Introduction

Nearly 90 percent of the 4.6 million people in Lao PDR live in rural villages, engaged in predominately subsistence livelihoods. These people have lived for generations in cultural patterns of resource use and management which, although not static, until recently did not threaten environmental sustainability. A mountainous country in which only approximately one-tenth of the land area is suitable for agriculture, forests are exceptionally important in the national and local economies, for food production (including swidden agriculture), wood and building materials, medicines, and other essential products, as well as for maintaining watersheds that protect downstream and lowland areas. Present trends of accelerating socio-economic development and rapid population growth, however, raise a specter of progressive environmental degradation that poses major challenges to institutions responsible for natural resource management.

Unlike its neighbors, Lao PDR still has a rich endowment of natural forests, covering nearly half its land area. Protected by a combination of ruggedly mountainous terrain, historically low population density, and isolationist national policy, its forests have been less affected by exploitation and conversion than most countries in Asia. However, rapid expansions in population, roading infrastructure, and market links within and outside its borders have substantially increased forest access and exploitation, resulting in an accelerating loss of forest cover, from approximately 17 million hectares in 1940 to 11 million hectares today. Expanding swidden agriculture, uncontrolled logging, and road and dam construction are the main causes of deforestation and forest degradation, with excessive hunting and illegal trade in wildlife and plants contributing to biodiversity losses (FN 3).

The Government of Lao PDR (GOL) has taken strong actions to promote sustainable management and conservation of forest resources. A National Forestry Action Plan, drafted in 1989 and adopted in 1991, provides broad forest policy and programme guidance. Recognizing the close relationship of local people to forests, the government has more recently adopted and started implementing policies that strongly emphasize and enable local participation in forest management, including allocation of forests to individuals and organizations for sustainable management (FN 4). The level of commitment and follow through on these policies is remarkable, quite possibly the most significant by any nation in Asia, and deserves special recognition and attention.

The national Department of Forestry (DOF), with substantial and increasing international assistance, is providing strong leadership for the development and implementation of participatory management strategies for both production and protection forests. A variety of participatory forest management (FN 5) (PFM) initiatives are underway in different projects and target areas, under strategies characterized as village forestry (FOMACOP), joint forest management (Lao Swedish Forestry Programme), community forestry (Lao PDR-Japan Forestry Cooperation, Community Forestry Project/Community Forestry Support Unit, and others), community resource management (NAWACOP), non-timber forest products (IUCN and CARE), and integrated conservation and development process (FOMACOP). Community-based resource management is also being promoted and developed by a large number of initiatives and organisations in other sectors, including fisheries, agriculture, and energy, many of which have important links to forest management.

The rapid expansion of participatory forest management in Lao PDR has generated a substantial and
increasing demand for appropriate training. Meeting this demand adequately will be critical for continued progress and success in participatory forest management.

The Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC) is an important regional institution that has provided training and related development support for participatory forest management for over ten years. Lao PDR has a pool of approximately fifty RECOFTC alumni in government agencies, NGOs, and international and donor organisations. These alumni contribute substantially to the national capacity and constituency in support of participatory forest management.

Nearly all RECOFTC training has been on a regional basis, often based at its training center at Kasetsart University in Bangkok, with English as the common language. With the continuing expansion of community forestry in Asia, many countries now have achieved a sufficient volume of community forestry efforts and programmes to benefit from expanded in-country training and information sharing for community forestry. Fulfilling its leadership role, RECOFTC wants to ensure the most effective training possible in the region, by continuing and evolving regional training and by assisting and strengthening in-country (country level) training as it develops.

Objective

The objective of this study was to explore the need and potential options for RECOFTC to initiate a programme aimed at improving participatory forest management training in Lao PDR, possibly as part of a broader Indochina strategy and programme. This study is part of the exploratory phase of a one year project, funded by SIDA.

This report documents the research process and findings for Lao PDR, regarding

- participatory forest management training needs and capacities
- key institutions and individuals in Lao PDR with which RECOFTC could establish key working and possibly lead/counterpart relationships
- preliminary recommendations regarding how RECOFTC could provide improved training adapted to Lao PDR, in support of strengthening in-country PFM training, while recognizing that finalisation of recommendations will require rationalisation within the context of the full study including Cambodia and Vietnam.

