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External review 'Tourism as a Tool for Development' UNESCO-Lao National Tourism Authority Nam Ha Ecotourism Project

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB – Asian Development Bank
CBE – Community-based Ecotourism
CMA - Conservation Management Advisor
CTA – Chief Technical Advisor
GA – Guides Association
GTZ – German Aid Agency
IFC – International Finance Corporation
NBCA – National Biodiversity Conservation Area
NPA - National Protected Area
NHEP - Nam Ha Eco-tourism Project
NTA - National Tourism Authority
NTFP – Non Timber Forest Products
NZODA – New Zealand Overseas Development Agency
PAFO - Provincial Agricultural and Forestry Office
PRA - Participatory Rural Appraisal
PTO – Provincial Tourism Office
RACAP – Regional Adviser for Culture in Asia and the Pacific
SDRI – Sustainable Development Research Institute
SUNV – Netherlands Development Organization and United Nations Volunteers
TA – Technical Assistance
TOR – Terms of Reference
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VSA - (New Zealand) Volunteer Service Abroad
WCS – Wildlife Conservation Society

Executive Summary

The number of international arrivals to Lao PDR has grown tremendously over the last ten years, from roughly 38 000 visitors in 1991 to over 737 000 in 2000. As the visitors spend longer in Laos, the number of tourists travelling to outlying provinces is also increasing. Those visiting Luang Namtha Province in the far northwest of Laos, bordering Burma and China, have risen from 4,732 in 1995 to over 24,700 in 2000. The rising number of tourists is attributable to concerted government initiatives to capitalize on the huge numbers of international tourists visiting neighboring ASEAN countries, as well as the significant number of regional Asian tourists, through both advertising campaigns and loosened regulations on visas and internal travel.

Tourists come to Laos to experience its rich cultural and natural heritage. The population of Laos comprises a large number of different ethnic groups, many of whom, to date, maintain largely traditional lifeways, particularly in the more remote mountainous regions. Laos also has an abundance of natural forest cover home to a vast number of bird and animal species, some of whose survival is threatened by forest utilization and hunting. Given this solid base of exotic appeal, tourism is now the largest earner of foreign exchange for the Lao government. Recognizing its importance to Lao's economic development, international donor and lending agencies are actively supporting the growth in tourism – for example, the Asian Development Bank is investing \$12 million in assisting both tourist infrastructure development, such as roads and airports, and the capacity to manage a growing number of visitors.

Anticipating the growth in tourism and concerned at its potential impact, UNESCO, through grants from New Zealand and Japan, began a project in 1999 in Luang Namtha that aimed to develop a framework for sustainable ecotourism. Working in collaboration with the Provincial Tourism Office, the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project's goals were to utilize tourism to assist in the social and economic development of ethnic villagers that otherwise had limited access to free market commodities or social support services. Not only did the project envision that tourists could help reduce poverty by bringing money directly into largely subsistent communities by paying for food and lodging, it was also intended that the Provincial Tourist Authority manage a separate fund, generated from tourist trekking fees, which is specifically designated to assist in livelihood improvement. An equally important project goal entails using tourism as a tool for forest biodiversity conservation. By giving villagers a larger economic base, ecotourism helps to reduce their reliance on forest flora and fauna resources. This is particularly relevant in Luang Namtha Province that has a number of villages in and around one of Lao's largest National Protected Areas (NPA).

In order to develop a model for sustainable ecotourism that might be used in other districts and provinces in Laos, the Nam Ha project established a series of guidelines and practices that sought to maximize the benefits of ecotourism for both the Provincial stakeholders and the target communities and minimize any potential negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts of repeated tourist visits to these communities.

- In Phase 1 of the project, between October 1999 and October 2002, the project team (with the assistance of the Provincial Tourism Office) began running 1,2, and 3 day treks and one boat-trip to villages in and around the National Protected Area.
- It set precautionary limits on the number of villages, the number of treks and the number of tourists in each trek.

- It established clear mechanisms for the use of fees paid by the tourists that include direct payments to the villagers for food and lodging that have dramatically improved the village economies.
- It enlisted the assistance of the NPA management unit, which is the government body directly responsible for conservation of forest resources, in project activities and provided incentives for villagers to adopt a number of forest and wildlife conservation practices.
- It has formulated a thorough guide-training manual and trained a large cohort of guides to take the tourists on the treks and provide appropriate cross-cultural information, assistance and supervision.
- It has developed a monitoring system for evaluating the impact of the treks in the target communities and mechanisms for consulting with village communities both before and during the trekking operations.
- It has developed the capacity of the local tourism staff to manage sustainable ecotourism activities.

As the following evaluation report describes in detail, the Nam Ha ecotourism Project has been a tremendous success in providing a model of how tourism might be used as a tool for development in rural and largely subsistent villages and as a mechanism for promoting forest conservation. This is particularly important in Laos, which has a large number of Protected Biodiversity Areas many of which will be ideal sites for the subsequent development of ecotourism activities. In each of the Nam Ha target villages, cash income has been increased markedly by the visits of tourists and the established framework ensures that this income is, to date, reasonably well distributed amongst the villagers. The villagers are enormously happy to have the tourists visit and (at this point) feel little in the way of negative impact of their presence. At the same time, the tourist treks have contributed positively to an increased awareness of forest conservation and the means to enact improved conservation practices.

In short, a framework has been established that allows the Provincial Tourism Authorities to manage and regulate ecotourism in a sensitive and sustainable way. However, at present there are shortfalls in the sustainability of the project activities and a second phase of donor-funded support is necessary to both consolidate the existing achievements and ensure that these achievements can be reproduced elsewhere.

The challenges faced by the project will be far more difficult and complex in the next phase. The sensitive attention to detail that characterized the first phase will be harder to maintain as both the number of tourists and treks increases over time and as the scale of the project expands to new sites. As tourists continue to visit somewhat isolated communities the potential for negative impacts increases dramatically over the long term. The elements of cultural change introduced by greater access to money and the free market are increasingly hard to regulate in sound and appropriate ways. Likewise, the environmental impact can only increase with greater numbers of tourists.

As new sites are brought within the framework of the project, the existing capacity of the Provincial staff to maintain the careful consultative approach will be strained. The District of Sing is a case in point. Project activities expanded to this district in late 2001. The presence of an already existing large and unregulated tourist market, in part predicated on the pursuit of illicit drugs, has made the comprehensive and effective imposition of ecotourism guidelines extremely difficult. While some successes can be claimed for the activities in Muang Sing, such as guide training and a newly formulated program of treks, many difficulties remain that will need to be

resolved in 2nd phase. The lack of functioning district tourist offices is a major constraint. This equally applies to other districts with ecotourism potential in Luang Namtha.

The relationships between guides and villagers will also need careful attention during the next phase. These relationships are crucial to the success of sustainable ecotourism, but these cross-cultural interactions are inherently fragile and need on-going support training. Social and environmental impact monitoring will also need careful support to ensure firstly, that the project's initial objectives of developing protocols that can effectively evaluate social and material change are met, and secondly, that the mechanisms for mitigating negative outcomes are well adapted to handle whatever findings emerge. It is expected that these processes can be integrated with national ecotourism guidelines and can be assisted by other ecotourism agencies and national research institutes.

The Nam Ha Ecotourism project has established a first-class working model for ecotourism activities in areas of great cultural and natural richness. With careful attention to the processes of sound planning, thorough consultation, cautious replication and appropriate capacity building, a donor funded second phase of this project should overcome existing weaknesses and leave a functioning model of great value to the Lao government, the large array of stakeholders in particular host communities, and to the future tourists that come to Laos to experience its physical and cultural beauty.

