory framework for its sustainable management as a key component of national food and nutrition security.

#### **SIP PROVIDES A BRIEF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE**

The SIP provides a brief historical narrative of fisheries and aquaculture development in Lao PDR and provides stakeholders with an insight into how understanding of the sector has changed over the last two decades. From an initial focus on methods and regulations concerning exploitation of the abundant natural fishery, understanding has developed and broadened to incorporate issues such as aquaculture, wetlands management and the communal conservation and management of aquatic resources (e.g. community fisheries management of ponds, lakes and reservoirs).

Developing local understanding and capacity for community management of aquatic resources has been particularly important. It has helped many rural communities develop more sustainable approaches to their exploitation of wild aquatic resources and provided a vital source of community income which in many instances has been used to kick-start other areas of development (e.g. village infrastructure development, food security and social welfare schemes).

There is an opportunity to  
build-on and formalize existing  
traditional practices and  
customs of conservation

The establishment of a legal and regulatory framework for the fisheries sector at the national level, provides local-level stakeholders the opportunity to further develop and interpret this framework among the farming community. In combination with recent government policies to accelerate the decentralization of development authority, provincial and district level stakeholders have been provided with a clear mandate to work with local communities to establish locally appropriate regulations for the conservation and sustainable management of aquatic animals. This offers the opportunity to build-on and formalize existing traditional practices and customs that many rural communities have developed over generations for the conservation and management of these resources.

Working with communities to developing locally appropriate regulations for sustainable aquatic resources management is important, as these resources play a key role in the livelihoods of

most Lao people (80% live in rural areas). The work will help to ensure the food and nutrition security of the country and make an important contribution to poverty reduction. Aquatic resources provide essential nutrients to rural communities and are especially important to the nutrition of at-risk groups such as pregnant women and small children.

Aquatic animals and plants provide essential nutrients to at-risk groups such as pregnant women and small children.



The SIP also places the Lao fisheries sector in a regional context

Compared to its neighboring countries, Lao PDR has a special potential to produce freshwater fish and other aquatic animals. The country has an abundance of streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs and other water bodies (including wetlands and rice fields) and a rich biodiversity of aquatic animals. It is a resource critical to the livelihoods of most rural communities and it is important that the country works to preserve it.

A survey by the Mekong River Commission identified over 1,200 species of fish in the Lower Mekong Basin and more than 600 of these species are indigenous to Lao PDR. Approximately 45 species have been determined to be of significant economic importance and of these, 18 have been identified as having potential for commercial pond aquaculture.

The importance of increasing fish seed production

The adequate production of fish seed is critical for the development of aquaculture and the enhancement of natural fish stocks. The government has established 23 fisheries stations nation-wide and these play an important role in fish seed production of both indigenous and exotic species, as well as the conservation of indigenous fish species. The stations are a sound basis for further development of the fisheries sector, but require an investment in building their capacity.

The DLF estimates that Lao PDR currently produces approximately 350 million fish seed/year (from both government and private sectors), but this represents only 65% of the estimated demand. With additional capacity, the national fisheries stations could make a significant contribution to increasing fish seed production (and other aquatic animals), as well as developing techniques and

Decentralizing fish seed production to the community-level will strengthen implementation of the “Sam Sang” policy

technology for the cultivation and conservation of indigenous species.

The government is working to encourage national and foreign private sector investment in fish seed production and also sees an opportunity for increasing income generation among rural communities by promoting small-scale fish seed production among farmer groups and individual farming families. Decentralizing fish seed production to the community-level through the establishment of multiple small-scale operations, will strengthen implementation of the government’s “Sam Sang” (decentralization) policy and significantly contribute towards accelerating both the resilience and growth of small-scale aquaculture. DLF is working to pursue this agenda with International Development Partners through a national program of professional training and human resources development for its district-level staff.

*Small wild fish collected for dinner from a rice field in Northern Lao PDR*



### *Problems and strengths*

This section of the document summarizes some of the considerable challenge Lao PDR faces in its development of the fisheries sector such the rapidly increasing population and degradation of the natural environment. However, the section also points out that these challenges are not insurmountable and that the country also has many strengths (e.g. abundant water resources).

Here as in other sections of the document, the SIP calls for renewed efforts by all stakeholders to address these challenges and emphasizes that they can be systematically addressed and gradually resolved, through a pragmatic and informed approach.

The text points out that there is still much to learn about the country’s natural environment and about ways to intensify aquaculture production (e.g. the formulation and production of fish

feed) and the development of value chains and markets for aquatic products.

The need to address both current and future challenges

The dynamic nature of the challenges which face Lao PDR and especially the management and development of the fisheries sector, is emphasized in this section. As well as addressing the current challenges, it is important for all stakeholders to also prepare for future challenges, such as the control of fish disease and regulation of imports (e.g. fish seed) at border checkpoints.

Provincial staff showing an extension poster they designed themselves



The future impacts of Climate Change are again referred to in this section as well as other developing problems such as the rapidly increasing use of agricultural chemicals and soil erosion, all which have serious negative impacts on capture fisheries and aquaculture.

### Risks and Challenges

A dialogue on risks and challenges was a natural focus for most consultations, especially at the provincial level. Stakeholders frequently expressed their frustration with a lack of resources and the seemingly insurmountable problems they faced.

These were often frank dialogues on specific local problems and the DLF Facilitation Team had to steer discussions towards a more strategic analysis of risks and challenges.

#### Overwhelming challenges

The scale of the challenges described in this section often seems overwhelming to many DLF staff. Their frustration with the enormity of these challenges was occasionally expressed during the consultation meetings. This is easy to understand and important to remember when designing consultation approaches.

Participating in a such a dialogue was a new experience for many provincial participants and it was a significant step in helping them

move beyond “frustration”, towards a focus on developing locally-driven solutions.

The ability to describe local development initiatives in the context of national development, is essential for improving collaboration with other sectors

The dialogue helped DLF provincial staff develop a more *strategic* picture of risks and challenges they face and improved their ability to discuss proposed local development initiatives in the context of national development. It was recognized this capacity is particularly important for improving collaboration with other sectors (e.g. health, environment) as well as securing funding for development projects.

#### DEVELOPING CAPACITY TO DESCRIBE AND ARTICULATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The series of consultation organized at provincial level to develop the SIP, highlighted the need to developing a better understanding of government goals and priorities. These are explained and referred to several times in this document to assist in developing this understanding and they are also presented in a way which will assist particularly provincial DLF level staff, to more clearly explain these goals and priorities (e.g. to district-level DLF staff), in the context of the fisheries sector. The provincial consultations clearly demonstrated the need to develop local-level DLF capacity to more clearly explain implementation activities and approaches from a more strategic perspective. The ability to do this will not only improve local approaches to the development and management of the fisheries sector, but importantly, will also strengthen linkages with other sectors. Not having the capacity at the local level to clearly communicate fisheries and aquaculture projects and activities in a wider strategic context, is limiting DLF’s ability to effectively engage with agencies from other sectors (e.g. Ministry of Energy and Mines and the private sector).

Although an analysis of risks and challenges were a focus for many discussions during SIP consultations, only a short summary of these issues is presented in this section. Provincial consultations confirmed that the risks and challenges of this sector are well understood by local-level stakeholders and the document has focused on providing advice and guidance on developing locally-driven solutions.

A summary of the main risks and challenges described in this section of the document include:

A summary of the main risks and challenges described in this section

- Increased fishing pressure on the natural fishery, use of illegal fishing methods and gear (e.g. electrofishing, poisons etc.), overfishing (e.g. blocking steams with nets).
- Climate Change (e.g. causing floods). Especially important for communities living along the Mekong and its tributaries.
- Reaching-out to poor communities in mountains and hills, many who still practice shifting cultivation. Soil erosion and landslides impact fish habitats and spawning grounds.
- Environmental degradation (soil, water and forests) and the exploitation of natural resources and chemical

contamination of soils all have important impacts on fish and other aquatic animals.

- Pollution from industries and towns that is not been effectively treated, impacts water quality and reduces the abundance of fish and other aquatic animals.
- Developing more effective regulations to address issues such as a reduce reliance on imports (e.g. fish seed), promote domestic production and regional markets. More effective use of SPS and better alignment with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and international trade cooperation frameworks (e.g. World Health Organization - WHO).
- Developing more effective regulations to address issues such as a reduce reliance on imports (e.g. fish seed), promote domestic production and regional markets. More effective use of SPS and better alignment with ASEAN and international trade cooperation frameworks (e.g. WHO).

#### HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES IN LAO PDR

The current system of government is organised in a centralised pattern with a strongly deconcentrated administration at the provincial level and to a lesser degree at the district level. The main feature of the Lao system is the balance between the vertical line – the central ministries and their field offices at the provincial and district level – and the horizontal line – offices, committees and mass organisations directly under the provincial governor and the district governor. Thus, any field office responds to both, the vertical line (central ministry) and a horizontal line (provincial and district authorities).

Decentralisation is one of the eight national priority development programmes in the Lao PDR. Decentralised rural development policies have long been recognised as a key for alleviating poverty and improving the socio-economic well-being of rural people. The current government system of the Lao PDR is organised according to a centralised pattern with a strongly deconcentrated administration at the provincial level and to a lesser degree at the district level.

The main feature of the Lao system is the balance between the vertical line – the central ministries and their field offices at the provincial and district level – and the horizontal line – offices, committees and mass organisations directly under the governor and the district chief. Thus, any field office responds to the vertical line (central ministry) and the horizontal line (provincial governor and district chief).

#### *Lessons Learned*

A summary list of “Lessons Learned” by the fisheries sector (since the 90’s), was developed by the DLF Facilitation Team during provincial consultations. It aims to emphasis key policy issues and address important challenges. A summary interpretation of this list is presented below:

- To improve collaboration between government agencies in the long-term, it is important to consider not only collaboration between different Departments and Ministries (the “vertical” aspect of Lao government institutional arrangements), but also

Summary  
translation/interpretation for

how inter-agency and cross-sectoral collaboration plays-out at the local level, within the decentralized context of provincial and district authorities (the “horizontal” aspect of Lao government institutional arrangements).

