



**“We are feeling safe about our land now”**

GIZ Land Program Laos:

Assessing the contribution to changes in land use, investments in land and perceived tenure security

# Imprint

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## Executive Summary

For the past decade, GIZ has supported participatory land use planning, land registration and land titling as a vehicle for sustainable rural development in Lao PDR. Following a number of predecessor programmes, the current Land Program (including Land Management and Decentralized Planning (LMDP) and Enhanced Land Tenure Security (ELTeS) projects) is active in the provinces of Luang Namtha, Sayabouri, Huaphan and Khammouane. This impact study focussed on some of the **intermediary and longer-term changes that GIZ's work in the land sector has been aiming to bring about in Laos**. Its purpose is to lead to a better understanding of trends in land management and perceived tenure security.

This impact study was conducted at the end of 2016 in 34 villages in Luang Namtha and Huaphan, selected to cover a range of criteria. Some of the study villages are designated ELTeS area and have not had substantial interventions by a land project to date. This allows the study to **compare trends in intervention areas with trends in similar areas** that have had no intervention so far. Enumerator teams conducted individual interviews with 546 respondents (16 per village). The study team also organised two focus group discussions per village, one with women and one with village authorities. In the following, the findings are summed up:

As part of its land registration work, the project aimed to disseminate information and thereby enhance villagers' awareness of matters related to land use rights. **Villagers in the intervention area consistently knew more than respondents in non-intervention areas**. What is more, women were less knowledgeable about land use rights and land titles than men, and especially at a community level, it is the village authorities and mostly men who discuss and make decisions.

Villagers were most importantly asked about their **perceived tenure security** and a majority of respondents in intervention areas felt that the interventions had **increased their land tenure security**: 73% of respondents who have had PLUP in their village, 98% of respondents who had land registration and 96% of respondents who had land registration and land titling confirmed they felt *more secure* about their land rights after the activity. Villages that had experienced the full project intervention of PLUP, Land Registration and Land Titling were more confident regarding their land security than those villages that had only experienced PLUP or only had land registration but had not yet received land titles. **The more comprehensive the intervention was, the more secure respondents perceived their land use rights to be**. However, in those areas where GIZ had not yet implemented any land management activities, respondents noted similarly high levels of perceived land security compared to project intervention areas. Respondents in non-intervention areas were also less knowledgeable about their land rights. This suggests that **one of the factors influencing the level of perceived tenure security is knowledge about land rights and awareness of potential threats to land tenure security**, which may lead to a more realistic assessment of tenure security by villagers.

Regarding **land transactions**, the study found a similar share of respondents who said that in the past they had conducted land transactions in intervention and non-intervention areas. In addition, most respondents experienced no problems regarding their land transactions (e.g. buying land, inheriting land, etc.), even without land registration or land titling. According to this finding, the project had no significant influence on land transactions.

When asked about **land conflicts**, the respondents reported that land conflicts occur occasionally (14% of all 546 respondents had experienced land conflicts in the last five years) and that most conflicts that do occur are relatively minor. Those **minor land conflicts can usually be solved at the local level by the**

**village authorities.** In intervention areas, most respondents noted that where previous boundary conflicts within the village were resolved, this was done by relevant parties themselves, or with the help of village authorities or the Village Land Management Committee (VLMC). The PLUP or Land Registration team usually does not discuss conflicts directly but instead refers them to the village authorities. The solution of land conflicts does not happen directly through the project intervention but only indirectly: the PLUP and land registration team activate locally existing land resolution processes, such as the land mediation unit. In that sense, **pre-existing land conflicts can rather be surfaced by project intervention and resolution occurs through the local village authorities.**

Regarding **investments in land**, the study found that most investments in land were made regardless of whether land was registered or titled. However, at least 11% of respondents that had invested capital in their land explicitly confirmed they had done so because they felt that land registration or titling provided greater land security. Connected with that, the study enquired about the **access to bank loans** and it turned out that Loans are often obtained by respondents without a land title as a collateral. Mostly, loan users obtain a group loan from the *Nayobay Bank*, or otherwise from family members. Therefore, investment on the basis of loans also usually occurs independently of having a land title.

Some of the findings still leave room for interpretation and additional research: almost half of all land title holders were women and yet, they still report difficulties with getting involved in the decision-making regarding this land. Women also know less about their land use rights. **Apart from increasing knowledge about land rights, the interventions appear to have had the most significant effect on perceived tenure security, and chances of accessing larger loans from commercial banks.** The Land-Program now faces opportunities and challenges of raising awareness, especially of women, about their land use rights. While the study sheds light on what resulted from land management, the real test for actual tenure security, as opposed to perceived tenure security, is still to come.

## Acronyms

<b>BMZ</b>	<i>Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung</i> , German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>CLST</b>	Communication on Systematic Land Titling
<b>DoNRE</b>	District-Office of Natural Resources and Environment
<b>ELTeS</b>	Enhanced Land Tenure Security in Laos
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>GIZ</b>	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
<b>HPN</b>	Huaphan Province
<b>IKM</b>	Information and Knowledge Management
<b>Lao PDR</b>	Lao People's Democratic Republic
<b>LMDP</b>	Land Management and Decentralized Planning
<b>LM-RED</b>	Land Management and Rural Economic Development
<b>LMRP</b>	Land Management and Land Registration Project
<b>LN</b>	Luang Namtha Province
<b>LPDP</b>	Land Policy Development Project
<b>LR</b>	Land Registration
<b>LT</b>	Land Titling
<b>MoNRE</b>	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
<b>NREIC</b>	Natural Resources and Environmental Information Centre, part of MoNRE
<b>NTFP</b>	Non-Timber Forest Products
<b>NUDP</b>	Northern Uplands Development Programme
<b>NU-IRDP</b>	Northern Uplands Integrated Rural Development Programme
<b>ODK</b>	Open Data Kit (ODK)
<b>PLUP</b>	Participatory Land Use Planning
<b>PoNRE</b>	Province-Office of Natural Resources and Environment
<b>VDP</b>	Village Development Planning
<b>VLMC</b>	Village Land Management Committees

## 1. Brief overview of GIZ's recent land management work

One of the potential barriers that Lao PDR is facing in its quest to become an Upper-Middle-Income Country<sup>1</sup> by 2030 relates to the degree of land security experienced by its citizens as well as the effective and sustainable use of private and communal land. Good land management is linked to a range of other development issues, such as food security, environmental and socio-economic sustainability, and resource management. Accordingly, a study of 108 countries published in 2002 validated a link between stronger property rights and an increased average growth rate in per capita income of 6 to 14 % annually<sup>2</sup>.

In order to address this complex challenge, GIZ has supported the Government of Lao PDR at different levels – the national, provincial, district and village levels – for much of the past decade<sup>3</sup>. Current interventions include the “Northern Uplands Development Programme” (NUDP), established in 2010, promoting rural development in remote, mountainous areas of Laos, specifically nine districts in the three Northern provinces of Luang Prabang, Phongsaly and Houaphan. The BMZ-funded component of NUDP – the “Northern Uplands Integrated Rural Development Programme” (NU-IRDP) – was implemented by GIZ from 2010 to 2015, aiming to strengthen government capacity to effectively address problems of land use and local development in participatory ways. As part of NU-IRDP, “Village Development Planning” (VDP) and “Participatory Land Use Planning” (PLUP) activities were supported in 446 and 230 villages respectively, implemented by local government staff partners with the participation of local villagers, in addition to other activities.

In parallel with NU-IRDP, from 2011 to 2014, GIZ rolled out a component on “Land Management and Rural Economic Development” (LM-RED), which was based on experiences of the previous “Land Management and Land Registration Project” (LMRP). LM-RED supported the “Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy” (MoNRE) in defining and testing a model for systematic land registration in pilot districts. LM-RED provided trainings, surveying equipment and technical assistance for establishing a cadastre and land titling system, and aimed to raise awareness of land rights among rural communities in target areas.

The experience derived from NU-IRDP and LM-RED subsequently fed into the current “Land Management and Decentralized Planning” (LMDP) Programme starting in 2015 and running until the end of 2017, which operates at a national level and in two districts in four provinces respectively. LMDP implements components on General and Agricultural Land Use Planning, Systematic Land Registration, Decentralized Development Planning, and Quality Investment Promotion. Another related component – “Enhanced Land Tenure Security” in Laos (ELTeS) started in 2017 and is designed to run until 2020, implemented in five additional districts of three of the LMDP target provinces.