Procedure

The procedure for the study was to identify, contact, and conduct semi-structured interviews with key leaders and staff in organisations involved in participatory forest management in Lao PDR. Questions focused on: past, current, and planned participatory forest management-related activities and training; training capacities, needs, and priorities; training target groups, possible trainers, and training venues and potential for cooperation in training. Interviews were conducted during 25 January - 2 February 1998 by Doug Henderson, consultant to RECOFTC, and Lydia Braakman, RECOFTC Training Specialist. Individuals interviewed are listed below, by organisation (full addresses are provided in Appendix 1).

Department of Forestry

Bounthong Xaisida, Deputy Director
Boualith Inthilath, IS/HRD Programme Coordinator
Chanthaviphone Inthavong, Director, CPAWM
Venevongphet, Deputy Director, CPAWM
Khamphay Manivong, Director, Forestry Research Centre
Pheng Souvanthong, Director, Extension Unit
Bounphon Mounda, Deputy Head, Division of Plantation and Conservation
Bounmysay, CFP/CFSU
Yatkeo Phoumidalyvanh, Planner and Trainer, CFP/CFSU
Sisompeth gender unit

National University Department of Forestry (Dong Dok)
Bounmy Phonesavanh, Deputy Director
Juergen Hess, Advisor

Lao-Swedish Forestry Programme
Bengt Frykman, Research Advisor
Simon Gill, Planning, Finance and Monitoring Advisor

Forest Management and Conservation Programme (FOMACOP)
Marco Kotila, Chief Technical Advisor
Vaneska Litz, Monitoring & Evaluation consultant

Lao-Japan Forestry Conservation and Afforestation Project (FORCAP)
Khambai Khamsana, Head, Lao-Japan Forestry Cooperation Unit
Takeko Linuma, Participatory Rural Development Advisor

GTZ Nam Ngum Watershed Management and Conservation Project (NAWACOP)
Karl Kaiser, Teamleader

IUCN
Joost Foppes, NTFP Project Advisor
Sounthone Ketpanh, NTFP Project National Coordinator
Clive Marsh, Senior Protected Areas Planning Advisor (LSFP)

Wildlife Conservation Society
Bill Robeshaud, Program Coordinator
Troy Hansel, Training and Education Coordinator

WWF
Rob Tizard, Conservation Officer
Jack Hurd, Transboundary Conservation Specialist
Findings

As noted in the Introduction, the government has adopted highly favourable policies and is actively promoting programmes emphasizing participatory forest management (PFM), and there is substantial and expanding funding for PFM initiatives. However, insufficient qualified staff was widely perceived as a major constraint to expanded implementation, implying that appropriate training is a major immediate need. An overview of key projects is provided in Table 1 and additional information on many is contained in appendices to this report.

DOF provides central leadership for the development and implementation of participatory forest management strategies. Although some opening to a pluralistic institutional structure with an independent sector is underway in Lao PDR, to date PFM efforts are implemented almost exclusively through government organisations, such as DOF, provincial agriculture and forest departments (PAFOs), and district forestry departments (DOFOs), with financial and technical support from IOs/NGOs. Highly independent private sector and NGO initiatives with minimal government connection and oversight, such as exist in other countries, do not yet exist in Lao PDR. This situation makes institutional analysis and training assessment relatively straightforward, at least initially, because by policy and practice all PFM efforts are connected to DOF.

Significant opportunities also exist for promoting PFM through organisations not presently involved or linked to DOF. As noted above, community-based management initiatives in the fisheries, agriculture, and energy sectors have important links to forest management, with potential for multi-sectoral cooperation in training. There are many government and NGO initiatives in rural development which warrant exploration for cooperation in PFM, including training for PFM. Also, as the country develops, it is probable that the government will increasingly diversify and the independent sector (private, NGO) will expand, with implications for PFM efforts and associated training needs for private sector and non-government staff and participants.

To date, there has been notably little information sharing or cooperation in training among PFM initiatives. Most initiatives underway in participatory forest management focus on achieving objectives defined in relation to specific geographic target areas, through developing "pilot" examples and "models" of participatory forest management, ranging in scope from several to dozens of villages (FN 6). Although part of and contributing to broader institutional development, these initiatives tend to operate as 'islands' within the forestry sector (FN 7), with little information sharing or cooperation of any type, including information sharing or cooperation on training. Several projects emphasize institution-level development, notably LSFP (although its main effort in participatory forest management has adopted a pilot-type approach), the Community Forestry Support Unit (part of the CUSO/JVC Community Forestry Project), and the German assistance to National University Department of Forestry (Dong Dok). These institution-level projects have not yet, however, provided an effective framework for information sharing or cooperation in PFM training, although there is awareness of the need and a desire to meet it.

