

STRATEGY PAPER

**NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS
AND THE ROLE OF THE SUNV PROGRAM
IN LAOS**



SUNV Laos
SNV Netherlands Development Organization
United Nations Volunteers
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Abbreviations

CUSO	= Canadian University Study Overseas
DWH/GAA	= Deutsche Welthungerhilfe/German Agro Action
EU IRDP	= European Union Integrated Rural Development Project
FAO	= Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FRC	= Forest Research Center
FUF	= Friends Upland Farmers
GoL	= Government of Lao PDR
GTZ	= Gesellschaft Technische Zusammenarbeit
ID/OS	= Institutional Development/Organizational Strengthening
IFAD	= International Fund Agricultural Development of the United Nations
IUCN	= World Conservation Union
MAF	= Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
NAFRI	= National Agriculture Forestry Research Institute
NAFES	= National Agriculture Forestry Extension Service (Extension Department)
NBCA	= National Biodiversity Conservation Area
NTFP	= Non Timber Forest Product
NUOL	= National University of Laos
ORSTOM	= Institut Français de Recherche Scientifique pour le Développement en Coopération
PAFO	= Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office
PDDP	= Project de Développement rural du District de Phongsaly
PDRPB	= Project de Développement Rural du Plateau des Bolovens
PTO	= Provincial Tourism Office
SUNV	= Collaboration between SNV and UNV in Laos
SNV	= Netherlands Development Organization
UNDP	= United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	= United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNV	= United Nations Volunteers
WCS	= Wildlife Conservation Society

0. Introduction

This paper describes the process of the development of an NTFP advisory program of SUNV in Laos. The paper starts with general information on NTFPs, the importance of NTFPs in the region and Laos. In the second part of the paper the policy and strategy of the different actors involved are stated. The policy and strategy of the GoL with regard to NTFPs is described, followed by an explanation of the policy and strategy of the organization SNV and the SUNV program in Laos.

In the third part of the paper the possible niches for SUNV to work in the NTFP sub-sector in Laos are identified. The different local organizations and partners working on NTFPs in Laos are listed and the opportunities and constraints for collaboration are discussed. The strategy and action points for 2002 summarize the results of an internal SUNV meeting in which certain decisions were made and action points established how to continue the development of the NTFP advisory program of SUNV in Laos.

1. General information on NTFPs

For decades the value of forest products was often only expressed in timber, neglecting the importance of other biological resources. These biological products are often grouped under the term Non-Timber-Forest-Products (NTFPs). In the last 15 years much more attention has been given to the importance and value of NTFPs. In literature many definitions are given but in this paper the following definition will be used.

The term 'Non Timber Forest Product' encompasses all biological materials other than timber which are extracted from forests for human use. These include foods, medicines, spices, essential oils, resins, gums, latexes, tannins, dyes, ornamental plants, wildlife (products and live animals including fish), fuel wood and raw materials, notably rattan, bamboo, small wood and fibers (IUCN, 1996).

First of all it is important to know why the value of NTFPs has been often underestimated. The main reason for this is the fact that most of these products are used for rural subsistence or local markets and that they often go unrecorded in official statistics, which focus on nationally traded goods. Another reason is the lack of a clear definition of these products and instead of grouping them they are often divided among forestry, agriculture and horticulture. Finally, modern forestry has favored timber and large-scale enterprises (FAO, 1995).

However, for most of the world's rural households, NTFPs provide essential food and nutrition, medicine, fodder, fuel, thatch and construction materials, mulch and non-farm income. These products are particularly important in relieving the 'hunger periods' in the agricultural cycle, and in smoothing out other seasonal fluctuations. Poor households, in particular, depend on these products for their livelihood because they usually have more access to the forest than to other resources. Women usually rely more than men on NTFPs for household use and income. Beside rural people NTFPs are also important for urban consumers, traders and product processors (FAO, 1995).

Because of rapid deforestation and over-exploitation the availability of NTFPs is at risk in many areas. Beside the fact that the food security of forest-dwellers is at stake there is also the possible loss of this traditional way of living. Immediate action is required in which the forest-dwellers participate. When trying to improve the sustainability of the NTFP use it is very important to distinguish between what is technically possible and what is politically and economically feasible.