- Specific mechanisms need to be developed to strengthen collaboration between government agencies within MAF and relevant agencies outside this Ministry (e.g. relating to trade and the environment). This should include the development of joint workplans and the mechanism should work within government institutions in both “horizontal” and “vertical” lines.
- As well as developing closer cooperation between the various stakeholders in the fisheries sector, it is important that work is done to develop closer integration of the various legal frameworks. More efforts to harmonize the development of various legal frameworks now being drafted by different ministries, including international agreements (e.g. OIE-World Organization for Animal Health), would assist the development of stakeholder partnerships within the fisheries sector.
- It is important the fisheries sector works towards reducing the current reliance on imports (e.g. fish feed and fish seed). Stakeholders need to work together to develop more self-reliance in this sector and becomes more competitive with neighboring countries.
- The development of the fisheries sector cannot be sustainable within an investment in infrastructure and institutions. For example, fisheries stations, research centers and extension services all require significant investment and standards need to be developed for issues such as the safe production of fish products and the control of fish disease.
- The fisheries sector requires more emphasis on the development of extension advice, communication materials and approaches to training. More effective use should be made of the media (including social media) to communicate important messages.
- The participation of women in the fisheries sector requires special attention and specific projects or activities should be developed which ensure their participation at all levels. This include ensuring women have access to credit, access to the media and are included in initiatives relating to adaptation to Climate Change.
- It is important to strengthen the existing network of community-level representatives (or “Village Volunteers”) who have played a key role in the development of the fisheries sector. Improved training curricula in capture fisheries and aquaculture is required at all levels, but it is especially important that the sector develops new approaches to improving capacity at the community-level.
- More emphasis needs to be placed on strengthening collaboration with other countries, especially collaboration with neighboring countries in the context of ASEAN and agreements

for greater collaboration in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (e.g. Asian Development Bank - ADB). Stakeholders at all levels need to play a more active role in developing stronger partnerships with other countries for foreign investment and closer cooperation is required with Development Partner (DP) agencies and international Non-Government Organizations. International partnerships for development should follow the principles of the Vientiane Partnership Declaration and opportunities should be explored for closer collaboration between DP's and local stakeholders.

### BREAKING DOWN THE *SILO* APPROACH

Much of the dialogue during consultations organized at central and provincial levels to prepare the SIP, centered around ways to address current challenges faced by the fisheries sector. Stakeholders participating in these consultations at all levels, enthusiastically engaged in this debate which identified several key *lessons learned* or collective “recommendations” for future development.

The development of more effective partnerships is the focus of many of the Lessons Learned presented below. Discussions during stakeholder consultations frequently focused on this issue and many of the Lessons Learned presented in this document, aim to galvanize action around this critical area of development. Stakeholder at all levels recognize the need to devise new approaches and mechanisms to stakeholder collaboration and coordination which breakdown the traditional “silo” approach. Although stakeholders were not able to clearly identify practical solutions to this problem, there is a collective ambition to use what lessons they have learnt and this is reflected in this section of the document.



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## SIP: Chapter 3 - Goals and Objectives

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*Chapter 3 aims to describe in simple and practical terms, three main goals for the fisheries sector which will guide the direction of future work.*

### ***The process of reaching a consensus***

Reaching a consensus on the goals and objectives of the SIP, was a starting point for provincial consultation workshops. At the local level, the basic aims of the “fisheries sector” were unclear.

### **The basic aims of the fisheries sector were unclear.**

Few participants in these workshops were familiar with national-level policy documents and in recent years, there have been substantial changes in central government policies and strategies. This has led to some confusion and misunderstanding among government staff at provincial and district levels.

The development of the SIP was an opportunity for DLF to address this misunderstanding and during the consultation (and drafting) process, clearly “translate” and explain in simple language, government visions, strategies and policies relating to the fisheries sector.

### ***Discussing the sector’s objectives in Luang Nam Tha (Northern Lao PDR)***



The main documents referred to during the consultation process were the existing Fisheries Sector Strategy and the over-arching strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). Strategy and policy documents from other sectors (e.g. Environment, Trade and Climate Change), were also referenced.

The three main Goals of the SIP presented in Section III, reflect strategic goals in these national policy documents. However, the explanation and interpretation of these Goals provided in

this Section, was developed from the context of provincial consultations.

***Goal #1: Reduce poverty and develop food security***

The **first Goal** emphasizes the link between this sector and food security and the important role of fish and other aquatic animals in the Lao diet. The Goal's description and explanation aims to provide provincial stakeholders with key information on the importance of these resources which could be included in provincial strategy documents and development plans. Differences in consumption between rural and urban communities are highlighted, as well as the critical contribution of these resources to the nutrition of poor communities, especially pregnant women and young children.

***Many opportunities exist for income generation from small-scale aquaculture***



Placing an emphasis on the sector contributing towards food security through fisheries production (aquaculture and natural fisheries production), reflects an important outcome of provincial consultations. The opportunity to engage in a strategic dialogue about the future of this sector, prompted provincial government staff to shift their focus from production (e.g. tons fish), to a more inclusive focus on

livelihoods. Discussions included implications of this shift on how development success is measured (e.g. through metrics of poverty reduction), as well as the need for closer collaboration with agencies in other sectors (e.g. health and education).

***Goal #2: Promote income generation and commerce***

The **second SIP Goal** focuses on promoting the generation of income and commerce. In the description and explanation of this Goal, the SIP emphasizes the potential of this sector to meet increasing demand for fish and other aquatic animals in local markets as well as regional and international markets.

The document recognizes commercialization of this sector is currently poorly developed, but illustrates how commercial cage fish farming has rapidly developed in recent years and the considerable potential for further expansion. Closer links between government and the private sector are required as well as improved access to credit.

Opportunities to promote sustainable small-scale aquaculture enterprises were explored during consultations. Provincial government staff are keen to develop closer engagement with the private sector and promote small-scale commercial enterprises, but it is clear they require additional support. Many local DLF staff do not have the technical capacity to confidently engage with private sector operators and they have limited understanding of standards and regulations required to promote regional and international trade.

***Commercial cage tilapia farming on the Mekong river***



***Capacity building required to engage private sector***

Future DLF capacity building initiative need to focus on creating and facilitating private sector linkages and building the confidence of local government staff at both provincial and district levels. Provincial consultations recognized this as challenging work for local staff, but agreed that increased

effort should be directed towards identifying opportunities to promote commercialization. The SIP provides some ideas and suggestions on how these linkages could be developed at the local-level (particularly among small groups of farmers) and it will be important that future capacity building initiatives (also discussed in the SIP), clearly target this issue.

Suggestions for an increased focus on commercial development in this section of the document, include development of markets for indigenous fish species in Southern Lao PDR. The high value and demand for indigenous Mekong fish species in neighboring countries represents an important opportunity for this sector.

***Goal #3: Environmental and institutional sustainability***

The **SIP's third Goal addresses** a major concern of local stakeholders: environmental sustainability. The inclusion of this Goal highlights the responsibility of especially local government staff, to directly address issues of sustainability in their daily work and the importance of a healthy environment for fisheries production.

SIP consultations emphasized how many provincial government staff are alarmed by the rapid expansion of large-scale commercial agriculture (particularly in the North), and the increasing use of pesticides by both large and small-scale farmers. They are witnessing a rapid decline in natural fisheries and are concerned about chemical contamination of soils, water and foods.

**BUILDING CAPACITY TO SUPPORT CHANGE**

Developing a clearer vision of DLF's longer-term role and the Department's relationship with local-level representatives (at provincial, district and community levels), was an important part of provincial consultations. The role and mandate of the Department has changed significantly over recent years and many local-level stakeholders, were unsure of their responsibilities within the wider national context for this sector.

Local DLF staff were keen to clarify responsibilities for issues such aquaculture extension (vis-à-vis the Department of Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives) and water quality monitoring (vis-à-vis the Department of Environmental Protection). They saw provincial consultations as an important opportunity to elaborate a longer-term vision of their role and the role of DLF, in the development of this sector.

In this context of institutional strengthening, the creation of the SIP was a timely intervention. There was a clear requirement for national guidance on local responsibilities towards the development of this sector and discussions made an important contribution to local-level planning for the fisheries sector.

Local government staff understand the importance of this environmental degradation and how the poorer sections of

Many local staff seemed overwhelmed by the extent of the problem

***Climate Change is addressed as a cross-cutting theme***

***Sustainably enhancing the natural environment***

the community are particularly affected. However, many local staff seemed overwhelmed by the extent of the problem and provincial consultations were an important opportunity for local government staff to “step-back”, and consider more strategically, what they could do address the problem. Some of the conclusions from these discussions have been developed into SIP recommendations (see Section 4: Work Areas and Section 5: Supporting Projects).

The description of the third SIP Goal includes a reminder that addressing Climate Change, is a core part of MAF’s responsibilities and an important part of its sustainability agenda. Although specifically referenced under Goal 3, recommendations to address Climate Change have been integrated into all the main sections of the SIP. A Climate Change specialist (from the National University of Lao PDR), assisted DLF staff with provincial consultations and drafting the SIP document. Rather than incorporating Climate Change issues into the SIP as a separate chapter, DLF decided to integrate these issues into the document as a *cross-cutting theme*.

Embedded in the explanation of Goal 3, is the special relevance sustainable environmental management has, to the fisheries sector. Work to conserve natural aquatic habitats such as fish breeding areas, has become an increasingly important aspect of DLF’s work over the last decade and efforts are needed to continue the expansion of this work.

This section also emphasizes that conservation should not be the only focus for work related to sustainable environmental management. Effort should also be directed towards sustainably “enhancing” the natural environment, by introducing farmers to simple, low-cost technologies which augment natural fisheries and promote small-scale aquaculture.

The Lum Pa (Fish Pits) of Attapeu is a traditional rice-fish farming system which aims to enhance natural production



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## Chapter 4 – Main Areas of Work

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*Chapter 4 is the central chapter of the document and aims to provide provincial stakeholders with ideas and suggestions on how to contribute towards the three SIP Goals, described in the previous Chapter.*

***Advice and  
suggestions  
presented as 8  
Workplans***

This Chapter was drafted to accelerate development in the Fisheries sector and aims to provide local stakeholders with practical advice in the main areas of their development work.