Introduction

On June 14, 2002 the Governor of Luang Namtha Province in Northwest Laos opened a new tourist information centre just off the main street of the provincial town. It is an impressive building whose classical lines, solid wood frame and elegant roofing shingles stand out against the more haphazard market stalls, concrete storefronts and houses around it. Befitting the moment, the Governor acknowledged the achievements that had led to the establishment of Luang Namtha's newest building. Amongst the assembled guests were a number of men from different ethnic groups whose villages spread out into the mountains surrounding the valley. The governor addressed them directly and noted that they were extremely lucky. He stressed several points to the gathered audience. No longer did the villagers have to labor as hard as before to bring plant and animal products down the winding muddy trails from the forest for sale in the town markets. Now things were different: these days the market was being taken to them. Tourism was making life easier. It was offering the key to improving the livelihood of the villagers; it was providing a new model – not conservation of forest resources as a distinct activity separate from people-oriented development. Now the model entailed conservation *for* development. Villagers could use their resources - forest, food and culture - to generate income with no investment required. And already the results were obvious – and with no negative consequences.

The Governor isn't the only one to be acclaiming the success of the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project that directly led to the construction of the new Information Centre. On the wall of the entry lobby at the Centre hangs the United Nations Development Award that the project received in 2001 for its achievements in sustainable human development and the reduction of poverty. In villages that tourists visit, headmen and villagers also echo the praises of the project. They welcome the arrival of cash income. Since the project began its first surveys to find trails that tourists might trek in Luang Namtha in early 2000, it has received a lot of attention for its ostensible achievements. Nearing the end of Phase 1 an external review team was consigned to provide an objective evaluation of project activities and outcomes. The following report provides a summary of these activities, an assessment of project achievements and shortcomings and a series of recommendations.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Tourism in the Lao PDR

The Lao PDR's tourism industry is expanding rapidly and offers a key opportunity to earn significant foreign exchange. Statistics compiled by the National Tourism Authority (NTA) indicate that the number of international arrivals in the year 2000 was 737,208, increasing from 37,613 just 9 years prior. The Lao authorities recognize the importance of its abundant natural and cultural assets, and actively promote them in an effort to draw international visitors to areas of natural bounty. However, the present lack of national capacity to plan, implement and sustainably manage cultural and nature tourism activities both inside and around the country's many national protected areas (NPA's) places the natural and cultural heritage at risk of being degraded.

1.2 Tourism in Luang Namtha

Following national trends, the number of tourist arrivals to Luang Namtha increased from 4,732 in 1995 to over 24,700 in 2000. To accommodate the growing number of visitors many low-cost guesthouses and hotels have been constructed in district centres. Presently there are 19 in Namtha District, 12 in Sing District, 2 in Vieng Phoukha and 4 in Long District. The cost of overnight accommodations ranges from US\$ 1 – 15. The main reasons international tourists visit the province are for its natural and cultural landscape. In 1999, a survey of international tourists found that 74% were interested in overnight treks to the Nam Ha National Protected Area (forthwith NPA) with trained local guides and 82% were interested in guided river trips to the protected area (Schipani and Marris 2002).

Tourist's main reasons for visiting Luang Namtha (n=131)	
Ethnic minorities	67.9%
Nature	66.0
Culture	50.4
New destination	43.5
Handicrafts	15.3
Other	13.0
Food	11.5
Monuments & Museums	6.1

1.3 The UNESCO-National Tourism Authority Nam Ha Ecotourism Project

In response to the need to develop a sustainable model for community-based culture and nature tourism - collectively known as community-based ecotourism (CBE) - the Office of the UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific launched the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project (NHEP) in Luang Namtha Province in October 1999. One of the main goals of NHEP is to create an economically viable ecotourism development model that assists in the fight against poverty and contributes to the conservation and protection of Lao PDR's cultural and natural heritage. The project's implementing agency is the National Tourism Authority (NTA) of the Lao PDR, with cooperation from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of Information and Culture. The project's main donors are the Government of New Zealand through NZODA and the Government of Japan through the International Finance Corporation's Trust Funds Programme.

1.4 Phase 1 Project Objectives

'Nam Ha ecotourism: Integrated Planning for Culturally and Ecologically Sustainable tourism Development through District and Local Community Management' established the following objectives for Phase 1 activities.

1. Local Community Involvement
2. Identification of Tourism resources
3. To create a group of locally trained community people in Luang Namtha Province who can begin to serve as the local professionals in the growing tourism sector. The training will be developed and held in the township of Luang Namtha. Trainees will be drawn from all districts of the province. Initially their newly acquired skills will be applied to the Nam Ha protected area and Muang Sing
4. To assist the establishment strategy of the Nam Ha national Biodiversity Conservation area by seeking ways tourism can contribute to reducing pressures on biodiversity by providing a means for alternative incomes for villagers within the Conservation area
5. To assist the people living in Muang Sing and in the village communities around Muang Sing to participate fully in the developing patterns of tourism and to develop mechanisms which

guarantee that this tourism avoids the negative impacts of cultural tourism, and to guesthouse owners, restaurant owners and potential tour guides to improve and upgrade the quality of their products and give them a new sense of professionalism

6. To assist local authorities and the local people to comprehend fully the range of impacts tourism will have on their cultures and environment and to assist in developing positive, constructive ways in which to minimise the negative impacts.
7. Endogenous model building
8. Resource Protection
9. Investment Promotion
10. Monitoring and Assessment of Project

2 PROJECT ACTIVITIES

2.1 Initiation of Project Activities

At its inception, the project had anticipated beginning a majority of activities in a neighboring district, Muang Sing, rather than Luang Namtha. However, upon the arrival of the Project team, it was decided to shift the focus of project activities to Luang Namtha. This was done for several reasons.

1. Muang Sing had an existing tourism industry and many attendant problems of tourists visiting villages in an unregulated way including the pursuit of opium
2. Luang Namtha offered a cleaner slate with which to develop sustainable ecotourist activities using adequate time for controlled development of access to villages and careful consideration of carrying capacity.
3. It was felt this pro-active approach would prevent many of the problems present in Muang Sing from being reproduced in Luang Namtha
4. Being the provincial capital, the proximity to government offices provided logistical efficiency to establish a collaborative ecotourism model and at the same time gain political support for development activities. Muang Sing had no district tourism representative.

The existing situation of unmonitored and potentially damaging tourism in Muang Sing led to the production of a poster that detailed a series of do's and don'ts for tourists. This was designed after consultative meetings with 52 Khamu and Akha villagers from Muang Sing. Outside of the poster production, the majority of activities began in Luang Namtha.

In mid 1999, under the guidance of Dr Heather Peters, Coordinator for UNESCO's Cultural projects in Lao PDR, the CTA, Mr Steven Schipani together with Mr Khamlay from the NTA established a work plan with counterpart agencies, primarily the Provincial Tourism Office (PTO) and its Director Mr Khamliene. The National Tourism Authority sent 3 people to join the project at this time. On January 19, 2000 an official meeting was held with the Governor of Luang Namtha to introduce the project and detail the scope of its activities.

Based on the survey data that reflected the tourists desires for opportunities to visit the cultural and natural resources, the project team developed one, two and three-day treks in and around the Nam Ha NPA. At the end of Phase 1, three treks operate regularly and there is also a one-day boat trip on the Namtha River running parallel to the Nam Ha NPA. The establishment of

these treks began in January 2000 when the first survey to identify trails was undertaken and in April the first overnight trek to Ban Nalan (Khamu ethnic group) took place after a series of consultations with the local community. Following a series of trial treks with project staff, treks with trainee guides and tourists began in June 2000 to this village. Official guide training began in October 2000 and by November the first cohort of guides was certified. By November 2000, 2 trips a week were being taken to Ban Nalan, and shortly thereafter one-day treks were established to Ban Pieng Ngam (Tai-Daeng ethnic group). By mid-2001, a program of organised lunches was offered in this village. In early 2001, surveys trips to Akha villages of Ban Nammatt Kao and Ban Nammatt Mai in the NPA were undertaken and in May 2001, 3-day treks to these villages started. By mid-2001, a boat trip to Ban Sopdut (Lanten ethnic group) was established that included lunch provision in the village.

