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**MISSION REPORT**  
**(Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation  
and On-farm Research)**  
**IUARP LAOS**

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PICTURE

Typical Landscape: Fallow vegetation in its different stages

## Executive Summary

This report covers a mission conducted during the period May 4 to May 12, 2002 for the Integrated Upland Agricultural Research Project (IUARP), Luang Prabhang Province, Laos. A workshop was designed to assist the Implementation Team (IT) of IUARP to come up with a Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) framework. Educational support materials were compiled and distributed as reference materials for the future. An introduction to basic concepts and practices of M and E and then PME, was undertaken followed by small group work. This resulted in a basic PME framework for the project. A practical, non-academic orientation to PME was put in place where project objectives became the organizing framework for the exercise. Overtime, increased levels of sophistication in the application of participatory methods may be aimed at and achieved (outcome monitoring). Initially, a few tools such as case stories, farm plans, livelihood profiles, maps (which local team are already familiar with) are suggested. The workshop provided participants an opportunity to discuss the needs for benchmark studies and its links with some of the P M and E tools. There is a need to ensure that benchmark studies are limited to a few critical indicators to avoid collecting too much data. The critical role of the IT in monitoring the implementation of the PME framework was emphasized as well as the need to better utilize, at community levels, the data-sets previously generated. The potential for participating communities to gradually establish village information systems may also be explored even as household level studies are undertaken to monitor the projects' progress and impact.

A related objective of the mission involved an assessment of IUARP's on-farm, participatory research and development effort. IUARP is probably among the very projects where PR and D is being undertaken among communities that are primarily engaged in shifting cultivation or its variations. With 200-300 farmers involved in various project activities, IUARP has a strategic opportunity to demonstrate that PR and D approaches do make a difference in the generation of relevant approaches and that they do result in eventual up-scaling of technologies. There is a need to limit direct interventions to the 8 villages (already rather large for a PR and D effort) if quality results are to be achieved. Therefore maintaining the desired levels of follow up and support will be a challenge given the low numbers of support staff. The project would therefore do well to explore opportunities for farmer-to-farmer extension and to identify opportunities for up scaling impact, using farmer-centered approaches. Cross visits may be introduced to complement the current emphasis on field days as a tool for education. Within a year, the project might want to consider using farmers as trainers or resource persons and even as peer reviewers and evaluators.

The mission also provided the consultant an opportunity to discuss the need and role for IEC (information, education and communication) materials. Posters and Brochures were proposed for use at the community levels and among local government officials and other support agencies. The need for decentralizing production so that the important stakeholders have increased control on the development and dissemination of materials was stressed. The idea of Resource book on Upland Resource Management in Laos was also introduced.

## **A. Introduction:**

The Integrated Upland Agricultural Research Project (IUARP) focuses on the upland areas of Luang Prabhang province in the north of Laos. It is implemented by the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, assisted/supported by a number of international collaborating institutions including IRRI, ICRAF, CIAT and others. Traditional shifting cultivation practices predominate in the uplands of Laos and, therefore, a considerable amount of the research and development efforts are geared towards addressing problems and issues associated with such systems. Participatory approaches to developing appropriate livelihood packages are featured, through an emphasis on on-farm participatory research in 8 villages. Priority areas include rice varietal improvement and related agronomic measures for enhancing productivity, diversification into fruit and other agroforestry options, livestock and forage development, fallow management, small-scale aquaculture, etc. The improvement of capacities of local communities and support institutions is also emphasized, along with methodological development in the generation of technological options. Dissemination and upscaling approaches will also be eventually built into the program.

## **B. Nature of the Mission:**

The consultant undertook this mission between May 4, 2002 to May 12, 2002. It was conducted under the guidance and in collaboration with ICRAF's Senior Capacity Building Specialist, Dr. Chun K. Lai. In addition, the presence of Dr. Sushil Pandey of IRRI also enriched the mission. One day was spent in Vientiane and the rest of the mission involved a stay at Luang Prabhang provincial capital town (where the workshop was conducted) and visits to project field sites.

The primary role of the consultant was to assist IUARP staff to develop a participatory monitoring and evaluation framework and to suggest practical approaches for its use at the community level. A related objective involved an assessment of IUARP's on-farm participatory research and development efforts. A day and a half was devoted to issues relating to extension materials development, a related but somewhat distinct agenda. The workshop was co-facilitated, at its different stages, by Dr. Chun K. Lai of ICRAF, this consultant and Mr. Phouthone Sophathilath (a NAFRI-designated IUARP Coordinator), and attended by members of the IUARP Implementation Team.