The advice and suggestions are accompanied by a narrative intended to assist local staff in promoting and justifying its implementation. They are not “directives”, and were developed from a series of detailed consultations with provincial government stakeholders.

The information is organized under eight Workplans (or *Work Areas*), which in discussions with provincial stakeholders, have been developed to more clearly define the “scope of work” for government staff working in this sector.

Advice provided in this Section is mainly intended for government staff working in local-level government agencies such as Provincial Livestock and Fisheries Sections, Technical Service Centers and District Units. It aims to assist them to expand the advice into projects and activities which will deliver measurable results by 2020 and further contribute towards development initiatives until 2025.

### **DEVELOPING SPACE FOR CHANGE**

Rather than presenting recommendations for work and action as a “list”, the SIP authors worked to include them in a narrative which supports and assists local government staff to craft justification to implement these suggestions. The SIP authors (lead by a DLF Policy Advisor), were mindful that in the context of local government administrations, staff often need to identify and develop policy space within their local institutions for change. Dialogue during provincial consultations highlighted this requirement and confirmed that although many local staff are keen to implement ideas and suggestions described in the SIP, some lack the confidence and/or ability to develop sound justifications and coherent plans for their implementation. The document recognizes that the challenges to more effective development are often political and the language and structure of the narrative in Section 4 (and other parts of the SIP), has been crafted to address this.

A key component of the advice provided in this Section, is the development of a “Partnership Approach” for future

Developing a Partnership  
Approach

management and development. Exploring ways to create more effective linkages between government agencies and other stakeholder groups (e.g. private sector and NGO's), was a central topic in provincial consultations and the SIP emphasizes how closer collaboration is a requirement for development of this sector.

An emphasis on *quality*

This Section also emphasizes the need to improve both quality *and* quantity in the 8 Work Areas of the SIP. The document implies more attention needs to be placed on Work *quality* (e.g. of capacity building, Farmer Group formation, demonstration site establishment), including the refinement of government agency responses so they are more appropriate to specific local contexts.

#### UNDERSTANDING STRATEGY

Most provincial government staff who participated in the SIP consultation process were not familiar with the rhetoric of *strategy*. Discussions sometimes stalled due to confusion over terms such as goal, objective, target, or vision (the Lao language equivalents). In general, provincial staff were more comfortable with a dialogue which focused on actions, and the DLF Facilitation Team initially focused provincial discussions on projects and plans, rather than the more abstract issues of policy and strategy.

While the provincial consultations were an opportunity to significantly develop understanding of national government strategy and policy, many local stakeholders intuitively understand the SIP mainly in terms of the actions it recommends. In this context, the SIP's eight Workplans summarize this action, and in simple terms describe the scope of the government's strategy for this sector.

**Work Area #1 –  
Zoning for fishery  
development**

Identifying geographic focal areas for developing fisheries management and aquaculture is one of the highest priorities for work in this sector. Provincial consultations revealed most local government staff already had plans to establish focal areas (part of a wider government land-zoning initiative), and consultations discussions emphasized its importance.

To assist provincial staff in identifying suitable focal areas for this sector, the SIP offers the following advice:

- Land use patterns in Lao PDR are changing rapidly and there is a reduction in land available for food production and maintaining the natural environment. Water resources and wetlands are the “basis” for the development of this sector and the importance of these areas requires greater recognition. To develop a more effective Partnership Approach towards development, the various agencies and other stakeholders require *focus* to develop an integrated and sustainable approach. This also applies to foreign investment from neighboring

countries and for Lao PDR to make the best use of its resources.

- It is important to bear in mind this sector has access to considerable resources – over 1.2 million hectares of rivers, streams, ponds, rice fields, reservoirs, lakes etc. While these resources are not just for fisheries and aquaculture, it is therefore important DLF staff (at all levels), work to develop focal areas for development and this needs to be undertaken in collaboration with other agencies (e.g. Environment). In addition, focal areas for this sector should not just be confined to water, but the broader land/water interface.

Small fish ponds being constructed to supplement rice-fish production in Northern Lao PDR.



- The identification of focal areas must have a sound basis and can be justified to a range of different stakeholders. MAF has developed a national agro-ecological classification system which can be used as a starting point. The features of 4 classifications in the table below, has been developed to help identify suitable focal areas for fisheries sector development.

**Key features of 4 national agro-ecology classifications to assist identification of focal areas for fisheries sector development**

<b>Type 1</b>	<p><b>Small flat valleys in upland, mountainous areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many different types of aquaculture often integrated with livestock rearing</li> <li>• Potential for seed production and already some experience farmers. New breeding techniques and demonstration sites required.</li> <li>• Production is mainly for family consumption and local markets.</li> <li>• Includes areas which are important sources of natural aquatic animals and plants. These require special attention as they are often important to poorer communities and their food and nutrition security</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Type 2</b>	<p><b>The 7-large lowland plain areas near the Mekong river</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are focal areas for irrigation development and offer the potential to develop many types of aquaculture.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They offer potential for rapid development of aquaculture and rapid diffusion of technology (e.g. recent boom in tilapia cage culture)</li> <li>• These areas are conducive to intensification and are near markets</li> <li>• Includes the lowland plains of Champasak and Vientiane</li> <li>• There are existing plans to promote foreign investment in these areas and opportunities exist to develop foreign export markets</li> <li>• Champasak can produce indigenous fish species with high export potential. Developing this market as a <i>specialty</i> of Lao PDR and has already been included in national strategic objectives.</li> </ul>
<b>Type 3</b>	<p><b>Medium-sized plain areas of valleys in Northern Lao PDR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aquatic animals and plants cultured and caught mainly for family consumption and sale in local markets</li> <li>• Includes rice-fish culture, fish seed production and nursing.</li> <li>• Often see integrated livestock-fish culture in these areas</li> <li>• Potential to develop partnerships with the private sector (both national and foreign), for local and international (regional) markets.</li> <li>• Special attention required to the impact of agricultural pesticides. This is important for human food and training is required in chemical safety. Need to ensure aquatic products are not contaminated.</li> </ul>
<b>Type 4</b>	<p><b>Si Phan Don</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large areas over 3,900 Km Sq. with deep pools, flooded forest, rice fields, streams and lakes</li> <li>• Important for aquatic resources on national and regional levels</li> <li>• An area for research and conservation</li> <li>• A source of aquatic products for important markets locally, in Vientiane and for export</li> <li>• The area has a cultural value and there is a need for conservation. It is important to ensure there is the capacity and regulations to conserve the important ecology</li> <li>• Tourism is important and it needs to be conserved for the next generation</li> <li>• Need for further study and survey.</li> </ul>

**Work Area #2 –  
Increasing the  
efficiency of fish and  
aquatic animal  
production**

Producing quality fish and safe food

Under the description of the second main Area for Work for this sector, the SIP drafting team took the opportunity to place an emphasis on improving the *quality* of production. Although government targets focus on producing a sufficient *quantity* of food, the DLF Facilitation Team made efforts to also address issues of quality during provincial consultations.

Discussions on quality included how to improve the quality seed fish from government and private sector fish breeding enterprises and the *safe* production of fish and other aquatic animals in areas contaminated from agricultural pesticide use (e.g. peri-urban areas of Northern Lao PDR). Reducing reliance of this sector on imported fish seed and fish feed, was also discussed.

This dialogue helped broaden provincial government staffs' understanding and interpretation of government policy in this area and the narrative under Work Area #2, aims to "remind"

provincial stakeholders of these discussions, and reinforce conclusions reached regarding future development.

Developing understanding about the process of development and change

Relevant to this dialogue and incorporated into other sections of the SIP, are conclusions from consultation discussions related to promoting intensification of aquaculture and fisheries management systems. There was a range of different perceptions and the discussions were helpful in clarifying government policy, and developing understanding around processes of development and change.

Augment traditional management practices and promote low-cost interventions

It was concluded that while a greater effort is required to promote more intensive farming and management systems, this does not necessarily imply abandoning existing (traditional) extensive systems. Government policy directs local staff towards developing a gradual and sustainable process of change which means the introduction of new technologies which may initially “augment” traditional fisheries management systems (e.g. in rice fields).

It was also agreed important to ensure new technologies introduced into poor communities have low production costs (e.g. through the promotion of herbivorous fish species), and that promoting *appropriate* intensification of traditional extensive systems, is not only required for increased commercialization, but is essential for the development of food and nutrition security (see SIP Goals – Chapter 3).

#### SUMMARY OF SIP ADVICE ON DEVELOPING THE SUPPLY OF AQUATIC ANIMAL SEED

- By 2025, the demand for fish seed is expected to have increased by 66%, but it is estimated government fish hatcheries will only be able to meet 32% of this demand. Fish seed is a basic requirement of the sector and greater efforts are needed to promote seed production among the private sector and farmer groups.
- Provincial consultations concluded government extension services should place emphasis on promoting small-scale seed production among farmer groups and expand the range and quality of seed produced. More focus needs to be placed on seed production of indigenous fish species as well as seed production of other aquatic animals (e.g. shrimps and crabs).
- Efforts should be made to reduce reliance on fish seed from neighboring countries, especially mono-sex tilapia (e.g. for cage culture).
- An acceleration in the development of national fish (and aquatic animal) seed production, provides an opportunity for provincial staff to make seed production “more local”. There is an opportunity to *reach-out* into more remote areas where aquaculture is still limited. This would require working with groups of farmers and developing small demonstration breeding facilities. Networks of farmers and farmer groups who breed and nurse fish seed should be promoted.

A focus on promoting small-scale aquaculture

This Section also addresses reducing production costs, but firstly emphasizes that most aquaculture in Lao PDR is small-scale and highly dependent on the natural environment. Many of the small-scale enterprises concern enhancement or “augmentation” of the

wild fishery. This small-scale aquaculture is mostly in the “countryside” (not in urban or peri-urban areas), and more effort is required to promote development of small-scale aquaculture in remote rural areas.

*The DLF is investigating new models for the promotion of small-scale aquaculture*



The costs of aquatic animal production are low and the products have a high nutritional value.