It is noted that the number of treks established at present exceeds the goals cited in the original project document. Several other outputs were also not mentioned in the original plan such as the 6 sleeping lodges built in each of the overnight target villages and the visitor information centre in Luang Namtha.

2.2 Steps in Developing Ecotourism in Villages sites:

2.2.1 Activity Sequence

- Field Surveys
- Tourism Awareness Workshops in the target villages
- Trailing the Trips
- Participant Feedback
- Community Feedback
- Guide and Community Operational Training
- Pricing the Trips
- Information and Promotion
- Monitoring

2.2.2 Selection Criteria

Trails and target villages were selected based on the following criteria

- Accessibility & safety
- Previous community cooperation in regard to conservation activities
- Provincial Authorities pre-determined that they are priority villages for economic development
- Interest on the part of the community
- The state of the natural environment
- The interesting material and traditional culture in the communities

2.2.3 Village Workshops

Tourism awareness workshops in the target villages consisted of the following topics:

- Who are international tourists, and reasons they come to visit Laos
- The importance of preserving traditional culture and the environment
- Community income-generating possibilities from tourism
- Dangers associated with tourists using illegal drugs in villages
- How to mitigate cultural misunderstandings

Following initial trial trips, community meetings were held with villages on the routes to: assess if communities wished to continue, to establish cultural guidelines, assess villagers' training needs, establish a carrying capacity, and price food and accommodation in the village.

2.2.4 Cost of Trips

The ecotourism trips are priced as follows:

Two-night Trek: US\$35 (4- 8 participants)

Overnight Trek: US\$24 (4 - 8 participants)

Day Trek: US\$9 (3 - 8 participants)

River Trip: US\$11 (3 - 8 participants)

These costs include food, water, guide fees, trekking permits, transportation and lodging (when applicable).

2.2.5 Carrying Capacity

Carrying capacity is determined using precautionary guidelines established by local authorities, participating communities and project staff. Trekking limits are as follows:

Two - night Trek: two trips/week: 4 - 8 participants (overnight in 2 villages)

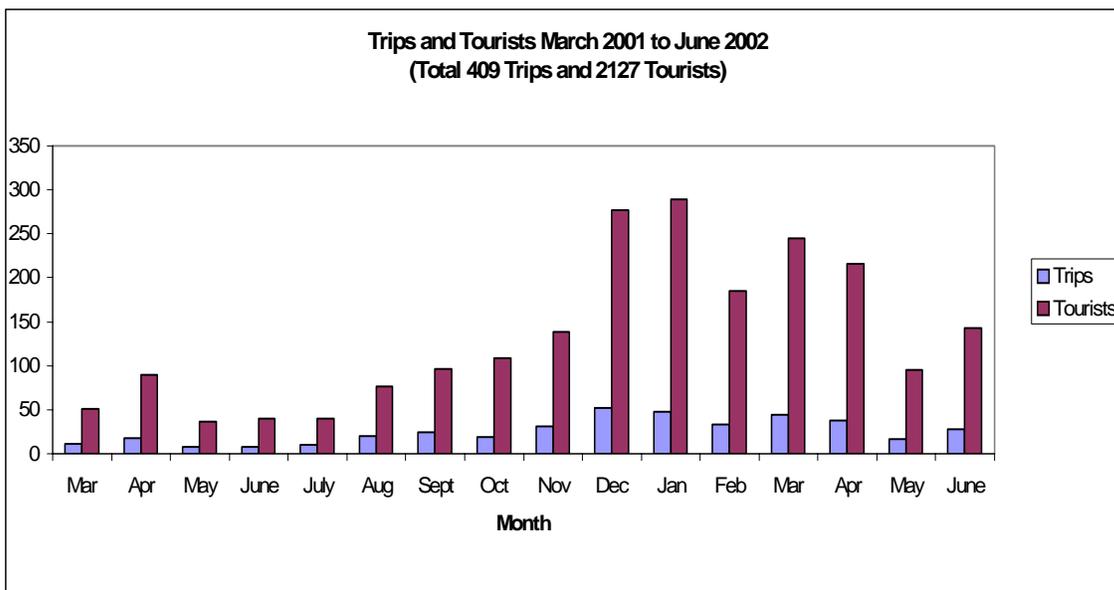
Overnight Trek: two trips/week: 4 - 8 participants (stay - 1 village; lunch - 1 village; visit 2 villages)

Day Trek: daily trips: 3 - 8 participants (lunch in 1 village, visit 3 villages)

River Trip: daily trips: 3 - 8 participants (visit 2 villages)

The Nam Ha Ecoguide Service now runs the non-profit trekking and river trips, under the supervision of the Luang Namtha Provincial Tourism Office. Most tourists that go on the treks are backpackers, however a growing number of tourists arrive via tour companies based outside of Luang Namtha. Outside operators are welcome to market the treks as part of a package and set their own commissions. All tourists that go on treks must pass the Nam Ha Ecoguide service and hire local guides to ensure that predetermined carrying capacities, environmental, cultural and village operational guidelines are followed.

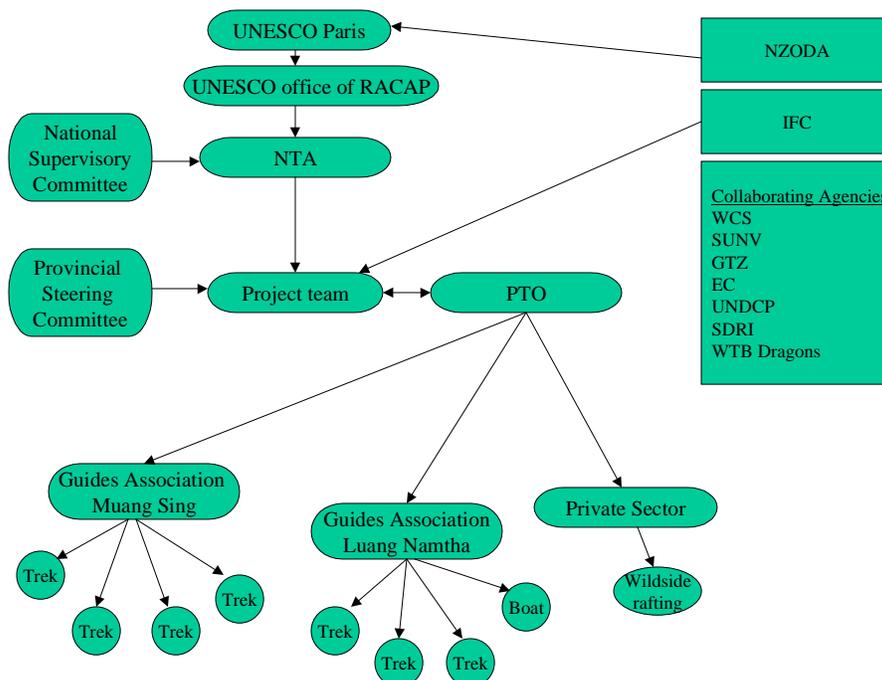
Figure 1:



3 PROJECT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

3.1 The Organisational Structure

The following figure presents an outline of the organisational framework within which the project operates.



3.2 Description of Roles and Responsibilities

The main donors are the Government of New Zealand through NZODA and the Government of Japan through the International Finance Corporation. NZODA Funds are channeled through UNESCO Paris to the UNESCO office of RACAP in Bangkok as the executing agency. The Bangkok office manages the international advisers and establishes bi-annual Fee Contract with the Lao National Tourism Authority to manage other activities. The NTA is the implementing agency for the project. IFC funds are channeled directly to the project or the advisers through the World Bank Lao country office in Vientiane.

Additional funding or in-kind assistance has been received from various private and public sector organizations. This has supported the placement of advisers and interns, paid for printing of promotional material and posters, employed short-term trainers and funded study tours and conservation activities.

