

Stakeholder Communication Strategy

June 2018

Lao PDR: Climate-Friendly Agribusiness Value Chains
Sector Project

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	-	Asian Development Bank
DAFO	-	District Agriculture and Forestry Office
DAW	-	Division for the Advancement of Women
DMF	-	design and monitoring framework
EMDP	-	ethnic minority development plan
GAP	-	gender action plan
LWU	-	Lao Women's Union
MAF	-	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
NPMO	-	National Project Management Office
O&M	-	operation and maintenance
PAFO	-	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office
PPIU	-	Provincial Project Implementation Unit
PPTA	-	project preparatory technical assistance
SCS	-	stakeholder communication strategy
Sub-CAW	-	Subcommittee for the Advancement of Women

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A. Introduction

1. The Stakeholder Communications Strategy (SCS) is designed as a blueprint to guide the project through the process of creating effective communications messages and products that resonate with the chosen target audience, to be delivered through multiple channels. This blueprint will help the project to choose the correct range and sequence of tasks.

2. The SCS has been developed to communicate the Climate-Friendly Agribusiness Value Chains Sector Project. It will support the design and monitoring framework activities by communicating, facilitating, encouraging, disseminating and leveraging successes, failures and lessons learned from project experiences. This will be achieved by maintaining clear, consistent, relevant, up-to-date and user-friendly messaging/information to stakeholders. The strategy complies with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Public Communications Policy and the ADB Stakeholder Communications Guide.

3. The SCS will underpin and guide the communication process for:

- (i) **Internal Communications:** Focussing on supporting the project implementation team regarding week-to-week management issues, emerging trends and threats, planning, and coordination between team at national, subnational/province and district/village level, to ensure efficient functioning of project implementation.
- (ii) **External Communications:** Focussing on supporting and reaching the main objectives of project outcome and outputs, as mentioned in the DMF and leveraging success.

4. The external communications will support the DMF outcome and three main target audiences: national, subnational/province, district/villages. The approach, means and channel of communication will be different for each level.

5. As indicated in the problem tree and from stakeholder consultation on the ground, communication gaps have been identified. Therefore, the SCS will be structured on three levels:

- (i) General knowledge and technical issues related to climate-friendly technologies;
- (ii) Project response - mechanisms and vehicles: Project, executing agency/implementing agency characteristics, functions and issues; and
- (iii) Specific activities: project implementation on the ground.

6. The current situation identified on the ground is that there is a lack of awareness and knowledge among rural communities and local government at the village level concerning response to climate change and related technical issues. Women in particular are less aware about responses to climate change phenomena. Therefore, translating the technical concepts into simple messages and linking them to the project will be a critical step to assist affected populations to better understand the issues.

7. Carefully selected communication processes and tools incorporated into the project will reinforce knowledge about responses to climate change and adoption of climate-friendly technologies.

B. Managing Expectations

8. It is important to manage expectations and transmit the perception that not all problems can be solved by the project. It must be stated clearly that the activities on the ground will be a model to demonstrate climate-friendly technologies while increasing economic benefits which then may be replicated in other areas of the country.

C. Approach

9. A stakeholder assessment was conducted during the project preparatory technical assistance (PPTA) involving group interviews with beneficiaries, literature review, meeting stakeholders during Inception and Interim Workshops and multi-stakeholder consultations in target provinces, districts, and communities. It increased the level of understanding and contributed to shaping an effective communication strategy for the project and for building a better understanding of how the project will benefit rural communities. Communication strategies and tools are designed to deliver necessary information to beneficiaries and stakeholders and allow them to make informed decisions about adopting climate-friendly technologies.

10. Some actors are of priority interest to engage with in order to leverage success, such as the 'actors of most influence' (key players). This means that the communications activities will be strategically targeted and prioritized to influence the key players such as farmers group leaders, and the communications tools, methodologies and media suitable to that targeted group will be used.

11. Based on focus group discussions during field visits, it was identified that the concerns and informational needs between males and females are similar and all are concerned with finding ways to increase household income and/or finding employment. In general, the majority of community members are literate.

12. During implementation the SCS will also set up the target for what to achieve in the short term, up to, and after 2024, and indicate what objectives have been achieved.

