The Northern Uplands Development Programme
selected lessons and observations

Luang Prabang, 12-14 March 2018
Push and Pull dynamics
impacts on upland farming systems and livelihoods

**Farming typology**
- Tradition Swidden cultivation
- Paddy rice cultivation

**Policy push**
- Shifting cultivation stabilisation
- Opium eradication
- Forest and land allocation
- Focal site development
- 4 Goals & 13 measures

**Push**

**Push-Pull**
- Fixed rotational cropping
- Intensified production of large ruminants

**Pull**
- Cash crop monocultures
- Industrial tree plantations

**Market pull**
- Cross border trade
- Large regional investment
- Small local trade and value addition
- Contract farming
- Mining and hydropower investments

**Outcomes**
- Greater market opportunities for some
- Unsustainable production (i.e. maize monoculture)
- Forest encroachment & landscape level changes
- Greater food insecurity in some areas
- Extractive development
What NUDP tried to achieve
Policy options for improving upland farming

- **Supporting options for diverse farming systems**
  - Provide options to improve farm diversity
  - Balance food security and commercial production
  - Support adaptive research on upland transition

- **Linking production to market demand**
  - Regional trade links
  - Private sector linkages
  - Market information systems

- **Promoting local agri-business & basic infrastructure**
  - Enhancing local processing, storage and value addition
  - Basic road, water, education and health

- **Improving institutional support mechanisms**
  - Regulations and incentives
  - Reorientation of extension system
  - Decentralized research system
The Lao Uplands Programme

Objectives

1. Integrated rural development is established as a process for eradicating poverty in uplands

2. Upland food and nutrition security is derived from improved livelihood and income security
   - Guaranteed through increased food production and improved incomes; linked to markets

3. Strengthened capacity of local government facilitates decentralization that leads to
   - Improved efficiency and effectiveness of public services delivery; and,
   - An enabling environment for private sector and civil society in uplands;
   - To maximize development of local potential

4. Sustainable natural resources management: conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity
Lessons learnt
Land and landscape management

- **Land use planning (LUP) approaches** must be simple to implement keeping in mind the limited resources of executing agencies.
- LUP should be integrated with **village development plans** (VDPs) and district social and economic development plans (DSEDPs).
- **Land use planning and registration for collective lands** has the potential to strengthen tenure security by upland communities, and is expected to be supported under new land policy and legislation.
- **Systematic registration of private land** in rural areas is costly and takes years to complete; however titled land provides collateral for loans and fosters increased investments on the land.
Lessons learnt
Local governance and planning

• VDPs and **village development activities** should be incorporated into and consistent with district socio-economic development plans.

• Before VDPs are prepared, facilitators and staff of involved sector agencies should understand **sector relevant policies**, plans, and decrees, and proposed and on-going private sector plans and activities that serve as a references for planning development activities.

• Better ways to share VDPs among development actors are required to **avoid duplication** of planning efforts and confusion, and to promote implementation of priority schemes.

• VDPs should include **sustainable NRM, land rehabilitation, climate-resilient infrastructure, nutrition-sensitive agriculture**.
Lessons learnt
Farmer organisations

• Farmer groups (FG) in remote upland districts are generally not advanced in organisational development; this factor should be recognized in grant funding procedures and assessment criteria.

• **FGs need training/support** in preparing proposals, managing finances, and keeping records.

• **Small grants to FGs** and their inclusion in private sector agricultural development activities can be a catalyst and motivate improved management; grants and livelihood programs can promote behaviour change (e.g., better management of communal grazing lands, collective marketing, collective investment, asset management)
Lessons learnt
Pro-poor rural economy

• **Value chain (VC) studies** are important in planning effective extension programs and livelihood interventions.

• Not all VC studies have been high quality. It is still important to **promote discussion and analysis** among stakeholders and to plan market-oriented actions and learn lessons from and build on previous projects.

• VCs for many upland commodities **extend across borders** making the detailed VC studies complex/costly.

• **Impacts from value chain development and livelihood support have been evident:**
  – livelihood improvements,
  – access to food, and dietary diversity in NUDP villages.
Lessons learnt
Agricultural extension and services

• NUDP has built DAFO and PAFO systems for extension planning, budgeting, management, M&E, and reporting that could be applied in other districts and provinces (supporting sam sang)

• NUDP has worked through staff in PAFO and DAFO to build their capacity - not parallel services implemented by consultants or NGOs

• Given available resources, TA, and targeted training, DAFOs can be empowered and become effective in delivering extension services to farmers

• DAFO can collaborate with private sector agribusiness investors and companies with funds to develop farmers’ livelihoods in the targeted districts
Lessons learnt
Agricultural extension and services

• The time and resources to **develop local capacities** should not be underestimated.

• Many **TSCs have shown limited capacity** to implement activities: few permanent staff and high turnover, little or no regular budget.

• NUDP TSC development process supports capacity development and identifies **services that meet farmer demand** and can be sustained.
Lessons learnt
Programme Based Approach

• NUDP has shown that DPs can use **government run systems** and implement effectively with government staff
  – GoL financial management works – independent audits demonstrate transparency/accountability
  – M&E systems were operated by staff trained down to district level

• Implementing projects through **district administrations** is cost-effective and administratively efficient; it allows cross-sector coordination that results in convergence

• NUDP faced **complexities of different DP financial management requirements.**

• DPs appear to have **lost interest in supporting a PBA** for the uplands
Looking ahead
Implementing the Uplands Development Strategy and Program towards SDGs

• Need to develop coordination **beyond agriculture** - includes village planning, infrastructure development, nutrition, etc.

• The UDP/UDS was prepared in a **highly participatory and consultative** manner and approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

• **Government and DPs have an on-going dialogue** on poverty alleviation, food and nutrition security, and socio-economic development in the uplands through the SWG-ARD
Looking ahead
Implementing the Uplands Development Strategy and Program towards SDGs

• Requires **strong leadership**, clear guidance, and frequent consultations with senior leadership.

• Upland development activities need to be **coordinated by GoL** to ensure consistency with relevant policies.

• Uplands **inter-sectoral coordination** office is needed within MAF as focal point for upland development activities

• Implementation of the UDP requires mechanisms for **coordination at provincial and district levels**
Thank you for your attention

Public Sector
Government agencies, MOs, donors agencies, INGOs

Private Sector
Regional investors, large-scale agribusiness, SMEs, and local traders

Civil society
Production groups, marketing and business associations, NPAs