Major tasks and responsibilities of each group are:

3.2.1 Project team (Foreign TA's, local NTA and project staff)

- Plans all activities
- Prepares budgets
- Drafts guidelines for ecotourism development
- Helps formulate regulations for NTA office to approve
- Coordinates with other relevant departments and donors

- Raises funds for additional activities
- Conducts guide training
- Conducts hospitality training
- Convenes village workshops
- Surveys new trails/product development
- Undertakes provincial ecotourism marketing and promotion
- Works to build capacity and institutionalise operations
- Takes the lead role in monitoring

3.2.2 National Tourism Authority (NTA)

- Undertakes a general supervisory role
- Provides some technical advice
- Submits reports to UNESCO and other donors
- Cooperates with other line ministries
- Manages fee contracts with UNESCO to pay for national staff honorariums and field operating costs

Three staff seconded from head office in Vientiane are based in Luang Namtha and work full time on the project. The NTA head office in Vientiane undertakes national marketing, manages policy issues and liaises with other relevant government and private agencies. The head of the project's central level national supervisory committee is the vice-chair of the NTA.

3.2.3 Provincial Tourism Office (PTO)

Major project related activities:

- Coordinate project activities
- Provides staff for general implementation of project
- Approves the project work-plan in cooperation with the provincial steering committee
- Administers the Guide Association
- Liaises closely with the project on every activity
- Assists with monitoring

Other tourism related activities:

- Manages hotels, guesthouses and restaurants
- Manages private sector
- Encourages tourism investment
- Cooperates with neighbouring countries
- Cooperates with relevant organizations and other provinces
- Provides feedback to NTA in Vientiane on policy

3.2.4 Steering Committee

- Oversees the project
- Gives feedback on project implementation
- Participates in annual meeting

3.2.5 National Supervisory Committee

- Consists of representatives from: STENO, Ministry of Information and Culture, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, NTA, UNESCO National Commission for Lao PDR, CIC.
- Participates in bi-annual supervisory meetings in Luang Namtha

3.2.6 Nam Ha National Protected Area Management Unit

- Provides data on wildlife and NPA
- Patrols and monitors condition of trail and the NPA

- Maintains trails
- Participates in trail surveys, helps identifying trekking trails
- Monitors biodiversity threats in cooperation with GA and Wildside

3.2.7 Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

- Provides data on wildlife and NPA
- Cooperates with project and NTA on workshop on conservation for tourism
- Undertakes impact monitoring training and information

3.2.8 Guides Association

The Association operates the treks and boat trip on behalf of the PTO.

- Lead tourists into ethnic villages
- Provides information
- Takes bookings
- Collects money and prepares receipts for tourists
- Manages guide rotation
- Regulates provincial guides
- Collates information on income and expenses associated with treks and prepares financial records

3.2.9 Private Sector

One company, Wildside, has a contract with the PTO to operate rafting trips. Other tourism and travel companies in the province are not directly involved in ecotourism, however, the framework for participation has been prepared.

- Adheres to regulations of PTO and NPA

3.2.10 Village Communities

- Provide village guides
- Help oversee tourist activity
- Provide food, lodging, etc
- Provide feedback on guides to PTO
- Manage some handicraft production and other opportunities
- Have stewardship and management of NPA
- Help set carrying capacity
- Assist with monitoring

3.3 Institutional analysis and assessment of capacity

Ecotourism in Luang Namtha has expanded extremely quickly and the outlook is for strong growth. This could severely strain existing resources and tempt operators and guides to cut corners in ecotourism activities. There is a threat that the sector will expand too quickly for the limited management capacity. The project team took an early decision in Phase I to produce results and demonstrate the potential of ecotourism. There is no doubt that this approach has achieved its objective. It is now timely to redirect resources and develop capacity by focussing on processes and practices of existing government institutions and documenting in detail the work that has been achieved. Much of the guide training has been handed over to local staff and officials. This process can be completed in the second phase, along with some new initiatives to enhance ecotourism policy development at local and national level. The project has increased the workload and brought new responsibilities to all of these agencies and groups. It has also provided project funds and through the guides association an income stream from operations that can be used for management.

- **The PTO** has taken on many new tasks and adapted extremely well during the first phase. The staff understand and support the principles of ecotourism, processes are in place for financial management and accountability and a new Visitors Centre and office has been constructed which has brought provincial and project staff, ecotourism operations and visitors together. The Centre also has a training room. The PTO Director agrees that his office staff need to develop further skills.
- **The NTA** staff, seconded from Vientiane, have made a major contribution to the success of Phase I. They have developed a keen understanding of ecotourism operations and benefits in addition to their management and supervisory role.
- **The Guide Association** functions well, financial reporting is well managed and transparent, information is of a high quality. Visitor feedback suggests that further English language training would improve the confidence of guides and office staff who work with the public.
- **Village communities** have benefited substantially although unevenly from ecotourism activities. Some communities have grasped the practical aspects of service provision and combine provision of food and accommodation with warm hospitality. Attempts have been made to distribute the opportunities and benefits of ecotourism to all families and to optimise the benefits through activities such as weaving or blacksmithing. Other villages are less organised and further development is required. Village representatives would benefit from collective workshops to jointly discuss issues, experiences and benefits of ecotourism.
- **The steering committee** has not been effective and has exerted little influence over the project. Reasons given include: lack of a clear mandate for responsibilities and action, there is no financial benefit for some players, all agencies are understaffed and it is not easy to take on additional work. The project team added that they had focussed on delivering tangible results rather than building the capacity of the steering committee but the meetings were well attended when convened by the head of the Provincial Cabinet rather than the PTO.
- **District Tourism Offices** have yet to be established in Luang Namtha Province. To do so will require the authorisation and budget from NTA. The economic importance of tourism to Lao PDR provides a case for the government to consider employing tourism officers at district level and this issue could be raised by the project at an appropriate time. An alternative, but less effective, solution is to provide training in tourism impact monitoring to district officials to raise their awareness of issues and develop a network of individuals who can report any concerns about tourism impact for follow up by the PTO.
- **UNESCO** has provided effective and timely professional support and management of project funds. The project CTA reports that UNESCO management is advantageous as it offers access to global expertise and is an effective project administrator. Plans are approved promptly and funds are always available as needed. Government officials expressed concern that UNESCO retails 13 per cent of project funds as a management fee. By contrast, transfer of funds from the IFC, managed by the World Bank, is slow and has created an obstacle to project implementation.

3.4 Further issues for consideration in Phase II

Although significant progress has been made the project staff still has a significant role in the operational and strategic framework and the capacity of the institutions involved is weak.

International advisers are concerned about continuing reliance on them to follow up on minor operational matters and some initiatives are relatively new and require time to hand over. One example is the monitoring system that involves collection of data over time to provide optimally useful information.

A related issue is that much of the project administration has been undertaken by international advisers during the evening and using their own computers. This has occurred partly because Luang Namtha is only served with electricity during the evening, the project has experienced problems with its generator, and also because the advisers spend considerable time in the field. While this is a tribute to their dedication and hard work some records have been difficult to locate. This can be addressed during Phase II as the town will be fully served with electricity and filing systems and computers can be set up in the new Visitor Centre and training facility.

International advisers also commented that low salaries of government officials are an impediment to building capacity, as staff must find additional ways to supplement their salaries. A per diem is an incentive for involvement of government staff at all levels, and some government employees work as guides at weekends.

The lack of a clear provincial tourism policy is a further constraint. Development of a tourism plan would clarify roles, identify opportunities and provide an additional tool to make tourism sustainable. The support from other agencies including technical and operational advice and financial assistance has been important to the project, however, it has added to the administrative load.

Recommendations

- Project focus moves from product development to strengthening management capacity - especially the PTO and a Board/steering committee
- The steering committee should be replaced with a Board which will oversee the project, approve workplan and financial statements, make recommendations for use of the Village Development fund, and other activities. If possible it should be convened by the Governor or Vice Governor.
- Produce a Provincial management plan, with district plans included
- Village representatives should have a regular forum to discuss issues and solutions. These might be convened in Luang Namtha or in a village lodge.
- To ensure effective handover of the project to local authorities, each of the activities currently undertaken by the project team should be transferred to local agencies.