2. The importance of NTFPs in the region

It is estimated that at least thirty million people, the approximate number of forest dwellers in Southeast Asia, are critically dependant on NTFPs. The total population deriving benefits from them is substantially greater. At the same time Southeast Asian sources account for most of the several billion dollars in annual world trade in NTFPs, including nearly three billion dollars in finished rattan products alone (IUCN, 1996).

In a publication of IUCN Netherlands (IUCN, 1996) it was concluded that:

- 1) the economic value of NTFPs in Southeast Asia is highly significant to the rural and national economies of the region in terms of the provision of material needs, cash income and employment.
- 2) the economic importance of these resources is for none greater than for the rural population of the forest and its surrounds, and in particular for traditional forest dwelling people, a fact which has important implications for how the resource should be managed and developed.
- 3) NTFP extraction can represent a sustainable form of tropical forest exploitation, for which traditional forest management systems provide valuable models, and which by enhancing the value of intact forest opposes the incentives for deforestation.
- 4) there is at the same time not only a great economic potential inherent in conserving and enhancing the forest resource base while developing the marketing and local processing of NTFPs, but there is a crying need to do so. If no action is taken, the welfare of many rural people will suffer grievous harm, the way of life of traditional forest dwellers will disappear, and with it will be lost the vast store of knowledge they hold regarding the use and sustainable management of non-timber forest resources.

3. The importance of NTFPs in Laos

Also in Laos the importance of NTFPs has been more recognized in the last decade. First of all NTFPs score higher on the priority list of foreign donors and also from the side of the government of Lao PDR (GoL) there is more interest. Research done by the IUCN-NTFP pilot project (1997) showed that the main use of NTFPs is for subsistence; bamboo shoots, fish, vegetables and wildlife. Women tend to collect more plant food products, men more animal products. Furthermore, many rural communities with little or no access to basic health care services are often heavily reliant on NTFPs as medicines. Beside the use for subsistence NTFPs also provide on average 55% of family cash income in rural areas. The quantities of exported NTFPs from Laos have increased dramatically in the last years. Typical export products are: 1) cardamom 2) damar resin 3) sugar palm fruits 4) bong bark 5) broom grass 6) orchid stems 7) rattan canes 8) paper mulberry bark 9) dried lizards 10) yang oil 11) malva nuts. The export value of NTFPs from Laos in 1996 was 4,3 million dollars which represents 2,5 % of total exports after timber, manufacturing of textiles, hydropower electricity and coffee (IUCN, 1997).

Other research (Aubertin, 2000) indicated that about 70% of the export value of NTFPs is for the production of medicinal plants. Medical cardamom (*amomum* spp, as distinct from the culinary spice of the same name) is second only to coffee as the highest earning agricultural export of Laos. Thus, the largest component of non-timber exports are medicinal or aromatic plant products destined for the neighboring countries of China, Thailand and Vietnam. The use of some of these NTFPs is relatively new for the rural population and the trade with neighboring countries only started recently. This is probably due to the fact that the infrastructure in Laos improved in the last decade and the presence of these NTFPs is diminishing in the neighboring countries (de Koning, 2000). Nevertheless, for Laos NTFPs are not primarily harvested or cultivated to serve international markets. Their function, above all, is inseparable from the way of life of the Lao population. In the villages, more than half of cash income generation comes from selling NTFPs, and the majority of animal protein in the rural diet comes from fishing and from gathering smaller

species of wildlife. Rural people ordinarily know at least 300 names for native plants and animals (Aubertin, 2000).

Compared with its neighbors Laos is thinly populated (20 persons/square km) and still has a relatively large forest cover. Furthermore, a lot of NTFPs also occur in cultivated areas or fallow land like broom grass or paper mulberry bark. However also in Laos the sustainable use of NTFPs is threatened by rapid deforestation, the general state of poverty among rural people, market pressure from outsiders, unstable prices, difficult transport, lack of processing capacity, lack of access to information, uncertainty on forest access rights giving little incentives for communities to manage forests (IUCN, 1997)

4. Policy and strategy of the GoL with regard to NTFPs

The interests of the GoL in the NTFP sub-sector are derived from its broader vision and policy statements, and its international agreements. The GoL ratified the Convention on the Conservation of Biological Diversity in November 1995, adopting a number of goals related to the sustainable management of forests and NTFP resources. In 1997, a vision statement was adopted (Sustainable Forest Management and Conservation in Lao, Vision 2020), which identified a number of priorities which are particularly relevant to guiding the development of the NTFP sub-sector. These priorities are (IUCN, 2001):

- 1) Develop viable alternatives to shifting cultivation and gradually decrease unsustainable upland farming.
- 2) Allocate land to rural families and enterprises and encourage afforestation.
- 3) Implement management in the National Biodiversity Conservation Areas (NBCAs) and protect watersheds.
- 4) Develop an appropriate and competitive forest industry.
- 5) Improve human resource development.
- 6) Improve forest research.

NTFPs have also been targeted as one of the top priority topics within the national forest research strategy of the GoL for the period 2000-2005. Objectives for the NTFP sub-sector are also expressed in the design of several NTFP-related programs and projects of the GoL. The main objectives of these have been to:

- Increase income from NTFP-based industry and trade through product improvement and marketing;
- Provide alternative livelihoods to shifting cultivation through NTFP developments; and,
- Provide incentives to local communities to conserve forests by increasing the social and economic benefits accrued to them from sustainable NTFP use.

An additional policy vision, which has significant implications for the development of the NTFP sub-sector, is for a substantial increase in forest cover and productivity. The Lao government is proposing to increase forest cover in the country from the present 47% to 70% by the year 2020. The achievement of this objective will involve the development of forest restoration incentives and technologies using appropriate NTFP species (IUCN, 2001).

5. Policy and strategy of SNV

At this moment SNV, the Netherlands Development Organization, is in a change process. A privatization process started in which a gradual divorce takes place between SNV and the Dutch government. Funding through the Dutch government has been secured however for the next 5 years (2002-2006). Another important fact is that SNV will become a provider of advisory services but will not tender for projects as many other private consultancy companies do. In the future SNV wants:

- To provide advisory services and expertise for poverty alleviation and good governance.
- Clients on meso-level i.e. (national), provincial or district level but not village level.
- To give capacity building support with specialization in sectors, especially ID/OS (Institutional Development/Organizational Strengthening). The thematic areas of SNV are 1) local governance 2) natural resource management, and 3) income generation.
- To be demand driven, flexible, accountable and network-based.
- To be a provider of TA (Technical Assistance) resources.
- A Dutch based international organization.
- To broaden its financial basis.

Project partners of SNV should have 1) strong management skills 2) a supportive legal framework 3) existing learning mechanisms, and 4) flexibility and motivation. Furthermore it is important that in the partnership with SNV there is 1) a focus on quality advisory skills, capacity building and ID/OS (Institutional Development/Organizational Strengthening) 2) agreed objectives with partners 3) clear roles and responsibilities, and 4) relationship and trust building.

In the Asia region SNV has field offices in Nepal, Bhutan and Vietnam. In Laos there is a special joint program between SNV and UNV, the so-called SUNV program. In the region SNV is active in building up expertise in, among others, community based (eco)-tourism and the NTFP sector.

6. SUNV program in Laos

The Program Manager, Program Officer and National Program Assistant of the SUNV program are based in the UNV office in Vientiane. Administrative matters and procedures are part of the UNDP in Laos. In the first phase of the SUNV program (1996-2000) technical advisors were placed within other existing projects, mostly financed by the UNDP. In this phase there was a geographical focus on the North of Laos without a real thematic or sector approach.

In the second phase (2000-2004) the SUNV program has been active in setting up advisory programs in the sectors: local governance, eco-tourism and NTFPs. These sectors fit well within the thematic areas of SNV. Eco-tourism and NTFPs are both covered under the themes Natural Resource Management and Income Generation. For the period of 2000-2003 the SUNV budget is 1,823,000 dollars of which 1,623,000 are funded by SNV and 200,000 by UNV. In total 15 advisors can be funded by the SUNV program of which a maximum of 5-7 have the Dutch nationality. It is envisaged that by the end of 2002 at least 4 advisors will be working in the eco-tourism advisory program and 2 in the NTFP advisory program.