The government is also working to develop larger-scale aquaculture enterprises (e.g. in collaboration with foreign investments from Hungary and China) and develop more self-reliance of aquatic products in urban areas (e.g. less imports of fish from Thailand). However, consultations highlighted the need to develop a balanced approach at provincial level. Most Lao people still live in rural areas and improving nutrition and developing food security is a government priority which small-scale aquaculture is well placed to address. With appropriate technology, the costs of aquatic animal production are low and the products have a high nutritional value.

Provincial consultations frequently returned to this issue of developing an appropriate balance. Government staff are acutely aware of their limited resources and of course reaching out to remote areas (with poor infrastructure), is costly. However, it was noted that government agencies at both central and provincial levels are placing increasing importance on accelerating improvements in food and nutrition security.

Possible strategies to promote small-scale rural aquaculture and the enhancement of wild fisheries were discussed during provincial consultations. The SIP highlights some of the conclusions from these discussions in terms of “lessons learned”:

Lessons learned in the promotion of small scale aquaculture and the enhancement of wild fisheries

- For rural areas, it is better to focus on promoting the culture of fish and aquatic animals which feed low in the food chain (e.g. silver barb, tilapia, common carp). Fish should be promoted which can utilize locally produced feeds (e.g. rice bran, maize meal etc.).
- Promoting more farmers to fertilize their ponds to produce “Green Water” can significantly reduce production costs and should be more widely used.

- More attention should be given to studying indigenous aquaculture and fisheries management practices and devising intensification strategies based on these indigenous techniques (e.g. common carp culture techniques in Xieng Khouang).
- Promoting community fisheries management (e.g. of village ponds, lakes or reservoirs) can be used to generate shared community income which can be used to develop roads, schools and other social development projects.
- There is a need to raise awareness about the dangers of agricultural pesticide use. These can be extremely toxic to aquatic animals and pose a risk to human food safety (e.g. pesticide residues accumulating in paddy crabs).

**Work Area #3 –  
Sustainable  
management of  
fisheries and  
aquaculture,  
including adaptation  
to Climate Change**

Discussions helped many provincial government staff better understand their role in working to address environmental challenges

Concerns about increasingly rapid degradation of the natural environment were frequently raised during provincial consultations. Participants provided many examples of this degradation and in general, seemed overwhelmed by the scale of the problem. For some participants, “Climate Change” was yet another environment-related problem they felt powerless to address.

The DLF Facilitation Team worked to move this dialogue towards a more strategic analysis of the situation and highlighted the linkages to and impacts on, possible future development strategies already discussed (e.g. accelerating the development of small-scale rural aquaculture, promoting indigenous fish breeding for export markets).

These discussions helped many provincial government staff better understand their role in working to address these environmental challenges and the need to more actively engage with other sectors.

This third Work Area was included in the SIP to emphasize this responsibility of provincial government staff and further develop understanding around issues of sustainability (especially environmental). It discusses some of the management and development approaches proposed in other sections of the document in the context of *sustainability*, and encourages local stakeholders so see issues such as adaption to Climate Change, as a challenge which can be addressed.

The importance of the natural fishery is highlighted (including rice fields)

The management of the natural fishery is discussed with an emphasis on the considerable size and importance of this natural resources to Lao PDR. To assist provincial staff in developing plans to improve the management and development of these vast resources, the document provides a classification which notably, includes rice fields (frequently an overlooked part of the natural fishery). Summary information and recommendations relating to

improving natural fisheries management is presented on five basic types:

- The Mekong and its tributaries
- Reservoirs and hydroelectric dams
- Large and medium-sized irrigation reservoirs
- Wetland areas including natural lakes and floodplains
- Rice fields

*The aquatic animals and plants collected from these rice fields is more valuable than the rice*



Discussing the management of cultured fish and other aquatic animals, this section of the document underlines how extensive culture systems need to be gradually intensified. Identifying ways to sustainably raise the production of these systems is a priority and the document makes the following suggestions for priority actions:

**Suggestions for priority actions**

- Increasing seed production, but with an emphasis on quality
- Improving the formulation of fish feeds, but with an emphasis on supplementary feeds
- Focus on developing small-scale aquaculture in rural areas and encourage farmers near the Mekong and its tributaries to explore opportunities to culture indigenous fish species for export.
- Develop methods and measures to control aquatic animal diseases (mainly to address anticipated problems in the future).
- Improve quality and formulation of marketable aquatic products
- Source funding to improve basic infrastructure, marketing systems and cold storage for fisheries products
- Promote private sector investment in the sector (both national and foreign)

*This section highlights how sustaining and augmenting the natural fishery is crucial to food and nutrition security (see SIP Goal #1)*



#### Additional strategic guidance

Promote the development of low-cost (organic) aquaculture and practices which do not damage the environment

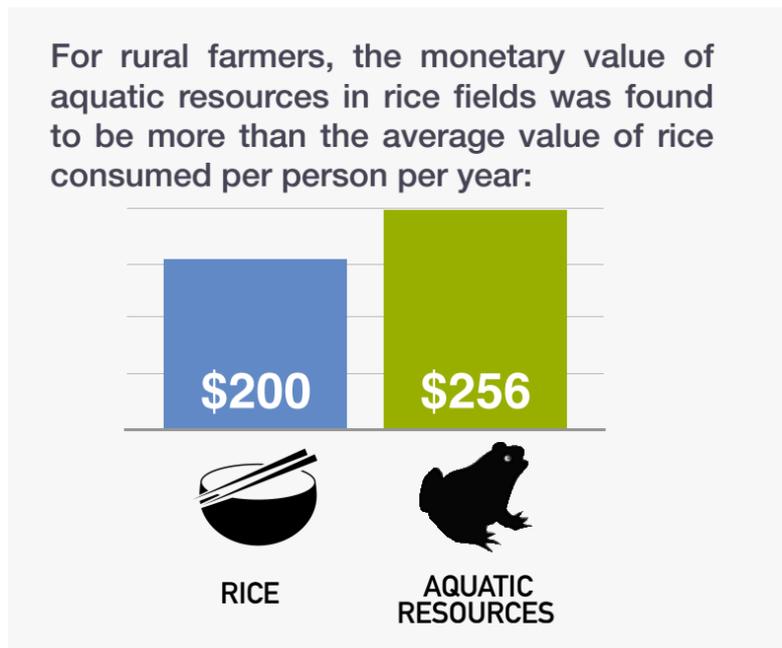
In addition to these specific recommendations, additional *strategic* guidance on addressing sustainability in this sector, is also provided. Six general guidelines have been developed, based on discussions during provincial consultations:

- Improve the management and production of *existing* water bodies and pay special attention to conserving aquatic biodiversity. Promote practices that do not damage the natural environment.
- Promote a variety of fish culture practices in rural areas which incorporate new technologies and the formulation of feeds using local ingredients. Promote using Green Water (pond fertilization to stimulate growth of algae), and aim to reduce production costs as a strategy to reduce poverty and improve food security.
- In areas near to the Mekong, promote the production of indigenous fish species for urban markets and export.
- Place emphasis on new technologies which sustainably exploit the potential of the country's natural environment

and wild resources. Also emphasize the development of a local economy and reducing costs of aquaculture investment.

- Promote gender awareness and the roles of both men and women in the sector’s development. Women have important roles which need to be promoted.
- Pay special attention to building sustainable human and institutional capacity at all levels, including the community level. Provincial capacity building plans need to be developed which pay special attention to the role of women (provincial consultations highlighted gender inequalities within government institutions).

*From research data collected by farmers as part of a collaborative project with FAO (2015)*



**Work Area #4 – Fisheries and aquaculture research requirements**

Provincial consultations underlined the need to accelerate research efforts, particularly applied, field-based research, that provides local-level government staff with the technical recommendations required to intensify aquaculture and fisheries management.

Most stakeholders were eager to contribute towards a debate on research requirements and discussions readily produced comprehensive lists of suggested topics. The next step of prioritizing these topics and defining clear linkages to priority activities proposed under other Work Areas, was however a challenge for the Team. The process required a series of follow-up consultations with MAF research staff (e.g. staff at the Lao Aquatic Resources Research Center - LARReC) and a review of current and possible future research capacity within the sector.

**Significant improvement in national research agenda for the fisheries sector**

Although challenging, this dialogue has significantly improved the national research agenda for this sector. It has become more relevant to local-level priorities and communication and

understanding of this agenda, has improved among both provincial and central-level staff.

Research better understood as a range of investigatory activities, including farmer-managed trials

The dialogue has also helped broaden understanding of research in this sector to become more inclusive of activities such as “farmer research” and “promotion trials”. Research is now generally better understood as a range of *investigatory* activities, not only undertaken by central-level research staff, but also legitimately includes activities such as extension trials and participatory community appraisals, undertaken by provincial and district-level staff. All these activities contribute towards the national research agenda, but in different ways.

The SIP recommends more field research should be conducted in partnership with farmers



This section of the SIP summarizes conclusions reached on research priorities agreed during these discussions. As in other sections of the document, these are presented within a narrative which aims to support provincial staff to propose and justify research activities related to these priorities.

Focus on aquaculture research to promote a gradual intensification of extensive, small-scale aquaculture systems

Research priorities for aquaculture are presented first and provide a clear focus on addressing technical issues relating to promoting a gradual intensification of extensive small-scale aquaculture systems, practiced by most farmers in rural areas. Recommendations focus on supporting communities to move beyond a reliance on the natural environment and the harvesting of wild fish and aquatic animals. They include research into fish breeding, fish nursing and aquaculture systems which are integrated into other farming systems (e.g. rice and small-livestock).

Developing alternative aquaculture strategies for these communities to adapt to the effects of Climate Change are also highlighted, as well as reducing risks to communities challenged by insufficient food and nutrition security. Examples provided

Research should not just be about fish

include developing adaptation strategies to shorter culture periods (e.g. during the dry season) and investigating the culture techniques of alternative aquatic animals (e.g. shrimps and crabs).

This sector's research agenda also includes issues of developing effective communication

This section's narrative also draws attention to research requirements relating to improved management of resources and communities. It underlines this sector's research agenda includes social research and the development of extension methodologies and communication materials (e.g. extension leaflets), is also part of this Work Area.