Table 1: Project Term Plan to Achieve the Set Goals

Project Term Plan	Indicators of success
Short-term goals (2018-2019)	Improved awareness of climate-friendly technologies
Mid-term goals (2019-2024)	Common understanding and engagement. The community is actively involved (participation) in project activities, shows behavioral change.
Long-term goals (after 2024)	Climate-friendly actions and technologies become part of life, unwritten rule.

D. Learning and behavioral changes

13. Local champions will be identified to disseminate positive climate-friendly behaviours which are sustainable. They may participate in capacity building and training activities promoting the adoption of climate-friendly production techniques which produce economic returns for the household.

E. Communication Objectives

14. The stakeholder consultation identified several communication objectives regarding the project as follows:

- (i) Provide information to farmers regarding concepts around climate-friendly production technologies and their links with project, using simple language;
- (ii) Address the need to create and build an understanding on the scope and breadth of the project (including the roles of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and ADB);
- (iii) Share knowledge: providing consistent, relevant, up-to-date and user friendly information to all stakeholders;
- (iv) Promote the project through meetings, interactive dialogue, local exhibitions and media and create printed and online information (website and social media), create mailing lists, list server (electronic newsletter);
- (v) Coordinate and exploit synergies: to facilitate policy, technology collaboration and information dissemination. Provide opportunities for all stakeholders to communicate with one another to share experiences and showcase effective local interventions;
- (vi) Use communications to help build capacity through information sharing, highlighting good practice and professional development, study/exchange visits to another site which has already implemented climate-friendly technologies;
- (vii) Help build the capacity and conduct training of targeted groups to increase local productivity and income, and communicate the results. Facilitate market links to increase sales of produce in the area;
- (viii) Communicate for learning and behavioral changes for individuals, communities and societies by creating local champions, to help community to make personal decisions to initiate and sustain positive climate-friendly technologies; and
- (ix) Encourage personal communications through own-community networks, family, radio, and temples to promote project benefits.

15. Based on the objectives above, the main communications plan/activities and tools are defined, and described in SCS table. The communications plan/activities will support project interventions by facilitating, encouraging, disseminating and leveraging success. This will be achieved by maintaining clear, consistent, relevant and user-friendly messaging/information to stakeholders.

F. Communications Infrastructure

16. Communications infrastructure will be established to link the executing agency in Vientiane (NPMO, MAF), and implementing agencies (PPOs) in target provinces. This will support internal communications within the project for handling management issues, emerging trends and threats, planning and coordination and for ensuring efficient functioning of project implementation.

17. This will also facilitate coordination between central, subnational/province and district areas for the delivery of almost-real-time information from activities on the ground to keep both central and local government up-to-date with the same information - to facilitate policy coordination, technology collaboration and information dissemination.

18. The technology to be used within the infrastructure should include software and hardware, cables and connectivity for security and faster data rates, network design services, management and planning services, in accordance with ADB procurement procedure.

G. Evaluation and Monitoring

19. Formal and informal monitoring will be ongoing whereas evaluation will be undertaken periodically for feedback and lessons learned regarding what works and what does not. It is also important to recognize the need to communicate with wider audiences of stakeholders, as levels of interest may fluctuate during the project cycle. This SCS should be updated regularly and periodically and remain a live document.

30. The monitoring and evaluation activities should also make full use of available technology, such as counting how many hits the project (MAF) website receives; how many and which related documents were downloaded by users and from which countries.

H. Summary

31. A SCS has been prepared, drawing on best practices outlined in ADB's Public Communication Policy.¹ It is based on principles of transparency, timeliness, meaningful participation, and inclusiveness. It will ensure that vulnerable groups, such as the poor and female-headed households, who risk marginalization, are provided with opportunities for receiving timely information, and can provide feedback during project implementation. Stakeholders include: (i) project direct and indirect beneficiaries with a focus on micro- and small-enterprises and small agri-businesses; (ii) civil society organizations; (iii) community groups and individuals living in the project area; (iv) private agencies and service providers who share an interest in the outcomes and/or impacts of the project; and (v) government agencies with a role in implementation. The strategy serves to inform and support community development, enhance government capacity to deliver a positive project outcome, and enhance project benefits while mitigating any potential negative impacts.

¹ ADB. 2011. *Public Communication Policy 2011. Disclosure and Exchange of Information*. Manila.

