

# **Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Public Information and Awareness Services for Vulnerable Communities in Lao PDR**

## **Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)**

September 2021

## 1. Introduction/Project Description

The *Public Information and Awareness Services for Vulnerable Communities Project* will complement a Bank Investment Project Financing (IPF), the Lao PDR Enhancing Systematic Land Registration Project, by strengthening information awareness on existing basic rights related to natural resources and livelihood. However, the project takes a step further to include other essential basic legal rights on social issues such as gender and disability as per the Laotian legal framework as part of its overall effort to enhance grassroots information service delivery and mechanisms.

Based on the findings of the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), Ethnic Group Development Framework (EGDF) and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) of the Enhancing Systematic Land Registration Project (P169669) with regard to direct and indirect economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts on Indigenous Peoples (IPs) by this project, the SEP of the Public Information and Awareness Services for Vulnerable Communities project will be updated to ensure that IPs (officially recognized as Ethnic Groups in Lao PDR) are fully consulted about and have opportunities to participate in actively, project design and the determination of project implementation arrangements. "The Public Information and Awareness Services for Vulnerable Communities project will aim at improving public access to information on natural resources and livelihood rights, address poor access to justice and low legal awareness by providing awareness raising and legal counseling services to the poorest and most vulnerable communities with approaches tailored to their unique conditions. The provided awareness raising and capacity building for counseling and paralegal services focus on improving access to information on natural resources and livelihood rights that are central for the livelihoods and subsistence of the beneficiary communities. Increased awareness and improved capacity to deliver legal counseling will help the communities to prepare and address challenges and livelihood impacts stemming from natural resource-based investments typical to Lao PDR. The grant will also aim to enhance bottom-up approaches, agency of local communities and capacity of local CSOs that will ensure the sustainability of the investment.

The grant beneficiaries will be the poorest and socially and economically most vulnerable persons of Lao PDR. This will include ethnic groups (Chinese-Tibetan, Hmong-lumien and Mon-Khmer), women and persons with disabilities. The beneficiaries will be in poor and remote rural areas, including persons that have settled in areas considered state forestland.

The **development objective** of the project is to improve access to legal information and counseling services on natural resources and livelihood rights to selected poor and vulnerable persons. This will happen mainly through strengthening local communities' access to quality information related to basic legal rights in relation to natural resources management, gender, and access to grievance redress mechanisms with a special focus on the LIWG members' project location throughout the country.

The project's SEP will have **three main objectives**:

- (1) guide the coordination and collaboration among HELVETAS/LIWG and the GoL's line ministries and mass organizations during the implementation of this project;
- (2) identify beneficiary stakeholders and to define a strategy for building and maintaining a constructive relationship with and participation of the principal beneficiaries of the project; and
- (3) effective information dissemination and communication strategy and approach.

The project will be implemented by Helvetas in close collaboration with the Land Information Working Group (LIWG), an umbrella working group of local and international CSOs that is part of the International NGO Network (INN) in Laos, and its members. Helvetas and LIWG will work with the Lao Front for National Development (LFND) and Lao Women's Union (LWU), as well as relevant local authorities, with guidance and consultations from MoNRE, mainly through Department of Land (DoL) and other relevant ministries. On this purpose, an Implementation Management Committee, involving the Line Ministry, the respective

District Governments, CSOs, representatives of communities, Helvetas and the WB, will be established with the aim of ensuring coordination and addressing potential misunderstandings during implementation phase but also throughout the project's implementation.

The implementation of the project activities will be conducted through provisions of up to six sub-grants to LIWG member CSOs. The selection of the sub-grant recipients will be governed through a project managing committee that will be set up by Helvetas together with the members of LIWG that will advise Helvetas on the sub-grant recipient selection criteria as well as the review of the submitted proposals. Detailed rules and procedures for administrating the subproject program will be provided in the project's operational manual.

The project will cover the following three components:

**Component 1 - CSO Capacity Building:** This component supports capacity building for LIWG CSO members to deliver awareness raising and counseling service trainings for village-level facilitators and paralegal volunteers who will disseminate public information and provide counselling services for the vulnerable and poorest rural communities, including women, persons with disabilities, ethnic groups and communities located in remote geographical locations. LIWG CSO member staff will receive public information dissemination trainings on rights related to livelihood security, use of natural resources and access to justice, and new training materials will be developed to test innovative approaches to engage with rural communities, including video materials. In addition, CSOs will receive trainings and coaching on supporting paralegal volunteers and VMC members with enhancing their ability to deliver counseling services. The training and coaching sessions for LIWG member CSOs will be held in Vientiane, or in provinces where the CSOs are based and in these cases will coincide with the provinces where the sub-grant activities under Component 2 will be implemented.

**Subcomponent 1.1 - Awareness raising capacity building for the LIWG member CSOs:** Helvetas provides capacity building for the local LIWG member CSOs to conduct their sub-grant activities (under Component 2) related to awareness raising. Legal experts of the LIWG secretariat will be recruited as consultants to provide Training of Trainers (ToT) on public awareness raising and counseling services for LIWG member CSOs. The ToT to LIWG member CSOs will be held focusing on the new Land and Forestry laws, with an emphasis on communities' natural resource and livelihood rights enshrined in this legislation. In addition, specific training sessions will be developed on the inclusion of women, youth and disabled people. An inventory of all existing and relevant capacity building and training materials already in use by local facilitators in various districts will be conducted, followed by updating, translating and development of new training materials and public awareness activity tools, such as brochures, village-level information sessions, short video clips and radio talk shows, related to natural resource, livelihood and access to justice rights. The trainings will be tailored to the local context by the sub-grantees (subcomponent 2.1) and will be followed up with field level coaching visits. In case face-to-face meetings are restricted due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, trainings can be held virtually. The capacity building activities will cater towards a broader group of CSOs (around 12) that have already indicated interest during project preparation.

