

March 22, 2013

Comments from Australia on Approval by Mail: Lao PDR: Scaling-up Participatory Sustainable Forest Management (IBRD)

Dear Ms Bliss-Guest,

Please find below Australia's comments on the

Australia's comments on 'Scaling-up Participatory Sustainable Forest Management' submitted by the Government of Lao PDR and IBRD

We are supportive of the project, however believe that the project documentation would benefit from addressing the following issues.

- Selection of districts and villages for participation in the project
 - There is very limited information included in the project documentation on how Districts and sub-FMAs were chosen to participate in the project. This has presumably been a result of quite detailed analysis and the project documents would benefit from including this.
 - Consideration should also be given as to how other villages or districts, which have not been identified as participants in the project, could be included if they demonstrate a strong interest and are able to be serviced through District structures established as part of the project. The current description of the selection process for community engagement seems very top down i.e. analysis will drive the selection of participating villages. While this is useful, strong community commitment to the project is likely to be a strong predictor of successful implementation of PSFM.
- Long term sustainability of PSFM in Lao PDR as a result of the project
 - There is little consideration in the project documents of whether institutional structures and the capacity built at the village, district and provincial levels will be sustained once the project is completed. The project has been funded since 2003 (albeit with a smaller geographical scope) so it would be useful to understand how much longer funding is likely be required beyond this project, to ensure outcomes are maintained.
 - On this, it would be useful to include a discussion of how successful the SUFORD program has been in integrating PSFM into the work of DOF and other government agencies to date, and how successful capacity building efforts at the village level have been. If this has not been particularly successful, it would be good to explain how this project has been designed to overcome these challenges.
- M&E: pg 57 indicates that information will be disaggregated by gender, ethnic group and household socio-economic status, however this is not reflected in the Results Framework (Annex 1).

- We welcome the implementation support plan which recognises the need for technical support in the area of safeguards and financial management. We are interested to see how the revised procedures and other measures will help to address capacity gaps, particularly given the large amounts of funding for Forestry being directed to Lao PDR by multilateral and bilateral donors.

Kind regards, Kristy

Kristy Graham

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