Table 2: Stakeholder Communication Strategy

Objective	Stakeholder Group	Function/Interest in Project	Messages	Means of Communication	Timeline	Responsibility	Resources
1. Ensure a good two-way flow of information, and promote ownership over subproject activities and climate-friendly agribusiness value chains sector development	Beneficiary communities including farmer production groups, women and men farmers, agricultural cooperatives collectors, rice millers, Village Chiefs and Village Administrations, local microcredit institutions.	Direct beneficiaries of project; local authorities participating in implementation and follow up of subprojects; beneficiaries of vegetable hubs; participants in agribusiness enterprise development; participants in technical and agriculture training, in workshops, study tours and skills and employment training.	<p>Local collaboration and support is fundamental to project effectiveness; information is to be shared openly and transparently; inputs into design and recommendations for improvements are welcome.</p> <p>Clear information on implementation arrangements and schedule of construction and civil works.</p> <p>Update on subproject progress and roles for any operation and maintenance after completion.</p> <p>Planned mitigation measures (including compensation rates, entitlements,</p>	<p>The project will produce user-friendly posters at local level giving information about when consultation meetings are to be held, and also showing subproject plans and activities. Details of how and where to register feedback (e.g. with Village Chief) is to be provided.</p> <p>Regular meetings between implementing agency & beneficiaries will be held every month for two-way flow of information about project activities, priorities and progress. Feedback from meetings will be logged, and feedback on follow-up actions will be reported at the following meeting. Village Head, village administration and LWU representative will receive orientation from project staff regarding what to do when local community members give them feedback on subproject.</p> <p>Standard reporting formats to be used by local authorities and IA for providing project updates to beneficiaries on a regular basis so that</p>	<p>Regular ongoing information exchange between IA (PPIU) (Implementing Agency) and beneficiaries prior to initiation of activities.</p> <p>During initial phase of subproject preparation.</p> <p>During detailed project design phase.</p> <p>At kick-off workshop/meeting when project is launched.</p> <p>Ongoing during implementation of activities and any construction and civil works.</p> <p>At completion in closing workshop at local level</p>	<p>EA (NPMO), IAs (PPIU), PAFO, DAFO, Sub-CAW Gender Focal Points and other related ministries and departments, local government including village council, Village Chief and Lao Women's Union representative.</p> <p>Responsibility for producing information materials will be with IA (PPIU), National Project Director (NPD) and Consultant team, particularly the Social Development and Gender Specialist. The Safeguards and Communications Development Specialist (SCD) will be responsible for following up on all community feedback.</p>	<p>Refer to Output 2, sub-component 2.2 (Capacity Enhancement) for source of funding for production of all communication materials and recruiting local communication consultant to design materials where necessary</p>

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			grievance redress mechanism, road safety and noise/pollution control measures before and after construction).	<p>information can be systematically transmitted to communities.</p> <p>Public information meetings, including regular updates by Village Head, Village Council members, and LWU at village level following any visits and meeting with IA and project consultants.</p> <p>Printed information about subproject in local language posted in accessible public areas, including information on how to provide comments or register grievances.</p> <p>Posters on information boards on upcoming training programs for agribusiness, technical training, skills training for employment, and small and micro-enterprise development.</p>		Responsibility for identifying best publicly accessible places is with Village Chief.	
2. Ensure an effective two-way flow of project information to women beneficiaries and ethnic minority beneficiaries	Women, poor and vulnerable households, ethnic minority groups (where applicable)	As above	As above plus disseminate contents of GAP and EMDP (where applicable), and opportunities to participate in training in income generating activities.	<p>Separate meetings with women organized; (i) LWU, and (ii) with ethnic groups in local language, where applicable.</p> <p>Printed information about the project posted in local and accessible language (or visual depictions)</p>	As above	As above	