4. PROJECT REVENUES AND FINANCIAL SUMMARY

4.1 Revenue Streams

All revenue the Nam Ha Ecoguide service generates from the trekking operations is retained in Luang Namtha. Profits are intended to be re-invested in small-scale development activities or to expand community-based ecotourism in the province. Participating communities in Luang Namtha (8 villages, total population roughly 2,000) receive substantial direct economic benefits by providing food and lodging, guide services, and through the sale of handicrafts. Revenue from the trekking permit goes directly to the Nam Ha NPA Management Unit to fund trail maintenance and conservation activities in the protected area.

The gross revenue generated by Nam Ha Ecoguide Service trekking and river tours from October 2000 – February 2002 was US\$34,400. Over 2,000 tourists from 38 countries went on treks and boat trips during this 16-month period. Monitoring data indicates that ecotourism revenues are contributing up to 40 % of total village income in some participating villages, and that a large proportion of the income is being spent on essential medicines, rice, clothing and household items (see Monitoring section).

Outside Funding

The project has received funding from two main donors: NZODA and IFC. Assistance from other collaborating agencies has been in-kind or provided directly to a designated activity, such as printing of posters, support for training or provision of volunteers or interns.

The use of funds from the New Zealand Government for year 1 and year 2 of the project, and estimates for year 3, are shown in Appendix 1. These figures do not include 13 percent recovered by UNESCO for support costs.

Financial support from the IFC was available during years 2 and 3. Detailed information is also at appendix 1

4.2 Collaborating agencies are

WCS	\$20 000 for wildlife monitoring (funded by NZODA) 2 training sessions on Conservation Principles and Monitoring Biodiversity
SUNV	2 advisers (handicraft development and project formulation)
GTZ	\$1200 for guide training in Muang Sing
EU	5000 euros
Where There Be Dragons (USA)	National Project Director received Outdoor Leadership training in the USA
UNDCP	\$500 to print the poster <i>A Message from Your Local Host</i>

Some technical advice has also been received from SDRI (intern)

Strengths

These small grants and in-kind support has added to the administrative load of the project team but has generated extensive interest and understanding of the project. Other funds were raised from pilot treks, savings and strong community support. These were used as to assist with construction of lodges in villages (an activity now supported by the Village Development Fund) and the construction of a Visitors Centre in Luang Namtha.

4.3 Economic benefits flowing from the project.

4.3.1 Guide Association income from trekking and boat trips

Treks are managed by the Nam Ha Guides Association which provides tourist information about the treks (and many other tourist concerns) and manages operational aspects of each trek

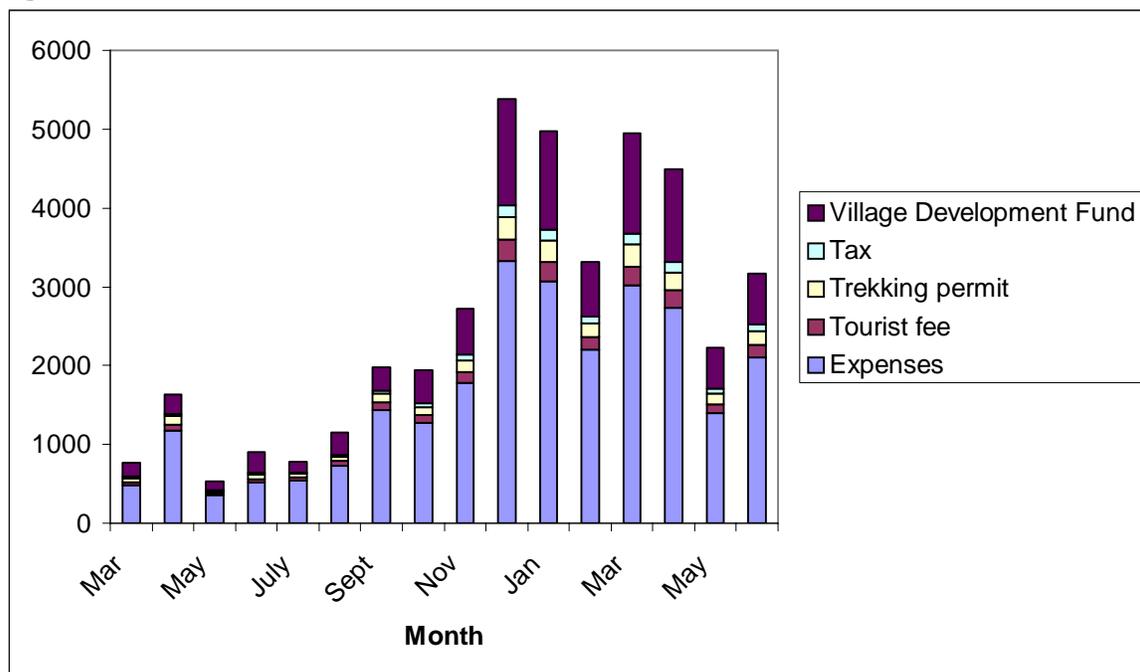
The Association also manages the financial arrangements including income from tourists, payment of guides, village and market shopping. It also transfers funds to the PTO, NPA, national authorities and undertakes some bank transactions.

The PTO holds the bank account, however, the objectives of ecotourism would be more clearly demonstrated to other provincial and national authorities if the Association held a separate account. Transactions through this account could be made available to the Board, guides, village communities and potential investors as a capacity building tool to enhance understanding of financial management and attract investment.

Records of income, expenditure, the number of trips and tourists are all maintained by the association and are displayed on noticeboards in the office for perusal by guides and visitors.

Small pilot treks began in February 2000. Monthly data are available from March 2001. Results are shown in the following figure:

Figure 2: Distribution of Guide Association income, March 2001 to June 2002

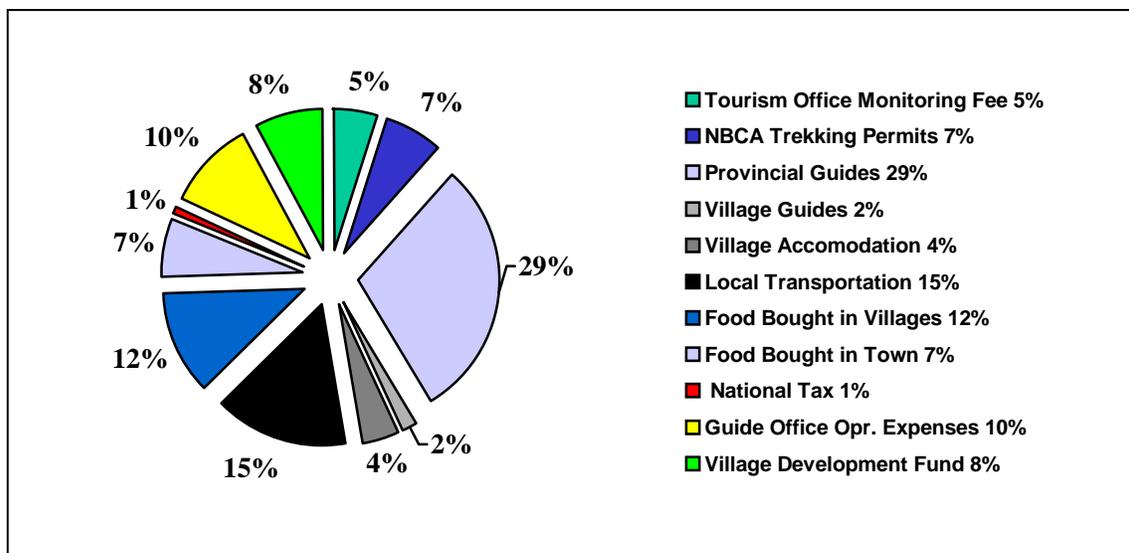


Although there is insufficient data at this early stage to determine trends (except possibly some seasonal variation) these records will be an important source of management information in the longer term.