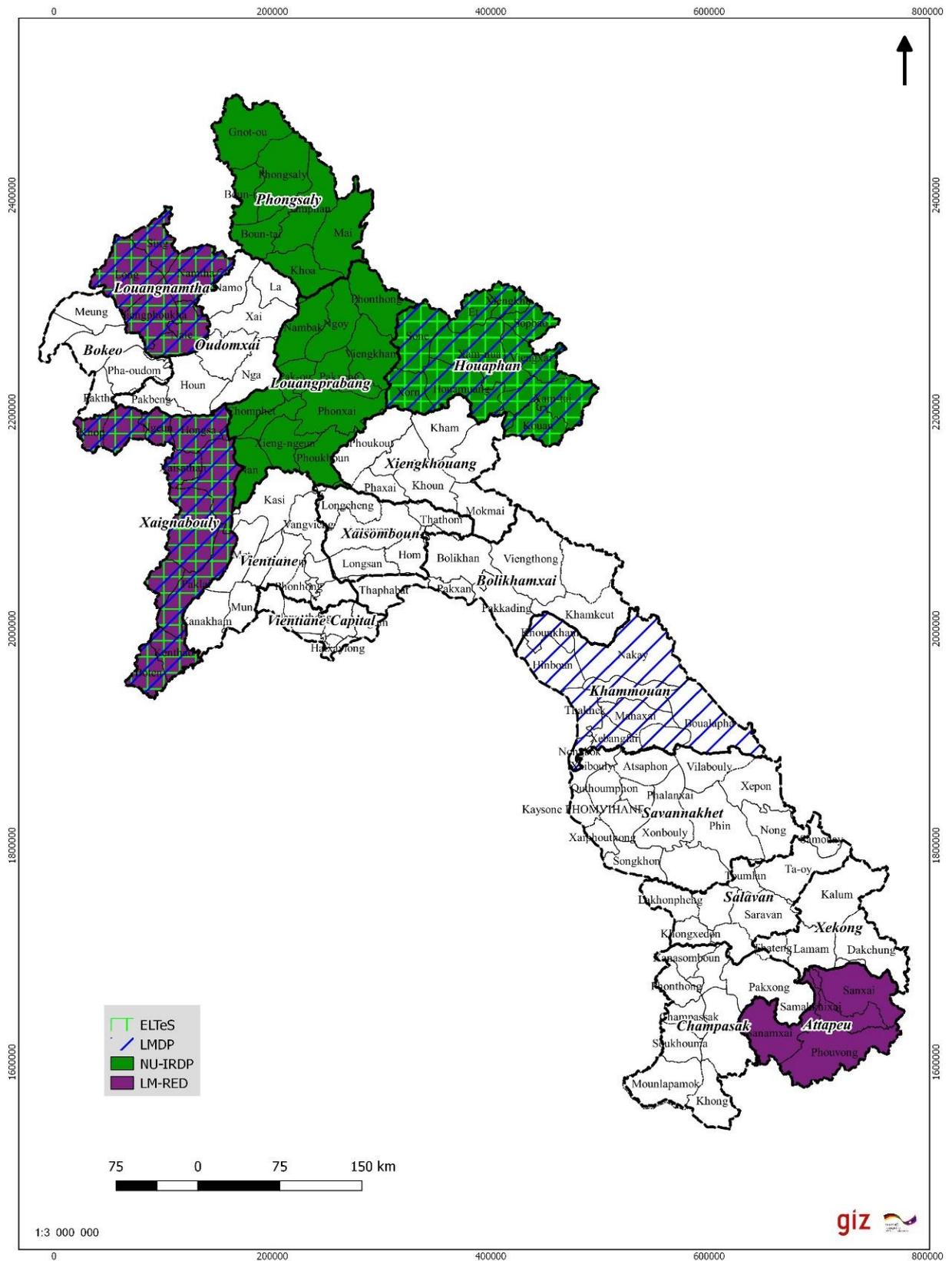
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<sup>1</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016 – 2020) of Lao PDR, Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Keefer, P., Knack, S. (2002). Polarization, politics and property rights: Links between inequality and growth. *Public Choice* 111, 127–154.

<sup>3</sup> The GIZ intervention in the land sector formally started in 2003 with the “Land Policy Development Project” (LPDP), as part of the second phase of the World Bank Land Titling Project. GTZ (before becoming part of GIZ) was responsible for the component “Land Policy and Legal Frameworks”.

Visual 1: Map of target areas



LMDP implements **five thematic components**:

1. Land Governance
2. Land Use & Spatial Planning
3. Land Registration
4. Decentralized Development Planning
5. Quality Investment Promotion

Each of these components is designed to contribute to a number of shorter-term and medium-term changes.

Expected **short- and medium-term changes**

- Increased capacity of different levels of government in land governance
- Increased knowledge and awareness of systematic land registration and titling, as well as of safeguards among communities, private sector and government actors
- Improved practice of government and private sector, reflected in improved quality of responsible investments
- Increased number of plots registered and land titles issued
- Land registration and titling enabling land users to invest more in land and transfer land more easily, thereby contributing to improved income
- Reduction of unresolved land conflicts

Ultimately, these changes are expected to contribute to three central expected impacts in the longer term, serving the central objective of “ensuring that the target population enjoys greater legal rights to land use while improving the management of public and private investments”.

These **three central expected impacts** are:

1. Greater protection of land rights and increased tenure security
2. Greater protection of natural resources
3. Greater reduction in poverty levels

Evidence for the complex long-term changes that GIZ has been trying to support in Laos is only emerging gradually, with many of the contextual drivers and barriers, such as national legislation, being largely beyond the sphere of GIZ's influence.

This impact study will focus on some of these intermediary and longer-term changes.



LMDP intervention villages have received different types of support over time, including support provided by the GIZ programmes mentioned above.

Each village covered by the impact study has been exposed to one of the following **types of intervention**:

1. Eligible for support but no support provided to date (designated ELTeS intervention areas)
2. Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP)
3. Micro-LUP<sup>4</sup> and Land Registration
4. PLUP and Land Registration
5. PLUP and Land Registration and Land Titling

## 2. Scope, objectives, and methodology of the study

### 2.1 Context of the study

This impact study was conducted from November to December 2016, nearly two years into LMDP and several years after GIZ started rolling out PLUP in the target areas. The study intends to provide a longer-term view of outcomes resulting from GIZ's land management work, specifically for LMDP, in the intervention areas. The LMDP team intends to use observations and findings for future decision-making and adjustments of the approach of the project. In addition, results, accompanying challenges and opportunities will be shared with stakeholders in-country, donors, and interested members of the public.

### 2.2 Key assumptions to investigate

Key assumptions of the impact study were based on the so-called "results model" of the LMDP project, which links project activities to primary and secondary desired impacts. While this review will not address the entire package of interventions under LMDP, it will shed light on a few key assumptions which especially the land registration component is founded on.

#### Key assumptions of the Impact Study:

1. **LMDP activities in the villages will contribute to greater knowledge** among the communities of their land use rights and the opportunities associated with exercising those land use rights.
2. **Land registration and land titling will lead to greater (perceived) tenure security** among target communities. The more comprehensive the GIZ interventions package is, the higher the villagers' perceived land security.
3. **Land registration and land titling activities will enable villagers to conduct land transactions** at greater ease and more safety through a formalized transaction process
4. **Land conflicts occur regularly and** are affecting lives and livelihoods in target areas. **Land registration and land titling activities will result in a reduction and prevention of land conflicts.**
5. **Land registration and land titling activities will increase the willingness of villagers to invest** in their land since they now feel more secure because of their land title
6. **Land Titles will be used by the villagers as a collateral to obtain formal bank loans**

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<sup>4</sup> Micro-LUP is a process of Land Categorization and Land Zoning as carried out by MoNRE and its sub-national line agencies between 2010 and 2013. Carried out in 2 to 3 days per village, this process does not provide the level of participation and PLUP, or the level of detail in outputs.

The study will test these assumptions and thereby arrive at a conclusion on LMDP's effectiveness, unexpected outcomes, and challenges and opportunities encountered by the programme regarding its contribution to changes in land use, investments in land and perceived tenure security.

### 2.3 The study's approach

The study combines two basic approaches to impact evaluation. On the one hand, it applies a retrospective approach by asking respondents to recall the situation at the beginning of the intervention and comparing it to the current situation. It uses a limited number of villages – 34 in two provinces Luang-Namtha and Huaphan – for investigation, to arrive at a detailed picture of change in each village. These two provinces were chosen because they best covered the diversity of interventions implemented in the past, allowing for a longer-term view of the effects of previous GIZ interventions. The study design seeks to test several assumptions on how the interventions contributes to specific changes. In addition to testing these assumptions, the study identifies other factors that influenced the intervention and the expected results, and arrives at conclusions about the role of the GIZ intervention.

While limited resources available for the study made a systematic use of comparison groups difficult, data was collected in both intervention and non-intervention areas. These non-intervention areas are designated for ELTeS and have so far been little exposed to land management activities. The study also looks at examples for each of the levels of support (from only PLUP to PLUP in combination with land registration and titling) in two key provinces, Huaphan and Luang Namtha.

The study conducted individual interviews with 546 respondents (usually 16 per village). The study team also organised two focus group discussions per village, one with women (383 participants in total) and one with village authorities (412 participants in total). Of the 34 villages in total, 23 had received project interventions to a different degree. The remaining 11 villages served as a comparison group as they had not encountered any project intervention yet.

Study villages were selected in a mixed purposive-convenience sample. The sampling sought to ensure the following would be included:

- Villages in which GIZ activities had started at least two to three years ago
- Example villages for each intervention categories in both selected provinces
- An equal number of villages for each of the selected provinces

Individual interviewees and focus group participants were selected on the basis of gender, age and ethnicity to broadly reflect the composition of the target villages. Most participants in the focus group discussions had also participated in the individual interviews. Depending on the size of the village, 15% to 50% of households were represented in the sample at the village level. While we cannot make generalisations about the villages in which data was collected or about the overall intervention areas of LMDP and predecessor programmes at large, the 546 individual interviews in addition to almost 70 focus group discussions provide a comprehensive picture of trends.

Table 1: Overview of the sampled villages in Luang Namtha and Huaphan

Village Group	Luang Namtha (LNT)	Huaphan (HPN)
<b>Group 1. No support yet (called Comparison Group)</b>	6 ELTeS villages (some PLUP activities in 2005 – 07)	5 ELTeS villages
<b>Group 2. Only PLUP</b>	2 LM-RED villages	2 NU-IRDP villages
<b>Group 3. Micro LUP and Land Registration</b>	N/A <sup>5</sup>	2 LMDP villages
<b>Group 4. PLUP and Land Reg.</b>	2 LM-RED villages:	2 LMDP villages
<b>Group 5. PLUP, Land Reg. and Land Titling</b>	3 LM-RED villages 4 LMDP villages	5 NU-IRDP villages 1 village in Houamuang <sup>6</sup>
	<b>17 villages</b>	<b>17 villages</b>

Table 2 in Annex 1 provides a detailed overview of the villages’ socioeconomic and demographic background.

A semi-structured questionnaire was developed to gain a reliable picture of developments at a village level, complemented by focus group discussions that allowed enumerator teams to delve deeper into trends that had come up in the individual interviews and to gain a better understanding of motivations, and barriers supporting or holding back the programme.

Field data was collected by LMDP’s IKM Team supported by the LMDP Provincial Assistants, two interns and by two staff from the “Natural Resources and Environmental Information Centre” (NREIC), under MoNRE. The interviewers for the first time used digital data gathering devices – tablets – to capture data, allowing for greater speed and ease of data-entry transfer and data-cleaning.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. Findings

The sample of villagers who took part in the individual interviews **showed the following characteristics:**

- 94% of respondents are married.
- 45% of respondents are female.
- 83% of respondents classify themselves as non-poor<sup>8</sup>.
- 93% of respondents are farmers.
- 76% of respondents were born in the village of which they are now a resident.

