

LAO UPLANDS INITIATIVE

landscape of opportunities

connectivity
Rural Laos opportunities
future
farming
Youth
mountainous
outmigration
Knowledge

subistence
Job
access
Skills
commercial
migrating

narrative
parents
media
social
transition
population

Education Made
urban

Making the case for sustainable agriculture: Changing the negative narrative towards agriculture through innovative approach to attract the youth in Lao PDR and Cambodia

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Background: Lao PDR

~60% of the population are under the age of 25
70% of the Lao households are engaged in farming

Rural youth represents roughly 45% of the total population and is crucial to the future of agriculture, especially in mountainous areas.

Rapid transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture accompanied by increased connectivity (e.g. roads, phones, social media) has brought both opportunities and problems for young people (Bartlett, 2017).

Compared to their parents, rural youth are better informed, increasingly mobile and have access to a wider range of products. But, they are also less likely to stay in the village due to both pressure from their parents to find a "better" job than farming and the negative narrative in general about farming activities (seen as backwards and tedious). This important outmigration of the young generation poses a direct threat to the future of farming, especially in mountainous areas.



Awareness Raising Through Short Film Productions & Public Events

Innovative approach: Filmmaking used as a tool to raise awareness amongst the public and policy makers about the need to support alternative farming practices.

Collaboration between regional event (Luang Prabang Film Festival) and the **Agroecology Learning alliance in South East Asia (ALiSEA)** to create a **short film competition** on the topic of Youth and Agroecology and a series of public animations.

Collaboration with **Towards Organic Asia network** to produce 4 short films about representative of young organic farmers in Asia (Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar) relying on Participatory Action Research and Inside-out reflection tools.

Targeted audience: general public, more especially urban consumers and policy makers / government staff.

Results / anticipated impacts: The film competition was successful in getting multiple messages out to the public in the Mekong Region: 20 submissions from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand, almost 370,000 video views on Facebook (across eight videos), over 1,3 million people reached.

To watch the top 8 films:



The two-day public event organized in the framework of the LPFF involved hundreds of people. More here <https://bit.ly/2ma7rct>

To watch the videos:



The 4 short films about young organic farmers will help empowering farmers and their communities, validating their knowledge and inspiring members within the network of agroecology movement and larger international audience



Research for Fostering Dialogue & Support Advocacy

Assessment of agroecological, social & economic performances of innovative farms that are led by young farmers

Innovative approach: Elaboration of a user-friendly assessment tool based on a range of reliable, easy-to-understand indicators applicable to the Mekong Region and addressing agroecological, social and economic dimension of the farms. The assessment targets in priority organic farms led by young and innovative farmers.

Targeted audience: Assessment tools aimed at being used by local organizations working closely with the rural youth in order to foster dialogue and raise the profile of innovative farmers.

Results / anticipated impacts: Producing case studies of innovative farms that would help inspiring and convincing not only active members within the regional network of young organic farmers but also conventional farmers, policy makers and consumers about the impact of agroecological farming practices.

Education for Promoting Agroecology & a New Narrative towards Agriculture

Developing of Teaching & Learning Material in Agroecology in the Lao PDR

Innovative approach: The Faculty of Agriculture of the National University of Laos has produced 4 new teaching manuals related to agroecology and sustainable farming in collaboration with the main national universities (Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Savannakhet, Champhasak) and the Department of Agriculture Extension & Cooperative (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry).

Targeted audience: BSc and MSc students, University professors.

Results / anticipated impacts: New manuals addressing organic agriculture, agroforestry, and integrated agriculture will benefit to the 200-250 BSc & MSc students who are enrolled each year at the faculty of Agriculture in Vientiane. It will help building a better understanding about sustainable farming with theory and practical examples and provides new ways to approach the work with farmers at field level.

To watch farmers' videos:



Smartphone video making
to document best practices and record
testimonies from inspiring farmers

Innovative approach: Together with a professional filmmaker, training module creation. The objective is to produce short technical videos to document agroecology practices and share experiences. Training module is built around four components i) elaborating script and enhancing communication skills, (ii) learning different shooting techniques, (iii) recording farmer interview for sharing field experience; (iv) editing and broadcasting on social media.



Targeted audience: Innovative and young farmers & development practitioners across the Mekong region (including government staff from agriculture extension services).

Results / anticipated impacts: 16 innovative farmers on agroecology, 6 development practitioners from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, 20 local staff from agriculture extension services in Laos have been trained. About 40 videos have been produced on different topics (composting, vegetable nursery, chicken raising...). Videos' outreach goes from 200 to 12,000 views in Cambodia. Several video screening have been organized at village and commune level to enhance the diffusion.

This approach has help boosting farmers' self-esteem and pride, enhancing farmers to farmers knowledge exchange, and encouraging a wider dissemination and access to agroecology information in rural area.

Lessons learnt & recommendations...

Producing regular and meaningful video contents related to agriculture and addressing rural population with farmers at the core of the process helps improving farmers' status toward young generation.

Relying on interactive platform and new communication technologies (especially smartphone) is a relevant approach to disseminate knowledge to rural stakeholders, especially the youth.

Social media platforms are powerful tools that serve farmers to build up their capacity in sharing their knowledge through structuring all the steps of the practices and providing clear explanations of the impacts observed on their farm. Feedback from other farmers also help them to improve their process through the time.



ALiSEA
Agro-ecology Learning alliance in South East Asia