There is, however, general awareness of and support for better information sharing and cooperation on PFM in DOF, including information sharing and cooperation on training. Several mechanisms have been instituted to promote information sharing and cooperation in DOF which could also improve information sharing and cooperation on training, including periodic management meetings and conferences, and a network of technical advisors in the forest conservation sector (in CPAWM) which meets quarterly.
Training needs and training capacities for participatory forest management

The favourable government context and expansion of PFM has generated a substantial demand for appropriate training, which will likely increase substantially in the intermediate future. As noted above, PFM training needs are currently met largely by individual projects (see Table 1) in accord with their respective specific objectives and workplans, capacities, and constraints. These projects have developed and continue to expand training capacities relevant to PFM, in terms of staff training capabilities and training materials. As would be expected, wide variation exists among these projects in terms of both topics and capacities to develop and conduct training.

Improved and expanded training in PFM was universally identified as a major need, even by organisations/projects with substantial training capacity. The largest single demand, identified by everyone interviewed, is for training in Lao language. Projects and organisations are primarily interested in training adapted to their specific contexts and objectives, but they recognize the need for and benefit of training that meets broader needs (of other projects, organisations, objectives, and contexts). Existing projects also cover only a very limited portion of the country, so training needs extend significantly beyond current projects. Informants perceived DOF staff as having conventional forest management training but little training for PFM, and many PAFO and most DAFO staff as having very limited or no training for forest management, and even less for PFM.

Suggestions for PFM-related training topics included

- participatory approaches for protected area management ("ABC's of conservation")
- participatory approaches for production forest management (village forestry /joint forest management)
- land allocation
- shifting cultivation
- NTFP resource management systems, harvesting, and marketing; the role of NTFPs in food and livelihood systems
- action research
- gender
- PRA and communication techniques
- English, report writing, computer, mgmt

In-country PFM-related training conducted to date was perceived to be largely ad hoc rather than programmatic, carried out on a single project/organisation basis rather than multi-project or institution-wide, and often excessively narrow (such as PRA training which was not well integrated). However, this training capacity, viewed collectively and in combination with the increasing emphasis on PFM in regional forestry training centers and the National University Department of Forestry, constitutes a substantial and expanding de facto national training capacity, which could be readily leveraged through better information sharing about training capacities and needs, and through more cooperation in training.

DOF recognizes that coordination of training is inadequate, wants a more organised approach to training, and has asked LSFP to undertake a comprehensive training needs assessment. An Institutional Measurement exercise supported by LSFP assessed types of training completed by Forestry staff at different levels and highlighted the need for additional training in areas like community forestry, rural development, and general management and organisational areas. A questionnaire-type training needs assessment conducted in 1997 among DOF, PAFO, and DAFO staff (which had an overall 22% response rate) identified high interest for training in consumption/marketing, joint forest management, agroforestry/farm forestry, wood industry, and rural economics (see appendix). Of note, Forestry Research Center staff identified training needs related to indigenous species and non-timber forest products as top priorities, suggesting strong interests related to PFM. More information about training needs may be available from the 1997 assessment, pending further analysis of the data. A training needs assessment planned recently by the conservation sector (CPAWM) was postponed, but if conducted (possibly in coordination with a larger needs assessment) will provide further information about training needs.

A wide variety of potential training venues is available, ranging from Vientiane based facilities (including the
National University Department of Forestry, located approximately 10km from Vientiane), to a large number of facilities in provinces, to local facilities associated with project sites. Informants generally favoured decentralised venues and "provincial training" as appropriate for PFM training. DOF emphasized decentralised training in line with national policy favouring decentralization. Suggestions varied on the degree and mode of decentralization, including:

- increased use of regional training facilities, such as the Regional Agriculture and Forestry Extension Centers (see Table 2)
- further decentralization to district training centers,
- mobile training units that use available local facilities rather than being tied to a core facility.

At least three projects (LSFP, FOMACOP, and FORCAP) are constructing and/or supporting special-built training centers in support of production-oriented or conservation-oriented forest management efforts, but it is unclear whether these projects are aware of each others' strategies or whether development and use of these facilities is coordinated or orchestrated within a larger DOF training strategy.