## **C. The P M and E workshop**

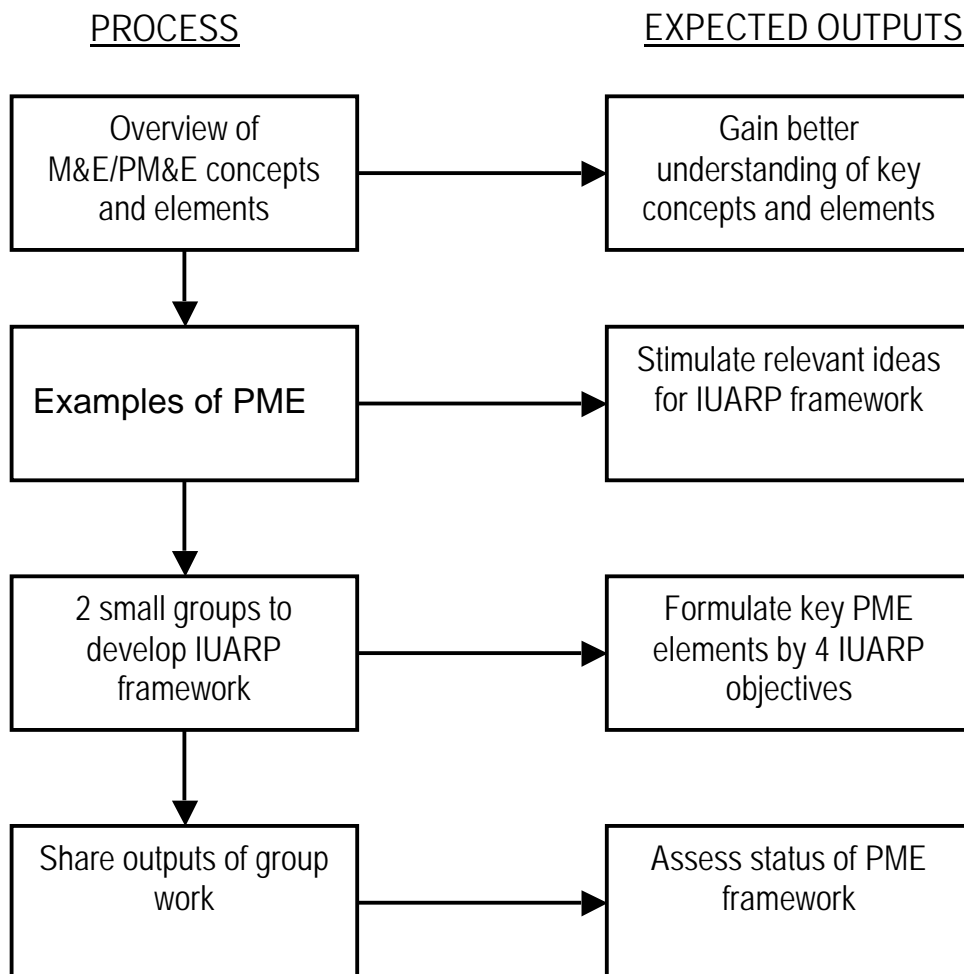
### **(i) A Background and Overview:**

The workshop to develop the P M and E framework was conducted over a 2 ½ day period (May 7 to 9, 2002). The workshop included a discussion of the bench mark survey (later changed to benchmark *study*) proposed by IRRI as well an exploration of issues relating to on-farm research and extension materials production. In order to do

justice to the PM and E agenda, the initial emphasis on extension materials production had to be reduced.

A considerable emphasis during the planning for this mission involved the identification of relevant materials which could serve as future reference to the IUARP team. All participants were provided with reference materials compiled by the consultant from a range of sources (IIRR, CIP-UPWARD, ICRAF, ACIAR, IIED/IDS, etc.). An attempt was made to first introduce the concepts of M and E (including the differences between the two) and only then discuss the participatory dimensions/issues relating to PM and E. Given the current level of knowledge and practice of participatory research methods and the level of understanding of M and E issues among the various participating institutions, *a step-by-step approach* to introducing PM and E is desirable/realistic. For example, a decision was made during the workshop, to use the project objectives (not the outcomes) as the basis for the PM and E framework. Outcome monitoring is considerably more complex and it might be something to consider later in the project cycle, possibly, even in the second phase.

### **DEVELOPING A PME FRAMEWORK FOR IUARP**



Once an understanding of basic P M and E concepts and principles was achieved among participants, the workshop discussed examples from other projects and then moved quickly to a hands-on activity: one of the four IUARP objective was “developed,” allowing participants to identify key questions, indicators, information needed, methods, responsibilities, etc. The four IUARP objectives were used as the basic organizing framework. Outputs from small group sessions were fed back to the rest of the participants. Discussions contributed to an improvement of the framework.

The framework the participants came up with is considered as work in progress, subject to review and finalization by committee members and organizational representatives who were not present at the meeting.

***(ii) A PM&E Framework for IUARP***

The P M and E framework for IUARP, **developed by workshop participants** appears on the next 2 pages: