

Laos: Support to the Vientiane Forestry College

Ex post-evaluation report

OECD sector	31281 Forestry education (training and further training)	
BMZ project ID	1995 66 860	
Project executing agency	Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry	
Consultant	Lao-German Company Ltd.	
Year of ex post evaluation	2006	
	Project appraisal (planned)	Ex post evaluation (actual)
Start of implementation	Q1 1996	Q3 1996
Period of implementation	60 months	104 months
Investment costs	EUR 2.96 million ¹	EUR 2.53 million
Counterpart contribution	EUR 0.40 million	EUR 0.40 million
Financing, of which FC funds	EUR 2.56 million	EUR 2.13 million
Other institutions / donors involved	GTZ	GTZ
Performance rating	2	
• Relevance	2	
• General developmental impacts	2	
• Effectiveness	2	
• Efficiency	2	
• Sustainability	2	

Brief description, overall objective and project objectives with indicators

The objective of the project was to make a contribution to the covering Laos' need for practice-oriented forestry experts (graduates of advanced technical colleges). The trained forestry experts were to contribute to sustainable forest management in Laos (overall project objective). The indicator for the achievement of the project objective stipulates that as of 2001, an annual 30 students are to graduate from the Vientiane Forestry College (VFC - now the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry of the National

¹ In addition, under the loan agreement approx. EUR 7.66 million were provided within the three programme phases to finance consulting services provided by German Technical Cooperation (TC) and counterpart contributions were made.

University of Laos) with the required qualifications (Bachelor of Science qualification-BSc). Ex post, the indicator to measure the achievement of the overall project objective was defined as the percentage of graduates from the Vientiane Forestry College who take on a job in Laos' forestry sector (primarily, in forest administration) suitable to their academic knowledge and skills.

The project comprised measures to elaborate new curricula adapted to the situation in the forestry sector in Laos, further training for professors and management consulting measures for the Forestry College (TC component) as well as the rehabilitation and construction of the new College buildings and the build-up of the infrastructure required for the management of the "Training and Model Forest" (TMF) (FC component). In addition, a fund was to be created for the silvicultural rehabilitation of the TMF. The Faculty of Forestry of the National University of Laos (formerly, the Vientiane Forestry College) was the project executing agency and responsible for the implementation of the measures.

Project design / major deviations from the original project planning and their main causes

The project is an FC/TC cooperative project implemented by GTZ and KfW. Originally, two packages of FC measures were to be implemented in two areas: a) the rehabilitation of buildings and the provision of teaching materials. It was planned to rehabilitate the technical infrastructure and the buildings of the Faculty of Forestry, to construct new teacher housing units and guest houses on the grounds of the Faculty of Forestry as well as a base camp in the Training and Model Forest (TMF). In addition, functional rooms (e.g. a water and soil laboratory and a library) including the necessary technical infrastructure and equipment were to be built or provided. And b) the creation of a Training and Model Forest (TMF) of approx. 20,800 ha recently assigned to the Faculty of Forestry and the building of an access road. Besides the preparation of the necessary planning documents (updated aerial views, mapping of the site), the acquisition of the required machinery and equipment from FC funds was planned. The institution responsible for the implementation of both types of measures was the Dong Dok Faculty of Forestry with the support of the TC consultants (GTZ).

The scope of the FC measures was modified after a local project progress review carried out by GTZ in 1999. The forestry concept of the TMF could not be implemented as was originally planned because at that time the institutional conditions for participation of the tutors and local communities in project planning and implementation were not given and professional forest management did not yet seem to be possible. The integration of the Vientiane Forestry College into the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry of the newly established National University in 1995/1996 led to a change of Ministry responsibility. The focus of the overall project changed from a forestry project with an educational component to an academic project with a forestry component. Thus, stronger emphasis was given to the teaching, research, and model function of the Training and Model Forest (TMF) versus the originally intended broad-scale rehabilitation and management of these areas.

After the change of concept prepared by GTZ, the areas created for the TMF were reduced from the originally planned 20,800 ha to 4,700 ha, of which 3,600 ha accounted for forest areas and the rest for agricultural areas. In addition, forest regeneration measures were carried out only on a total of 189 ha instead of the

originally planned 1,250 ha. This allowed the extension of the scope of the building infrastructure measures. Even considering this change of concept, considerable improvements of the faculty's campus infrastructure and of the TMF could be achieved through the FC funds. The change of concept led to cost reductions of the overall project, without any decline in efficiency.

The implemented measures were as follows:

- rehabilitation of the campus buildings (administration, lecture hall, classrooms, buildings for plant collections and laboratories as well as students' halls of residence);
- acquisition of office and laboratory equipment as well as of teaching materials;
- building of an information centre and acquisition of the necessary equipment (library, documentation, computer hall, remote sensing centre and GIS centre);
- construction of teacher housing units for 20 families;
- use of the FC funds that had been released due to the change in concept for the construction of another students' hall of residence for 40 students and for the construction of a classroom building;
- rehabilitation of 189 ha of forest through enrichments and reforestations;
- building of a base camp with an assembly room, office rooms, a canteen, a tree nursery and accommodation facilities for 20 persons, including subsequent waterside protection measures (Camp Philiat);
- creation of a training camp with lodging facilities for 40 students (Camp Napo);
- expansion of the main access road to the Training and Model Forest (TMF), of community communication roads, as well the creation of forest tracks in the TMF;
- In addition, FC funds were used for minor forest regeneration measures and equipment.

The design of all the facilities was adequate; they were properly built and are being used for the agreed purposes. Only the design of the teacher housing units seems to have been undersized, since most of the inhabitants extended these units at their own expense with the consent of the Faculty of Forestry by an additional hall located in the ground floor. In addition, the supply of teaching materials could be improved and an adequate contribution to a site-oriented reforestation could be made (the Faculty of Forestry now possesses one of the few rehabilitated forest areas with 30 endemic tree species in the region). The expansion of the road network in the area of the model forest had a positive side effect: it contributed substantially to opening up villages and connecting them to the region.

In summary it can be stated that the measures were a suitable means of contributing to the mitigation of the main problem. Although the major part of the graduates of the

Faculty of Forestry are being employed by the public administration and assume, above all, a steering and control function in the rural areas, their number and mission (sustainable use and protection of the natural forest resources) is not sufficient for the ultimate achievement of the project objectives. To this end, the project concept should also have provided for an active contribution to effective sector policy implementation.

Key results of the impact analysis and performance rating

In Laos, forestry and agriculture are the primary economic sectors to combat poverty and to foster the sustainable socio-economic development of the country. In particular, they are important for the protection of the water catchment areas and the sustainable use of the huge hydroelectric potential of the country. Through the construction of roads, the project region has been further developed and access to markets and social services could be improved. Overall, there is fewer slashing and burning for shifting cultivation purposes (cultivation of rice). Moreover, the creation of fish ponds, the development of poultry farming, market gardening, etc. can be seen as a result of the sensitisation campaigns for the local population. It is expected that illegal deforestation will decrease in the project region. Thus, the measure contributed to the elimination of the identified bottlenecks in the training and model forests. Although the project had an indirectly positive impact on the reduction of poverty, this was neither a main nor a secondary objective. For this reason, the project had an overall general developmental orientation.

As far as the gender impacts of the project are concerned, the limited possibilities were in our view not fully exploited. Originally though, gender impacts had not been envisaged as an objective of the project. Through the modernisation of the curriculum contents and the teaching methods (TC component), more female students could be reached, so that their percentage rose considerably from 7% at the time of the project appraisal to an average of 21% during the last few years. Among the teaching staff, the percentage of women has also risen. Given this differentiated approach, the project contributed to an improvement of the potential for a better social position of women.

The project did not aim at achieving participatory development or good governance. Through the TC component, the capacities of the district government and the communities were strengthened to enable them to align aspects of sustainable resource management with overarching socio-economic development.

With the support of the GTZ the first and only non-governmental organisation (NGO) of Laos, the "Dong Dok Nature Society", was founded in 1998. Currently, this NGO consists of about 250 members and has established a good reputation, among others through its Mobile Conservation Unit and due to the environmental education implemented at numerous schools in Laos. Also other donors (e.g. Lux-Aid) are interested in cooperating with this NGO.

Resource protection was an explicit overall objective of the project. Its ecologic impact can be rated positively at all levels. However, due to the FC financed roads in the Training and Model Forest, general access to the forestry resources was improved, thus also increasing their vulnerability. Awareness campaigns and capacity building measures at the level of the district governments and, above all, among the population helped reduce the risk of negative side effects. Overall, the environmental impacts of the project are positive.

The developmental effectiveness of the FC/TC cooperation project is assessed as follows:

- With the support of German development cooperation, the Faculty of Forestry in Laos has achieved an excellent reputation regarding curriculum development, the state of academic education, the qualification of its staff and the quality of its equipment. This also becomes apparent from the results of the demand and employment study: all the 46 employers who were already employing graduates of the Faculty of Forestry were planning to employ further graduates. 90% of another 129 potential employers were planning to employ forestry graduates in the forthcoming years, so that future demand for graduates seemed to be ensured. In our view, graduates will not have difficulties in finding a job which corresponds to their academic education and training. The project objective was more than fulfilled. However, there is a maintenance problem of the teaching infrastructure, because the financial means of the project executing agency are limited. The introduction of tailor-made concepts to solve this problem has considerably reduced the sustainability risk. No ideal solution could be found with regard to the long-term use of the access road to the Training and Model Forest; however, the sustainable effectiveness of the road can be ensured to a sufficient extent through the expected assistance from the local authorities in the area of road maintenance by providing heavy machinery and equipment. Overall, we judge the project's sustainable **effectiveness as sufficient (sub-rating 2)**.
- Without the project, the primary core problem (sustainable management of the forestry resources) would not have been possible to solve due to the lack of practice-oriented forestry staff. Thus, the developmental **relevance** of the project is **satisfactory (sub-rating 2)**.
- The project contributes significantly to the achievement of the overall project objectives: The Faculty of Forestry is the only school of this kind in Laos and nearly all of its graduates remain in the sector and the majority of them are employed by the forest administration. An adequate implementation of the forest policy would not be possible without the Faculty. For this reason, we judge the **overarching developmental impact** of the project as **satisfactory (sub-rating 2)**.
- The objectives of the project measures were achieved with a reasonable use of funds/effort. The construction methods applied to build the infrastructure financed under the project were simple and appropriate to the local conditions. Utilisation of the project infrastructure is very good (production efficiency). At the level of the overall project objective, the limited use of funds contributes to a cost-effective improvement of the education standard in the forestry sector. Thus, the allocation efficiency can be judged as satisfactory. Considering the scarce funds available for maintenance, however, we assume that the operational efficiency will be somewhat restricted. Overall, we classify the project's **efficiency** as **satisfactory (sub-rating 2)**.
- The overall sustainability of the project impact is guaranteed given the expected high demand for graduates and the efforts of the project executing agency to integrate both the students and the teaching staff into the maintenance of the facilities used by them (the former through tuition fees and the latter through the maintenance of the funded teacher housing units). There is a certain risk that the

maintenance of the access road to the Training and Model Forest (TMF) might not be performed satisfactorily. Given the low proportion of funds allocated to maintenance purposes and the resulting slight risk for the use of the TMF, we rate the overall **sustainability** of the project as still **sufficient (sub-rating 2)**.

In summary, we rate the **developmental efficacy** of the project to be **satisfactory (overall rating 2)**.

General conclusions and recommendations

No general conclusions and recommendations were drawn from the project.

Notes on the methods used to evaluate project success (project rating)

Projects are evaluated on a six-point scale, the criteria being relevance, effectiveness (outcome), “overarching developmental impact” and efficiency. The ratings are also used to arrive at a final assessment of a project’s overall developmental efficacy. The scale is as follows:

- 1 Very good rating that clearly exceeds expectations
- 2 Good rating fully in line with expectations and without any significant shortcomings
- 3 Satisfactory rating – project falls short of expectations but the positive results dominate
- 4 Unsatisfactory rating – significantly below expectations, with negative results dominating despite discernible positive results
- 5 Clearly inadequate rating – despite some positive partial results the negative results clearly dominate
- 6 The project has no positive results or the situation has actually deteriorated

A rating of 1 to 3 is a positive assessment and indicates a successful project while a rating of 4 to 6 is a negative assessment and indicates a project which has no sufficiently positive results.

Sustainability is evaluated according to the following four-point scale:

Sustainability level 1 (very good sustainability)

The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to continue undiminished or even increase.

Sustainability level 2 (good sustainability)

The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to decline only minimally but remain positive overall. (This is what can normally be expected.)

Sustainability level 3 (satisfactory sustainability)

The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to decline significantly but remain positive overall. This rating is also assigned if the sustainability of a project is considered inadequate up to the time of the ex post evaluation but is very likely to evolve positively so that the project will ultimately achieve positive developmental efficacy.

Sustainability level 4 (inadequate sustainability)

The developmental efficacy of the project is inadequate up to the time of the ex post evaluation and an improvement is very unlikely. This rating is also assigned if the sustainability that has been positively evaluated to date is very likely to deteriorate severely and no longer meet the level 3 criteria.