There was a distinctly negative perception of regional short-term training as not meeting highest-priority training needs, a perception that is probably exacerbated by frustration over the lack of training that meets immediate and increasing needs for training in Lao language with appropriately adapted content and materials. Criticisms of regional training included the following points:

- the training is often conducted in English which puts many staff at a severe disadvantage and excludes many others from participation
- training often takes the staff away from their place of work for long periods which adds a further burden to the staff who are left behind
- the training is often not relevant or appropriate to the context in Lao PDR
- the training is not tailored directly to their experience
- the training does not always allow staff to discuss with their colleagues
- the training is often very expensive

Regional training will undoubtedly continue to be used because it is available and it contributes to PFM development, but it is perceived as not meeting the most important needs and as giving diminishing returns. The highest priority need is for in-country training that is available to increasing numbers on government staff, IO/NGO staff, and project participants for whom regional training is not appropriate or feasible. Until this in-country need is satisfied, the availability of regional training alone will probably be perceived in an increasingly negative light.

Key institutions and individuals

A number of organisations/projects in Lao PDR have characteristics and are appropriately positioned to play key roles in improving in-country training for PFM, in terms of relevant objectives and experience, and skilled staff. These include

DOF

Several units in DOF have strong existing or potential involvement in PFM and could provide effective nodes for PFM training:

- The Center for Protected Areas and Watershed Management (CPAWM) provides the framework for linking among a dynamic set of initiatives for management of NBCAs and watersheds. All of these initiatives have a commitment to participatory management strategies and effective informal networking and cooperation already exists among a number of NBCA management efforts. CPAWM leadership and a number of key projects within CPAWM expressed strong interest and commitment to improving cooperation in training.
The Community Forestry Support Unit (CFSU) has potential to become a key network for information sharing and cooperation among all or many PFM organisations/projects, from the center to field projects. The CFSU has a training mandate and some limited training experience. Although the CFSU appears at present to lack a clear strategic plan or adequate budget, with appropriate support it could achieve an important networking function and could be a key mechanism for improving information sharing and cooperation related to PFM training.

The Forestry Research Centre (FRC) is a recently established unit with strong potential to provide leadership in PFM concepts and approaches throughout the Forestry sector. The FRC has effective leadership which has expressed strong interest in PFM, including organising and conducting related training. FRC receives funding support from LSFP, in line with LSFP commitment to applied research.

In a fashion similar to FRC, the Gender Unit is recently established and has strong potential to contribute concepts and approaches that are important to PFM. The unit has effective leadership, a work programme emphasising training, and a demonstrated training capacity. The unit receives funding support from LSFP.

IOs/NGOs

A number of IOs/NGOs involved in PFM have strong potential to contribute to improving in-country training for PFM:

- LSFP is the largest institutional strengthening project integrated broadly in DOF, has a long-running commitment to building training capacity, and has taken significant steps to promote and support PFM. Based on these strengths, LSFP is well oriented to play a key role in improving PFM training, based on stimulating cooperation among organisations/projects involved in PFM. LSFP has active links to key units in DOF that could provide leadership for a cooperative initiative in PFM training, including CPAWM (especially related to NCBA management), Forestry Research Centre, and the Gender Unit. LSFP also has a small link to the CFSU, which as noted above could provide valuable leadership for improving PFM training if the unit is strengthened. The LSFP-supported Joint Forest Management project could provide a valuable institutional link to a field implementation (pilot) project.

- FOMACOP (Forest Management Subprogramme) has developed the most substantial PFM training capacity, including technical advisors, staff capacity, and training materials in Lao language. As such, it has substantial potential to contribute to improving PFM training, if its training capacity and experience is made available outside its immediate target area. FOMACOP recognizes the need and its potential for contributing to institutional strengthening, and has expressed interest in shifting toward institutional strengthening although it perceives its current objectives as inhibiting such a shift. Testing FOMACOP/FMS training strategies and materials in other contexts, especially by other organisations/projects involved in PFM, would be a practical early step in cooperative PFM training.

- The IUCN NTFP project is developing capabilities related to the sustainable economic exploitation of NTFPs, a critical but largely overlooked element in comprehensive approaches to forest valuation and management. Although the NTFP project is oriented toward supporting biodiversity conservation, NTFP-related knowledge and programming strategies are equally important to sustainable forest management for production and conservation objectives. Linked to an international NTFP program, the NTFP project has developed significant training capacity. The project is willing to share this capacity with other organisations/projects involved in PFM, and has expressed strong interest in cooperating in PFM training.

- Several organisations/projects involved in NBCA management, including IUCN, LSFP, FOMACOP/NBCA, and WCS have training capacities for conservation-oriented forest management that could contribute to a broader, cooperative training effort. Technical staff of these projects already meet periodically (quarterly) to share information about their respective projects. They recognize the benefits from expanded cooperation and expressed interest in cooperating on training. Given the high level of interest and commitment to cooperation among these and other conservation-oriented organisations/projects, initiating a cooperative training effort for PFM related to NBCA management is a high priority.

