

(DRAFT) Report

NTFP Producer Group Formation (02/06/13 – 07/06/13)

Background

The giz/MONRE project “Integrated Nature Conservation and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the HinNamNo Region” has engaged a technical assistance mission from the local consulting company AFC¹ to facilitate co-management and sustainable use of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) in and around the HinNamNo NPA. Thus far, the following activities have been implemented:

- District and Provincial Level workshop to review plans and general interest/feasibility
- Village level workshops in 2 project target communities (Ban Nongping and Ban Nyawet) to review villagers’ interest and general feasibility, as well as to shortlist NTFPs with marketing potential
- Market research and value chain analysis conducted in several districts in Khammouane and Savannakhet Provinces, to ascertain market demand for the shortlisted NTFPs

Activities Implemented

As a result of the market research survey, broomgrass and bamboo handicrafts (sticky rice baskets, ‘huat’ etc.) were identified as having potential for marketing. To enable market-oriented production, “producer groups” were to be formed in the two project target communities of Ban Nyawet and Ban Nongping. To this end, a further consultant team from AFC consisting of 4 persons (2 women) was engaged to work with district level staff and the two communities from 02/06/13 – 07/06/13.

Group Formation Training

On 03/06/13 a district level training workshop was held for selected project counterparts from the District Office of Natural Resources and Environment (DONRE, 4 participants) and the Lao Womens’ Union (LWU, 2 participants). Topics covered included:

- The importance and advantages of producer group formation (economies of scale, greater leverage with traders etc.)
- Important things to consider when forming groups (inter-group dynamics, gender etc.)
- Discussion and refinement of a draft set of producer group rules and regulations

¹ AFC – “Agro Forestry Consulting”, formerly known as AIMA – The Association for Improving the Living Standards of Multi-Ethnic People to Adapt to Climate Change



Fig 1: AFC director Mr. Souvanpheng Phommasane giving a presentation on group formation; the consultant team and district staff engage in team-building games

Group Formation in 2 HNN target villages

Following the training workshop, AFC consultants and district staff split up into two teams to work on producer group formation in the two target communities of Ban Nongping and Ban Nyawet. From 04/06/13 to 06/06/13, the teams were working at village level. Work conducted included:

- A short report by district staff on the results of the market research survey, highlighting the market potential of bamboo handicrafts and broomgrass



Fig 2: Villagers in Ban Nyawet examining sample bamboo handicrafts from Savannakhet Province, Scene from the Group Formation work in Ban Nongping

- Group formation; 18 villagers (5 women) in Ban Nyawet volunteered to form 1 bamboo weaving producer group; 20 villagers (x women) in Ban Nongping volunteered to form 2 bamboo weaving groups in Ban Nongping (10 persons per group). In both villages, there was little to no interest in forming broomgrass/broom-making producer groups.
- Selection of producer group committees for all three groups; several group members in both villages volunteered to stand for election for the 3-person committee of their

respective groups. On average about 6 persons per group stood for election. Villagers then voted in a secret ballot for the 3 committee members (1 group leader and 2 deputies, minimum 1 woman per committee). The following persons were selected to their respective committees:

- Ban Nyawet bamboo weavers group 1: Mr. Bingkeo (group leader), 2. Mrs. Saysamone (Deputy 1), Mr. Lang (Deputy 2)
- Ban Nongping bamboo weavers group 1: Mr. God (group leader), Mrs. Da (Deputy 1), Mr. Dtuan (Deputy 2)
- Ban Nongping bamboo weavers group 2: Mrs. Bunsuan (group leader), Mrs. Nuandee (Deputy 1), Mr. Tong (Deputy 2)



Fig 3: Group members standing for election to the committee in Ban Nyawet introduce themselves, Bualapha LWU staff Mrs. Kunma explains the voting procedure to a lady in Ban Nongping

- Participatory drafting of rules and regulations for the producer groups. Using a draft set of rules as a guide, the teams engaged villagers in discussions on a set of rules and regulations for their respective producer groups. Rules and regulations for all three groups were agreed upon, and will be submitted to the Bualapha district administration for official approval.