**Subcomponent 1.2 - Counseling service capacity building for the LIWG member CSOs:** Under this subcomponent, Helvetas provides capacity building for the local LIWG member CSOs with a focus on counseling services to be delivered by village-based paralegal volunteers, VMC members and lawyers at district based Legal Aid Centers (LAC). The objective is to enhance the capacity of LIWG member CSO staff to train paralegals in providing counseling services related to natural resource and livelihood rights. The capacity building will be tailored based on a capacity needs assessment. Training materials on providing counseling services related to natural resource rights, livelihood security and related issue will be produced, updated and translated, and ToT for LIWG member CSO staff conducted to enhance their capacity to train local paralegal advisors, lawyers at LACs and VMC members. As in the case of subcomponents 1.1/2.1 these

training materials and trainings will be tailored to the local context by the sub-grantees in subcomponent 2.2. Although only a limited number (approximately 6) of sub-grantee CSOs will be selected at a later stage, the capacity building will be provided to a broader group of CSOs (about 12) similarly to subcomponent 1.1.

**Component 2 - Sub-grants:** The Sub-Grants will be used to cascade the CSO capacity building, and the training of trainer inputs provided under the Component 1 to implement in the project target areas the awareness raising and the capacity building for counselling service at community level. Through sub-grants allocated to LIWG member CSOs, public information dissemination activities conducted by trained village-level facilitators will directly engage rural communities. Local community members trained and coached by Helvetas member CSOs will conduct these activities in close coordination with village authorities, mass organizations and local government officials of MoNRE. A limited number of 10 -12 sub-grantee CSOs will be selected at the outset of project implementation to deliver the training and coaching to local facilitators and village focal points providing public awareness raising activities. This component also aims to enhance the capacity of legal counselling service providers focusing mostly on paralegal volunteers elected by the village community, VMC members who will be trained to have paralegal capacity, as well as members of the Laos Women's Union (LWU) at the village level to work on women rights. The LWU will also play a facilitating role to ensure the adoption of culturally accepted ways of engaging women participants. In certain cases where village paralegal capacity is insufficient, district level lawyers of Legal Aid Clinics (LAC) will be trained instead, if existing and operational. Approximately 6 sub-grantees will be selected to conduct the village-level counselling service capacity building.

**Subcomponent 2.1 - Public awareness raising of local communities:** Under this subcomponent LIWG member CSOs will provide training and coaching to village-level focal points and facilitators to strengthen their capacity to deliver community awareness raising activities for local communities in selected target areas. Training packages (developed under subcomponent 1.1) will be adapted to the specific local context through design and planning workshops, and village-level community facilitators will receive trainings on the specific topics. LIWG member coaches will visit communities and village-based facilitators periodically to conduct field level coaching. The subcomponent activities will be conducted through a sub-grant mechanism, where LIWG member organizations will submit sub-grant proposals defining the final activities, project locations and beneficiaries to Helvetas based on their own consultation process with communities. The sub-grant management mechanism is described in more detail in the Sub-Grant Manual (Annex). Throughout the implementation of the sub-grants, grass-roots level screenings and monitoring surveys will be held to assess the requests and needs of the communities, and to ensure the involvement of the most vulnerable community members, including women, ethnic groups and persons with disabilities. Up to max. 12 sub-grants will be provided under subcomponent 2.1, targeting a total of 60 villages.

**Subcomponent 2.2 - Training and coaching of paralegals on natural resources and livelihood rights:** The specific outputs of this sub-component will be geared towards strengthening legal counselling services, and village based focal points for paralegal assistance in each of the implementation villages. LIWG member CSO which participated in the capacity building training (subcomponent 1.2) and were selected for a sub-grant, will partner with the district LAC under the MoJ and village representatives of the mass organizations to provide capacity building activities to village level voluntary paralegals, VMC members as well as LAC lawyers. Throughout the implementation of the sub-grants and the ongoing monitoring and review process, grass-roots level screenings and surveys will be conducted to assess the requests and needs of the communities and to track the progress and effects of the capacity building activities. Up to six sub-grants will be provided under subcomponent 2.2, and the same sub-grant management structure described in the Sub-Grant Manual will be used. In total, 300 legal counseling service providers will be trained in 60 villages, on average in each village 2 village paralegals and 3 VMC members.

**Component 3 - Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation and Knowledge Dissemination:**

**Subcomponent 3.1 - Project Management and Administration:** The grant will be managed and implemented by Helvetas through the establishment of a Project Management Unit (PMU). The PMU will be staffed with a full-time project manager and part-time financial management, procurement, training and M&E specialists. The PMU together with the Implementing Agency are responsible for overall project management. The sub-grantees will report to the PMU on the activities that are implemented by CSO members of the LIWG through sub-grant arrangements (component 2) However, the Implementing Agency, PMU and Project Manager will be solely responsible for reporting on all aspects of the project, including financial management, procurement, M&E, GRM and ESF, to the WB and JSDF through quarterly progress and annual reports. The IA will also organize a Project Launch event, conduct annual audits and prepare a Mid-Term Review report of the grant project. Under this subcomponent, the PMU will also build the capacity of the sub-grantees on project management, FM, procurement, ESF, M&E and other aspects required to fulfill their sub-grantee responsibilities. The PMU will be responsible for direct implementation of component 1 whereas component 2 will be implemented by LIWG CSO members through sub-grants.

**Subcomponent 3.2 - Monitoring and Evaluation:** The project will develop and implement a participatory monitoring and evaluation system with i) quarterly, bi-annual and annual monitoring milestones, and ii) recurrent surveys of the final beneficiaries. The recurrent surveys will focus on final beneficiaries' of Component 2 and include sub-grantee CSOs (Component 1) feedback on the implemented activities. The surveys will be implemented as part of the Subcomponents 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 and 2.2. Annual progress reports will be used to review and assess the overall progress of the grant activities. A result monitoring plan and guidelines will be jointly developed by Helvetas and the LIWG and in consultation with key stakeholders (beneficiary community members, sub-grantee CSOs and relevant government entities) prior to the first Interim Evaluation. At the outset of the project moreover, a targeted baseline survey will be conducted, which will further inform the precise scope of the activities under Component 1 and 2.