Training institutions

Several training institutions have potential to contribute to improving in-country training for PFM:
The National University Department of Forestry (Dong Dok) is the main training institution for forestry professionals in Lao PDR, including most staff of the DOF and IO/NGO projects linked to DOF. Strengthening the PFM content of training at Dong Dok is important for expanding the understanding and constituency for PFM in DOF and among forestry professionals in Lao PDR. Although the present curriculum is typical of conventional forestry (e.g., concepts and methods of forest estate management, with little participatory content), the Faculty is actively revising the curriculum with increased emphasis on participatory approaches. The Faculty is also interested in strengthening linkages to DOF and to field projects, which could involve linkages (such as applied research) to PFM projects and activities. The Faculty is receiving technical and financial assistance from Germany, and the project expressed interest in strengthening Faculty skills and supporting Faculty involvement in cooperative PFM training.

Regional Agriculture and Forestry Extension Training Centers and other decentralised training centers provide facilities for holding trainings and may have some staff with appropriate capacities for PFM training. The directors of both north and south RAFETCs and some other staff have attended RECOFTC courses. With LSFP support, DOF has partially completed a curriculum for the RAFETCs which includes content appropriate for PFM and may in time be activated. In the near term, however, the training centers should be considered primarily as physical facilities in provincial locations rather than in terms of offering appropriate training skills. By engaging the training centers in PFM training, when feasible, the capacities of the centers to effectively support training will be increased.

Although not a key institution in terms of programme implementation, the MAFF Donor Coordination Unit expressed strong support for improving programme coordination and would be helpful in programme development and initiation. The unit advisor, Peter Stevens, expressed special interest in promoting PFM-related programming and for RECOFTC in particular.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Lao PDR has embraced policies and programmes promoting participatory forest management as strongly as any country in Asia, and is receiving increasing support for PFM from IOs and NGOs. However, a shortage of appropriately skilled staff and training capacities poses a major critical constraint to rapid expansion of PFM, and thus poses a significant obstacle to policy and programme success. Regional training, although helpful, is not sufficient or appropriate for resolving this constraint. Developing adequate in-country training capacity for PFM will be essential to the achievement of policy and programme goals.

The advantages of in-country training include:

- communication in national language(s) increases the accessibility and impact of training
- increased relevancy of information, adapted for national contexts
- increased flexibility in timing and venues
- lower costs and direct in-country economic benefits
- overall ability to reach more target participants
- corollary strengthening of key institutions and promotion of PFM

The existing capacity and strong organisational support for in-country PFM training -- in Lao language, by national trainers and institutions, and with locally adapted training content -- provides an important foundation for further training development. Regional training will continue to contribute to PFM development in Lao PDR, particularly if it is oriented to be supportive (rather than duplicative) of expanding national capacity for in-country training. A programme supporting such in-country capacity building and institutional strengthening, appropriately integrated with the institutional framework of the Forestry sector, would be welcomed and appreciated.

Drawing on its strengths as a recognised training institution and its positive relationship to the Forestry sector in Lao PDR, RECOFTC is positioned to initiate and support a special programme to strengthen in-country training for participatory forest management. Programmatic steps can be undertaken to initiate institutional relationships and to establish practical near-term objectives which, when accomplished, will provide the foundation for establishing longer-term objectives and an expanded effort. The SIDA grant provides near-term financial resources to undertake these steps, and it is hoped that the information and suggestions in this report may serve as a basis for programmatic discussions and planning between the GOL, other key organisations, and RECOFTC. Additional near-term funding may be available from organisations/projects supporting PFM in Lao PDR, and onward funding may be available from SIDA or other donors.
A special programme to strengthen in-country training for participatory forest management in Lao PDR could be initiated by the following steps:

1 Identify and select a combination of

- priority topics for in-country training, which most broadly meet the needs of organisations involved in PFM
- motivated individuals with strong potential for training leadership, in key organisations/units and institutional positions where training leadership in selected topics is possible (but not necessarily in training institutions *per se*); selected individuals must be Lao PDR nationals who are fluent in English and able to travel internationally.

Suggestions for priority topics and lead organisations/units are given below. Identification and selection of individuals who can serve as lead trainers, and who would be the core participants in the special programme, would need to be done through consultation with GOL and other potentially involved organisations.

2 Strengthen the skills of the selected individuals to serve as lead trainers in selected topics, through appropriate training for planning and implementing in country training courses. Training should cover training techniques, training needs assessment, and course design/planning including linkages to key training institutions, organisations, and field projects.

3 In cooperation with key organisations, promote the establishment of a national network of PFM trainers, and formation of working groups (not more than 6 people) associated with each selected topic.

4 Support selected lead trainers in the preparation and implementation of in country training courses linked to key organisations, field projects, and training institutions. Support could include expert technical assistance and/or funding support for developing and conducting in-country training.

This approach does not target/focus on training institutions *per se*, but seeks to engage training institutions by getting them involved as collaborators in designing, planning, and conducting in-country training courses.

Drawing on the findings in this study, recommendations for priority topics, location of lead trainers, and training support are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority topics</th>
<th>Source of lead trainer</th>
<th>Training support (FN 8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concepts and methods in participatory management of</td>
<td>A project supporting NCBA management within CPAWM</td>
<td>appropriate topical short course (if necessary) TOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protected areas</td>
<td></td>
<td>training course design, organisation and implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts and methods of NTFP development: resource</td>
<td>IUCN NTFP project</td>
<td>appropriate topical short course (if necessary) TOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assessment and management, harvesting, and marketing</td>
<td></td>
<td>training course design, organisation and implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods and application of action research in</td>
<td>Forestry Research Centre</td>
<td>appropriate topical short course (FN 9) TOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community forestry</td>
<td></td>
<td>training course design, organisation and implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporating gender in community forestry programming</td>
<td>Gender Unit</td>
<td>appropriate topical short course (FN 10) TOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>training course design, organisation and implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic concepts and methods in</td>
<td>A production-oriented</td>
<td>appropriate topical short course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recognising the scope of interest and expertise related to at least two of the suggested courses (protected areas and production forests), the special programme could target capacity building to small working groups (2-4 individuals) drawn from 2-3 projects, rather than by single individuals. While the cost of this would exceed the SIDA grant, organisations/projects in Lao PDR may be willing to co-fund additional participants.

Training on Incorporating Gender could be developed and implemented as an integral part of other courses, such as Participatory Management of Protected Areas, NTFP Development, and Participatory Forest Management. A similar approach could also be taken with developing and implementing training on Action Research, to make it an integral part of other courses. However, integrating two topics (such as Incorporating Gender and Participatory Management of Protected Areas or NTFP Development) would be a major accomplishment, and trying to integrate three training topics into one course might prove too ambitious.

A suggested schedule for the initial steps for this programme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feb - Apr</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>Sept - Nov</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consult with GOL, DOF, and key organisations regarding study findings and recommendations; confirm selected topics; select individuals</td>
<td>Programme participants attend Extension course at RECOFTC</td>
<td>Short course (at RECOFTC) for selected lead trainers on training course design and planning</td>
<td>Organisation and implementation (in Lao PDR) of training courses on priority topics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Major projects involved in participatory forest management in Lao PDR

**Forest Management and Conservation Program (FOMACOP)**

FOMACOP is the largest project supporting PFM in Lao PDR in terms of both financial resources and geographic coverage. FOMACOP is implemented through two subprograms: Forest Management which focuses on production forests, and NCBA Management which focuses on 4 NCBA in 4 provinces. The Forest Management Subprogram is promoting a version of PFM termed village forestry on a large scale, currently operating in 64 villages and expected to increase to 95 villages by 1999. Village forestry involves conveying both extensive management responsibilities and tenure rights over production forest areas (800 to 6000 ha) to villages, and providing appropriate training to both villagers and government Forestry staff. To support this ambitious program, FOMACOP/FMS has developed a large training capacity and substantial training materials for village forestry, but apparently with little communication or coordination with other PFM projects. To date, it is unclear whether this training capacity is available in practice outside FOMACOP/FMS, and both the training capacity and training materials have yet to be tested for appropriateness and adaptability by other projects and in other contexts.

A mid-term review of FOMACOP is scheduled for April 1998; issues related translating lessons learned from field experience into institutional strengthening are expected to be “high on the agenda.”

**SIDA Lao-Swedish Forestry Programme (LSFP)**

LSFP is the longest running and one of the largest projects in the forestry sector. The current LSFP phase (IV) concentrates on 1) developing models for planning and implementing activities to support sustainable land management, 2) developing technical and management competence, and 3) applied research. LSFP operates through six sub-programmes.
LSFP has a major commitment to training, including support for long-term formal training (currently supporting 21 MSc candidates at overseas institutions), external and in-country short courses, and other in-service training for Forestry staff from DOF to the village level. LSFP has expressed support for further developing in-country training, possibly with collaboration by a regional training institution such as RECOFTC (FN 11). Under its Forest Management Sub-programme, LSFP has started a Joint Forest Management project aimed at developing village-state partnership approaches to management of different types of production forests. The JFM project targets villages around Dong Kapho State Production Forest in Savanakhet province. The project is testing two different contractual arrangements which vary in allocation of responsibilities and benefits between villages and the state.

Under the Forestry Research Subprogramme, LSFP supports applied research, including substantial scope for research related to PFM, and the establishment of the new Forestry Research Centre.

**Lao-Japan Forestry Conservation and Afforestation Project (FORCAP)**

The goal of FORCAP is to promote forest/watershed management in Lao PDR through implementation of forest conservation (especially stabilising shifting agriculture) and afforestation in Nam Ngum Dam Watershed Area to ensure a sufficient water supply to the Nam Ngum reservoir. Started in 1996, phase one of FORCAP is nearing completion. Phase one was primarily a planning phase, emphasising participatory planning. Phase two (July 1998 - July 2003) will be an implementation phase. Associated projects supported by Japan include a special watershed study and construction of an afforestation center.

FORCAP has developed training capacity for village planning and has provided "pilot" training on agroforestry, livestock, handicrafts, fisheries, and other topics raised in village planning. FORCAP provides "on the job" training and is planning to support external training for 15 staff on community forestry extension and community-based water resource management.

**GTZ Nam Ngum Watershed Management and Conservation Project (NAWACOP)**

Started in 1995, NAWACOP is a ten-year project aimed at developing and implementing a participatory approach to watershed management in the upper Nam Ngum River watershed, above a hydroelectric facility constructed in 1973. The watershed is inhabited by approximately 80,000 people and affected by a variety of problems causing environmental degradation that threaten the hydroelectric facility, including different resource use practices and conflicts among ethnic groups, insecure tenure, swidden agriculture, cropping intensification, and logging. NAWACOP Phase 1 (1995-97) focused largely on information gathering, problem analysis, and project introduction to selected local communities. Phase 2 will expand the geographic target area and identify and promote key interventions, including an emphasis on increasing wood production by "freeing up" more area for forest from shifting cultivation. At present the project does not have a defined training strategy, but plans to engage a local consulting firm to conduct a training needs assessment associated with identification of key interventions.

**Community Forestry Project / Community Forestry Support Unit**

CFP is a project supported by CUSO and JVC. The overall project has four objectives, 1) coordination, 2) training, 3) establish pilot villages, and 4) data collection, documentation, and information exchange, but evolved to emphasise data collection and pilot villages. In practice the project is implemented as two subprojects, the Community Forestry Support Unit based in DOF and supported by CUSO, and the Community Forestry Development Project that operates in 18 villages in Khammouane supported by JVC.

The CFSU holds a unique institutional position and important potential for promoting and facilitating information sharing and cooperation among PFM projects and initiatives. However, financial, technical, and management support to the CFSU has been limited, which combined with other difficulties appears to have resulted in significant underachievement. One of the few projects designed to promote inter-organisational support, the CFSU received a large demand for PFM training, particularly from NGOs (such as JVC, MCC, CIDSE, CARE, Save the Children, ZOA), much of which it did not undertake due to inadequate capacity.

Although the CFSU has not yet realized its potential, DOF recognizes this important potential and is considering upgrading the CFSU to a national community forestry unit (FN 12).
IUCN Sustainable Use of Non-timber Forest Products Project (NTFP)

Started in 1995, the NTFP project aims at conserving forest biodiversity by promoting sustainable economic exploitation of NTFPs at the community and provincial levels. GOL favours NTFP development and promotes NTFP projects. The NTFP project is developing models of sustainable use of non-timber forest resources in 3 pilot areas (Oudomxai, Saravane, and Champassak provinces), based on establishment of community-level NTFP management. The project provides day-to-day training by technical advisors, has periodic in-house training courses, field training for GOL staff and pilot villages, and has used external training (RECOFTC). The project receives considerable demand for training related to PRA and NTFPs from other projects and provinces, and is considering establishing an NTFP training unit as a subproject or separate project.

IUCN NCBA projects

IUCN has been instrumental in promoting and supporting the identification and designation of National Biodiversity Conservation Areas (NCBAs) in Lao PDR IUCN is currently supporting the establishment of management strategies and capacity for two NCBAs, in Champassak and Saravane provinces. These projects have developed training capacities in participatory approaches for protected area management, and they are supportive of cooperation in training.

Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF)

The emphasis of WWF in Lao PDR is trans-border biodiversity conservation, especially in the south and east. WWF interest in PFM relates to integrated conservation and development, and participatory approaches to protected area management. WWF-Laos has supported trainings and study tours, and WWF has a regional training capacity (in Thailand and Vietnam), which already collaborates with RECOFTC. WWF is interested in cooperation in in-country training.

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

The objective of WCS is conservation of wildlife and wild habitats. WCS has mainly been supporting wildlife surveys which include village interviews, but is shifting to longer-term projects and environmental awareness and education. WCS supports community development as a strategy for conservation, and is actively involved in community forestry in one NCBA in northern Lao PDR WCS does not have experience in local participation in wildlife management but recognizes that involving local communities in wildlife survey and monitoring could lead to community interest in conservation and management. WCS is highly support of cooperation in training.

Table 2. Training institutions involved in participatory forest management in Lao PDR

Department of Forestry, National University of Lao PDR

The Department of Forestry of the National University (previously Dong Dok Forestry School, under the DOF) has a teaching staff of 38 (1 Phd, 10 MS, 15 BS, 12 Dipl.) and 328 students (268 in the Diploma programme and 60 in the Bsc programme). Curriculum, teaching skills, and facilities are being upgraded with support from Germany. Curriculum development is in communication with DOF, and students from Dong Dok do practical studies through DOF. Development of a "training and model forest", in coordination with DOF, also figures prominently in plans. The Department has a link to FORSPA and has been contacted by the ICRAF SEA initiative. Social forestry is not yet a major component in the curricula, but the Department recognizes that social and village forestry "is a core part of the curriculum" and is actively in the process of revising the curricula toward participatory forest management. An inter-institutional teaching course on Social Forestry and Land Use Planning was held Sep-Oct 1997, and one on applied research in social forestry (drawing on FSR concepts) is planned for February 1998. The Department was highly receptive to expanding links to the DOF and other organisations, including joint seminars, training, facilities (such as a herbarium to be implemented in collaboration with IUCN) and field activities. Applied research in social forestry and action research were specifically discussed and encouraged by the GTZ advisor as possible modes of linkage between Dong Dok and DOF.

Regional Agricultural and Forestry Extension Training Centers
Several regional forestry training institutions exist, although the specific titles, functions, and assignments seem to be in a state of flux. Regional Agricultural and Forestry Extension Training Centers, located at Luang Prabang (Xieng ngem) and in Savannakhet province (Xepon), are intended to provide short-course training of 3-6 week duration, on a demand basis. Course topics may include silviculture, nurseries, firewood, and conservation. A course on joint forest management (organised by Mr. Khamphay) was held at the RAFETC in Savannakhet. A curriculum under development since 1996 (by DOF with support from LSFP) planned and partially drafted subject materials for four training modules, all of which are topically relevant to PFM. An analysis of the RAFETCs was prepared by LSFP in 1997 (see appendix). The RAFETCs are perceived as lacking qualified staff and being hard to use because of their locations.

Footnotes

1. Prepared by Doug Henderson, a community forestry specialist based in Phnom Penh, Cambodia
2. Also known as shifting or slash and burn cultivation.
5. The term 'participatory forest management' is used in this report to refer to community based strategies for forest management. While the term 'community forestry' is generally used elsewhere in Asia, in Lao PDR this term is less appropriate because of difficulties arising in translating the term community.
6. FOMACOP Forest Management Subprogramme, although in many respects implemented as a 'pilot-type project targeting specific geographic areas, operates at such a large scale and with substantial accomplishments as to potentially be an institutional strengthening project. At present, FOMACOP Forest Management Subprogramme seems highly cautious, perhaps reluctant, to engage in broader institutional development not directly supportive to accomplishing its geographically defined output targets, thus in the view of the authors it is primarily a 'pilot' project rather than an institutional strengthening project.
7. The broader institutional issues were generally recognized by informants; characterizations of the project relationships included "Balkanized" and "islands of success."
8. EXT = Extension short course; PAS = Participatory Management of Protected Areas short course; PART = Participatory Approaches short course, in Nepal
9. A training course on action research is under consideration by RECOFTC, but may not be available within the desired timeframe, so participation in an alternative course may be necessary
10. TBD
11. Memo from S. Gill to B. Inthilath, 29 January 1998
12. Interview with Mr. Bounthong