Most respondents belong to the Lao-Tai ethnic group and live off their land through permanent or rotational agriculture as well as livestock raising. 27% of those interviewed belong to the village authorities. Figures suggest that those respondents in non-intervention areas included in the study, on average, were more likely to classify themselves as poor, compared to the intervention group. This may have influenced the way people responded.

<sup>5</sup> All villages in Luang Namtha that had Land Registration based on a Micro-LUP already received land titles

<sup>6</sup> One village in Houamuang was reassigned from being in the comparison group (Group 1) to Group 5 as it was discovered that Land Titling had already been conducted by the Government of Laos.

<sup>7</sup> The software (Kobo Toolbox) is based on the Open-Data-Kit (ODK) and allowed a fast and economic data-analysis.

<sup>8</sup> Respondents were asked to categorise themselves according to the official definition of poverty of the Government. If they did not know about this, they were asked for their personal assessment.

Figure 1 below shows how breakdown of ethnicities in the study population, aggregated and by province. Figure 2 presents an overview of main income sources of respondents.

Figure 2: Ethnicity of survey respondents

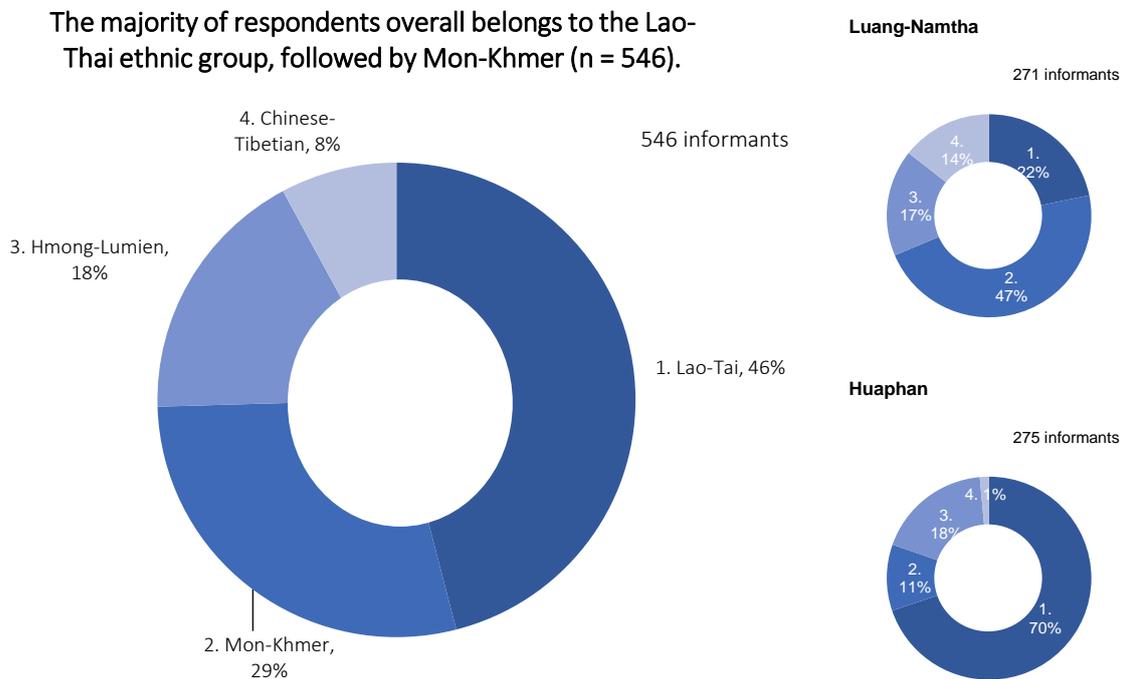
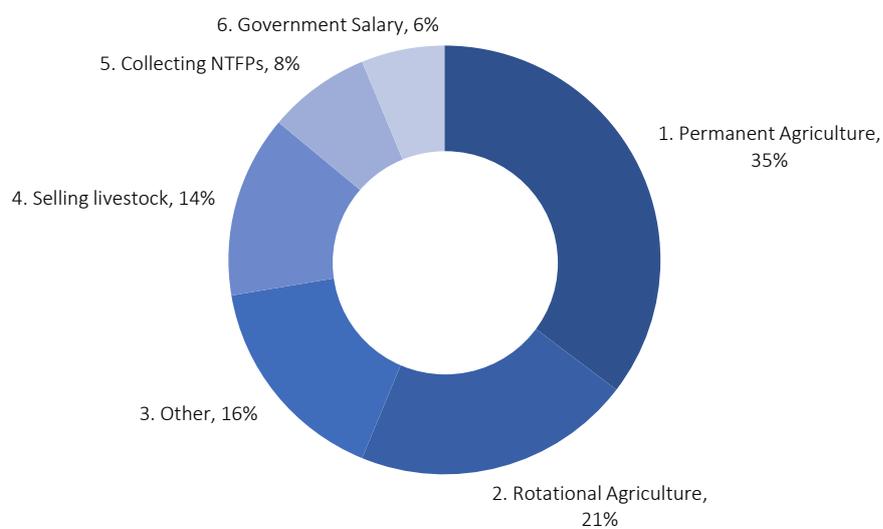


Figure 3: Main sources of income of survey respondents

Main sources of income: Most of the respondents (56%) derive their main income from permanent or rotational agriculture (n=546).



### 3.1 Expected Outcome 1: Enhanced Knowledge of Land Use Rights

Some of the activities under LM DP – specifically “Communication on Systematic Land Titling” (CLST) – aimed to disseminate information on land use rights and obligations to villagers in target areas. These activities were expected to improve villagers’ knowledge of relevant topics, such as land use rights; the process of land registration and titling; the role that village authorities would play in the process; and the advantages of owning a land title particularly for women. CLST was implemented by DoNRE staff jointly with the Lao Women’s Union.

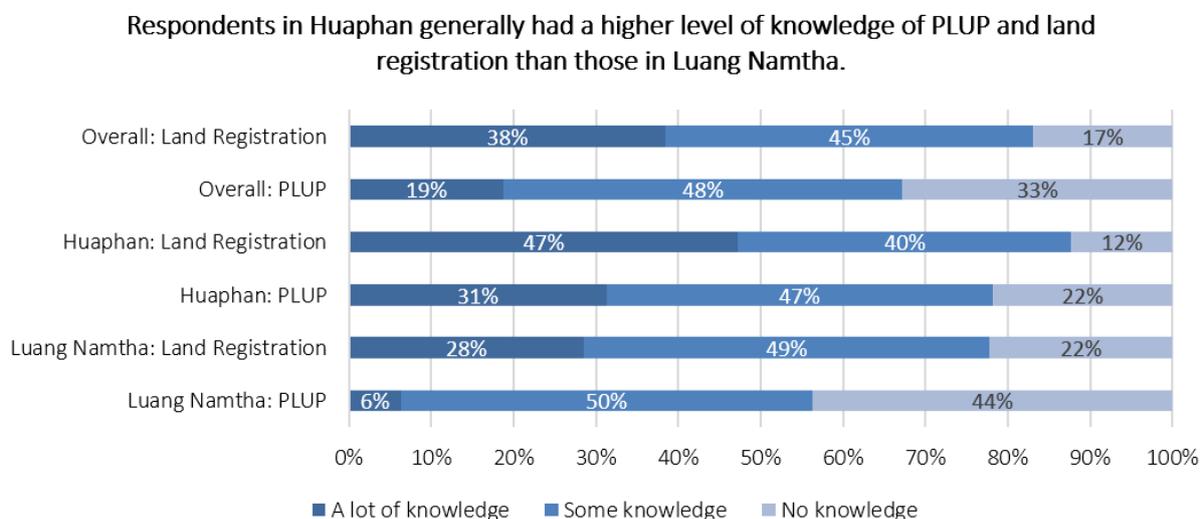
#### *Awareness of the intervention*

First, the study interviews aimed to check whether respondents remembered the intervention at all. They prompted respondents to recall the different GIZ interventions – from PLUP to land registration: According to the interviewers’ assessment:

- 57% of respondents in target areas demonstrated *some or significant* knowledge of PLUP (211 out of 371 respondents only in intervention villages).
- 83% of respondents in target areas displayed *some or significant* knowledge of the land registration process (308 out of 371 respondents only in intervention villages).

**Respondents from intervention villages in Huaphan were notably better at recalling the interventions compared to those in Luang Namtha.** This translated into a similar pattern for knowledge of relevant issues – they were consistently and at times significantly better informed than respondents in Luang-Namtha.

Figure 4: Levels of intervention recall in intervention villages in Huaphan and Luang Namtha



One possible explanation for this is that activities in Huaphan included more communication and awareness raising of legal rights. Respondents there also had a better grasp of the Lao language, which has likely influenced how well they understood any information disseminated to them during the activity. Additionally, villages in Huaphan targeted in the study tended to be closer to urban areas and less remote than villages in Luang Namtha, which are often also populated by members of ethnic Akha.

### *Increased knowledge about land use rights and land titles*

Of the topics addressed during the interviews, **villagers in intervention areas knew the most about land titles**, followed by knowledge about private land use rights and finally communal land use rights:

- 40% of respondents in intervention villages said they had “a lot of knowledge” about land titles (148 out of 371 respondents, only in intervention villages), 39% said they had “some knowledge” (145 out of 371 respondents).
- 32% of respondents in intervention villages said they had “a lot of knowledge” about private land use rights (119 out of 371 respondents); 53% said they had “some knowledge” (197 out of 371 respondents).
- 29% of respondents in intervention villages said they had “a lot of knowledge” about communal land use rights (108 out of 371 respondents); 49% said they had “some knowledge” (182 out of 371 respondents).

The gender of respondents affected their level of knowledge to some degree. **Women were less knowledgeable about land use rights and land titles than men:**

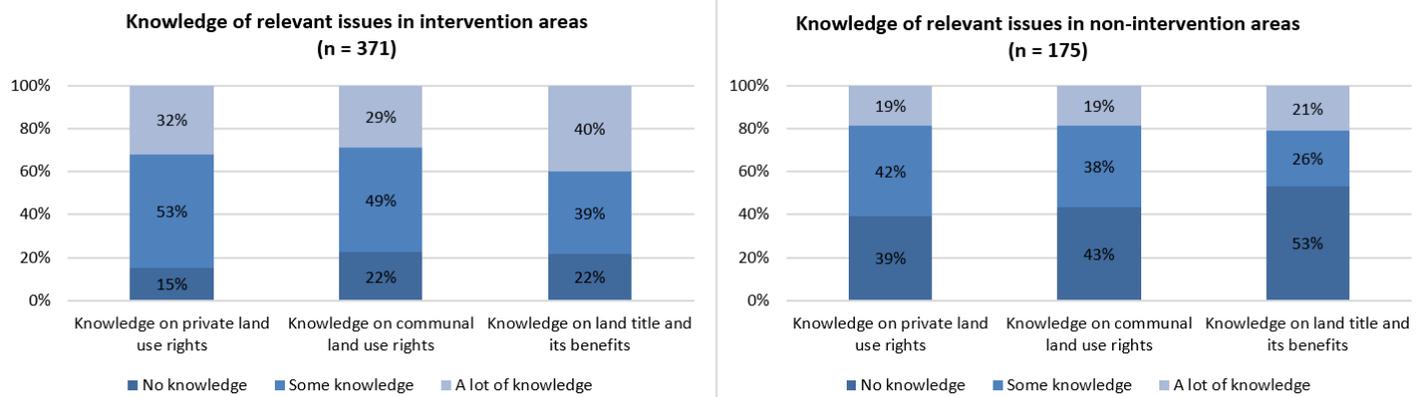
- 40% of women vs. 24% of men reported to have “no knowledge” about **land titles**
- 29% of women vs. 18% of men reported to have “no knowledge” of **private land use rights**
- 37% of women vs. 23% of men reported to have “no knowledge” of **communal land use rights**

This pattern is not entirely surprising, considering previous studies, e.g. the NU-IRDP impact study, which demonstrated that women participated less actively in interventions and were less confident in voicing their opinions in meetings and in their level of knowledge about relevant issues. The observation that women have less knowledge about land titles and their land use rights was supported by the focus group discussions, where women in both intervention and non-intervention areas tended to report the same: while they are usually involved in decision-making at a household level, at a community level it is the village authorities and mostly men who discuss and make decisions. A few focus groups discussions surfaced a lack of clarity about the right of widows or women in general to participate in village level meetings.

### *GIZ's contribution to increased knowledge*

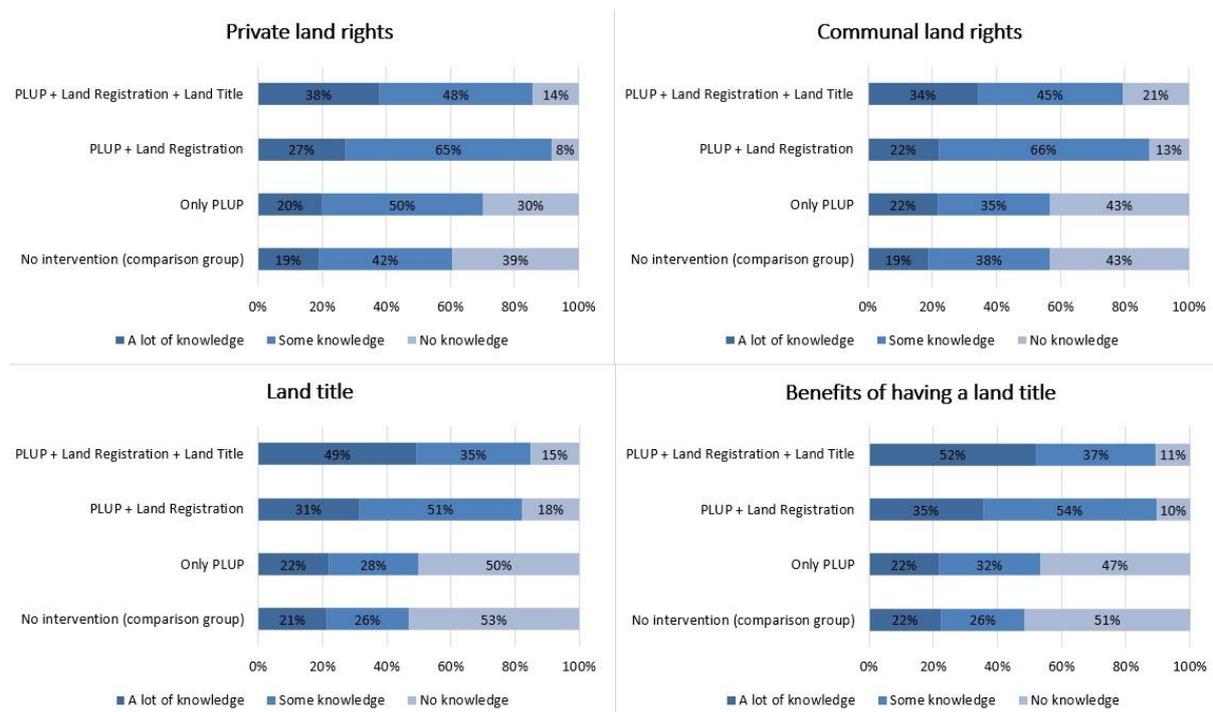
The study finds that **those who had been exposed to GIZ's awareness raising and other activities were more knowledgeable about relevant issues than those in villages where GIZ had not implemented any awareness raising activities**. This trend is particularly pronounced for knowledge on land titles, where 53% of respondents in non-intervention areas said they had no knowledge about land titles, compared to 22% in intervention areas.

Figure 5: Knowledge of pertinent issues in intervention and non-intervention areas



It is notable that people who participated solely in PLUP do not appear to have gained considerable knowledge; however, **where PLUP as well as land registration activities were implemented, respondents consistently demonstrate the highest increase in knowledge about land use rights and land titles.** Adding land titling activities made no significant difference to levels of knowledge. An explanation for this could be the fact that the main activity to increase knowledge and awareness of the villagers is the activity on “Communication on Systematic Land Titling”, which is only part of the land registration activities.

Figure 6: Knowledge of issues by intervention types to which respondents were exposed<sup>9</sup>



The study substantiates the assumption that LMDP activities in the villages did contribute to greater knowledge among the communities of land use rights and the problems and opportunities associated with land tenure.

<sup>9</sup> n = 548. The number of respondents per group was as follows: for the comparison group, n = 75; for the PLUP group, n = 60; for the PLUP + Land Registration group, n = 96; for the PLUP + Land Registration + Land Title group, n = 217.

### 3.2 Expected Outcome 2: Land Ownership and Enhanced Tenure Security

While land in Laos is owned by the state, individuals and organisations have the right to use some of the land. Land titles represent official certificates of permanent land use rights; they can refer to private residential, private agricultural or communal land use rights. For GIZ, land use planning in connection with land registration and subsequent titling of land is key to protecting individuals' access to food and income resources. Land titles were to make it more difficult for private investors and the government to expropriate land without adequate compensation.

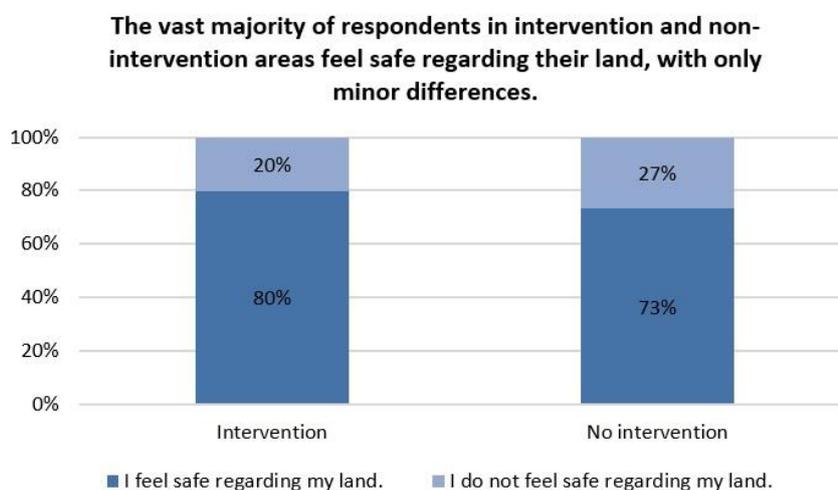
Anecdotal evidence from previous GIZ studies in Laos had shown that land registration in itself had significantly elevated levels of perceived tenure security, with land titling not necessarily increasing this level of confidence any further.

It is too early for conclusions about how well land registration and titling protects villagers from actual expropriation in the long run. However, the study captured villagers' **perceptions** of how tenure security had changed as a result of the GIZ intervention.

#### *Overall levels of perceived tenure security*

- Land scarcity is increasingly relevant to respondents in intervention villages as well as future ELTeS villages. Mountainous terrain and the prospect of migration to the village is putting a strain on available farmable land particularly.
- **99% of respondents in intervention areas said they have private land parcels which they use for residential or agricultural purpose**, compared to 97% in non-intervention areas.
- **96% of respondents in villages who had land registered land confirmed that they registered any of their own private land parcels**, versus 0% in non-intervention areas. 93% of respondents in villages with land titles confirmed that they personally possessed a land title. More than 80% of the land titles were registered under the woman's or in conjugal ownership with their husband.
- **66% of female respondents in intervention areas had land registered in their name**. Those who did not have land registered in their name had little knowledge of the process or said that their family's land had been inherited by their husband or that they thought only the household's representative could be registered.
- The study also observed **similar levels of perceived tenure security in intervention and non-intervention areas**. 80% of respondents in intervention areas felt their access to land use was well-protected, compared to 73% in non-intervention areas.

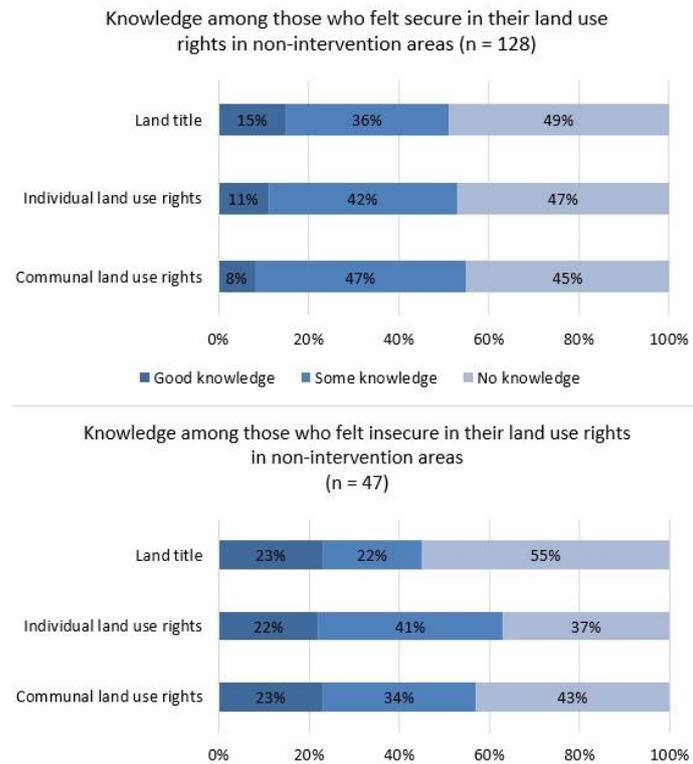
Figure 7: Perceived tenure security in intervention and non-intervention areas



*GIZ's contribution to perceived tenure security*

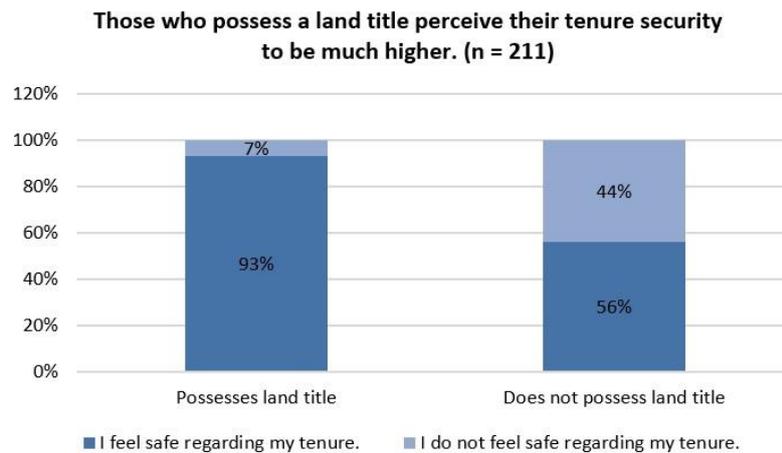
In those areas where GIZ had not yet implemented land management activities, respondents noted similarly high levels of perceived land security. However, respondents in non-intervention areas that felt insecure about their land use rights also were slightly more knowledgeable about relevant issues than those that felt well protected. This suggests that **one of the factors influencing the level of perceived tenure security is knowledge about land rights and awareness of potential threats to land tenure security. More knowledge may lead to a more realistic assessment of insecurity of these villagers tenure rights.**

*Figure 8: Link between level of knowledge and perception of tenure security*



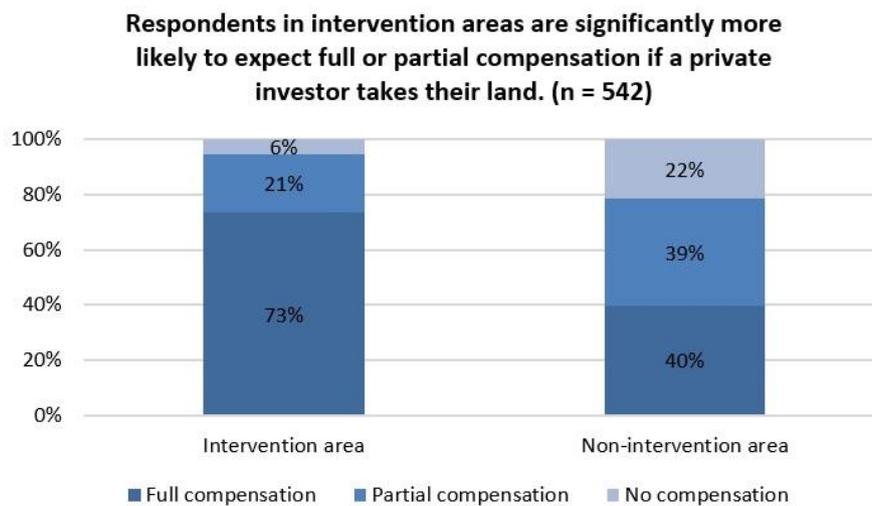
There is a strong link between ownership of land title and perceived tenure security. **Almost all respondents (93%) who have a land title in their name feel secure about their tenure, compared to those who do not own a land title (56%).**

Figure 9: Land title ownership and perceived land tenure security



Furthermore, when it comes to other perceived benefits of having a land title, **respondents in intervention areas are more confident they would receive compensation for their land, if it is taken away by an investor**: 73% expect full and 21% expect partial compensation. This contrasts sharply with respondents in non-intervention areas, where only 40% would expect full and 39% would expect some compensation.

Figure 10: Expectations of compensation in intervention and non-intervention areas



The trend is not as pronounced for cases where the government is the expropriating party. Overall, respondents expect less compensation in this case, regardless of whether they are from intervention or non-intervention areas:

- **30% of respondents in intervention areas expect full compensation compared with 32% in non-intervention areas.**
- Comparing expectations regarding compensations, villagers expect a much higher compensation from private investors than from the government: 63% of respondents expect full compensation and 27% partial compensation if their land were taken by a private investor. Only 31% expect full compensation and 52% partial compensation if their land were taken away by the government.
- Some respondents also expressed their appreciation for potential projects that the government would develop with their land, which would be expected to benefit the community. There is

less of an assumption among respondents that the government would use the land for personal gain, unlike with private businesses.

**A majority of respondents in intervention areas felt that GIZ interventions had improved their land tenure security**, with 98% considering land registration as having played a role in this, 96% considering land titling as having been relevant and 73% attributing some degree of increased security to PLUP. What is more, almost all women who had land registered or titled in their name said they felt more secure in their land rights because of it. Most also mentioned additional benefits, such as being protected in their land use rights in the case of divorce, having to be consulted by their husband before land transactions and being secure in their right to inherit land from their husband.

For the highest level of perceived land security and for private residential land users, a pattern emerged where:

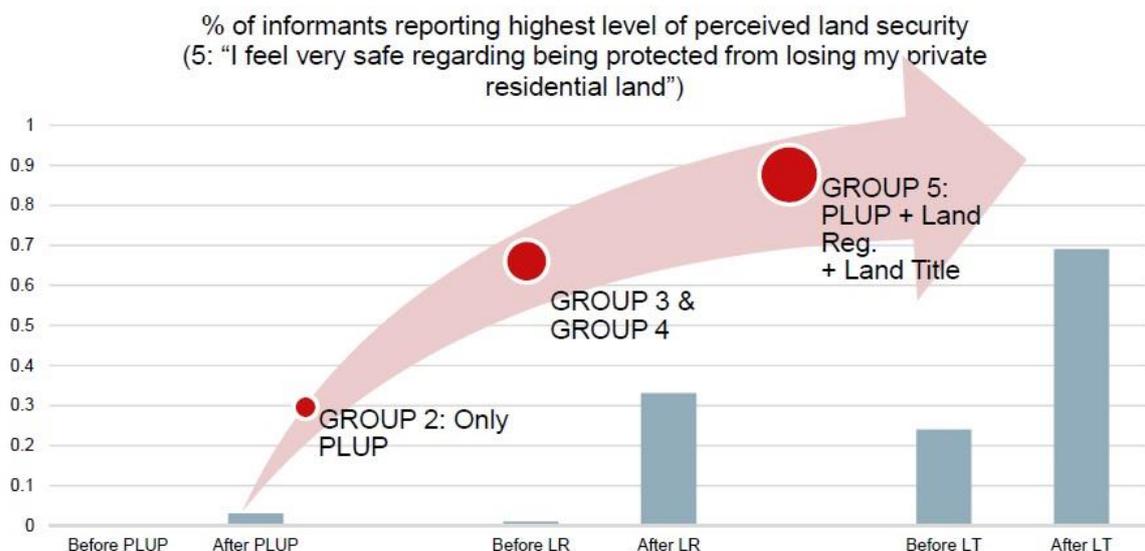
- The more comprehensive the package of interventions that villagers were exposed to was, the higher their perceived land security. In other words: **Those that had experienced PLUP, Land Registration and Land Titling were more confident regarding their land security than those that had just experienced PLUP and registration**, but these were in turn more confident still than those that had only participated in PLUP.
- This pattern looks similar for private agricultural land users.

*“My land has been registered, for the next step, I think, we can propose to the relevant office to issue a land title. Second, my land will be protected from anyone who tries to take away my land. Third, I can use my land more comfortable and without worry about land conflict.”*

Answer of villager during interview

Figure 11: Perceived tenure security differs by types of intervention

**Perceived tenure security increases in step with the extent to which respondent’s village was exposed to land management activities (private residential land).**



Respondents provided a number of **reasons why private and agricultural land registration gave them a greater sense of tenure security**:

- It would enhance their ability to negotiate with anyone trying to take away land.
- It would lessen their concern about land conflicts and would lead to clearer and more transparent demarcation of land boundaries.

**Those that felt secure about their land in non-intervention areas also had their reasons:**

- The most common response was that all the villagers already had their own land, often inherited from their parents or bought from others. **Many villagers also emphasised the absence of conflicts in the community.**
- No one was trying to access their land as it was so remote or the land was not of good enough quality for it to be threatened by anyone.
- Some emphasised that it was rightfully their land as they and their ancestors had been using it for a long time and they were going to protect it from any threats. A few villagers said that **land boundaries were clear and well-known, also among the village authorities.** Some said they had been paying taxes on it to the government.

**Those that felt insecure about their land in non-intervention areas felt that:**

- They lacked proper documentation or proof of ownership/land title.
- Someone could simply come and access their land, particularly with rising population pressure and new people moving to their village.

**Overall, the study substantiates the assumption that land registration and land titling would lead to greater perceived tenure security** among target communities. However, also in the absence of certified land use rights, many respondents in non-intervention areas also felt secure. This could be linked to a lack of knowledge about issues linked to tenure and land use.

That said, we cannot yet substantiate the link between the intervention and factual tenure security as it is too early to make that assessment.

### 3.3 Expected Outcome 3: Land Transactions

Land transactions relate to selling, buying, leasing, inheriting land or passing land on as inheritance. The underlying assumption of the study is that land registration and land titling activities would enable villagers to conduct land transactions more securely and at greater ease.

*Overall trends in land transactions*

- Overall, **36% of respondents in intervention areas said they had made a land transaction in the past**, slightly fewer than in non-intervention areas.
- In terms of the kinds of transactions common among both groups, buying land, leasing and inheriting land appear to be most typical for both.

*GIZ's contribution to easier land transactions*

Generally, no significant problems were mentioned in connection with land transfers, except in the case of leasing land to others. **38% (14 out of only 38 respondents who leased their land) – all in intervention**

areas – reported they had had problems with leasing, a finding confirmed by the focus group discussions. The problem tends to be with leasing to private investors, who break their promises, for instance through non-payment, terminating the lease before the agreed date in addition to other contractual breaches. One respondent reported that he was not in the village when the investors came, before land titling had taken place. Representatives of the district struck a bargain with the investors on the land he had inherited from his parents, but without his consent. He never received any money from the deal.

### Village Case Study 1: “Benefits of Land Registration activities”

**Village name:** Poungkok

**Location:** Sing District, Luang-Namtha Province

**Village size:** 59 households with 342 people

**Under which project:** LM-RED

**Project activity:**

✓ PLUP ✓ Land Registration ✓ Land Titling



*Village trends:*

- The village displayed a solid overall level of knowledge regarding private land use rights (31% reported “a lot of knowledge” while the average across all villages was 28%).
- The village reported no significant land conflicts.
- Most investments were in permanent agriculture and for enhancing the quality of the plants. 75% of villagers reported that they had obtained loans.
- Village authorities fear that with land titling the value of land will increase and more villagers will sell their land, although the selling of land is not allowed in their village.
- Land lease was very popular in this area (mostly involving Chinese investors) as it is close to the Chinese border. But there have been issues regarding land lease contracts with Chinese investors as some of the investors left without payment as agreed contractually.

*Reported benefits from the project intervention:*

- Women reported that they had been involved in the decision-making process within families as well as at a community level.
- There has been a significant increase in perceived land security after the land titling activity: before land titling no one reported feeling “very safe”, after land titling it was 56%.
- Villagers have used their land titles as collateral to take out loans for different purposes. Before having a title, it used to be difficult to access bank loans. Villagers also report that they would happily pay land taxes as a title would enable them to obtain a loan.
- In the past, villagers used to plant upland rice but have now turned to cash crops after learning of good practices from a neighbouring village.

**The study partially substantiates the assumption that GIZ’s land registration and land titling activities would enable villagers to conduct land transactions at greater ease in general.** It appears that it may have facilitated a higher rate of leasing. Village authorities predict that sales and purchases of land will increase once land titles have been handed out.

### 3.4 Expected Outcome 4: Land Conflicts and Resolution

GIZ's bundle of interventions was intended to address land conflicts that occur where land boundaries are not clear or documented, where ownership of land is disputed or where government or private interests might put land use rights in jeopardy. The underlying assumptions of the study were that (1) land conflicts are a common issue affecting the target areas, and (2) that a more systematic approach in the shape of PLUP, registration and titling would contribute to a resolution of land conflicts.

#### *Overall trends related to land conflicts*

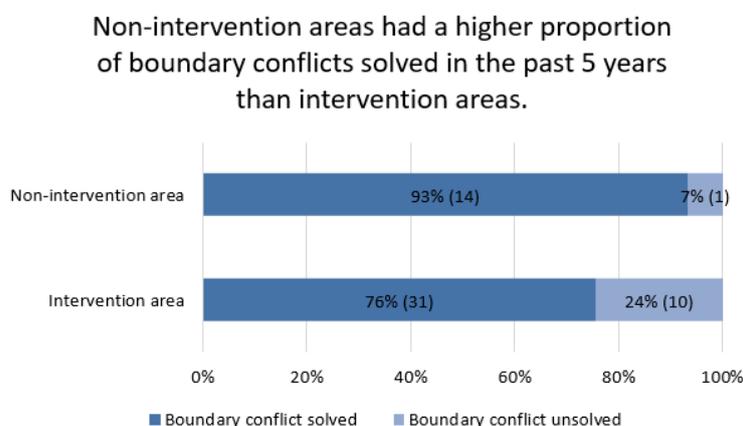
The study found that land conflicts occur occasionally and that most conflicts are relatively minor. They can often be solved at the local level:

- **14% of all respondents had experienced land conflicts in the last five years** (76 respondents confirmed having experienced land conflicts out of 546 respondents in total). Of these, about half noted that they had lost land due to the land conflict. 10% had experienced boundary conflicts, mostly within the same village or where other villages had used part of someone's land or occupied prime communal land used for agricultural purposes. 3% experienced mostly smaller boundary conflicts on private or communal land. Previous studies, for both LM-RED (in 2014) and NU-IRDP (in 2015), had reported slightly higher levels of land-related conflicts.
- **Focus group participants from 3 out of 11 villages in non-intervention areas described conflicts with neighbouring villages or investors**, leading to destroyed land or land loss. In almost all villages in non-intervention areas did respondents express fear that they may face conflicts or land grabbing someday in the future.
- **Respondents in intervention areas appear to be more sensitive even to small-scale conflicts** – conflicts were mentioned in most female focus groups but most of these were described to have been resolved, either by the Naiban or by land zoning, registration and titling.
- **Only 6 people out of 546 said they had faced conflicts where land was tried to be taken away by a private investor or the government.** However, 5 of those 6 cases occurred on a land parcel which was not registered or titled. In one case, the affected land parcel was already registered and the outcome of the conflict is still not decided.

#### *GIZ' contribution to changed levels of land conflicts*

**Respondents in intervention areas were slightly more likely to have experienced land conflicts in the past 5 years (17% versus 9% in non-intervention areas).** Non-intervention areas also had a higher proportion of boundary conflicts solved in the past five years.

Figure 11: Boundary conflicts in intervention and non-intervention areas



What seems like a puzzling finding at first can be substantiated at a theoretical level. The process of PLUP and subsequent re-allocation of land may lead to a more formal land allocation which necessarily includes land loss for some. **In this way, PLUP has the potential to surface underlying conflicts.** There are other factors that were mentioned by participants in focus groups that likely spur conflict: increasing land pressures from migration of newcomers moving to the village, rising land prices, rejection of formalisation of land allocation (“In the past, we could do whatever we wanted; now, there are so many rules for what we can do.”) as well as ecological changes, for instance related to floods.

PLUP, according to respondents, rarely led to land loss. Only 3% of respondents in intervention areas reported that PLUP had caused land conflicts among villagers. However, at the same time, women discussing in focus groups frequently mentioned restrictions now in place that kept villagers from expanding their land or planting freely, partially due to land zoning, creating protected areas and clearer demarcations of land boundaries. Some were dissatisfied with these new constraints, describing them as creating new difficulties and narrowing the space available. On the other hand, some discussants also appreciated these new boundaries, emphasising they had led to fewer conflicts and to the re-growing of forest areas.

In intervention areas, the majority of respondents noted that where boundary conflicts were solved, it was mostly between parties directly involved or by the village authorities, the Village Land Management Committee (VLMC). However, it is not easy to differentiate between those groups as the village authorities are usually also members of the VLMC. The PLUP Team or the **Land Registration Team usually does not discuss conflicts directly but instead refers them to the village authority.** Only 5 out of 20 respondents in villages that had received PLUP, land registration and also land titling confirmed that their conflict was resolved directly by the Land Registration Team. The study concludes that the process of PLUP, Land Registration and Land Titling has helped enable local village authorities to surface and solve pre-existing land conflicts. However, at times this process has surfaced dissatisfaction and conflicts, likely after land re-allocation or restriction of uses of conservation forest.

**The study can partially substantiate the assumption that land conflict is a common issue in the intervention areas** – a small percentage of respondents, as well as most focus groups, revealed the existence of low-level conflict. These conflicts are usually resolved at the local level with the help of the respective village authorities. However, PLUP and Land Registration can play an important role in identifying and addressing those conflicts.

### 3.5 Expected Outcome 5: Increased Investment in Land

An assumption is that GIZ's land registration and land titling activities would increase the willingness and ability of villagers to invest in their land.

The PLUP, land registration or titling process did not include elaborate awareness raising on how to invest sustainably in one's land. All the same, land registration and land titling in themselves were expected to have an effect on the level of investment, for example by enhancing (perceived tenure security).

This study observed that:

- **Investments were made by villagers in both intervention and non-intervention areas**, for similar purposes– primarily for residential improvements, agricultural production and livestock raising.
- **Investment behaviour is influenced by many different factors apart from having a land title.** However, a small fraction of villagers did increase their investments after receiving land registration and land titling.

### *GIZ's contribution to increased investment and access to loans*

Overall, 73% of all respondents conducted investments in their land in the past 5 years. Most of those investments were in improved quality of plants, shifting agricultural plantation towards short-term crops (54%) or in permanent agricultural paddy land or plantations such as planting permanent trees (45%) and less in residential land (25%), for example repairing or upgrading a building.

The majority of these conducted investments turned out to be beneficial as 87% of villagers that invested in their land reported that the investments increased their livelihood. Respondents described that households had bought new agricultural equipment, reduced slash-and-burn agriculture, improved their income and health and reduced their work load.

**Respondents in intervention areas overall were more likely to have made investments in their land:** 79% had invested in their land in the past 5 years, compared with 60% in non-intervention areas. However, this does not imply that those investments were conducted *because of* land registration or land titling activities although **11%** of those who had invested **directly attributed this to an increased land security through land registration or titling**. Interestingly, those investments which were directly attributed to increased land security through land registration or titling were **mostly conducted in residential land and less in agricultural land**, which is very different to the overall investment behavior. A potential explanation for this is, that **overall more residential land parcels were registered and titled than agricultural land parcels**, so that investments which were conducted *because of* land registration or titling are also primarily in residential land.

Also, respondents who **did not invest in their land** were also asked why they had not invested. Only 2% of these respondents directly indicated a lack of land security as a reason for not investing in their land. Other obstacles to investment were noted more frequently, such as a “lack of money” to invest (45%) or a variety of other reasons (44%)

**The study partly substantiates the assumption that GIZ's land registration and land titling activities would increase the willingness of villagers to invest in their land**, although there are many different factors that influence investment behaviour much stronger than having a land title.

### 3.6 Expected Outcome 6: Increased Access to Loans

Another assumption is that GIZ's land registration and land titling activities will increase the ability of villagers to obtain bank loans by enabling them to use their land title as a credit collateral.

This study observed that:

- **Loans are generally obtained by respondents without them using a land title as a collateral.** Apart from borrowing within extended families, the *Nayobay Bank* (see box below) can be expected to gain importance as a source of funding in the near future. The *Nayobay Bank* recently has taken further steps to lower barriers to loan access for poor rural areas in Laos<sup>10</sup>. However, a few villagers raised concerns about taking out loans even from the *Nayobay Bank* as they had seen how families were incapable of repaying a loan, for instance after the livestock they had invested in died.

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<sup>10</sup> The Laotian Times on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2016. Last accessed on 13/03/2017 at <https://www.laotiantimes.com/2016/12/09/nayoby-bank-increase-loan-amounts-expand-branches/>

## *GIZ's contribution to access to loans*

Respondents that have obtained loans have frequently done so via the **Nayobay Bank**. The Nayobay Bank is a specialised subsidiary of the Bank of Lao PDR, aiming to support the government's poverty reduction policy by providing small loans in low-income districts. These loans target those looking to invest in their livestock, plantations, rice paddies, handicraft and other means of generating livelihoods. The Nayobay Bank offers individual as well as group loans starting at around 600 to 3700 USD per person at different repayment schedules, from a year to more than five years at differing interest rates (between 5 and 7%).

In terms of the interventions influencing access to loans there was no significant difference between intervention and non-intervention areas: **56% of respondents in intervention areas had tried to take out loans, compared to 51% in non-intervention areas**. In both areas 99% of those who tried to get a loan were successful. The confirmation by the village head of their assets was an alternative to using a land title as a collateral, or to borrow informally from family members, often interest-free.

**The respondents in intervention areas that had taken out a loan tended to be part of a group that obtained a group loan from the Nayobay Bank.** This kind of loan does not require a land title as a collateral. Generally speaking, there is

a sense that plenty of sources of funding are available without bureaucratic hurdles such as the requirement to provide land as a collateral. Villagers, for different reasons, do not usually access loans from official institutions, rather relying on their informal network. Some villagers argued that having an official land title could help them take out larger loans, but it is questionable if this would meet current needs and be desirable, considering risks of indebtedness in the long term.

The focus group discussions also confirm that **other factors determine loan usage to a larger degree than land titles do**. Villagers who have not taken out loans yet have not refrained from doing so because they are insecure about their land use rights or because they cannot produce a collateral. They cite other reasons, such as the risk involved in having to repay the loan on time, the bureaucratic hassle involved in dealing with banks or the fact that it is commonly small emergency loans that are most needed, which can usually be obtained faster and interest-free from relatives.

**The study partly substantiates the assumption that GIZ's land registration and land titling activities would increase the ability of villagers to access loans.** Most of the loans are accessed without a land title as a collateral via the Nayobay banks. However, there is anecdotal evidence that some villagers used the land title as collateral to access larger bank loans.

## Village Case Study 2: “The Benefits of Land Titling”

**Village name:** Viengthong

**Location:** Hiam District, Houaphan Province

**Village size:** 70 households with 309 persons

**Under which project:** NU-IRDP

**Project activity:**

✓ PLUP ✓ Land Registration ✓ Land Titling  
(Residential Land)



### *Village trends:*

- The village displayed a higher than average level of knowledge (59% of respondents had “a lot of knowledge” compared to 28% on average)
- The women’s group reported sufficient residential land but not enough access to agricultural land. There is also not enough land available for newcomers to the village who cannot inherit land.

### *Changes as a result of the GIZ intervention:*

- There was a relatively high number of investments, and a third of villagers reported increased investments in land because of land titling.
- A majority of villagers obtained loans from the Lao Development Bank, using the land title as collateral (65% of villagers obtained a loan and 55% used the land title as a collateral).
- There is a high level of perceived land security, with strong improvements after land titling: before land titling, 36% reported they felt “very secure”, which afterwards increased to 81%.
- Minor boundary conflicts exist in the village due to boundary marks being moved during land registration. Some families lost land to neighbours inside the same village

### *Reported changes resulting from the project intervention:*

- Villagers reported decreased land conflicts and increased land security. Land boundaries are described to be clearer due to the introduction of permanent land boundary markers
- Villagers commonly obtained loans with the Nayobay Bank for livestock raising, but some villagers also used the land title as a collateral for non-livestock loans. This is where the land title proved to have the most added value. Viengthong being a local trading hub, villagers require larger amounts of money than they can get via the small loan programme of the Nayobay Bank, to invest in fish ponds, the local water factory, the gas station or similar projects.
- Investments in residential land have increased after receiving the land title.
- Women participating in the focus group discussions confirmed they felt more confident regarding their land due to having their name registered in the land title.
- Women also report increased involvement in decision making both in the family and the community as they feel more confident as a result of co-owning or owning a land title.

### 3.7 Opportunities and challenges

We need to remember that the study cannot generalise on trends in the entire intervention areas; instead it can provide some pointers at where discussion and more attention are needed. Study participants (184 respondents for this question) cited the following advantages they saw as resulting from owning a land title, which reflect the issues mentioned by respondents, providing a foundation for programming in the future:

- “Other people cannot take away my land easily.” (77%)
- “My overall land rights are better protected.” (58%)
- “I can use my land title as a collateral for a loan.” (43%)
- “It is easier to transfer land.” (38%)
- “I am less likely to lose my land to an investor or the government.” (23%)
- “The value of my land will increase.” (10%)
- “I would receive more compensation if my land is taken away.” (7%)

Despite these expectations, the picture regarding the success of land management activities is more complex.

#### *Investments in land*

As described above, investment in land in the past 5 years was overall a common feature of both intervention and non-intervention areas. At the same time, only a small proportion of respondents exposed to land management that had invested said they did so because of land registration and titling, and the investment was predominantly in residential land, in line with the type of land title received. There might be an opportunity for land management work in Laos to explore how investment in non-residential land, including agricultural and communal land, can be strengthened via a greater focus on land titling in these areas.

**Recommendation:** The ELTeS project could explore further whether a different focus on agricultural or communal land titles could bolster an increase in investment in non-residential land, which is expected to yield further livelihood benefits for farmers and communities.

#### *Access to loans*

Overall, the study demonstrates that community members have several informal and formal channels for loan access, including family and village networks and banks such as the Nayobay or Lao Development Bank. While overall the data suggest that land registration and titling have had little systematic influence on villagers accessing loans, some anecdotal evidence from the study suggests that ownership of a land title can add value in one specific situation: villagers reported that a collateral is required for larger loans from the Lao Development Bank, for which they can use their land title. Thus, **while a land title might not be beneficial for smaller and informal loans, it might facilitate larger projects in some communities.**

**Recommendation:** Even if land titles play a limited role for most people seeking out loans in target areas, it is worthwhile to further evaluate how land titles are used for loan access and wider livelihoods changes in target areas

#### *Women’s participation in land management decision-making*

**Almost half of all land title owners being women is an encouraging trend.** Particularly in intervention areas with land registration and titling, women reported stronger involvement, e.g. having complained to the village head, if they had not been consulted enough during decision-making on land use, citing what they had learned about women's rights during the intervention. Consultation appears more common for private investor projects than for government projects.

However, **women were also less knowledgeable than men when it came to land use rights and land titles.** Women in both intervention and non-intervention areas tended to report the same: while they are usually involved in decision-making at a household level, at the community level it is the village authorities and mostly men as representatives of households who discuss and make final decisions. A few focus groups surfaced a lack of clarity over the rights of widows or women in general to participate in village level meetings.

**Recommendation:** There should be a stronger emphasis on enhancing the knowledge of female villagers about their land rights during land registration activities. . The effectiveness of awareness raising measures should also be monitored and evaluated closely.

#### *Mixed picture in designated ELTeS areas*

While the study did not conduct a systematic needs assessment in designated ELTeS areas, there are a number of challenges and opportunities facing villages there that are worth discussing further.

- On the one hand, **respondents had the expectation that a land title would be useful** – in protecting their land and enabling land transactions. However, some resisted the idea of incurring additional cost linked to having a land title, for instance for being charged a fee when picking it up from the authorities, or being required to pay high taxes on their land, particularly agricultural land (in Homchalern in Luang Namtha, Muangkao in Huaphan). Some respondents therefore rejected the idea of having PLUP or land registration activities in their village.
- This notion was supported by a moderate level of satisfaction expressed with the existing way land was managed without any project intervention. The focus group discussions also revealed that respondents in ELTeS areas had already been investing in their land without any land titles<sup>11</sup>.
- The Nayobay banks have an increased presence in the poorest areas of Laos, and some respondents in the ELTeS areas hoped that having a land title would enable them to access comparatively larger loans from banks, which require a land title as a collateral. However, it is **cannot be answered with the study whether larger loans are addressing household and community development needs** .
- Despite this, **a majority of respondents in ELTeS areas explicitly expressed demand for solutions to ongoing land conflicts and other land-related issues.** They suggested that land management could add value particularly to determine as a community which land is suitable for what agricultural practices and to help them think through how to optimally use their scarce arable land. The same goes for land use planning with regard to avoiding natural disasters, such as floods, and to help with planning investment projects such as roads or irrigation systems. As mentioned before, a future of increasing population pressure is looming large for many respondents and is already described as leading to conflicts. **This is where land management interventions could add value.**
- **The village of Homchalern and Konlang provided conflicting signals,** with village authorities reporting there was no demand for another round of PLUP, following land use planning in 2007,

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<sup>11</sup> Investments have been primarily in rice, cassava, rubber and other crops as well as livestock.

and women saying they would like to undertake land use planning to better manage the boundaries with neighbouring villages. Other villages were also divided on whether they needed PLUP. Some, like the village of Mokjod, had had bad prior experience with PLUP, which in 2005 and 2006 reportedly led to conflict in the village, and therefore rejected the idea of doing more PLUP.