**Subcomponent 3.3 - Knowledge Dissemination:** Under this subcomponent a knowledge dissemination strategy will be designed. The outcomes and findings of the grant activities will be disseminated as workshops, reports, knowledge sharing events and through various forms of media. The IA will organize bi-annual knowledge sharing meetings with LIWG members, as well as an annual symposium, which will be catered towards LIWG member CSOs across Lao PDR and interested government stakeholders such as MONRE and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). Knowledge sharing meetings will be held for sub-grantees to exchange lessons learned and experiences for the field, while mass organizations and involved government agencies will also be invited to participate. Every effort will be made to ensure that publications, training programs, seminars, workshops or ceremonial events financed under the JSDF, and all other materials used with respect to the proposed grant activities and JSDF, shall clearly indicate that the activities in question have benefitted directly from this funding source. JSDF's logo will be displayed on all publications and at all events. In addition to the use of the logo, the Bank will take all appropriate measures to ensure that JSDF's support receives local publicity. In case COVID19 mobility and meeting restrictions will be in place, Helvetas will ensure that dissemination activities are held virtually.

## 2. Brief Summary of Previous Stakeholder Engagement Activities

- The first communication between the World Bank and LIWG happened between December 2018 and June 2019 in an informal manner. Based on those discussions, the World Bank drafted a concept note of a potential project on public awareness and information sharing on land rights to JSDF. This document was not disclosed.
- On 11 February 2019, LIWG held an Annual General Meeting and had a session to inform the members about the preliminary discussions with the World Bank. Following this, LIWG created a task force to be involved in the design of the project. LIWG Core Members were informed by email about the task

force.

- Afterwards the World Bank conducted a mission in Laos in September and October 2019. Different online meetings happened as well in order to prepare this mission and a meeting with the LIWG Core Members was held in September 2019. This meeting was purely informative. Information about the meeting was not disclosed.
- The World Bank, Helvetas and LIWG had a working session together with the LIWG task force. This meeting aimed at defining the outlines of the project. As a result, a presentation was done and revised between LIWG, Helvetas and the World Bank team at the end of the session. It was shared by email to the task force.
- During the September mission, the World Bank team, Helvetas and LIWG met with the Minister of MoNRE and Lao Front for National Development, which is a government mass organization to discuss the partnership.
- In November 2019, LIWG held a 2-day workshop with the task force to design in more details the project. Minutes were drafted and shared with the LIWG task force. Based on this event, LIWG and Helvetas drafted a concept note which was shared as well with the task force by email. This concept note served as a basis for drafting the PIN which was also shared to the task force by email. An online meeting occurred as well to discuss about the situation of women land rights in Laos following a field survey in LIWG members project sites.
- The World Bank team visited Laos in January 2020 and met with LIWG and Helvetas at the World Bank office to discuss the safeguards. Afterwards, LIWG, Helvetas and the World Bank have had on-going online meetings in order to help the preparation of the safeguards, agreements and other requirements. Information about those meetings are not disclosed publicly but LIWG maintains the task force informed by sharing progress by emails.
- Other consultations' meeting with the task force were organized in 2020:
  - On 18 June 2020 where discussions were about risks and role and responsibilities;
  - On 18 September 2020 to identify a roll-out of a typical village-level interventions and approach considering targets.
- LIWG Core Members were kept updated about the progress of the work whether by email or during Core Members meetings and the recent Annual General Meeting in February 2021.

### 3. Stakeholder identification and analysis

#### 3.1. Affected parties

In general, the project beneficiaries will be the poorest and socially and economically most vulnerable persons of Lao PDR. This will include ethnic communities, women, persons with disabilities, persons living on subsistence agriculture. Beneficiaries will be primarily in poor rural areas, including persons that have settled in areas considered forest land. In such geographical areas, poor infrastructure and limited government resources for outreach have hindered knowledge and awareness. The beneficiaries also include key stakeholders that serve as focal points in information dissemination at the grassroots level, including mass-organization members (e.g. LWU, LFND), district and provincial government officials, community-based organization members, and members of LIWG who would receive capacity-building training. Directly and potentially adversely affect will be:

- **Communities** at local level including ethnic groups and women who will benefit from the project

activities: awareness raising activities and counselling services. The risk for communities is being misunderstood by the local authorities when they report about land issues and ask for legal advices. This risk is high. The other risk is social unrest after being aware of their rights and communities experiencing ineffective grievance mechanisms. This risk is moderate. There is a risk for women that customary rules undermining their rights is not overcome.