The result does give an indication that ecotourism will prove to be good business. During the fifteen-month period, the operations required an outlay of \$26,149, returned \$5,347 to government agencies through the Tourism Office Fee, trekking permit and other taxes. \$9,423

was available for the Village Development Fund, a figure that would represent profit for a private company.

Figure 3. Distribution of trekking fees (based on a 3 month sample)



The establishment costs of a trekking operation are relatively low as no major plant or equipment is required. The major outlay is for lodges, which are constructed and owned by host villages.

It is theoretically possible that enterprising guides could enter into contracts with the PTO to run treks privately. Under this arrangement it is likely that guides would retain their commitment to the environmental principles of ecotourism to ensure that their operation is sustainable, however, it may be necessary to develop guidelines to ensure that community development objectives of ecotourism are met. There are, however, a number of preconditions for setting up a business in Laos that would have to be considered, such as the high cost of initial investments and requirement of investment licences.

Strengths and weaknesses

Most importantly at this stage is that a process has been developed which is managed by Provincial Tourism Office staff that demonstrates capacity with record keeping, transparency and accountability.

Broad community awareness and understanding of the system will build financial management capacity and business skills in the community and in the villages.

There may be a need to raise understanding among stakeholders about use of funds, in particular how the village development fund is distributed. Guidelines are currently being developed at the national level which should address this issue.

4.3.2 Economic impact in the town of Luang Namtha

Although the project is not targeted to developing the economy of Luang Namtha it has had a significant impact on employment of guides, tuk tuk drivers, food producers and sellers, etc.

It has also boosted other tourist businesses. Guest house proprietors report increased occupancies and a tendency for tourists to return to their properties after a trek. This represents an extra night that would not have been spent in the town, as well additional income for food and beverages consumed.

4.3.3 Management of tourism generated income at village level.

The main sources of funds generated at village level are for accommodation, food and cooking, and handicrafts. The amount of income will vary between villages depending on the number of tourists hosted and the services offered. (for details of income distribution and its use see section 9)

4.4 Ban Nalan

One village where a system is working well is Ban Nalan, the first village to host tourists overnight on a regular basis. No tourists had visited Ban Nalan prior to participating in the project. The village now receives economic benefit through lodging, cooking, selling food, selling handicrafts (bags and rice baskets) and through village volunteers escorting tourists to see nearby salt licks and look for wildlife.

Cooking and food sales are distributed by roster. All families are rostered to provide for tour groups, however, the system should be viewed as a first 'right of refusal' rather than compulsion. If the rostered family is unable to provide food or assistance, food will be bought from other villagers. It is understood that villagers put their families first and will not sell food, especially small livestock, if there will be insufficient for the family.

The lodge was initially constructed with financial assistance from the project and village labour and it now returns a small income. Cleaning and maintenance is managed by roster. Income from the lodge is used for lodge maintenance and the surplus is available for loan. Loans are generally given in cases of emergency, for example to take family members to hospital.

Villagers suggested that it would be possible to use this fund as the basis for small loans to start handicrafts or other income producing activities. A fund supported and managed by the village could have a positive impact on developing capacity in business planning and financial management.

5. NHEP GUIDING SERVICE

5.1 Guide services

The guide services are a linchpin in the successful achievement of project goals. Guides facilitate the interactions that take place between the tourists and the natural and cultural environment they encounter on the treks. They set the terms of exchange and act as critical gatekeepers in encouraging the positive effects and minimizing the negative impacts of the deliberate use of tourism to bring material benefits and livelihood improvements to target communities. The guides help the tourists in every aspect of their trek into the NPA and site villages – they organise logistics and take care of food and lodging. Most importantly they assist the tourists appreciate and understand the cultural and natural resources they encounter and instruct and monitor tourists on appropriate practices in target communities. They establish the atmosphere in village communities upon which all following activities build.

At the same time, the guides are also themselves highly important cultural interlocutors. Because they visit target villages regularly and represent lowland Lao culture with which the villagers are already somewhat familiar, they often have greater cultural impact than do the tourists, with whom communication is minimal. In other words, because members of minority ethnic groups can identify more easily with the already familiar lowland Lao guides than with more alien foreign tourists, these guides can directly represent the direction that cultural change takes for highland people. Therefore, it is not only how the guides perform their role as cultural interpreters that is at stake in the maintenance of sustainable ecotourism, it is also how they themselves appreciate and work towards the objectives and goals of the project that is a crucial element in the project's impact.

Luang Namtha Province requires by law that all trekking is undertaken with a certified guide. This means all tourists must use the PTO guide services if they wish to visit either the NPA or ethnic minority villages in the area. Such regulations provide the legal platform through which ecotourism benefits are derived from the treks in the first instance. They also provide the means by which poverty reduction in the villages can be a direct product of the project's activities. Adequate training and ongoing guide evaluation protocols are therefore fundamental steps in project activities and the successful attainment of its objectives. The evaluation team finds that the Nam Ha project has made this a cornerstone of project initiatives beginning with the employment of foreign TA's to facilitate appropriate training, establish training curriculum and modules, and develop training guidelines that might be used in subsequent or additional project sites.

5.2 Guide Training

Beginning Sept 2000, in co-ordination with project staff, a foreign consultant (Mr Paul Eshoo) established guide-training activities. By July 2002, a total of 89 (69 from town and 20 from villages) guides have been trained and certified to take tourists on treks organised by the project. There are 4 levels of guides assisting with treks in Luang Namtha and Muang Sing: Lead guide (payment \$10/day); Assistant guide (\$9/day) and Intern (helping) guide who has not yet been certified (\$7/day) and Village-Based guides (\$4.75/day). Lead guides must have English language proficiency.

The certification training for town based guides has taken place in four sessions - the first 3 for duration of 2 months each and the 4th an accelerated training of only one-week. 1 training for village guides was carried out over one week.

Certification Trainings

18/8/00 – 18/10/00	Luang Namtha	12 participants
6/1/01 – 6/3/01	Luang Namtha	14 participants (1 from Muang Sing)
14/9/01 – 14/11/01	Muang Sing	21 participants (16 from Muang Sing)
2/4/02 – 9/4/02	Luang Namtha	19 participants (7 from Muang Sing)

This final training was shorter due to budget constraints and a lack of funds to employ trainers for a longer period. Some of the graduates of this training had been intern guides for 6 months prior

to training and have now been promoted to assistant guide level. Others were new to the guide service.

Candidates for Nam Ha ecotourism guide certification were initially selected from government sectors such as the Forestry Department, local villages, local guesthouses, Police Department, the teacher's training college and from the private sector. Using a project-designed bilingual manual, guide training covers the following topics: ecotourism, local and national tourism regulations, principles of guiding and eco-guiding, history and cultures of Luang Namtha and Muang Sing, bio-diversity conservation, basic first aid, development planning and cross-cultural understanding. The training's are conducted by a number of appropriate teachers in their respective fields (natural resource managers, historians, ethnographers, first aid experts, and ecotourist specialists) and engage the guides in both conceptual and practical issues of eco-guiding. The courses have a requisite total of 70 hours of combined in-class study plus a minimum of 6 days group and individual trekking. During the two-month training sessions, field trips are taken to several villages with tourists to further develop guide skills. Upon completion of the training, guides are required to take a written exam covering these topics, an oral examination about guiding principles and an oral evaluation of English skills which is used to determine their suitability for Lead Guide status.

5.3 Guide Employment

The guides are employed on a rotational system following a roster. In Luang Namtha there are 17 lead guides, one of whom is required on all treks. If the group has more than 3-4 tourists, assistant guides are required as well. With the combination of 1, 2 and 3 day treks, lead guides are employed roughly 1-3 times a month, sometimes less. There are no fulltime guides, and at present outside of the co-ordination provided by the PTO, there is neither a professional association (prohibited in Laos) of the guides nor a specific form of on-going contractual employment. However, the guides hold regular meetings on their own, in essence like an association, to discuss issues, problems and areas for improvement. The guide coordinator (staff of the PTO) is usually but not always present. There is no "President" of the group.