- **Several villages stressed the importance of reserved spare land** – land that could be allocated quickly by the community to newcomers or newlywed couples - and found fault with previous land management interventions for not including sufficient spare land.

**Recommendation:** Overcoming the scepticism of some villages will be an important task for ELTeS. Rejection of land management was also linked to low levels of knowledge of relevant issues, so awareness raising and consultation of villagers will likely play a prime role in shaping demand and legitimacy of the intervention. The ELTeS approach already includes conflict monitoring to track the development and resolution of land conflicts, including those arising during land use planning.

### Village Case Study 3: “Opportunities in designated project areas”

**Village name:** Houaysou

**Location:** Xon District, Houaphan Province

**Village size:** 61 households with 502 people

**Project activity:** No project intervention, selected as ELTeS target village.



#### *Village trends:*

- The villagers had an average level of knowledge about land use rights.
- There have been no issues with obtaining loans without land titles.
- Villagers in Houaysou had slightly lower perceived land security in comparison with neighbouring villages (67% report feeling “very safe” in terms of their residential land vs. 73%-76% among neighbouring villages).
- There was an agriculture land conflict with neighbouring villages in 2015, but villagers solved it by themselves at a village level. However, they remain concerned that their land will be accessed by others.
- Villagers report that residential land is sufficient, but agricultural land is not enough for all the villagers. They also use communal land as an area for livestock. They also experienced a land conflict in 2004 regarding the leasing of land to a Vietnamese company. The company paid the owner of the land directly, instead of the overall village. Apart from that, villagers have no experience with individual land conflicts, which makes them feel secure in their customary land ownership. Most of the investment in the village contributes to permanent crop plantation and livestock raising.
- Women reported that they have been involved in the decision-making process about all land transfers both in the family and at the community level.

#### *Relevant needs and expectations:*

- Villagers were satisfied with the existing micro land use plan but were not sure what would happen in the future with increases of population. They expect benefits from having a participatory land use plan involving everyone in the land zoning.
- Some households already obtained loans from the Nayobay Bank for livestock raising. In the past, most of the loans came from relatives but since 2015 loans were obtained predominantly from the bank.
- Villagers would prefer to have land titles; they mentioned they could benefit from having clearer boundaries, to avoid conflicts as well as reduce occupation of available land.
- Respondents expect the project intervention to support them with land registration and land titling activities such that they are able to access bank loans.

## 4. Conclusions

Overall, the results of the study corroborate some of its underlying assumptions while challenging others.

- Land management activities appear to have **contributed to enhanced knowledge** of key topics, though more for men than for women.
- The study also substantiates the assumption that **land registration and land titling contribute to greater perceived tenure security** among target communities. However, in the absence of PLUP or land registration, many respondents in non-intervention areas also felt secure. **This was slightly related to a lack of knowledge about issues linked to tenure and land use.**
- Land management activities have **contributed to increased land transactions** (e.g. buying and selling of land). The activities are also linked with an increase in land-leasing, which is a type of land transaction that was reported to potentially cause problems.
- The study partially confirms the assumption that **land conflict is a common issue in the intervention areas** – a small percentage of respondents, as well as most focus groups, revealed the existence of low-level, minor conflicts. The land registration and titling process was shown to play only a limited role in resolving conflicts directly, as the PLUP and Land Registration teams usually do not discuss conflicts in detail but instead refer them to the village authority. However, the process of PLUP, Land Registration and Land Titling has helped village authorities to surface and solve pre-existing land conflicts.
- The study partly substantiates the assumption that **land registration and land titling activities will increase the willingness of villagers to invest in their land**, although there are many different factors that influence investment behaviour to a larger degree than having a land title.
- The study also only partly substantiates the assumption that **land registration and land titling activities would increase the ability of villagers to access loans**. Most of the loans are accessed without a land title as a collateral via the Nayobay banks. However, the case of Viengthong suggest the possibility that land titles would help villagers to obtain larger loans than they can get from the Nayobay Bank.
- Finally, the assumption that **perceived tenure security increases in step with the comprehensiveness of support** provided was substantiated through the study.

Testing these assumptions is not an end in itself but will serve to inform reflections and discussions by the LMDP and ELTeS teams on what outcomes are realistic and strategic to work towards. The findings provide reassurance in some areas that things have moved in the right direction, as with enhanced knowledge on key topics. They also point us towards trends that are less expected or where less progress has been seen than might have been anticipated, as with the linkages between land title

***Contextual factors also played a major role in determining outcomes:***

- **Population pressures and scarcity of arable land** were mentioned frequently as putting a strain on village relations and resources, leading to a high degree of anxiety about the future.
- The **Nayobay Bank** has become an often-mentioned source of loans in the villages, particularly for smaller loans used for agricultural and livestock purposes, for which no collateral is needed. Loans that do require a title as a collateral can rarely compete with this low-scale investment.
- **External investment**, particularly private foreign investors from China and Vietnam, were occasionally mentioned as a source of both income and problems.
- **Access to markets** is one factor among several that apparently determines how well optimised land use and investment can translate into increased incomes from cash crops.

ownership and behaviour related to investment and loan access as well as land conflicts. In these areas particularly, in order to understand better the role that land management is playing in social and economic changes in target areas, it is worth continuing to listen to communities.

While the study sheds light on what outcomes have resulted from land management to date, important questions to ask and study in the future remain: about factual tenure security, as opposed to perceived tenure security, the long-term development and resolution of conflicts and the effect that increased land transactions and investment might have on quality of life of the target groups.

## Annex 1

Table 2: Overview of sampled villages' socioeconomic and demographic background

Province & District	Village Name	Village Group	Project	Year of project activity	Main Ethnicity	Total Population	Poverty class
HPN - Houamuang	Houaxieng	G 1	none	none	Lao Tai	374	Non-poor
HPN - Houamuang	Muangpeun	G 1	none	none	Lao Tai	250	Non-poor
HPN - Houamuang	Nampong	G 1	none	none	Lao Tai	240	Non-poor
HPN - Xon	Houaysou	G 1	none	none	Hmong-Lu Mien	474	Poor
LNT - Nalae	Homchalern	G 1	none	none	Mon-Khmer	284	poor
LNT - Nalae	Konlang	G 1	none	none	Mon-Khmer	262	non-poor
LNT - Nalae	Mokjod	G 1	none	none	Mon-Khmer	290	non-poor
LNT - Nalae	Mokkoud	G 1	none	none	Mon-Khmer	276	non-poor
LNT - Nalae	Mokphat	G 1	none	none	Mon-Khmer	344	poor
LNT - Nalae	Phouthon	G 1	none	none	Mon-Khmer	498	poor
HPN - Viengxai	Kalun	G 2	NUIRD	2011	Lao Tai	164	Non-poor
HPN - Viengxai	Longlao	G 2	NUIRD	2013	Hmong-Lu Mien	257	Poor
LNT -Vieng-phoukha	Namvang	G 2	LM-RED	2014	Hmong-Lu Mien	1022	Poor
LNT -Vieng-phoukha	Sakon	G 2	LM-RED	2014	Mon-Khmer	438	Non-poor
HPN - Viengxai	Nakhao	G 3	LMDP	2016	Hmong-Lu Mien	407	Poor
HPN - Viengxai	Nasarn	G 3	LMDP	2016	Lao Tai	140	Non-poor
HPN - Viengxai	Kien	G 4	NUIRD +LMDP <sup>12</sup>	2016 (LMDP)	Lao Tai	570	Non-poor
HPN - Viengxai	Thaen	G 4	NUIRD +LMDP <sup>13</sup>	2016 (LMDP)	Lao Tai	205	Non-poor
LNT -Vieng-phoukha	Namngern	G 4	LM-RED	2014	Lao Tai	522	Non-poor
LNT -Vieng-phoukha	Phoulath	G 4	LM-RED	2014	Mon-Khmer	574	Non-poor

<sup>12</sup> NUIRD registered communal land and LMDP residential land

<sup>13</sup> NUIRD registered communal land and LMDP residential land

HPN - Hiem	Kang	G 5	NUIRD	2013	Mon-Khmer	449	Poor
HPN - Hiem	Khong	G 5	NUIRD	2013	Lao Tai	171	Non-poor
HPN - Hiem	Korkieng	G 5	NUIRD	2013	Lao Tai	321	Non-poor
HPN - Hiem	Poungkhai	G 5	NUIRD	2012	Lao Tai	420	Non-poor
HPN - Hiem	Viengthong	G 5	NUIRD	2012	Lao Tai	522	Non-poor
LNT - Long	Pakha	G 5	LMDP	2016	Chine-Tibet	506	Non-poor
LNT - Long	Pang-an	G 5	LMDP	2016	Chine-Tibet	256	Non-poor
LNT - Sing	Pakha	G 5	LMDP	2016	Chine-Tibet	290	Non-poor
LNT - Sing	Poungkok	G 5	LMDP	2016	Chine-Tibet	342	Non-poor
LNT -Vieng-phoukha	Kampon	G 5	LM-RED	2014	Mon-Khmer	305	Non-poor
LNT -Vieng-phoukha	Mai	G 5	LM-RED	2013	Mon-Khmer	669	Non-poor
LNT -Vieng-phoukha	Thiao	G 5	LM-RED	2013	Mon-Khmer	1109	Non-poor
HPN - Xon	Muangkao	G1	none	none	Lao Tai	547	Non-poor
HPN - Xon	Vangkhouavang	G1	none	none	Lao-Khmer	309	Poor