- **The Village Chiefs** will be the ones who deliver authorization for activities happening in his village and coordinate with the civil society organizations implementing the project. There is no risk identified for him.
- **The Village Mediation Committees (VMC)** are composed of representatives of mass organizations at local level. The village mediation committee will receive training on land rights, mediation and conflict resolution, gender and will be the ones receiving the complaints at a first place. Their role will be to solve the land issues reported. The risk for them is low. VMCs ensure the effective participation of women in activities and full protection of their rights according to the law (in opposition of customary rules which could be unfavorable and not supportive for women in some villages).
- **The paralegals** will be selected by the communities. They could ideally be representatives from the Lao Women Union and/or the Lao Front for National Development or even student in law (through apprenticeship). Ideally paralegals will be one male and one female in each community. They must have the trust from the communities. They will be recipient of training as for the VMCs. Paralegals are volunteers. They help to connect communities and in particular women and ethnic groups to VMCs. The risk for VMCs is to be threatened by local authorities as they might hear about land issues before complainants address a local justice system. The risk is high. Paralegals will bring support to the disadvantaged ones such as women, disabled people and ethnic groups.
- **The Civil Society Organizations (LIWG members)** delivering awareness raising activities, training on land rights and counselling activities. LIWG members will be recipient of training and knowledge/information sharing. A Community of Practice will be created in this purpose. CSOs and their sub-projects may be questioned and misunderstood among public stakeholders and local authorities. As a result, the process of getting a Memorandum of Understanding can take time and affect the project's implementation timeline. Thus, informed consultation with the skeptical stakeholders from the very beginning of the project will be critical, and communication will be streamlined through a focal staff/coordinators appointed from the main counterpart agencies (DoL/MONRE, LFND).
- **Legal Aid Clinics:** Lawyers of the existing and running legal Aid Clinics will be trained. Their role will be to advise on the cases and processes to undertake before going to court. Lawyers may be questioned and misunderstood among public stakeholders and local authorities. As above, this risk will be attended to through early informed consultations and clear communication channels.
- **The district authorities DoNRE and DoJ** will be part of the Implementation Management Committee. They will be recipient of Training of trainers and trainers for paralegals, VMCs and students. They are consulted during the drafting of the Memorandum of Understanding. There is a risk of turn-over of government staff during the project duration and over time.

### 3.2. Other interested parties

Helvetas and the sub-grant recipients that implement the activities will work closely with the mass-organisations like LWU and LFND to ensure services are properly directed towards women and ethnic communities that will benefit from grant activities. Both LWU and LFND are government-linked mass-organisations with village level presence. Their participation will support longer-term sustainability. LIWG members will also work in collaboration with local branches of MoNRE (PoNRE/DoNRE), MoJ and other

relevant ministries and departments on information materials/tools development, trainings of trainers, and delivery of inclusive community outreach to establish synergies with GoL's efforts on legal information dissemination. Particularly, the project will engage with the following interested parties which work with the affected communities:

- **The District Authorities through DAFO** will be invited to training. There is a risk of turn-over of government staff during the project duration and over time.
- **Provincial People Assembly** will be invited to training. No risk identified.
- **The Provincial Authorities, PAFO** will be invited to training. There is a risk of turn-over of government staff during the project duration and over time.
- **The Provincial Authorities PONRE and PoJ** will be part of the Implementation Management Committee. They are consulted during the drafting of the Memorandum of Understanding. They will deliver letters of approval for activities. They will be trainees. PoJ will be staffing the Legal Aid Clinics. There is a risk of turn-over of government staff during the project duration and over time.
- **The Central Authorities of MoNRE:** Will be consulted during the drafting of the Memorandum of Understanding. Will approve the Memorandum for Understanding and participate in the Implementation Management Committee. Will appoint a Point of Contact to work with Helvetas/LIWG on the grant. Will nominate trainees and give approval of training manuals.
- **The Central Authorities of MoJ** will nominate trainees and gives approval of training materials. Will participate in the Implementation Management Committee. They will be consulted during the drafting of the Memorandum of Understanding.
- **MoFA and PoFA** will be consulted during the MoU drafting and approve the MoU.
- **LFND:** Will be consulted during the MoU drafting. Will participate to the Implementation Management Committee. Branches at local level will be involved in the project implementation and capacity building and awareness raising activities.
- **LWU:** Will be consulted during the MoU drafting. Will participate to the Implementation Management Committee. Branches at local level will be involved in the project implementation and capacity building and awareness raising activities.
- **INGO Network:** Will be informed of the project **Other stakeholders in the land sector and partners of LIWG (GIZ, FAO, MRLG etc...):** Will be informed on the project, the progress as well as the learnings through the Land Subsector Working Group, and other information sharing events organized by the project.

### 3.3. Disadvantaged / vulnerable individuals or groups

There is a lack of capacity to provide necessary information and awareness to remote communities in general, and in particular to poor, vulnerable persons in rural areas. MoNRE has shown interest in partnering with CSOs to help build capacity and improve delivery of services. The efforts to improve public's legal awareness engagements include the Ministry of Justice's effort to establish legal aid offices in all Districts and the stronger involvement of the Lao Front for National Development (LFND) in information and awareness activities at the village level. The project will need to include specific activities to reach out to disadvantaged individuals or groups effectively and to ensure accessibility and cultural appropriateness, taking into account the needs of ethnic groups, gender, people with disability, vulnerability, language, and literacy to ensure benefits are accessible to all, specifically:

- Women, disabled people and ethnic groups might face some difficulties in participating effectively in the consultation process and/or public information sessions. Indeed, women are so far hardly involved

in land management meetings and have little place to voice their opinions due to cultural practices while they are important users of land especially for their livelihood. Meetings are often organized when women are busy taking care their kids or cooking.

- Women from ethnic groups might face language barriers if the consultations are in Lao as the official language using legal and technical terminology. Most often, women do not feel comfortable to express themselves in front of men. Information about issues faced by women related to natural resources rights are quite limited in Laos. Through recent studies, LIWG has acquired a better knowledge of it and has conducted some reflections with its members to explore ways to address it.
- Disabled people are usually excluded from public consultation and information sharing events.
- Villages, including different ethnic groups do not only use different languages, but can also face social challenges affecting cohesion and communal relationships.

In order to be able to reach out to the most disadvantaged individuals and groups the project will be implemented by LIWG members in their current geographical areas of work. They have extensive experience working in community outreach especially with vulnerable people in those areas. The project will develop tools inclusive of ethnic languages where possible and relevant. Tools considered to make information available include mobile applications, video clips, or the use of visual materials like the LIWG legal calendar, or the utilization of radio programs. Information and awareness raising sessions will be customized and delivered based on needs of specific target groups.

#### **4. Stakeholder Engagement Program**

##### **4.1. Purpose and timing of stakeholder engagement program**

The main goals of the stakeholder engagement program are to ensure that all stakeholders are kept informed and consulted according to their level of engagement into the project.