The Eco-tourism sector is relatively new in Laos. Therefore SUNV has put a lot of effort in developing this advisory program. Many donors are still reluctant to get involved in this 'new way of approaching development'. Until now there is only one eco-tourism project in Laos, the UNESCO/NTA implemented Nam Ha Eco-Tourism Project in Luang Namtha province, funded by the government of New Zealand and IFC (International Finance Cooperation). SUNV supports this project with Advisory Services on Handicraft Production and Marketing, and with the development and formulation of the second phase. Furthermore, SUNV is facilitating a consultation process with the local authorities in 4 provinces to identify the needs for eco-tourism development and to develop a program. At the same time like-minded partners for funding and implementation are identified. In the future advisory services will be delivered in these 4 provinces; Luang Namtha, Luang Prabang, Khammouane and Savannaketh. At the national level support will be given to the development of an institutional framework for sustainable tourism,

addressing the needs for organizational development, capacity building, legislation, policy and strategy development.

The development of the NTFP advisory program will be different. Compared with eco-tourism more effort has been put in the NTFP sector in the past, and more donors are getting interested in this sector. For SUNV it will be more feasible to link up with other partners involved in the NTFP sub-sector and to identify niches to develop expertise. SUNV already started a strategic cooperation with the FAO in terms of advisory support for capacity building and program development among national FAO-staff. Further opportunities for SUNV advisory support have to be identified, which will be done step by step.

7. Identification of niches for SUNV to work in the NTFP sub-sector

As already mentioned NTFPs are important for the economy of Laos. They have a great potential for poverty alleviation, food security, biodiversity conservation and development of sustainable forest-based commerce and industry which will lead to income generation and employment. The sector should be carefully developed, with a strong emphasis on research and knowledge development and management. Beside technical possibilities it is also very important to know what is economically and politically feasible. Beside an increase in production through improved conservation, harvest, cultivation, product diversification and storage techniques it is also important to investigate improved processing, transport, marketing and trade possibilities. Maybe most important to know is the political legal framework with regard to NTFPs, the taxation system, the user rights of forest products by rural people, the owner rights of plantations and the possibilities to create organized producer groups.

At national level there are some critical problems that constrain the achievement of sustainable NTFP use that should be addressed. These are the largely uncontrolled nature of NTFP trade, and the absence of basic resource data needed to develop priorities and strategies for guiding the development of the NTFP sub-sector. Until now the institutional setting of the NTFP sub-sector is not well defined. Support or regulation of the NTFP sub-sector is fragmented among different departments with different objectives, limited connection to each other, and holding different interpretations of national policy. Effective guidance to the sub-sector requires substantial development of coherent strategies, policies and implementation guidelines. Policy makers need basic information about the sector and feedback from grassroots levels to be able to assess the impact of current policies and to make adjustments where necessary. Policy development is constrained by the absence of knowledge of the presence, values, threats and management measures related to NTFP resources, and by a generally low capacity for strategic planning (IUCN, 2001).

With regard to the policy and strategy of SNV and the SUNV program one possible niche for SUNV could be to advise on the institutional development and organizational capacity building of the NTFP sub-sector. Linkages between the different stakeholders and a better exchange of information could contribute to coherent strategies, policies and implementation guidelines. Because of the many different departments, project partners and other stakeholders involved in the sector, it is very difficult to follow a demand driven request for an SUNV advisory position. One of the options to be explored further is to recruit a senior NTFP advisor with knowledge on ID/OS. This NTFP advisor could be part-time linked with a Lao project partner, like the Forest Research Center, who already expressed needs in capacity building, especially on planning and proposal writing (Sisaveuy Chanthavisack, 2002). At the same time this advisor could work part time as a liaison officer linked to the SUNV office in Vientiane, in order to advise and support the different stakeholders on institutional issues within the NTFP sub-sector. By doing this SUNV builds up knowledge in the NTFP sub-sector in Laos and develops gradually its NTFP

advisory program. Such a position could be easily linked with the SUNV advisory position within FAO or UNDP.

Apart from the proposed advisory position at the national level, SUNV intends to support NTFP development at the provincial and district (meso) level, preferably linked to existing programs and/or projects. Because SNV wants to work demand driven it is difficult to indicate in this paper in which niches of the NTFP sector SUNV will work. If possibilities would occur in which an SUNV NTFP advisor could be linked with the eco-tourism sector or with other SUNV advisors in certain geographical areas this would be preferred above other options. The possible niche for SUNV to link NTFPs with eco-tourism is still relatively new. Especially in some of the NBCAs in Laos the potential is probably very high (Steven Schipani, 2002). When working with clients on meso-level to develop sustainable NTFP use techniques it is of course of utmost importance that rural people are involved in all stages of the process.

8. Local organizations and partners working on NTFPs in Laos

8.1 NAFRI and IUCN

From 1995 – 2001 the Forest Research Center (FRC) of the National Agricultural Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) of the GoL (MAF) executed the IUCN NTFP pilot project in collaboration with the IUCN. This project established and trained three field teams (in collaboration with the PAFO of Oudomxay, Saravane and Champassak province) to gather information and jointly develop models for NTFP conservation and development with NTFP collectors and users. In addition, a central project management team supported the fields teams and undertook a number of related studies about NTFP values, technologies, markets and trade, at national and sub-national levels. The project (IUCN, 2001) has generated the following results:

- 1) A significant amount of new data on NTFPs in Laos.
- 2) Increased income to the rural poor in pilot villages through formation of NTFP user groups and improved marketing of selected products.
- 3) Completed feasibility studies for improving the processing of several NTFPs.
- 4) Domestication techniques for several NTFP species.
- 5) Examples of sustainable harvesting systems for a few important NTFP species under community forest management.
- 6) Examples of co-management of forested protected areas.
- 7) Methods and tools for researching, planning, and facilitating NTFP-based conservation and development initiatives, and associated training approaches and materials.
- 8) A pool of trained field workers who can use participatory techniques to study, plan and implement NTFP management initiatives at provincial and community levels, and who can train others in the use of such techniques.
- 9) An increased demand from rural development organizations for technical support to develop small-scale NTFP-based enterprises.
- 10) An increased recognition of NTFPs as a priority issue for Government development and research programs.

Because of the success of the pilot project, IUCN and NAFRI are active to set up a second phase of the IUCN NTFP project. The purposes of this new project (IUCN, 2001) are to:

- 1) Assist the GoL to expand the capacity of rural development agents to facilitate NTFP conservation and development at community level, through the expansion of NTFP training programs for field workers (as developed by the first project).
- 2) Replicate and expand where appropriate, the successful models developed in the first project for harvesting, domestication, processing and marketing specific NTFPs.

- 3) Continue action-research on other important NTFP species that were not studied in detail in the first project.
- 4) Address a select number of constraints that limit the capacity of GoL to develop national and provincial level strategies for NTFP conservation and development: and, to monitor and regulate NTFP trade.

In the new project proposal again the project management team will be located at the central level in Vientiane, to secure support from various line agencies to the zonal offices and to support the capacity building of the FRC as an NTFP information center. The project needs to establish three zonal offices, one for the northern zone (Oudomxay), one for the central zone (Paksane) and one for the southern zone (Pakse) in order to cover the diversity of forest conditions in Laos and allow for expansion of NTFP extension services. The total project duration will be 5 years with a total budget of 6,400,000 dollars. Unfortunately until now no donor has been identified for the second phase of this project.

8.2 NAFRI, NAFES and new SIDA (Swedish cooperation) research & extension programs

In February 2002 the Lao Swedish Upland & Agriculture Research Program started at NAFRI. The Upland Development and Poverty Alleviation program at NAFES is in a formulation stage and will probably start at the beginning of 2003. In both programs it is planned to include NTFPs in research as well as in the upland extension activities. The target districts of both programs will be based in Oudomxay and Luang Prabang province. The approach will be quite broad and until now there are already activities identified to improve the production, processing and marketing of NTFPs (Paul Overgoor, 2002). The program is very willing to exchange ideas and collaborate on both institutional as implementation level and would like to be informed about future developments of the NTFP advisory program of SUNV. Because of the fact that DANIDA (Danish cooperation) will pull out of Laos as a donor, SIDA (Swedish cooperation) will probably be one of the most important donors in the area of NTFPs (Peter Quist-Hoffmann, 2002).

8.3 Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry (NUOL)

In the past research on marketing of NTFPs has been done by the French research institute ORSTOM in collaboration with the Agriculture Faculty. Some of the activities have been implemented in Houaphanh and Sayaboury province. The research done by Aubertin (2000) is one of the results of this cooperation. With regard to the Forestry Faculty research has been done on botanical issues, especially bamboo and rattan. Soon a PhD student will start to research the impact of land-allocation on NTFPs use and user rights (Joost Foppes, 2002).

8.4 FAO

In 2001 FAO launched a project in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) on marketing information and extension, with emphasis on agricultural products. FAO is interested in broadening the scope of the project to other sectors like livestock, forestry products, etc. The forestry products sector might be worth to link to the Forest Research Center of NAFRI, especially with regard to the marketing component. At the moment more concrete plans are being developed to work out this collaboration which might start in 2003. The focus will be on marketing of NTFPs in selected target areas (Thibault Ledecq, 2002). The FAO has a regional project on capacity building with regard to international trading and marketing (skills training). FAO is interested in pilot projects at provincial level, covering income generating activities, conservation issues, community based approach, eco-tourism, etc. Also in the past FAO was active in research on Bensoin (NTFP) in Luang Prabang province (1996-1998). Bensoin is a balsamic resin obtained from the trees of *Styrax Tonkinensis*.

8.5 Other implementing agencies on provincial level

In the following a list is given of different agencies involved in the implementation of NTFP activities on provincial and district level. Also the main NTFP species worked on are indicated. Some of them are mentioned in more detail in the following chapters because they might be interesting cooperation partners for SUNV because of their linkage with eco-tourism activities.

- a) IUCN NTFP project in Oudomxay, Saravane and Champassak province (broom grass, cardamom, bamboo shoots, rattan, orchids and frogs).
- b) UNESCO Nam Ha Eco-Tourism Project in Luang Namtha (link with eco-tourism).
- c) WCS in Luang Namtha (NTFP feasibility study and cardamom).
- d) FUF in Luang Namtha (cardamom).
- e) GtZ project in Sing and Nalé district in Luang Namtha (cardamom).
- f) EU IRDP in Luang Namtha (cardamom) & new EU project in Luang Namtha.
- g) ZOA in Sing district in Luang Namtha (cardamom).
- h) EU micro-projects II in Luang Prabang (paper mulberry bark) & new EU project in Luang Prabang.
- i) Lao Swedish Upland & Agriculture Research Program in Luang Prabang and Oudomxay.
- j) PDDP project in Phongsaly (cardamom).
- k) DWH/GAA in Oudomxay (honey).
- l) IFAD program in Oudomxay. Loan of 13,4 million dollars in which NTFPs are an important component.
- m) Nam Tan project in Sayaboury (NTFP feasibility study).
- n) PDRPB project in Champassak (cardamom).
- o) SUNV pilot eco-tourism project in Savannaketh (link with eco-tourism).
- p) CUSO in Saravan and Sekong (link with conservation issues).

8.5.1 PTO Luang Namtha and UNESCO Nam Ha Eco-Tourism Project

In Luang Namtha the UNESCO Nam Ha Eco-tourism project started recently with activities to link NTFPs with eco-tourism. The NTFPs used for handicrafts like bamboo, rattan and natural dyes are monitored on a 3-monthly basis. This can indicate the increasing pressure on certain NTFPs and the need for conservation of these species. The income derived from these NTFPs by selling handicrafts to tourists will help to motivate the local population to conserve certain species. In Ban Nammatt Gau, which is one of the villages visited on the 3-day trek, a 100 hectares village wildlife reserve has been established. The first objective of this reserve is to gain extra income for local people through tourism. In an optional tour the sound of birds are imitated by local Akha hunters to attract birds, the use of certain plant species is being explained as well as the tracks of certain animals. The second objective is a conservation objective. Different signboards with protection rules are placed along the entire trek. In another village there is the idea to develop an optional tour in which the focus is more on flora NTFPs which the tourists can harvest on a limited scale and prepare and eat themselves (Guy Marris, 2002). In Ngoi district of Luang Prabang province local people already started to organize tours for tourists how to fish with a local net, of course with fried fish in the lunch that is included.

8.5.2 PAFO Luang Namtha and WCS

WCS is supporting the Nam Ha NBCA Management Unit of the PAFO in Luang Namtha. The main tasks of the Nam Ha NBCA Management Unit are the establishment of a natural resource management plan, the enforcement of natural resource management rules, patrolling of the area, monitoring of the threats and status of biodiversity, conservation education and public awareness. Beside these main tasks two activities that are directly linked with the NBCA will be developed as an incentive for the population living in/around the Nam Ha NBCA i.e. the promotion of

certain NTFPs and eco-tourism. Incentives are payments in cash, in kind, or in social status, which are intended to encourage actions by individuals or communities in support of the management aims of the protected area and biodiversity conservation generally (de Koning, 2000). The Nam Ha NBCA Management Unit started to work on NTFPs in 1996 and recently started also with eco-tourism. The eco-tourism activities are done in collaboration with the UNESCO Nam Ha Eco-Tourism Project and there is a strong link between the two projects.

