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Briefing Paper – Land Issues & Conflicts Hotspots Identification & Analysis (LI-CHIA)

Introduction

Land, its ownership and use, is a contentious commodity in Laos and many countries. Notwithstanding the fact that Laos counts 285,000 square meters of land its territory, land paradoxically can be both the source of pride and hope as well as dispute. Multiple and competing uses of land are increasingly a problem as Laos develops and prospers.

What is a Hotspot?

A "hotspot" is an area where land issues and problems have been identified by various stakeholders and are significant enough to merit intervention or solution. Land related issues periodically surface in the course of Land Use Planning (LUP), Land Registration, Investment Monitoring, and Area Physical Framework formulation.

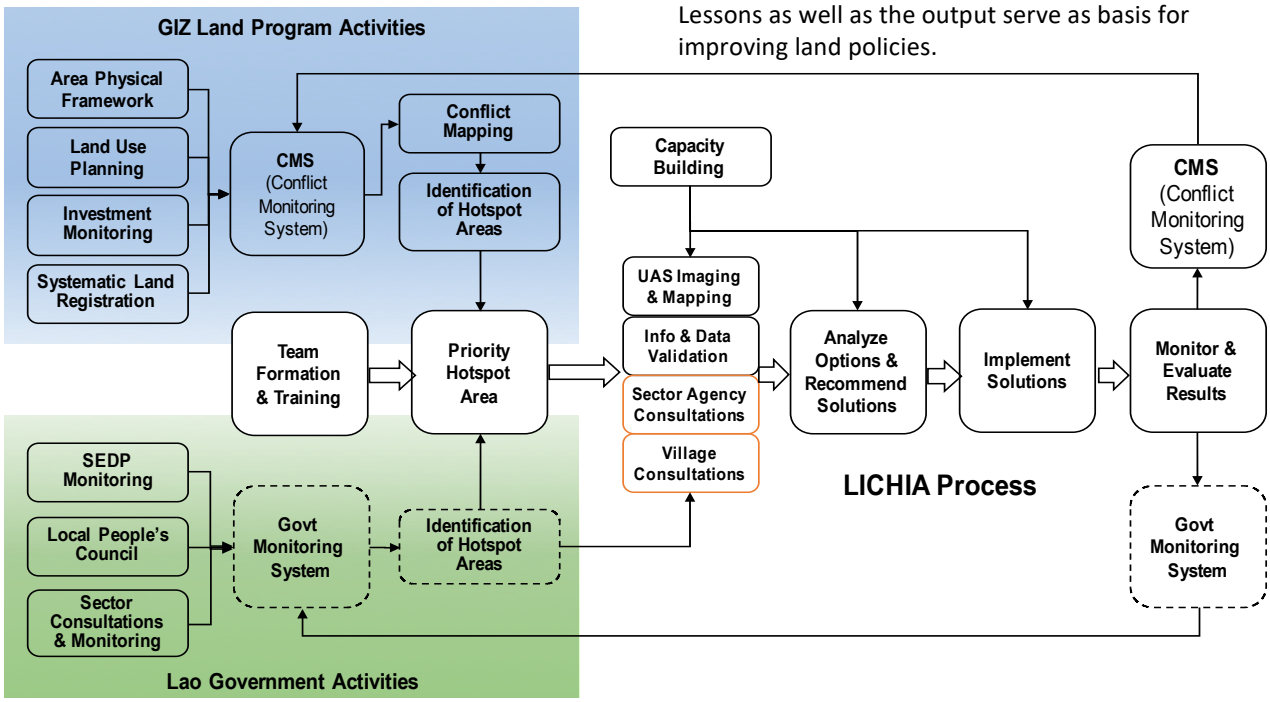
An area is considered a Hotspot when the following criteria are met:

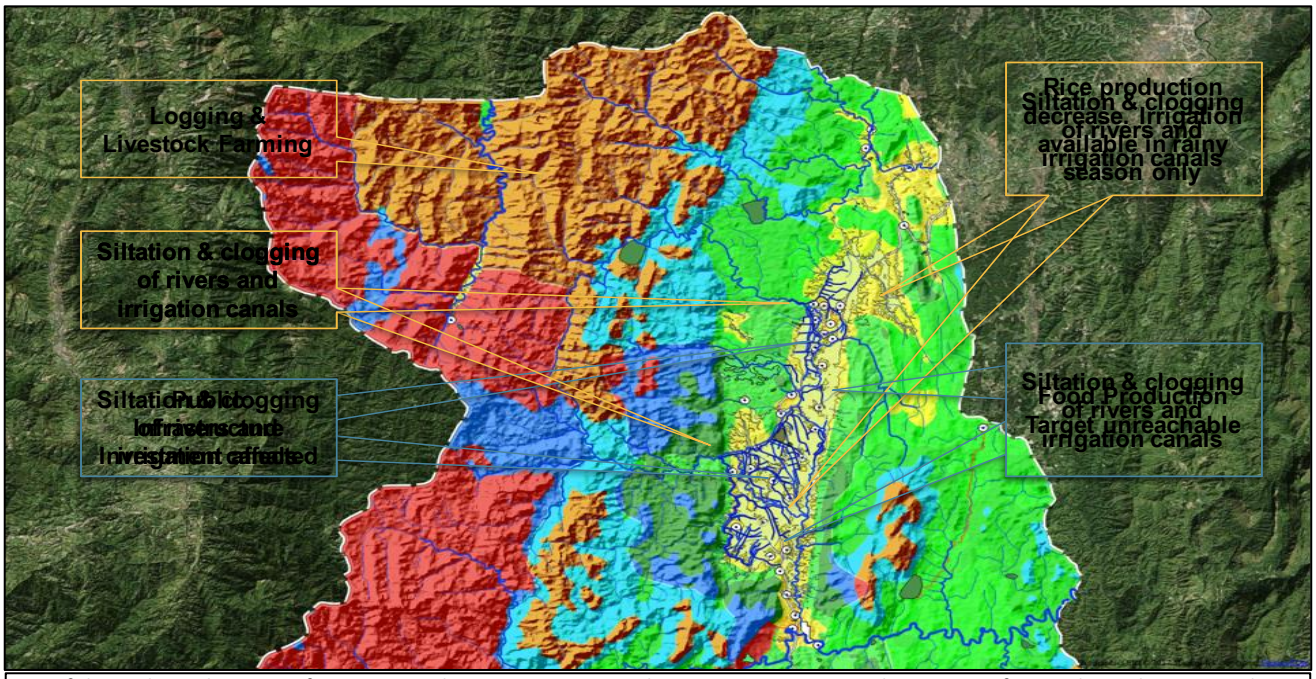
1. There is prevalence of land-related issues or disputes between claimants especially affecting vulnerable populations.
2. The land issue is causing significant harm to the environment.
3. People's livelihoods are affected or hampered due to competing claims and insecure land tenure.
4. Disputes trigger conflicts and disharmony in the community.

The LICHIA Process

The LICHIA processes outlined below are coordinated by local institutions mainly at the district and province levels.

1. **Team Formation & Training** - local government staff is organized and capacitated.
2. **Information & Data Collection** – sourced from monitoring activities of GIZ Land Program and the Lao government.
3. **Issues Mapping & Hotspot Area Identification** – Georeferenced data plotted in maps using QGIS software.
4. **Issues Analysis and Solutions** – Field visits, consultations and research to validate and analyse land issues. Possible solutions are explored and institutions engaged.
5. **Lessons Learned Workshop** – Experiences are documented and shared locally and nationally. Lessons as well as the output serve as basis for improving land policies.

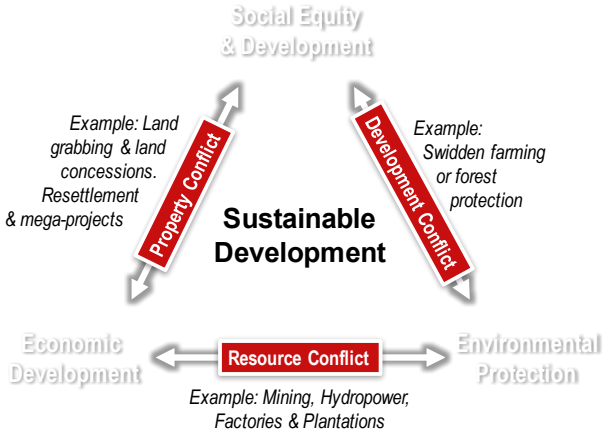




One of the early applications of LICHIA is in Phiang District in Sayaboury Province. During the process of Area Physical Framework planning, a section in the northern-most area of the district has been identified as a hotspot for the following reasons: a) perennial flooding of rivers endanger people's lives and livelihoods, b) river siltation renders the irrigation system inefficient and limits agriculture productivity in the affected areas and cost the government a lot money for river rehabilitation, and c) people perceived that illegal logging activity caused harm to the forests and wildlife in the area and they wanted these curtailed. Though the APF and LICHIA process the local government solved the land issue by promulgating a local policy to redelineate the hotspot area as "protected forest" and to revise the land use policy for the area.

Triangle of Priorities & Conflicts

Government planners and decision-makers often address 3 fundamental priorities namely: a) social & equitable development b) economic development, and c) environmental protection.



LICHIA helps the government to analyze plans and trade offs of development plans, while informing affected populations and incorporating their perspectives.

Lessons from Implementing LICHIA

Initial lessons from implementing LICHIA in pilot districts:

1. Land issues and disputes are not always ventilated, visible and documented.
2. Solutions are most often in the hands of people or institutions at the closest or lowest level, but some cases require involvement of higher level interventions.
3. Institutions that respond to land issues have different mandates and perspectives. They need to be capacitated and their mandates clarified.
4. Technology and tools to enhance understanding and analyses of land issues are helpful to enhance objectivity and transparency in the process.

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