- Helvetas and the LIWG sub-grantees will respect the formal procedures in place to communicate with government authorities. All communication with the government whether at central, provincial, and local levels will be done in a formal way through the indicated formal channels.
- Consultation on the draft MOU will involve government Line Ministries, MOFA, local governments and mass organizations at district, provincial and central level following established government procedures.
- Implementation Management Committee, involving the Line Ministry, the respective District Governments, CSOs, representatives of communities, Helvetas and the WB, will be established with the aim of ensuring consultation, coordination and steering throughout implementation.
- The sub-grantees will communicate with the communities through their community liaison officers as well as their awareness raising teams who speak and understand the local dialects.
- The project will ensure that all publications, training programs, seminars, workshops or ceremonial events and all other materials used by the project, shall be developed in consultation with the concerned government counterparts and the local communities to ensure easily understandable languages, messages and pictures are used. They will clearly indicate that the activities in question have benefitted directly from WB/JSDF funding. The respective logos will be displayed on all publications and at all events. In addition to the use of the logo, the project will take appropriate measures to ensure that the WB/JSDF support receives local publicity.
- LIWG has created a task force to work together on the design of the project. While the task force is not involved in each communication between Helvetas, LIWG and the World Bank, it gets regularly informed

by emails for each relevant information.

- LIWG will also use the quarterly core members meeting to keep its membership updated about the progress of the project. LIWG will also use its quarterly E-newsletter for highlights.
- LIWG members will be informed by emails about the grant through an internal call for expression of interest with required information provided.

#### 4.2. Proposed strategy for information disclosure

The main audiences and means of information disclosure will be:

- Leaflets, posters, radio and television programmes , mobile applications, , video clips, and the use of the LIWG legal calendar to inform communities
- Websites, social media, newspapers, information centers and exhibitions or other visual displays to address the public
- Knowledge sharing events, technical and non-technical summary documents and reports to address interested stakeholders
- Official correspondence, project reports, meetings and meeting minutes to communicate with the government

Key elements of the information disclosure strategy at different project stages will be:

Project Stage	List of information to be disclosed	Methods proposed	Timetable / Locations / dates	Target stakeholders	Percentage reached	Responsibilities
Project Inception (Mobilization)	SEP, LMP, ESCP	Helvetas/LIWG Website	Before Project Effectiveness	General Public, Project affected parties and relevant agencies	100% of the IMC members 80% of other relevant agencies	Helvetas
Project Implementation	Project Information	Helvetas/LIWG Websites; Social media; Leaflets, posters; Press releases (print and electronic); Knowledge sharing platforms (e.g. LSSWG; LIWG)	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter of Y1	IMC members; LIWG members; Other relevant agencies; other interested parties and stakeholders	100% of IMC/LIWG members 80% of other relevant agencies	Helvetas; LIWG Secretariat

Project Implementation	Updates of ESCP	Helvetas/LIWG Websites; IMC meetings/minutes	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter of Y2 & Y3	General Public; IMC members; Other project affected parties	100% of the IMC/LIWG members	Helvetas
Project Implementation	Awareness Raising & ICE Materials	Helvetas/LIWG Websites; Social media; Information leaflets, posters; Knowledge sharing platforms (e.g. LSSWG; LIWG)	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter of Y1	Relevant agencies and interested parties and stakeholders	60% of relevant, potentially interested agencies/parties	Helvetas; LIWG Secretariat; Sub-grantees
Project Implementation	Project Progress Reports	Reports and input papers to the IMC; Minutes of the IMC meetings	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter of Y1, 1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter of Y2 and Y3	IMC members	100% of the IMC members	Helvetas
Project Monitoring & evaluation	Review & Beneficiary Survey/Final Evaluation Reports	Helvetas/LIWG Websites; Reports to the IMC; Minutes of the IMC meetings	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter of Y2 & Y3	IMC members; LIWG members; Other relevant agencies; other interested parties and stakeholders	100% of the IMC/LIWG members 80% of other relevant agencies	Helvetas
Project Knowledge Sharing & Learning	Studies; Knowledge Products; Print & Electronic Publications; Audiovisual Products	Knowledge sharing events / workshops; Electronic platforms; Social media	1st and 3rd Quarter of Y2 and Y3	LIWG members; other interested parties and stakeholders	60% of relevant, potentially interested agencies/parties	Helvetas; LIWG Secretariat;
Project Close Out	End of Project Report	National workshop	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter of Y3	IMC members; LIWG Members; Other relevant agencies; other interested parties and stakeholders	100% of the IMC/LIWG members 80% of other relevant agencies	Helvetas

Project Stage	List of information to be disclosed	Methods proposed	Timetable / Locations / dates	Target stakeholders	Percentage reached	Responsibilities
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Mobilization phase	LIWG internal call for expression of interest	Emails LIWG, Helvetas website	Project's inception phase	LIWG core members	100%	LIWG Secretariat
Mobilization phase	Project's SEP and ESCP	Helvetas website	Project's inception phase	Public		Helvetas
Mobilization phase	Selected sub-grantees	Helvetas and LIWG websites	Project's inception phase	Public		Helvetas, LIWG
Mobilization phase	MoU approval	Ceremony, newspaper publication	Project's inception phase	Public	Helvetas	
Implementation Phase I: Training of trainers	Awareness raising and communication materials	Helvetas, LIWG	Final version	LIWG members, public		LIWG
	Lessons learnt, experience sharing, good practices	LIWG Core Members meeting Sharing events	Project's implementation phase	LIWG Core Members		LIWG Secretariat with the CoP

### 4.3. Proposed strategy for consultation

A range of methods will be used to consult with each of the stakeholder group, incl. interviews with stakeholders, surveys, public meetings, workshops, focus groups on specific topics, or traditional mechanisms for consultation and decision making, and to document and disseminate the outcomes of these consultations (minutes, reports to IMC, media reports, etc.):