A poster recently produced by farmers and DLF provincial/district staff emphasizing the importance of conserving aquatic animals and plants for good nutrition



Research to improve fisheries management

After discussing research priorities for aquaculture, the section them addresses research priorities relating to developing improved fisheries management methods and basic information about wild and managed fisheries in Lao PDR.

Priority areas include methods to more effectively demarcate conservation zones and natural breeding areas. Methods of stocking fisheries and social measures to protect and conserve natural resources and aquatic biodiversity are also mentioned.

The narrative draws attention to the importance of wetlands and rice fields to national food production. Provincial consultations emphasized how these are often overlooked in fisheries projects which tend to focus more on reservoirs, lakes, rivers and streams.

More research needed into the biology and ecology of indigenous fish species

The need for more research into the biology and ecology of indigenous fish species is included and a list of species of special economic importance is provided to guide future research efforts. Relatively little is known about the biology and ecology of many of these species, but many have a high market value and considerable export potential. The section calls for a comprehensive research effort on these species (including methods of processing and value chain development), but emphasizes the research process should include local-level

stakeholders and developing effective communication with local communities.

**Mitigating the impact of hydropower dams, mining and irrigation structures**

Research into measures to mitigate the impact of large development projects (e.g. hydropower dams, mining and irrigation structures), is also identified as a priority as well as addressing impacts of Climate Change. Provincial consultations extensively discussed both issues and in relation to Climate Change, many provincial government officers were concerned about a perceived increased occurrence of severe flooding and lengthened dry periods during the rainy season.

**Few provincial staff have any training in fisheries science or fisheries management**



**Not knowing “where to start”**

These concerns and a desire to mitigate the effects of large development projects, reflect a more general wish among local stakeholders for tools and methods which they could apply, in some areas, to rehabilitate natural ecological systems and the natural productivity of fish and other aquatic animal habitats. At the provincial level, understanding of fisheries ecology and fisheries management is extremely limited and many government officers feel powerless to address the decline they are witnessing in the natural fishery. Technical capacity in fisheries management is weak and many local-level government staff, “do not know where to start”.

**The need to build technical capacity in fisheries science**

The DLF Facilitation Team included a national fisheries expert (the *only* person in MAF with a PhD in Fisheries Science!), and for effective discussions during provincial consultations, it was necessary for him to provide an overview of basic fisheries management principles. For many provincial government staff, this was their first exposure to fisheries *science*, and there was a keen interest in this subject. It stimulated a useful debate on possible future fisheries development strategies and

demonstrated there is an opportunity for more engagement of provincial government staff in improving fisheries management.

***Work Area #5 –  
Aquaculture and  
fisheries promotion  
and extension  
services***

The narrative in this section of the SIP does not provide a specific work focus for extension and promotion services, as this is provided under other Work Areas of Chapter 4. Instead, this section focuses on the importance of these services and how it is a *shared* responsibility of stakeholders, including those in the private sector.

The role of the DLF and other MAF line agencies have changed significantly in recent years, as central-level agencies have worked to develop their mandates and respond to new development paradigms. These changes have been relatively rapid and many government staff at provincial and district levels, are now uncertain about institutional responsibilities and strategic focus. While this whole document aims to address this uncertainty, an area recognized of being of particular importance, is responsibility for extension services.

***Responsibility for extension activities is not clear***



Provincial consultations revealed considerable confusion over this responsibility and the DLF Facilitation Team found it necessary to explore the issue with participants in detail. Key points of these discussions have been incorporated into this section’s narrative and include a table which summarizes responsibilities for extension and promotion at different institutional levels.

**Recent changes in institutional mandate at central, are not fully understood by local-level staff**

To some extent, confusion over this issue stemmed from changes in mandate and policy made at central level which have not yet been fully understood or implemented at local levels. This includes policies related to decentralization (“Sam Sang”), and the implications of provincial staff having a greater role in determining the strategic direction of local development.

However, the confusion was also related to an increased emphasis by national government on agency and stakeholder

collaboration to provide extension services. Central-level government agencies have been designing a more collaborative approach to the provision extension service for several years. While the rationale for this collaboration is understood by most provincial government staff, the historical tradition of government line agencies, means there are few mechanisms available for staff to realize this collaboration in practice.

*District-level staff have the potential to make a greater contribution to extension activities if their role is clearer*



Provincial consultations helped staff to identify ways to improve inter-agency collaboration

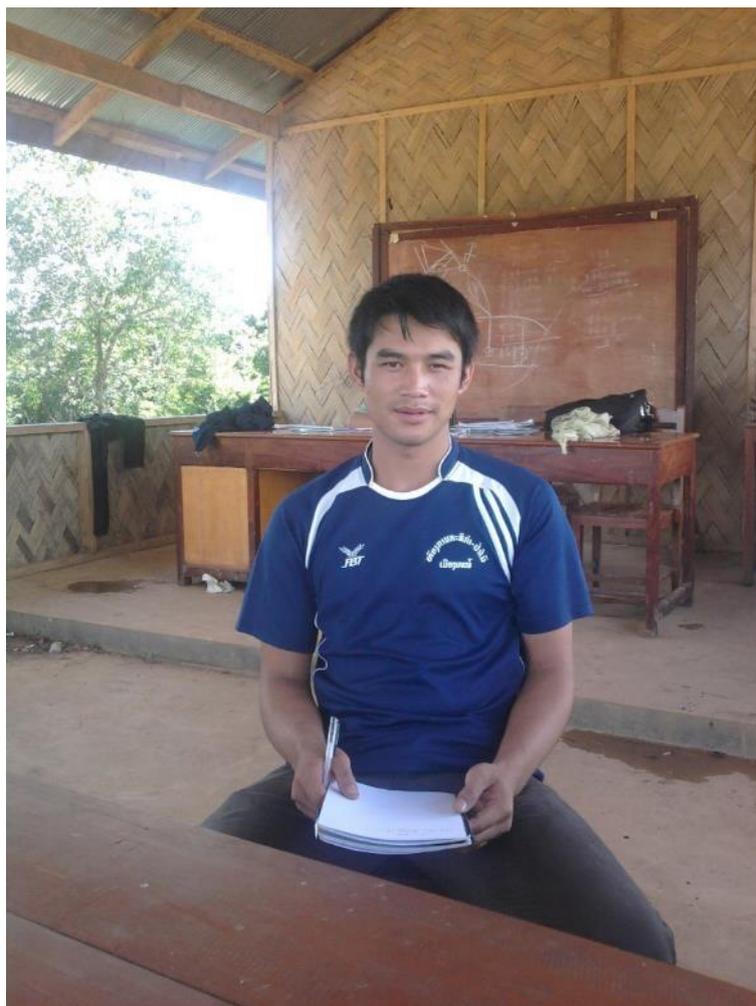
SIP consultations included brainstorming sessions to identify new ways to promote greater inter-agency collaboration at the provincial level. The need to accelerate efforts to develop collaborative workplans and projects, is emphasized in this section and other parts of the document.

This section suggests some practical ways in which mechanisms for closer collaboration could be developed. It suggests all relevant local government agencies aim to work collaboratively on establishing Farmer Groups (a component of MAF's agricultural extension system), as well as the establishment of demonstration sites (e.g. for small-scale aquaculture and home vegetable production to improved nutrition).

Better utilizing what's available – TSC's have potential to focus some multi-sector extension activities.

The potential for community-level Technical Service Centers (TSC's) to be more effectively utilized in extension and promotion activities is also highlighted in the context of promoting greater collaboration. There are over 200 of these Center's nation-wide and they represent a potential institutional nexus for developing stakeholder collaboration around extension services. More effective use of TSC's is also suggested under Work Area 6 (Improving and building basic infrastructure).

*There is potential to better utilize existing community-level Technical Service Centers and the government staff based there*



### ***Work Area #6 – Improving basic infrastructure***

**Many provincial staff are not aware of the national facilities that exist within the fisheries sector**

This section of the SIP provides a strategic overview of infrastructure facilities of this sector (e.g. demonstration centers, fish seed hatcheries, research stations etc.) and a brief history of their development. This information was included as consultations revealed many provincial staff are not aware of the facilities which exist nation-wide. While they are familiar with local facilities, provincial staff in Northern Lao PDR for example, are generally not aware of facilities in the South.

Provincial discussions identified considerable potential for greater collaboration between facilities such as fish breeding stations, and for provinces to develop closer partnerships to jointly develop facilities such as demonstration centers for promoting small-scale aquaculture (e.g. at community-level Technical Service Centers).

The DLF Facilitation Team encouraged provincial staff to see these facilities as *shared* resources and consultation discussions explored how facilities and the expertise they contain, could be more widely used and disseminated.

**There is also potential to share expertise between provinces (e.g. on community engagement)**



**New mechanisms are required to promote collaboration between provinces**

Opportunities for closer collaboration between provincial fish hatcheries were discussed and it was agreed that enhanced collaboration would not only facilitate the exchange of seed fish, but also expertise in fish breeding (e.g. exchange of staff with expertise on breeding fish). While to some extent such collaboration already exists, the consultations concluded additional institutional mechanisms are required to promote it and facilitate further identification of similar opportunities (e.g. expertise relating to developing demonstration facilities or community engagement)

**Making better use of existing facilities**

This section of the SIP aims to contribute towards more effectively utilizing these existing facilities and was drafted to promote a more cohesive sense of ownership of this infrastructure among stakeholders. The narrative emphasizes a focus on improving the use for these existing facilities and recognizes that funding to support the development of new facilities is limited.

Making better use of national research facilities is also addressed under this Work Area and again highlights how general perceptions of *research*, need to be broadened to include activities such as farmer-managed trials and the development of extension methodologies (see Work Area #4 – Fisheries and aquaculture research requirements). When opportunities to invest in new research facilities are available, the section encourages provincial staff to also consider *applied* research with local communities and how an investment in developing on-farm trials and demonstration facilities, also contributes towards building local human resources capacity.