8.5.3 PTO Savannakhet and SUNV

At the end of 2001 the SUNV pilot eco-tourism project started in Savannakhet province. The eco-tourism activities take place in Dong Phou Vieng NBCA and also here there might be a possible link between eco-tourism and NTFPs. Inside the NBCA, the eco-tourism is likely to occur, only in the dry season (so far), due to limited access and the villages stating that they cannot take the guests between June and early November. The wet season is the most prolific time for NTFPs, but there is a limited selection of NTFPs during the dry season, i.e. some bamboo and rattan shoots, rattan and some hibernating frogs. There is still a great deal of scope to feature these in the eco-tourism trail, and also to gather information on their sustainable harvest. These aspects should be further worked out in a later stage of the project (Jim Johnston, 2002).

There is a good opportunity to do some wet season activities with NTFPs in the smaller Provincial Protected Area called Dong Na Tat which is only 15 km from Savannakhet and has easy access in the wet season. There is an opportunity for eco-tourists to not only learn from the villagers here about the collection and use of NTFPs, but there is a good opportunity to involve some tourists in the seed/spore collection, propagation and planting/inoculation of NTFPs such as rattan, and mushrooms to supplement their natural occurrence. This could be undertaken under the guidance of FRC NTFP section and the village guides. This also is a good selling point for Community-Based Tourism in the local village. There will be probably also a lot of opportunities to link NTFPs with eco-tourism in Khammouane province (Jim Johnston, 2002).

9. Opportunities and constraints for collaboration

As already mentioned before there are several opportunities for collaboration with other agencies. First of all those on institutional level in Vientiane: if a SUNV liaison officer in Vientiane could work on the institutional issues within the NTFP sub-sector, it would be very important to collaborate with NAFRI, NAFES, NUOL, IUCN, FAO, SIDA and others like the handicraft center, export promotion center, medicinal plant institute and Chamber of Commerce. The IUCN, FAO and Lao Swedish Upland & Agriculture Research Program of SIDA already expressed their interest in collaboration. These contacts already resulted in one SUNV programming advisory position within FAO.

On project implementation level IUCN also expressed interest to collaborate with SUNV. Because funding of the second phase of the IUCN NTFP project is still unclear, the collaboration hasn't been discussed into more detail yet. It is not yet clear what the exact demand and added value of SUNV would be. Further discussion is needed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of a possible collaboration and the niche of SUNV support in such a project. Also operational budgets should be in place for the SUNV advisor, as well as counterparts from the right department on provincial and district level. If a link could be established in certain geographical areas where SUNV is already active this would be preferred above other areas.

Also the possibilities for collaboration with WCS in the Nam Ha NBCA Management Unit should be further explored if there is a demand from PAFO Luang Namtha. This SUNV position could be easily linked with the UNESCO Nam Ha Eco-Tourism project in which SUNV is already active. Other collaboration possibilities could be with the new EU project in Luang

Namtha and Luang Prabang, the new IFAD program in Oudomxay and the new SIDA programs in Luang Prabang and Oudomxay.

10. Strategy and action plan for 2002

In this paper the importance of NTFPs in the region and within Laos is stressed. They have a great potential for poverty alleviation, food security, biodiversity conservation and development of sustainable forest-based commerce and industry which will lead to income generation and employment. From both the policy and strategy of the GoL as of SNV and the SUNV program, there is a lot of interest and need to work in the NTFP sector. Because already quite some work has been done on NTFPs within Laos it is important to link up with existing projects and programs. In an internal meeting (March 2002), SUNV decided on a strategy how to continue the development of its NTFP advisory program and which actions should be followed up.

The development of the NTFP advisory program is the responsibility of the Program Officer. It will be important to identify the niches for SUNV in the NTFP sector. SUNV will not be the leading agency on NTFP activities in Laos. Probably most of the added value of SUNV will be in the areas of ID/OS, linkages and networking. At the same time it will be important to develop and maintain close linkages with other agencies in the NTFP sector, internally and externally, in the region and in the Netherlands. The flexible SUNV advisor (30%), Program Officer, Program Assistant and the 2 new NTFP Advisers will further develop and shape the NTFP advisory program in Laos. Hopefully this program will create many opportunities for additional placements of NTFP advisors, possibly with a link to the eco-tourism advisory program.