- **Communities at local level including ethnics groups and women:** There will be consultations at local level. Those consultations will be organized at a suitable time for women, with separate groups. During monitoring and evaluation, communities might be interviewed with questionnaires and focus group discussion. Radio programs will also be used, and an application might be developed. Ethnic languages will be used to ensure an effective and meaningful outreach to ethnic communities.
- **The Village Chiefs and ethnic leaders** will participate in trainings where participatory methods are applied. During monitoring and evaluation, the village chiefs will be interviewed with questionnaires. They will also be consulted during IMC meetings.
- **The Village Mediation Committees (VMC)** will participate in trainings where participatory methods are applied. During monitoring and evaluation, they will be interviewed with questionnaires. The VCMs themselves will use traditional mechanisms for consultation and decision making in case legal advice is required by the local communities.
- **The Paralegals** will participate in trainings where participatory methods are applied. During monitoring and evaluation, paralegals will be interviewed with questionnaires. Themselves they will use traditional mechanisms for consultation in case legal advice is required by the local communities.
- **The Civil Society Organizations (LIWG members)** will be consulted with different means of communication such as e-mails, social media, digital platforms and f2f meetings. They will participate in trainings where participatory methods are applied. During monitoring and evaluation, communities will be interviewed with questionnaires and focus group discussion.
- **Legal Aid Clinics:** Lawyers will participate in trainings where participatory methods are applied. During monitoring and evaluation, lawyers will be interviewed with questionnaires.
- **The District Authorities** will participate in trainings where participatory methods are applied. During monitoring and evaluation, they will be interviewed with questionnaires. They will also be consulted during IMC meetings.
- **The District Authorities DaFO** will participate in training where participatory methods are applied.
- **Provincial People Assembly** will participate in training where participatory methods are applied.
- **The Provincial Authorities PAFO** will participate in training where participatory methods are applied.
- **The Provincial Authorities PONRE and PoJ** will participate in training where participatory methods are applied. They will also be consulted during IMC meetings.
- **The Central Authorities of MoNRE** will be consulted during IMC meetings.
- **The Central Authorities of MoJ** will be consulted during IMC meetings.

Key elements of the consultation strategy at different project stages will be:

Project stage	Topic of consultation	Method used	Timetable: Location and dates	Target stakeholders	Responsibilities

Project Inception (Mobilization)	Consultations on the targeting / implementation modalities / setting up of Sub-grant Management Committee	Workshop	Before Project Effectiveness	LIWG Steering Committee / LIWG Core Member Group	LIWG Secretariat
Project Inception (Mobilization)	MoU drafting	Consultation Meetings at local level Consultation Meetings at Provincial level Consultation Meetings at Central level	1st Semester of Y1	DoNRE and relevant District Authorities PoNRE, PoFA and relevant Provincial Authorities MoNRE, MoFA, MoJ	Helvetas / Sub-grantees
Project Inception (Mobilization)	Consultations on selection of Sub-grantees	Management committee meeting	1st Semester of Y1	LIWG membership	Helvetas & LIWG Sub-grant Management Committee
Project Implementation	Consultation on currently used AR and LC practices and materials	Workshops	1 <sup>st</sup> Semester of Y1	LIWG members, LIWG Sub-grantees	Helvetas & LIWG Secretariat
Project Implementation	Start of project information sharing and consultations	Kick-off meetings	2nd Semester of Y1	MoNRE, MoJ, MoFA, PoNRE, PoJ, LFN, LWU, LIWG members, Sub grantees-	Helvetas & LIWG Secretariat
Project Implementation	Consultations on emerging new AR & LC practices	Knowledge sharing workshops	2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester Y1 & 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester Y2	LIWG Sub-grantees / LIWG members	Helvetas & LIWG Secretariat

Project Implementation	Consultations on project implementation issues / process	IMC meetings	3rd Quarter of Y1, 1st and 3rd Quarter of Y2 and Y3	IMC members, incl. MoNRE, MoJ, MoFA, PoNRE, PoJ, LFN, LWU, Local Authorities, community representatives	Helvetas
Project Implementation	Consultations on project implementation issues / process	LIWG Steering Committee Meetings LIWG Core Member Meetings LIWG General Assembly	Quarterly (LIWG SC); Half-yearly (LIWG Core Members); Annual (LIWG General Assembly)	LIWG Steering Committee, LIWG membership	LIWG Secretariat
Project Implementation	Consultations on project implementation issues / process	Annual Symposiums	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter of Y2 and Y3	IMC members, LIWG membership, other interested stakeholders	Helvetas & LIWG Secretariat
Project Monitoring & Evaluation	Beneficiary consultations feedback on project implementation issues / process	Beneficiary Survey, project Review and Final Evaluation	4th Quarter of Y2 (Review) & Y3 (Beneficiary Survey & Final Evaluation)	Communities, beneficiaries	Helvetas
Grievance mechanisms	Stakeholder / beneficiary feedback on project implementation issues / process	Public hearings, focal points at different level (VMC, local authorities, sub-grantees, Helvetas) using phone, emails, social media, direct contact	Ongoing	Affected communities, project staff, other stakeholders	Helvetas
Project Inception (Mobilization)	Creation of a management committee	Task force & LIWG steering committee meeting	Project's inception phase	LIWG members	LIWG Secretariat