**Decreasing reliance on neighboring countries**

Decreasing this sector's reliance on facilities in neighboring countries is also addressed. Both central-level and provincial government staff are keen to reduce their dependency on these

countries for resources such as seed fish, fish feed and laboratory facilities. Consultations concluded there should be renewed efforts to attract investment from government, private sector and international development partners to address this weakness.

Ensuring a supply of “clean food” is a major concern

The need to develop better facilities at border checkpoints to control disease is a priority as well as developing better national laboratory facilities to identify diseases and address food safety, particularly chemical contamination.



Consultation dialogue frequently returned to discussions on how Lao PDR could best exploit its potential to produce “clean food”, but provincial staff were keenly aware that Lao PDR has very few facilities to test the quality of aquatic products and develop the standards (and labelling) for export markets.

#### ALERT FROM THE PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Reports on the increasing use of pesticides in Lao PDR have raised the alarm about the use of highly hazardous pesticides by farmers wearing little or no protection. Some of these pesticides, i.e., paraquat and methomyl, have been banned in the country. Lao does not produce active ingredients or pesticide formulations. Nearly all pesticides sold and used in Lao originate from Thailand and China, and to some extent from Vietnam. Lao, as with most non-industrialized countries, lacks the technology to dispose of pesticides safely. Thus, enforcing pesticide regulations, for example by confiscating illegal pesticides, becomes a challenge in the absence of adequate technology to dispose of hazardous products.

Encouraging provincial staff to develop a more holistic and strategic approach to the development of facilities in this sector, was an important task for the DLF Facilitation Team. They emphasized how the “facilities” of this sector should be more broadly considered as resources *shared* by all stakeholders and included not only government stations, but also the facilities of communities and the private sector.

Facilities to produce seed fish can be developed in cooperation with the private sector

This emphasis helped steer provincial discussions towards a more strategic dialogue on future utilization and development, and a description of possible opportunities to improve fish seed supply, has been included in this Section. It describes how a range of institutions, centers and private-sector facilities are contributing towards improving this supply and how better utilization of existing seed production facilities managed by all stakeholders, should now be a priority.

**New facilities under construction**

Towards the end of this Section, the document highlights the importance of some on-going infrastructure development projects and priorities for improving government-managed facilities over the next 2-3 years. These include a project supported by JICA (Japanese government), to strengthen fish seed production, fish disease identification and water quality monitoring as well as projects to construct new fish seed production facilities in Luang Prabang and Attapeu. Priority is also given to the development of facilities to test the safety of fisheries products including facilities for disease, food and water inspection. This Section again underlines the importance of developing facilities to implement international agreements on the application of food safety and animal and plant health measures (sanitary and phytosanitary measures - SPS).

**Work Area #7 –  
Strengthening  
government staff**

While the need for capacity building in Lao PDR is well known, provincial consultations drew attention to its importance. Few provincial government officers working in this sector are graduates in fisheries or aquaculture related subjects and opportunities to develop professional competence are limited.

Staff are keen to explore new approaches to professional development

Capacity development is required at all levels, but consultation discussions revealed how many government staff are keen to explore new approaches to professional development. More staff with relevant academic qualifications are required (e.g. at MSc and PhD levels), but also capacity building initiatives which are more practical and directly relate to their work responsibilities.

**FRAMEWORK DLF TRAINING AND EDUCATION – CONTRIBUTION TO SIP DEVELOPMENT**

Type	University/College education	University/College training	Training workshops	Framer/community training
Curriculum	Existing courses at national and international level (existing national and international standards)	Alternative work-based courses (existing national standards)	Courses developed as required (no current standards)	Courses developed as required (no current standards)
Certification	National or international Diploma/BSc/MSc/PhD	National Diploma/BSc	No formal certification system	No formal certification system
Orientation	Academic orientation	Practical, work-based	Practical, work-based	Practical, work-based
Targets	Targets "new generation" of DLF staff	Targets existing (older) DLF staff	Targets existing DLF staff	Targets village-level volunteers
Commitment	Full time courses	Part-time courses	Part-time courses	Part-time courses
Main aim	Develop next generation of technical specialists and planners	Develop better rural development specialists (support Technical Specialist and Planners)	Improve capacity in all professional areas of work	Support DLF data collection; Establish examples of Good Practice
Requirement (2015-2020)				

Opportunities for education and training in this sector have declined in recent years

Provincial staff also expressed concern about building capacity of the “next generation”, and how it is important they are able to effectively engage with their counterparts in the regional and international community. There is a general perception that opportunities for education and training in this sector have declined in recent years and capacity building activities have become more *ad hoc*.

Many provincial staff saw the development of the SIP as an important step in reversing this decline and discussions explored ways capacity development processes could be improved and provinces develop a more pro-active approach to capacity development at all levels (including the community level). The following framework for DLF training and education was developed during SIP drafting to further develop dialogue around approaches to staff capacity building.

The SIP suggests ways in which training and education activities can be made more practical and systematic

This Section of the SIP presents the conclusions of these discussions in a narrative which provides provincial staff with practical recommendations. It also aims to assist staff in justifying the importance of capacity building in development projects and suggests ways in which training and education activities can be designed to be more practical and systematic.

A summary description of the Sector’s overall institutional structure is included, together with a brief explanation of roles and responsibilities of the main offices. (e.g. the role of the DLF central Fisheries Division). This information is available in other documents, but provincial consultations revealed how these documents are sometimes not accessible to, or understood by, some provincial staff.

Accelerating local capacity development is key to the success of the decentralization policy

Information relating to the institutional structure was also included to emphasize how the current structure (and new policy), aims to promote greater decentralization of development authority. An important message of the SIP is that greater responsibility has been assigned to provincial staff for local interpretation of national policy (the “Sam Sang” policy). Accelerating local capacity development is therefore key to the success of this decentralization, and provincial staff must not only be familiar with this new institutional landscape, but also need to more aggressively integrate capacity development into all aspects of their work.

Developing improved institutional mechanism is also part of capacity development

There is also a reminder in this Section that developing institutional structures and processes, were discussed as part of this Work Area and in responding to the new challenges of decentralization, provincial staff have an opportunity to address institutional weaknesses themselves. This includes opportunities to promote the role of women as well as more effectively

implementing principles of community participation and local ownership.

***On-the-job training is the most effective way to build capacity***



**Opportunities to create local-level “in-house” training events**

A discussion of these new opportunities during provincial consultations, encouraged provincial staff to consider developing their own local capacity building strategies. Although it was recognized funds are limited, the discussions identified some actions which could be incorporated into future *Provincial* Human Resources Development (HRD) plans. Possibilities for developing “in-house” training events were discussed including the temporary exchange of staff between provinces to act as mentors or trainers.

**More locally-directed capacity building required**

Provincial consultations concluded there was considerable potential for developing more *locally-directed* capacity building activities and to support this initiative, Work Area #7 focuses on providing practical advice for provinces to develop their own plans for staff and institutional strengthening.

**5 Basic Principles for the design of local capacity building initiatives**

The advice offered in this Section includes 5 Basic Principles:

- Undertaken “brainstorming” to develop ideas and implement strategies (involve other stakeholders and facilitate people to express their ideas)
- Promote success and reward achievements. Develop activities which have been done well.
- Promote participation, especially in decision-making and planning. Promote the role of local wisdom and knowledge.
- Use the resources you have and make the best use of these in an appropriate way. Make linkages with other local-level initiatives.
- Build networks of people and develop communication materials to spread technical knowledge (e.g. technical manuals, leaflets, posters). Advertise and promote successful results through published documents, websites and social media to increase participation.

**7 recommendations to integrate capacity building into all aspects of work**

Related to these Basic Principles, are 7 specific recommendations which aim to assist provincial staff to integrate capacity building to all aspects of their work and develop provincial plans for HRD and institutional strengthening:

- Promote, encourage and facilitate staff to use their existing skills and experience in their workplace
- Implementation must be flexible and there should not be too much emphasis on following standard methods. Working processes have to be adapted to be appropriate to the local context.
- Strengthen existing local institutions and work with development partners in accordance with national government decentralization policies (“Sam Sang” policy).
- To establish and strengthen farmer groups, use the experiences gained and lessons learned by other agencies (e.g. Department of Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives).
- Promote farmer learning and develop demonstration sites (to increase fish production and improve fisheries management), which are a shared learning resource for farming families, communities and extension workers. Develop example farming families who can spread knowledge and experience to the wider community.
- Promote production initiatives which build partnerships between different stakeholders (e.g. private sector operators) and are closely linked with markets.
- Ensure the success of local-level activities and workplans are regularly monitored and evaluated.

**Capacity building initiatives should also include communities**

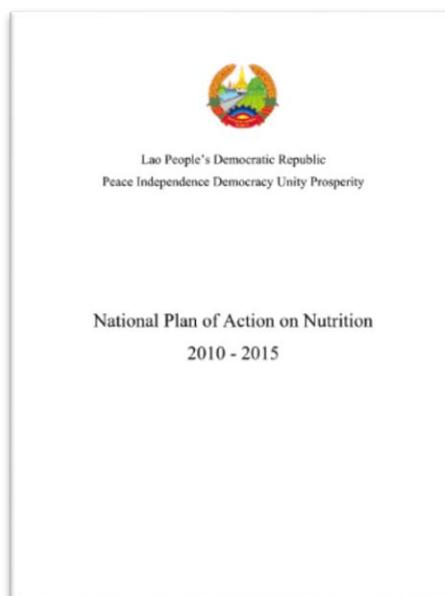
Although the title of this Work Area refers to “government staff”, the narrative emphasizes the importance of developing capacity building initiatives which incorporate farming families and communities. The critical role of village-level volunteers, village representatives, production groups and “example farmers”, was frequently referred to during provincial consultations. Developing improved approaches to local-level capacity building must also include community-level “staff”, and address capacity in areas such as processing and marketing

**Strengthening capacity for liaison with other stakeholder groups is a priority**

Strengthening capacity for liaison and developing collaborative workplans between different agencies and stakeholder groups is a priority. While provincial consultations included representatives from other sectors (e.g. environment, energy), there are currently few examples of collaboration between sectors and stakeholder groups which address fisheries and aquaculture.

The consultations provided an important opportunity to address this weakness and for many provincial participants, this was their first opportunity to explore the strategic development of aquaculture and fisheries in a multi-sectorial context.

