

Integrated Rural Development in Poverty Regions of Laos (NU-IRDP)

Policy Advice

1. Content and Goal

An integrated approach to rural development needs to include both policymakers and people “on the ground”. This refers not only to activities as such but also to the lessons learned from the implementation of these activities. Under the NUDP a range of activities are taking place and experiences are made which need to be fed back to the national level. This may help to further develop and improve strategies and operational mechanisms related to rural development, which again supports our partners to take part in a substantial policy dialogue on pro-poor rural development in Laos. Integrated Rural Development requires line ministries to coordinate their services and harmonize their conceptual and technical approaches. Agricultural Development, Food Security, Good Governance etc. have to be considered and discussed in an integrated way to achieve the desired impacts on the reduction of poverty in the Northern Uplands.

2. Approach, method, scale

The NU-IRDP supports the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), and the National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (NCRDPE) with advisory services and knowledge management. The lessons learned from NUDP’s planning and implementation activities are systematized step by step and fed back and discussed with the partners on the national level. Furthermore, the experiences are discussed in the Sub-Sector Working Group Uplands (SSWGUp) and the NUDP National Steering Committee. Currently, these experiences are also used to support the formulation of an Uplands Development Strategy and the support of the Task Force Rural Development. “Policy advice” is not only provided by advice as such, but also through the systematization of gained knowledge – mainly through in-depth studies, the setup of databases, monitoring systems, communication mechanisms and “lessons learned” workshops. Policy- and decision-makers at all levels are included in these discussions.

3. Impacts

The impacts of a strengthened policy dialogue are hardly measurable in numbers, but visible at different points: The idea of a rather *integrated* approach to rural development is by now an important part within the terms of reference of the SSWGUp. Seminars brought together different line agencies involved in rural development, stressing the importance and advantage of a larger, integrated cooperation approach. This is increasingly understood and taken into consideration. The kick-off for a Task Force Rural Development - initiated by the NCRDPE in its Rural Development coordination function - is a clear signal that the idea of *integrated rural development* is gaining common acceptance.