	Consultation workshop with LIWG members on the grant	Meeting	Project's inception phase	LIWG core members	LIWG Secretariat
	Selection of sub-grantees	Management committee meeting	Project's inception phase	Members of the managing committee	LIWG managing committee
	MoU drafting	Meetings at local level  Meetings at Provincial level  Meetings at Central level	Project's inception phase	DoNRE and relevant district authorities PoNRE, PoFA and relevant provincial authorities MoNRE, MoFA, MoJ	Helvetas along with sub-grantees
	Internal review of lesson plans, awareness raising and communication materials	Meeting of the CoP	Project's inception phase	CoP members	Sub-grantee in charge of the development of materials
Phase I &	MoU approval	Kick-off meetings with the IMC	Project's implementation phase	MoNRE, MoJ, MoFA, PoNRE, PoJ, LFN, LWU, Sub-grantees LIWG Membership	Helvetas
Phase I & II	Community of Practice	Meetings	Project's implementation phase	LIWG members	LIWG Secretariat
	Project management committee	Meetings, emails	Project's implementation phase		LIWG Secretariat
	Mid-term evaluation	Official correspondence and emails IMC meeting	Project's implementation phase	MoNRE, MoJ, MoFA, PoNRE, PoJ, LFN, LWU, Sub-grantees LIWG Membership	Helvetas

	Interim evaluation	Official correspondence and emails IMC meeting	Project's implementation phase	MoNRE, MoJ, MoFA, PoNRE, PoJ, LFN, LWU, Sub-grantees, LIWG Membership	Helvetas
	Grievance mechanisms	Public hearings, focal points at different level (VMC, local authorities, sub-grantees, Helvetas) using phone, emails, social media, direct	Project's implementation phase	Affected communities, project staff, other stakeholders	Helvetas

#### 4.4. Proposed strategy to incorporate the view of vulnerable groups

- The grant beneficiaries will be the poorest and socially and economically most vulnerable persons of Lao PDR. This will include ethnic communities, women, persons with disabilities, persons living on subsistence agriculture. Beneficiaries will be primarily in poor rural areas, including persons that have settled in areas considered forest land. In such geographical areas, poor infrastructure and limited government resources for outreach have hindered knowledge and awareness.
- In order to maximize the chance to reach out the most disadvantaged groups, the project will closely engage with the LWU and the LFND and also students. Their role will be to ensure that no one is left behind, and all have a meaningful participation in the project activities.
- Separate meetings with women will be organized. Meetings will use the service of interpreters of ethnic languages to make sure that all participants understand.
- Separate meetings with ethnic leaders will be organized. Meetings will use the service of interpreters of ethnic languages to make sure that all participants understand.
- Specific meetings at convenient time and location will be set-up for those groups.
- Channels such as public hearings, focal points, access to information for vulnerable groups will be set up to facilitate the access to the grievances mechanisms such as developed in part 6.

#### 4.5. Timelines

**Mobilisation:** During the project mobilization, consultations will be primarily conducted in the frame of the drafting and the submission of the **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**. The main steps will be: 1) the initial drafting of the MoU in collaboration with the respective Line Ministry (MONRE); 2) the local level consultations, starting at District level with the involvement of the respective District authorities and stakeholders, and - based on the district approval - followed by a provincial level consultation involving the Provincial Governor's Office, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the concerned Line Departments; 3) and finally the central level consultations during a Joint MoU Review Meeting with the participation of the

participation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Line Ministry (MONRE) and other Ministries of relevant sectors. -> *Along this process, decisions will be taken to refine the project design and the MoU which will finally be approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (will take minimum the first 6 months of the project). Helvetas will request a focal point at MoNRE/DoL to help with the coordination with MoFA and other relevant government stakeholders.*

**Implementation:** The implementation project will be supervised and guided by the **Implementation Management Committee (IMC) Meetings**, which ensure broad stakeholder participation, including representatives of the central level government (MoFA, MONRE, etc.), of the provincial and district authorities as well as representatives of the communities and their organizations. -> *The IMC-Meeting will approve workplans, discuss progress and take decisions related to the implementation strategies and interventions (yearly).*

**Implementation:** A Sub-grant **Management Committee (MC)** will be created whose members will be confirmed through a vote by the LIWG Steering Committee. One of the roles of the Management Committee, representing the LIWG membership, will be to review the proposals from the potential sub-granted and select the sub-grantees. It will also have a role of mediation and consultation where deemed necessary. -> *The MC will be a sounding board for the project, provide regular feedbacks on the project implementation process and prepare recommendations for the Implementation Management Committee Meetings (half-yearly).*

**Implementation:** The LIWG Secretariat will coordinate a Community of Practice composed of the sub-grantees. The CoP will meet quarterly to share experiences and lessons learnt. This will be reported at the **LIWG core members meetings or any other relevant events** (e.g. academic researchers, freelance consultants, development partners and regional organizations) to share and exchange about the project in the wider community of practice. -> *The CoP will engage in members meetings and knowledge sharing to support initiatives and decisions for policy matters to be taken up through relevant civil society action, e.g. LSSWG and/or FSSWG meetings (half-yearly / yearly)*

#### 4.6 Review of Comments

Key moments of review, disclosure, and reporting back to stakeholders will be:

- Information and dissemination of final MoU at all levels of stakeholder engagement during the review process (e.g. District, Provincial coordination meetings, project launching events)
- Stakeholder participation in the baseline data collection and dissemination of baseline information (Implementation Management Committee Meetings)
- Yearly planning, reporting and progress with multi-stakeholder participation (Implementation Management Committee Meetings)
- Feedback and analysis and through community of practice (LIWG learning events)
- Stakeholder interviews and social audits during project mid-term review and end line surveys (Implementation Management Committee Meetings)

## 5. Resources and Responsibilities for implementing stakeholder engagement activities

### 5.1. Resources

- The yet to be assigned Project Manager of Helvetas will be in charge of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, which will be implemented in close collaboration of the LIWG Secretariat and the sub-grantees. The SEP will be integral part of the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) as

well as of the Project Planning Framework and annual yearly workplans.

- The Cost Table includes the budgets for all the planned stakeholder engagements.
- The current contact persons are:

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## 5.2. Management functions and responsibilities

**Helvetas** will be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the SEP, including the facilitation of the MoU related consultations and of the stakeholder engagement and consultations through the Implementation Management Committee Meetings (Oversight: Country Director; Implementation: Project Manager).