***The National Nutrition Strategy and Plan of action will require aquaculture and fisheries interventions for its success***

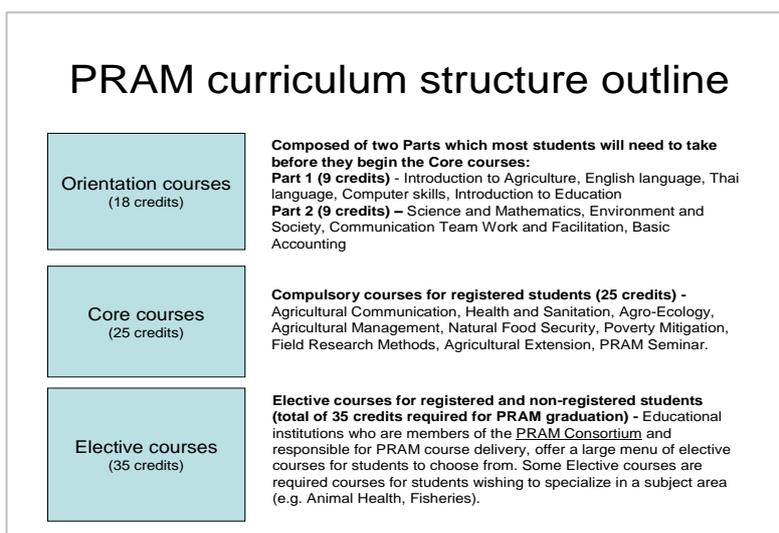


This section of the SIP aims to remind provincial staff of the importance of developing capacity in this area and provides some examples (also discussed during the consultations), of national policies and strategies which depend on effective cross-sector collaboration.

**The PRAM is a professional education program developed in collaboration with Savannakhet University**

These examples include the National Nutrition Strategy which requires close collaboration between three sectors (Agriculture, Health and Education), as well as professional education programs developed to strengthen provincial-level DLF staff capacity (Poverty Reduction and Agricultural Management professional bachelor degree program (PRAM), jointly developed by Savannakhet University and MAF).

***The Poverty Reduction and Agricultural Management Initiative (PRAM) is an innovative educational program designed to empower government officials at the local level with the tools necessary to reduce poverty in their districts. It was developed through collaboration between MAF/DLF and Savannakhet University***



The need to develop collaboration between farmers, processors and markets is also highlighted together with the need to develop better linkages between local and foreign investors, and collaboration with Non-Government Organizations, regional agencies and international organizations.

Identifying practical ways for provincial staff to improve collaboration, was one of the more challenging aspects of provincial consultations. Participants generally understood the need for greater collaboration between sectors and stakeholder groups, and were supportive of efforts to improve it. However, despite considerable discussion, provincial staff found it difficult to identify practical ways to improve collaboration.

*Opportunities exist for DLF staff to strengthen collaboration with the education sector*



Provincial staff still work within an institutional culture based mainly on the traditional model of a Line Agency

Provincial staff still work within an institutional culture based mainly on the traditional model of a Line Agency. Each provincial agency is largely independently supported and there is relatively little shared accountable for development results. While a narrative of sector “convergence” is being developed at national level (e.g. through the National Nutrition Strategy), working practices remain largely unchanged at provincial level.

DLF is working to promote a new Partnership Approach

Following these discussions, the DLF Facilitation Team concluded a new approach to normal working practice is required within the sector and decided to use the SIP to more widely promote collaboration. The need for more effective collaboration is highlighted in all sections of the SIP and DLF is working to promote a new Partnership Approach, with national and international Development Partners.

Identifying practical ways for provincial staff to improve collaboration, was one of the more challenging aspects of provincial consultations. Participants generally understood the need for greater collaboration between sectors and stakeholder groups, and were supportive of efforts to improve it. However,

despite considerable discussion, provincial staff found it difficult to identify practical ways to improve collaboration.

**Work Area #8 –  
Monitoring and  
evaluation**

This section of the SIP begins with a summary of provincial consultation discussions which aimed to clarify understanding of monitoring and evaluation and the need to develop more effective approaches to this area of DLF’s work.

The DLF Facilitation Team had to carefully address this subject as many provincial government staff see M&E as a process of *inspection* rather than learning. Initially provincial staff were cautious to engage with central level staff in a dialogue which may simply result in “more demands for data”.

Explore ways in which provincial staff could develop their own systems of M&E

However, the DLF Team developed these discussions and supported provincial staff to explore ways to improve their *own* approaches to measuring and evaluating success.

The dialogue revealed that while considerable monitoring data are collected and project evaluations undertaken, local-level staff are generally skeptical about the usefulness and reliability of this data and the conclusions reached. It was clear they often have little input into the design of M&E systems or the processes of data analysis and interpretation.



New systems of M&E need to be developed with the active participation of local staff

Further reflection on opportunities for developing provincial-level Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems and linking them to existing national systems, prompted frank discussions on the challenges faced by agencies at both levels. Most workshop participants expressed frustration with the current systems and there was a keen desire to improve these. However, it was clear that for any improvements to be successful, new systems had to be developed from “the bottom to the top” and with the active participation of local staff.

A summary of these discussions has been incorporated into this Section’s narrative and aims to communicate the importance of developing more systematic approaches towards M&E. The Section also provides a frank analysis of the current situation and encourages government staff at both central and local levels, to develop more effective and transparent ways of measuring success.

Many provincial staff are unsure of how start development of more robust systems

While this Work Area is important, it is recognized development is likely to be slow and will require considerable support. Understanding of M&E among staff at all levels is generally weak and there is little capacity to develop improved M&E systems at the local level. Many provincial staff are unsure of how to even start development of more robust systems.

4 recommendations aimed at kick-starting M&E improvements

This Section of the document therefore mainly aims to provide simple advice and encouragement. It is deliberately brief and provides 4 simple recommendations aimed at kick-starting a nation-wide process of bottom-up M&E system development:

- Improve staff capacity in this Work Area and systems of monitoring and evaluation at every level (from the bottom to the top).
- Accelerate development of training curricula and staff advisory guidelines at all levels. Promote improved and more effective methods of monitoring, evaluation and assessment.
- Develop places to store data and information and more effective ways to manage it, that utilizes the internet and websites. Develop networks to share this information.
- Increase focus on developing the capacity of staff to liaise with other agencies for the development of collaboration with regional and international organizations. In partnership with these organizations develop staff capacity and improved systems of monitoring, evaluation, information management and communication.

Monitoring and evaluation was not identified as a Work Area during provincial consultations. It was understood by most participants to be a “cross-cutting theme” which requires attention under all Work Areas. However, after follow-up discussions at Central level, the DLF Facilitation Team decided to

include it as a SIP Work Area, to promote new local-level initiatives on developing M&E systems.

There was considerable debate among DLF authors on the approach towards developing a SIP monitoring framework

There was considerable debate among DLF authors on the most appropriate approach towards developing a SIP monitoring framework and how best to integrate this information into the document. While it was agreed indicators would be required to measure progress against each Work Area, these indicators could not be developed using the participatory approaches discussed during provincial consultations. There was insufficient time and resources within the project for the detailed consultations required to develop such indicators.

District officers learning about M&E



Incorporating progress indicators developed unilaterally by central-level staff was the alternative approach, but this also presented problems. The SIP was intended to document a *collaborative* interpretation of *existing* policy and offer advice. Including a set of indicators without consultation with provincial staff and against which their performance could be evaluated, could be seen as a misinterpretation of the project's objectives and Guiding Principles (see Part 1 for a list of these Principles).

To resolve this problem, the SIP authors developed a "nuanced" approach which aims to establish the principle of monitoring progress under each SIP Work Area, but does not impose a fixed monitoring framework.

"subjects for reporting on progress" will be used to monitor SIP progress

Proposed "*subjects for reporting on progress*" are included under each Work Area and a monitoring framework (with Outputs, Targets and Progress indicators), is included in the SIP, but contained in the document's Appendix.

The document does not therefore *direct* provincial staff to use this framework for reporting, or suggest it is providing an alternative to production targets established in government policy. Instead,

the SIP provides some recommendations for reporting a foundation for follow-up work on M&E systems development at both central and provincial levels.

The proposed indicators (and “report headings”), provide some good examples of *process indicators* which are time-bound and include information on both the quantity and quality of predicted events, changes or outcomes. They will help focus future dialogue on M&E system development and significantly, introduce a framework for not only measuring success in terms of outputs, but also processes.

As noted above, more work is required to develop M&E capacity in this sector and a greater emphasis on measuring *process*, will contribute towards accelerating development in all Work Areas.

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## SIP Chapter 5 – Supporting Projects

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To further guide project development at provincial and district levels, DLF included a list of *generic* or supporting projects. While Chapter 4 (SIP Work Areas) are intended to be the main reference for the development of new projects, this list responds to requests from some staff for more specific guidance.

### *Project list development*

The SIP authors developed this list based on provincial consultations, but also a series of detailed consultations with other MAF agencies at central level (e.g. Department of Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives, LARReC etc). Four guiding principles were used in the development of this list:

- The projects must be in-line with existing government policies and regulations
- The projects must contribute towards all three SIP objectives (a) food security; (b) increasing production (c) sustainable development
- The projects must be realistic and consider social and economic factors, priorities for development, community involvement, and opportunities for collaboration with other stakeholder groups.
- Must consider the limited funds of the government and promote linkages with the international community, neighboring countries, and ASEAN members. The projects should be sustainable.

The table below contains a summary translation of the 31 Supporting Projects listed in Chapter 5. Estimates of the investments required to implement these projects is contained in the SIP Annex.