Conclusions

A total of 3 producer groups with 38 members (x women) have now been formed in the two project target communities of Ban Nongping and Ban Nyawet. All groups are mixed, both in terms of gender and level of experience, with complete beginners joining alongside experienced bamboo weavers. Training needs assessments and in-village product development trainings are envisioned for August 2013, to help improve quality of produce, introduce new designs and build technical skills, especially for the inexperienced group members.

As a next step, committee members from all three groups will go on a study trip to Vientiane Capital and Vientiane Province to visit bamboo markets and traders and to observe and learn first-hand from successful village level handicraft producer groups in Santhong and Phonhueang districts.

Many villagers were rather skeptical with regards to the potential for income generation through bamboo handicraft sales. Reports from the market research as well as audio-visual presentations of previous AFC/AIMA work in helping communities set up sustainable producer groups and market linkages went a long way towards addressing these concerns. However, many group members still lack confidence in the marketability of their produce, particularly with regards to quality, market access and market demand. It is hoped that the upcoming study tour will help to further strengthen the confidence of group members with regards to market demand and their ability to produce quality goods for commercial sale.

Initially, bamboo will be sourced from the two communities' respective 'village production forests' outside the HinNamNo NPA. According to group members, bamboo supply remains abundant in these areas. A detailed inventory scheduled for July 2013 will seek to confirm and quantify the amount of bamboo available in the two 'village production forests'. In the medium-term, cultivation of bamboo may also be an option.

Villagers justified their lack of enthusiasm for pursuing broomgrass/broom production by the relatively limited amount of broomgrass available in their area, and by the fact that the product is highly seasonal, with processing and marketing usually taking place in the months of January-March only. In both villages, bamboo handicraft production was seen as having greater potential for sustainable, year-round marketing. According to previous research the potential for broomgrass may be higher in other project target areas (such as the Nongma cluster).

District level staff from two departments (DONRE and LWU) had the opportunity to build their capacity and gain hands-on experience in setting up and organizing village-level producer groups. The skills and knowledge acquired can be applied in a number of different settings, and may thus help strengthen the overall management of the HinNamNo NPA.

Annex 1: List of Ban Nyawet Producer Group Members

ລດ	ຊື່ ແລະ ນາມສະກຸນ	ລະດັບການສຶກສາ	ປະສົບການ	ເບີໂທລະສັບ
1	ທ. ປິ່ງແກ້ວ	ມ 6	ດົງຟັດ	030 9147761
2	ທ. ລັງ	ປ 7	ກະຍັງ	
3	ນ. ສາຍສະໝອນ	ປ 5	ສະຫວິງ	
4	ທ. ແປງ	ມໍ 5	ກະດົງ	
5	ທ. ຄໍາ	ປ 5	ຍັງບໍ່ເຄີຍ	
6	ທ. ວຽງ	ປ 2	ຕິບເຂົ້າ	
7	ທ. ກະຕິ	ປ 3	ຍັງບໍ່ເຄີຍ	
8	ນ. ຍິງ	0	ຍັງບໍ່ເຄີຍ	
9	ນ. ເລິງ	0	ກະດົງ	
10	ນ. ນາດ	0	ຍັງບໍ່ເຄີຍ	
11	ນ. ສະ	0	ສະຫວິງ	
12	ທ. ກາ	0	ສະຫວິງ	
13	ທ. ກາດາ	ປ 5	ກະບຸງ	
14	ທ. ຄູນ	ປ 5	ມວຍນິງເຂົ້າ	
15	ທ. ຫູບ	0	ກະດົງ	
16	ທ. ລີ	0	ເຄີຍສານຫຼາຍຢ່າງ	
17	ທ. ໝາຍ	0	ຍັງບໍ່ເຄີຍ	
18	ທ. ຄຽງຄໍາ			

Appendix 2: List of Ban Nongping Producer Group Members