Guides are called in on an as-needs basis. Several guides work regularly on the weekends but the majority work on a more piecemeal basis. Lack of guides who can work on a fulltime basis led to the need for the abbreviated training in April 2002, so that more guides could be enlisted. The project's rationale for this somewhat ad hoc system is that, at this time, tourism should be only a supplementary income to guides and villagers alike, as dependence on it can exacerbate problems, such as over-trekking in certain areas or loss of traditional livelihoods. Teachers were found to often be the best English speakers, however, it was thought inappropriate to pressure them to abandon this profession. Forestry officials were desired as guides to provide a means to get them into the NPA more to help patrol and monitor.

Nevertheless even 1-2 treks (3-6 days work) per month offer a comparatively high salary of \$30-60/month for the lead guides, which can be well above an average government salary of \$20/month. Coupled with the low demands on time, this is a major reason behind the very low attrition rate. Of the total number of guides trained, only 3-4 have left or been asked to leave. This was due to infractions, such as inappropriate purchase of wildlife during treks. There are many more applicants for guide positions than the project is able to receive indicating that it is perceived as a desirable occupation, largely because of its relatively high remuneration.

The Guides

On your trek you will be led by certified guides. Trained as part of the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project, these men and women are locals, with knowledge of and respect for the natural and cultural features of the Luang Namtha area and the Nam Ha National Protected Area. Be sure to ask them about the environment you are trekking through and consult them if you have any questions about village or forest protocol.

Addendum in each of the Project Promotion and Information Pamphlets and Booklets

5.4 Guide Evaluation

The quality of the guide training is essential to the successful attainment of the project objectives. It directly determines the sustainability of the project both in terms of on-going tourist satisfaction and the impact the tourist treks have in the site villages and the environment through which they travel. The project has set in place monitoring guidelines to assess the skills and practices of the guides during their interactions with the tourists, and the tourist satisfaction with the tour in general. Visitor feedback forms have been designed and are completed by all tourists taking the treks. They have been summarised on monthly basis since the January 2002 in order to provide a mechanism whereby both the tourists experience can be regularly reviewed by the PTO. Below is a summary of one month's (March) evaluation of a random sample of (up to) 35 tourists on the 3 different treks and the boat trip. Only selected questions have been annotated here, nevertheless they give an idea of tourist satisfaction and thereby a de facto assessment of the guides performance.

Tourist satisfaction with guide interpretation of NPA, Plants and Wildlife, Ethnic Groups, History.

March 2002	Excellent	Good	O.K.	Not enough	No information
3-day trek (B. Namat Kao)	26%	34%	25%	11%	3%
2-day trek (B. Nalan)	12%	30%	32%	21%	4%
1-day trek (B. Nam Hoy)	13%	31%	31%	15%	9%
Boat trip	16%	27%	33%	7%	16%

Tourist experience on the trek with:

March 2002	Begging	Rudeness	Aggressive selling of handicrafts	Fake display of tradition for money
3-day trek (B. Namat Kao)	38%	8%	42%	4%
2-day trek (B. Nalan)	0%	0%	0%	0%
1-day trek (B. Nam Hoy)	3%	3%	0%	0%
Boat trip	6%	12%	7%	0%

Tourist perception that the village they have visited has been negatively impacted by tourism

March 2002	Yes	No
3-day trek (B. Namat Kao)	19%	81%
2-day trek (B. Nalan)	0%	100%
1-day trek (B. Nam Hoy)	0%	100%
Boat trip	13%	87%

It can be noticed that the longer trek into the NPA has better ratings for guide interpretation of nature and culture, but at the same time the tourists on these treks report higher levels of begging and negative cultural impact due to their presence, such as aggressive selling of handicrafts. This pattern is consistent across the five months of feedback evaluations that have been collated to date. The 3-day treks stay in 2 villages rather than 1 so the potential is potentially increased both for positive learning experiences but also for negative interactions of the types listed above. The Akha villages on this trek are remote and relatively poor when compared with nearby towns, and what is perceived by the tourists as unwelcome behavior such as 'begging' might simply be understood in local terms as an effective acquisition strategy. It is usually only some of the children that 'beg' and many times it is akin to a game that hinges on getting a response from the visiting tourists. In one of the Akha villages, a mother commented that they tell the children to stop asking for money, but they don't listen. Some children usually ask for a small amount of money to buy sweets. There are also some reports of the young women gesturing for tips after the massage is given to the tourists. A headman from another target village of a different ethnic group felt that different ethnic groups are more or less likely to condone pursuit of assistance in this fashion. Either way, such trends need to be monitored carefully and feedback to the villagers could in all likelihood reduce such occurrences. Again the onus is on the guides to attempt to mitigate such interactions and lack of effective communication between the guides who do not speak the ethnic dialect is a shortcoming. Increasingly village men can speak Lao but to date it is still extremely limited in some villages. However, local village guides should be able to act as cultural interpreters in this instance.

The tourists also complete a specific evaluation form that rates the guides' performance on each trek. The questions are primarily oriented to the guides' ability to communicate with the tourists and explain items of cultural and environmental interest. One question asks about the guides' ability to interact with the villagers, and while generally positive, the responses make clear that this capacity varies greatly. On one trek undertaken by the evaluation team, communication with the villagers was limited and primarily consisted of a question/answer session with the village headman over dinner. The lead guide made little attempt to interact on a wider level (although the assistant guide made slightly more contact due to her role as cook).

These guide assessments provide a concrete means of evaluating performance and useful feedback for the guides themselves on how their work is perceived. They offer a device whereby the project can recommend either promotion or demotion between lead and assistant guide status. The evaluations show that different guides have widely varying ability in communication with the tourists. Some guides have adequate, even excellent, English, in others it is modest. English skills notwithstanding, many tourists expressed the avid desire for more information about the forest life and cultural systems. However, given the relatively low cost of the treks it appears that most tourists have generally low expectations of guide services and are mostly happy even with limited communication while on the trek. Even those that find the treks expensive are quite forgiving with English skills, so long as they feel that there is good rapport between villagers and guides. It is important to note that most tourists want guides not just for interpretation but to help

then feel comfortable in an alien environment like the village. Poor communication between guides and villagers equals lack of comfort — that is they don't feel welcomed.

5.5 Village guides.

In 3 villages at the start of the treks, 8 local village guides from each have been enlisted in project activities. They receive \$4.75 per trip to travel with the group to the village where they will sleep that night. They assist with carrying bags and food preparation at the destinations. In one village, B Nammatt Kao, local guides are used to take tourists to the nature reserve recently created specifically for tourist interests (see conservation section).

Village - based training for these guides focuses on:

- sanitary food preparation
- housekeeping
- interests of tourists
- simple village-based guiding methods
- how to mitigate cultural misunderstandings
- basic accounting

In March 2002, WCS conducted 2 special trainings for project workers, 9 project guides and 11 local village guides to introduce the guides to basic principles of biodiversity conservation and natural resource management. The intention was to provide the guides with an increased ability to 'conduct nature interpretation' and thereby increase both tourist satisfaction and tourist income. This level of training contributes markedly to the ability of the guides to engage in activities that directly enhance the goals of the project. The lessons learned from the training have been strengthened through their direct application when taking tourists into the Nammatt Kao nature reserve. A second training for biodiversity monitoring has been less successful due to a lack of follow-up activities.

5.6 Guide-Villager Relationships

As mentioned, interactions between ethnic villagers and Lao guides are crucial to sustaining the ongoing principles of ecotourism that seek to minimise negative impacts. It is in all likelihood one element of ecotrekking that is the hardest to monitor and control. While reports from different site villages indicated overall satisfaction with guide behaviour, the evaluation team also encountered descriptions of guide practices that are less positive. Sometimes it is as simple as the headmen not feeling adequately included in the tourists activities in the village or being introduced as soon as the tourists arrive. But it also appears that in some instances there is an ongoing tension between the parties attempting to benefit financially from the tourist's presence, that is the guides and the villagers. These reports are anecdotal but indicate nonetheless ongoing dynamics between guides and villagers that need the attention of project management.