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(where applicable).				<p>posted in accessible public areas.</p> <p>Designation and provision of materials/toolkit to LWU for promotion/coaching in micro- and small enterprise development and disseminating information about agribusiness opportunities from IA / project consultants</p> <p>Preparation and use of IEC materials will be done when needed, and all IEC materials will be user-tested before finalization.</p>			
3. Raise visibility and awareness of benefits of agribusiness development for inclusive growth and for building ownership over ongoing infrastructure development (e.g. vegetable hub, biofertilizer plant and rice mill improvements) and also	Beneficiary communities.	Direct and indirect beneficiaries of project.	Project investments and agribusiness promotion is beneficial to local economy, culture and gender equity.	<p>Media press releases and coverage about the project by local media –print, radio, and TV features (if possible).</p> <p>Signboards promoting visibility of MAF, ADB and local government collaboration for climate friendly agribusiness and value chain development and improvements.</p> <p>Inaugurations of completed construction and civil works with promotional events at subproject sites.</p>	<p>At project launch and midway through as tangible results are realized.</p> <p>Signboards at appropriate locations at the start of construction and through project implementation.</p>	<p>IA (NPMO), (PPIU) PAFO, DAFO, Sub-CAW Gender Focal Points and local authorities;</p> <p>NPD is overall responsible for media relations. The specific person responsible for media relations will be the local Communications Consultan who will identify the best media channels for</p>	

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farmer production groups and agriculture cooperative development.				MAF website about project activities, progress and documents.		reaching different audiences.	
4. Ensure an effective two-way flow of project information to promote public-private partnerships for inclusive agribusiness growth and value chain development	Private sector agribusinesses and milling cooperatives	Direct and indirect beneficiaries of project; partners in development activities.	Promote participation in agribusiness initiatives which will increase available supply of good quality produce such as fresh vegetables, employment creation and initiatives to promote climate friendly agribusiness value chain development	Partnership in workshops / meetings / surveys on agribusiness development and marketing / promotion programs. Local Communications consultant will develop a unique dissemination/engagement plan as part of his/her core activities, including design and production of a full suite of marketing materials.	Ongoing during implementation of project activities	EA (NPMO) / project implementation consultants	Refer to Output 2 sub-component 2.2 – Capacity Enhancement

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5. Ensure a good two-way flow of project information and promote women's ownership over subproject activities and agribusiness development.	MAF DAW	Responsible for promoting gender equality and mainstreaming gender in agriculture sector Plays a role in overseeing gender inclusiveness in agricultural development in Lao PDR Promote women's involvement and participation in micro and small enterprise development and employment training in the agriculture sector.	Key benefits, and gender equity of subproject activities and climate friendly agribusiness and value chain development Specific benefits targeted to women Disseminate information on progress on gender equity	National Steering Committee and Provincial meetings. Regular coordination meetings between IA, TA Gender consultants and MAF DAW for implementing project GAP and recommending any improvements	From outset of project and regularly throughout project lifetime.	Project Gender Consultants and MAF DAW, and Sub-CAW Gender Focal Points	
6. Ensure a regular flow of project information and promote collaboration to complete constructed infrastructure and civil works.	MAF PAFO and DAFO staff; Government officials, contractors, and communities in the project areas.	Responsible for implementation and O&M of constructed infrastructure subprojects and civil works.	Project design, key project benefits, implementation arrangements and schedule of construction and civil works Main project impacts (positive and negative). Planned operation and	National Steering Committee and Provincial Committee meetings. Regular coordination meeting for detail design of construction and civil works, and implementation of project activities. Regular flow and sharing of documentation. Project website.	From outset of project and throughout implementation.	IA (PPIU)	

Objective	Stakeholder Group	Function/Interest in Project	Messages	Means of Communication	Timeline	Responsibility	Resources
			maintenance measures.				
7. Ensure understanding of project impacts, outcomes and outputs and importance of theme of inclusive growth.	Beneficiaries; MAF; local authorities such as Village Chiefs, village council members, LWU (village authorities and LWU will receive orientation to develop their understanding for project impacts)	Responsible for project implementation	<p>Effective execution of their tasks, regular follow up, monitoring and reporting progress and constraints is important for project success.</p> <p>Community collaboration and inclusive approach is essential to effective project delivery.</p>	<p>Dissemination of National Steering Committee decisions and strategic documents.</p> <p>Training in project management and other institutional strengthening activities.</p> <p>Formats and simple chart (s) showing responsibilities for project implementation, flow of funds, flow of activities, monitoring and follow-up.</p> <p>Project website (managed under MAF website)</p> <p>Regular email updates on project activities and relevant developments in agribusiness.</p> <p>Sharing of information on project budget allocations; transparent process for selection for study tours, regional visits and other benefits and institutional strengthening activities.</p> <p>Gender and EMDP implementation training.</p>	From outset of project and throughout implementation.	IA (PPIU)	