The **LIWG Secretariat** will be responsible for the facilitation and implementation of the community of practice related stakeholder engagement and consultations knowledge sharing and consultations through the LIWG Steering Committee, and the LIWG membership (Oversight: LIWG International Coordinator; Implementation: KM & Communications Coordinator).

The **(Sub-grant) Management Committee** will define the sub-grant recipient selection criteria, review the submitted proposals and select the sub-grant recipient. Besides that, the MC will be a sounding board for the project, providing regular feedbacks on the project implementation process and prepare recommendations for the Implementation Management Committee Meetings (half-yearly). The MC members will be elected by the LIWG Steering Committee and be composed by representatives of LIWG members, of the LIWG Secretariat and Helvetas, but can also include a LIWG external member.

To ensure stakeholder engagement and consultation outcomes are properly documented:

- The SEP activities will be mainstreamed into the result framework of the project and the project will report against SEP specific indicators.
- The SEP activities will be integrated into the annual yearly project work plans and reported on as part of the progress reviews
- The SEP will be part of the ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL COMMITMENT PLAN and reported on according to WB requirements
- The main stakeholder engagement and consultation events will be documented in specific reports and minutes

## 6. Grievance Mechanism

A Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) will be established to receive and resolve complaints and grievances in a timely and effective manner that satisfies all parties involved. Grievances can be submitted if someone believes the Project is having an adverse impact on the community or individual livelihoods. This may also include questions asked for further project information, clarification, comments and suggestions to strengthen the project design and implementation. Specifically, the GRM will:

- provide affected people with avenues for making a complaint or resolving any dispute that may arise during the course of the implementation of the project.
- ensure that appropriate and mutually acceptable redress actions are identified and implemented to the satisfaction of complainants.

Grievances of the public will be captured, channeled and addressed in two ways:

- Claims and grievances will be submitted and referred through the existing Village Mediation Units or directly to assigned GRM focal points of the district, provincial and central offices of the oversight agency (MONRE), or to assigned focal points of sub-grantee organizations or the project management unit of Helvetas. The contact details will be disseminated through information leaflets and websites. Submissions of grievances will be received orally by phone and direct contacts with assigned focal points or in writing through text messages using e-mail/social media contact points. Grievances will be recorded at the point of reception and forwarded to the project management unit of Helvetas. Grievances are investigated and addressed by the project management unit of Helvetas which will consult and seek guidance for grievance redress from assigned MONRE GRM focal points. Grievances and feedbacks received and addressed are documented in a specific logbook and ESF monitoring/progress reports. For any grievances that are irrelevant or unrelated to this project, the complainants will be advised to directly contact or approach the concerned authorities and organizations.
- The project will consider setting up a free-of-charge hotline or WhatsApp commonly used to provide another means of sending and receiving grievances. Where possible public hearings will be conducted at the community level to provide space for all affected, but particularly vulnerable households to express their views and concerns in relation to the project during the planning, implementation and monitoring of the community-based interventions. Helvetas in collaboration with the LIWG Secretariat will support sub-grantees in the facilitation of such hearings but also engage directly with communities. Opportunities for feedback will be created during the initial contacts with affected communities providing space for the people to deliberate their concerns and if necessary, modify the project interventions; these will be followed up during progress monitoring, encouraging communities and external stakeholders to provide feedbacks, raise eventual their concerns and share their experiences. Grievances voiced through hotlines, hearings or any other consultations will be documented, and concerns and eventual specific grievances followed up and addressed through a timely response by the assigned GRM focal points of the sub-grantee organizations or the project management unit of Helvetas.

## 7. Monitoring and Reporting

### 7.1. Involvement of stakeholders in monitoring activities

- The project unlikely requires systematic third party monitoring due to its relatively low environmental and social risks. No direct and indirect adverse environmental impacts are foreseeable. Regarding

potential social impacts, risks include escalating tensions around unresolved land-related conflicts and dispute resolution processes, as well as insufficient coordination and collaboration among directly or indirectly affected stakeholders. The type of risks will have to be addressed through mitigation measures inbuilt into the project management and implementation process and cannot be dealt with through third-party monitoring inputs.

- The project will build on the capacity and know-how of the implementing parties (incl the sub-grantees) to assume monitoring tasks as part of the regular project cycle management. Third party inputs might be required for setting up the overall monitoring and result measurement system, matching WB/JSDF requirement. And external support might be needed for data collection and interpretation in general, as well as for the execution of baseline and end line surveys and the anticipated mid-term and end of project evaluation.
- The project will use a range of project cycle management milestones to involve project stakeholders in the project monitoring process at different levels:
  - Public hearings will be conducted at the time of the annual monitoring of the project, involving affected communities and local stakeholders in the review and dissemination of the monitoring results.
  - Regular CoP meetings will be the most important platform for a qualitative context and impact to monitoring of the project with broad stakeholder involvement of public and private stakeholders.
  - Through the Implementation Management Committee, the Project Management Committee and the LIWG Core Member meeting, the project will share and review the monitoring results on a periodic basis, to get feedback and deepen the analysis.
  - Affected stakeholders and beneficiaries will be actively involved in the data collection for the preparation as well as the execution of the planned internal and external project (interim-) evaluations.

## 7.2. Reporting back to stakeholder groups

The project will report back to the affected and interested stakeholders through the mechanisms outlined in chapter 4.5 and chapter 4.6. Reporting on progress, reviews and evaluations will take place:

- During the annual IMC meetings which is chaired by the respective government authorities and attend by all directly involved stakeholders, including community representatives.
- During the half-yearly Project Management Committee meetings, the meetings of the LIWG Core Member Group, as well as the thematic exchange in the COP the status of the project will be shared and discussed, and recommendations will be elaborated for steering and further decision making at operational and IMC level.