Within 2002 it will be important to work out the 2 proposed NTFP advisory positions. SUNV decided that it is important to have inputs on both institutional level in Vientiane as on implementation level in the province. Between the two levels there is often a gap and it is important to gather knowledge and experience on both levels. Therefore it was decided to have one NTFP advisory position on institutional level in Vientiane and one on implementation level in the province. For the position on institutional level it is decided to have a senior NTFP advisor with knowledge on ID/OS to work part-time as a liaison officer and part-time linked as an advisor to a Lao partner agency (eg. the Forest Research Center). To know more about the institutional setting of the NTFP sector and to identify linkages, gaps and needs, there will be a consultancy mission in which the institutional setting of the NTFP sector will be analyzed together with different stakeholders. This participatory analysis will take place in September 2002 by an external- and national consultant and will be prepared by the SUNV staff currently involved in the development of the NTFP advisory program. After the analysis negotiations will be continued with the Lao partner agencies that will receive part-time advice of the NTFP advisor and other partners that will be involved in the network of the part-time liaison officer. Operational budgets have to be secured for this position. SUNV should already start to explore the availability of suitable NTFP advisors within the SNV and UNV pool. It would be ideal if the external consultant for the institutional analysis would also be a possible candidate for the NTFP advisory position on institutional level in Vientiane.

For the position on implementation level in the province it is important to keep in touch with possible collaboration partners like IUCN, IFAD, WCS, UNESCO, EU and SIDA. Stand alone positions (within PAFO for example) are not feasible in the provinces and there should be a project structure in which the NTFP advisor will operate. The possibilities in which there is a clear demand, a possible link with eco-tourism and an overlap with geographical areas where SUNV is already active are preferred. After a decision has been taken detailed negotiations on roles and responsibilities, added value of SUNV, budget lines, transport and infrastructure access, right counterparts on both provincial level and district level, etc. have to take place before

placement of the NTFP advisor. Both NTFP advisory positions that will be created should have assignment durations of at least 2-3 years instead of the regular 1-year contracts of SUNV.

The **action plan 2002** for the different SUNV staff involved is listed below:

SUNV Program Officer, SUNV Program Assistant and flexible SUNV advisor:

- Preparation of consultancy to do the participatory institutional analysis of the NTFP sector. This participatory analysis should lead to an advisory position on institutional level in Vientiane. Prepare ToR and recruitment of consultant and Lao National. Inform the different stakeholders involved that will participate in the analysis (April-June 2002).
- Implementation of the consultancy (September 2002).
- Start detailed negotiations with project partners where there is a clear demand and possibility for collaboration, both on institutional as implementation level (September-December 2002)

SUNV Program Officer, SUNV Program Assistant:

- Follow-up with IUCN on 2nd phase IUCN-NTFP project for possible advisory positions on implementation level in the province (April-June 2002).
- Keep on linking up with the development in the NTFP sector within and outside SNV in the region and in the Netherlands (ongoing).
- Identification of possible NTFP advisors within the UNV and SNV pool (ongoing).

Flexible SUNV advisor:

- Keep close contact and explore possibilities with new EU project, IFAD program, WCS/UNESCO and the Lao Upland & Agriculture Research Program for a possible advisory position on implementation level in the province (April-June 2002).
- Continue to improve the documentation on the whole process of the development of the NTFP advisory program for SUNV, SNV and other partner agencies involved (ongoing).

SUNV Program Manager:

- Try to re-allocate SUNV budget for NTFP program development activities. This money can be used for the operational activities of the proposed liaison officer on institutional level in Vientiane (April-June 2002).
- Identification of possible NTFP advisors within the UNV and SNV pool (ongoing).

SUNV advisor within FAO:

- Get more information on the Forestry Strategy 2020 and the involvement of JICA. Inform program officer on other NTFP information through the FAO network (ongoing).

Other SUNV advisors:

- Please inform Program Officer on new developments in the NTFP sector and continue to give feedback to the flexible advisor on new documentation that will be developed. Participate in the institutional analysis of the NTFP sector or follow-up workshop when needed (ongoing).

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