## List of SIP Supporting Projects

Work Area	Supporting project
<b>Work Area #1 – Zoning for fishery development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Investigate and survey the potential for improved fisheries management in reservoirs and natural waterbodies</li> <li>2. Undertake studies on potential for food production and commerce in flood plain areas boarding the Mekong river</li> <li>3. Conduct studies to determine an appropriate agro-ecological classification for the zoning of areas for aquaculture development.</li> </ol>
<b>Work Area #2 – Increasing the efficiency of fish and aquatic animal production</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop culture techniques of fish and other aquatic organisms for poverty reduction in lowland and upland mountainous areas.</li> <li>2. Develop fish culture methods to promote commercial production</li> <li>3. Develop approaches to fisheries management and regulation</li> <li>4. Improve the management of seed production (fish and other aquatic animals) in centers and breeding stations at provincial and district levels.</li> <li>5. Develop techniques for the inspection and the verification of production standards</li> <li>6. Develop health protection measures for fish and other aquatic animals</li> <li>7. Develop feed formulation for the culture of fish and other aquatic animals</li> <li>8. Strengthen the technical capacity of technical staff and farmers</li> </ol>
<b>Work Area #3 – Sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture, including adaptation to Climate Change</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Study improved approaches to fisheries management in hydropower dams and irrigation reservoirs</li> <li>2. Promote participatory community management of fisheries in natural water bodies</li> <li>3. Promote fisheries management in rice field environments</li> </ol>
<b>Work Area #4 – Fisheries and aquaculture research requirements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Study seed production techniques of indigenous fish with potential for commercial production.</li> <li>2. Evaluation studies of approaches to the management of aquatic animal resources</li> <li>3. Research studies into the habitat ecology and spawning of indigenous fish with commercial value</li> </ol>
<b>Work Area #5 – Aquaculture and fisheries promotion and extension services</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen the capacity of extension staff at provincial, district levels, staff in centers and staff in community-level Technical Service Centers.</li> <li>2. Develop the establishment of farmer groups to promote breeding of fish and other aquatic animals and fish farming.</li> <li>3. Promote methods of culturing fish and other aquatic animals which are Climate Smart</li> <li>4. Promote gender sensitivity in fisheries and aquaculture</li> <li>5. Develop databases, statistics and public information for technical extension services.</li> </ol>

<b>Work Area #6 – Improving basic infrastructure</b>	1. Improve and maintain the Nam Souang Fisheries Development Center
	2. Improve and maintain Ban Hat and Ban Na Indigenous Fisheries Research Centers, Khong District Champasak Province
	3. Construct a center to produce indigenous fish seed in Oudomxay Province
	4. Develop regional fish seed production centers in Luang Prabang (North), Savannakhet (Central) and Champasak (South)
	5. Strengthen the capacity of fish and aquatic animal disease inspection and research centers at central and provincial levels
<b>Work Area #7 – Strengthening government staff</b>	1. Develop training curricula for extension workers and farmers
	2. Promote the establishment of example farming families in focal areas for the development of aquaculture
	3. Develop technical specialist staff at provincial and district levels
<b>Work Area #8 – Monitoring and evaluation</b>	1. Develop mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the capacity of government staff.

# Appendix 1

## Documents produced during the project

Title	Description	No Pages	Date	Type	Project reference
Developing TCP-LAO-3403 Implementation Arrangements	This report summarizes the conclusions of meetings and discussions held between 26th-28th Feb 14 aimed at “getting TCP/LAO/3403 started”. This dialogue was facilitated by FAO and designed to support the FAO’s commitment to the Vientiane Declaration, by ensuring DLF take a leading role in the planning and implementation of start-up activities.	12	Feb 14	Project report	R6255
DLF/FAO coordination meeting Mar 14	A summary of discussions during the first DLF/FAO TCP/LAO/3403 Coordination meeting. The discussions refer to DLF draft documents presented during the meeting and include proposed revisions to the project’s Logical Framework and an initial draft of a six-month workplan.	4	Mar 14	Meeting minutes	R6318
LogFrame revisions and initial workplan	This report summarizes the conclusions of meetings and discussions held between 24th-27th Mar 14 concerning revisions to the Logical Framework of TCP/LAO/3403 and development of a draft workplan for the first six months of implementation (Apr – Sep 14). The discussions were arranged following agreements on project implementation arrangements in Feb 14.	12	May 14	Project report	R6313
Notes on meeting with Dr Sompanh Chanphengsay, deputy director of the	This meeting was to formally update senior MAF officer on progress of project review and seek guidance for its further development. The	1	May 14	Meeting minutes	R6358

department of MAF's Planning and Cooperation	comments and suggestions made by Dr Sompanh are recorded in this document.					
Drafting an initial letter of agreement (LoA) to start project implementation	This report summarizes the conclusions of meetings and discussions held between 2nd and 4th July 14 concerning drafting an initial Letter of Agreement (LoA) to start implementation of TCP/LAO/3403. The meetings were arranged following agreements on project implementation arrangements in Feb 14 and revisions to the Logical Framework in May 14.	22	July 14	Project report	R6587	
Second DLF/FAO coordination meeting Aug 14	Summary of the second DLF/FAO TCP/LAO/3403 Coordination meeting held at FAO Lao PDR offices on the 19th Aug 14. Main objective of this meeting was to review recent progress and discuss the overall scheduling of the project.	3	Aug 14	Meeting minutes	R6515	
Summary of revisions to TCP/LAO/3403 made during Inception Phase (Feb–May 14)	During the second DLF/FAO Coordination Meeting in August 14, it was agreed a short document be prepared summarizing the differences between implementation as envisaged in the original project document and the current workplan. Although the original objectives of the project are being adhered to, the implementation modality was modified to accommodate recent developments in the local context of the project.	10	Aug 14	Project report	R6598	
Moving from strategies to action on fisheries and aquaculture	This document was prepared by DLF and FAO as a press release for the Vientiane Times (Lao newspaper for the English-speaking community of Lao PDR). It aims to inform the general public about the TCP/LAO/3403 project and reports on two meetings held on the 28th and 29th August 2014	4	Aug 14	Public communication	R6588	
DLF/FAO Coordination Meeting Nov 14	A summary of discussions during the fourth DLF/FAO TCP/LAO/3403 Coordination meeting held at FAO Lao PDR offices on the 12 Nov 14. The main objective of this meeting was to review recent progress and discuss a revised six-month workplan proposed by DLF	5	Nov 14	Meeting minutes	R6663	
TCP/LAO/3403 revised Logical Framework	Prepared to guide implementation, this report describes the Project's revised Logical Framework in Lao and English	8	Dec 14	Project report	R6869	
SIP Outline workshop report	A report in Lao on decisions reached during a workshop to discuss and develop an outline (main headings) of the Strategic Implementation Plan document	30	Jan 15	Project report	R7096	

Report on conclusions of second project Steering Committee Meeting	A report in Lao on conclusions of second project Steering Committee Meeting. The meeting reviewed the SIP document Outline and proposed consultation process.	12	Jan 15	Project report	R7096
Initial outline of MAF/DLF Strategic Implementation Plan for aquaculture and fisheries	English language translation of the document Outline and notes on proposed content of the MAF/DLF Strategic Implementation Plan for Fisheries and Aquaculture management and development in the Lao PDR	8	Jan 15	Project report	R6871
Concept Note for an Additional Component to TCP/LAO/3403	This Concept Note outlines a proposal for an additional component of TCP/LAO/3403 which aims to ensure the Plan is effectively communicated to local-level stakeholders and that crucial competencies exist at the local level to implement the Plan.	4	Feb 15	Concept Note	R6850
Provincial consultation meetings report	Reports in Lao on the process and outcomes of three regional SIP consultations workshops for provincial-level stakeholders.	35	Apr 15	Project report	R7096
Report on Central-level consultations	A report in Lao on the process and outcomes of Central-level consultations to develop a Strategic Implementation Plan (consultation with national-level representatives)	40	Feb 15	Project report	R7096
Technical reports of National Experts	Reports in Lao and English produced by National Experts on Policy, Fisheries, Aquaculture and Climate Change which were used to provide technical information in the drafting of the Strategic Implementation Plan.	110	Jun 15	Project report	R7096
Impacting poverty and malnutrition in Lao PDR through promoting micro-scale aquaculture of wild aquatic animals.	Aquatic resources are a key component of the Lao diet especially the rural poor. This Concept Note describes how the promotion of very small-scale aquaculture interventions could address poverty and malnutrition. It was developed to support DLF consultations with international Development Partners	1	Jun 15	Concept note	R7086
Lao Fisheries Law in Lao and English	An official publication of the recently developed Lao Fishery Law in Lao and English languages. Translation was supported by the project.	17	Sep 15	Legal document	R7253
Project start-up timeline	This documents provides a Timeline of key events during the first stages of TCP/LAO/3403 implementation and following its approval by FAO and the Lao government.	2	Sep 15	Project report	R6597
Accelerating capacity building of local-level DLF staff	A Concept Note requested by DLF to accelerate and expand capacity building programs for DLF staff based at provincial and district levels. The Note describes an alternative approach to capacity building for	1	Sep 15	Concept Note	R6595

	DLF local-level staff which provides professional training in the field (on-the-job), which leverages off existing vocational training facilities. The approach also complements existing plans to develop and expand university education in the fisheries sector.					
Strengthening the reporting and monitoring of fisheries and aquaculture in Lao PDR	A Concept Note drafted to support DLF consultations with international Development Partners. Requested by DLF, the Note highlights the challenges and opportunities related to strengthening DLF reporting and monitoring systems.	1	Oct 15	Concept Note	R7281	
Achieving food and nutrition security through aquatic resources	An English language interpretation of conclusions and agreements reach during a DLF Coordinated Working Group meeting of representatives from key stakeholders in the aquaculture and fisheries sector of Lao PDR The Working Group was established as part of international Development Partner consultations to explore new ways in which this sector can address food and nutrition security.	20	Dec 15	Workshop report	R7297	
Development of a Strategic Implementation Plan for Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture development & Management in Lao PDR	Abstract of presentation given at the 34th Asia-Pacific Fisheries Commission (APFIC) in Colombo	1	Feb 16	Abstract	R7522	
A Strategic Implementation Plan for Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture development & Management in Lao PDR	Final authorized version of the Strategic Implementation Plan for Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture development & Management in Lao PDR. Published after approval by the Project's Steering Committee.	80	Jul 16	DLF planning document	R7788	
Notes on the process of SIP development and its content	Notes on the process of SIP development, the consultation process and an English language summary interpretation of its contents.	20	Nov 16	Project report	R7175	