Despite the project establishing fairly fixed rules for exchange, a common complaint is that sometimes guides will attempt to bargain over food costs or simply buy less and/or cheaper food so as to spend less than the allocated amount and themselves keep the difference. In some villages this is kept in check as the guides are supposed to get a receipt from the headman. Some villagers suggested when tips are provided by the tourists for certain services such as the traditional massages offered by Akha villagers, the money will be kept by the guides rather than distributed. Other villager complaints revolved around an attitude of authority and bossiness that, in all likelihood, stems from embedded lowland/highland relationships where enduring prejudicial hierarchies determine patterns of behaviour. There have been some (relatively few) instances of guides attempting to maximise their financial gain in other ways. For example, at times village guides at the start of treks have been bypassed and the money for their services kept by the

guides. The guides too have complaints about the villagers: Price gouging, begging for more tips after/during massages, very slow/lackadaisical help when they're trying to find food to prepare for the tourists, lost or stolen blankets, poorly managed equipment, to name a few. Such general concerns highlight the very fragile nature of the relationship between both parties.

These comments clearly do not apply to all guides and/or villagers and are maybe only applicable to a minority. But what they do signal is that ecotourism projects such as Nam Ha need to pay particular attention to the relationships between the villagers and the guides. The relationship between these two parties will have enormous bearing on the sustainability of project activities in the long term. Trust established between guides and villagers in the process of bringing tourists to village sites creates social capital that underpins successful project development activities. This social capital is vital to the ultimate sustainability of ecotourism well beyond the period of donor funded activities.

Strengths

- The guide employment system is a flexible system that keeps a large number of guides on a fluid rotation that can keep pace with demand as needed.
- The guide training has provided a large number of people from diverse sectors in Luang Namtha with the opportunity to better their English skills. It has also provided knowledge on a wide range of cultural issues and conservation principles that are not available from any other institution in Luang Namtha
- Many guides have an obvious commitment to the ecotourism goals of the project and see themselves as directly contributing to the development of ethnic minorities.
- The guide service has spread an in-depth appreciation of ecotourism principles to a wide sector of Luang Namtha government (especially NPA staff) and private sector workers who are employed as guides. In turn this fosters a broad and detailed understanding of development issues as they relate to the ethnic groups living around Luang Namtha town.
- A detailed ecotourism guide training manual has been produced that can be used in other sites in Luang Namtha and with minor amendments other sites in Laos.

Weaknesses

- Even with the large number of guides, they are sometimes unavailable at any given time. On occasion, they arrive late for the start of the tour.
- Due to the flexible nature of the rotational system, some guides only work once every two months. The large number of irregularly used guides makes quality control very difficult.
- It is likely that guide skills utilised only very intermittently are likely to diminish.
- There is little ongoing training for guides in the village setting.
- At present there is little incentive to improve guide skills. Once one is a lead guide there is no means of being further promoted, or up-grading ones skill for specialist services, such as wildlife or ethnic expertise.
- Guides have little command of ethnic dialects making the communication with the villagers difficult. The concentration is on English translation rather than communication with local villagers at the target sites. All the lead guides are selected for their English language ability alone, not their ability to converse with the villagers. This is handled at times, by the provision of village guides and the presence of villagers who can speak Lao but in some villages this is only a very few people.
- Many tourists request more detailed information on the flora, fauna and cultural systems of the villagers they visit. At present there is a shortfall in what the guides can provide.
- The reduced training periods are inadequate. Even the two month training sessions are not enough in some conceptual and practical areas. For example, the CMA commented about guide training in his Final Report, "It is the opinion of the CMA that a lack of time and thought

put into the planning and preparation together with a lack of resource materials for the trainees significantly compromised the effectiveness of the training”.

- In certain areas, such as English language skills and cultural sensitivity, ongoing project attention is required. This latter issue whereby subtle stereotypes of ethnic prejudice are still present in guide/highlander interactions needs constant monitoring in order to reduce its presence.
- Training materials have not yet been translated into Laos.

Recommendations

- Create more formalised professional guides association with a more detailed code of practice and employment benefits.
- Employ a smaller core of fulltime guides from the private sector and a wider pool of part-time guides from government occupations.
- Outsource English training and provide incentive for guides to continually seek to upgrade their language skills and other forms of information expertise, possibly through a greater number of employment levels.
- Further develop guide skills at communicating with villagers through training sessions in the villages themselves, and insure that a village guide is available on each trek who can facilitate conversation and interaction between tourists and different ethnic groups.
- Translated materials
- Technical sessions on culture, history and guiding techniques need to be more practical and hands-on
- Better use of non-formal training from Lao teachers
- More comprehensive testing

5.7 Additional Activities

5.7.1 English Classes.

Beginning September 18 2000, foreign consultant (Mr Paul Eshoo) conducted English classes (beginning and intermediate conversational) two hours/day for participants from National Tourism Authority, Department of Information and Culture, Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Provincial Administration Office, Police Department, Post Office, Department of Communications, and local hotels. The consultant reports that attendance was low and inconsistent and recommends that in future English be out-sourced to private sector.

5.7.2 Rafting Techniques Training

Wildside has conducted rafting techniques and white water safety skills training for a subset of the guides who have specialised in rafting and river treks.

5.7.3 Study tours (see appendix 5)

- Chosen villagers and village guides have been taken on study tours to other tourist sites in Luang Prabang to give them a perspective on what it feels like to be a tourist.
- Fifteen members of the Guides Association had a study tour to Northern Thailand to observe CBE there in mid-2001.
- High level members of NTA, PTO and Provincial Department of Forestry have been taken to observe ecotourism and conservation and park management in Nepal (June 3-13, 2001).
- In addition a number of on site study tours have been conducted with the cooperation of the Nam Ha Ecotourism project for representatives from other provinces.

5.7.4 Hospitality training

In mid 2001, two teams of 10 restaurant owners, workers and project staff were trained in hospitality services by the Novotel Hotel in Vientiane

5.7.5**Production of Promotional and Educational Material**

The project has produced a number of high quality information and promotional materials that have raised the profile and effectiveness of the project. The presence of a NZ volunteer with expertise in desktop publishing greatly assisted in this process. See Appendix 3 for a list of products

6.0 BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION

6.1 National Protected Area

In 1993, the Lao government established 20 protected areas termed National Biodiversity Conservation Areas or National Protected Areas (NPA). Together they comprise approximately 12.5% of the land area of Lao PDR. The Nam Ha protected area (NPA) is 222,400 square hectares, mostly in Luang Namtha district but also spreading into the districts of Muang Sing, Muang Long and Viang Poukha. This NPA is home to a large array of flora and fauna (over 288 bird species and 37 large mammals) including a number of endangered animals such as bears, tigers and gibbons. Many other larger birds, mammals and reptiles present in the NPA are listed as globally threatened or key species of conservation significance. The Nam Ha ecotourism project has aimed to directly address perceived causes of the decline in plant and animal species in the NPA through alternative development strategies. It is assumed that unsustainable hunting and swidden farming practices with resultant habitat loss are responsible for the reduction in biodiversity in forest areas in the NPA. This in turn shifts the focus for preventive activities to the 25 villages currently within the NPA boundaries and a further 86 just outside its borders.

To address the presence of village communities, whose livelihood practices are potentially at odds with government conservation goals, one of the key NHEP objectives is:

- **To ensure that tourism contributes to the conservation of bio-diversity in the Nam Ha NPA and promotes the preservation of the cultural heritage of participating communities.**

To balance these somewhat contradictory goals, the project has chosen 2 villages within (and 1 village on the edge of) the NPA to develop as target villages and thereby develop trial models for sustainable ecotourism that aim to directly achieve the above objective. If successful such a model would have applicability throughout Laos where deforestation and changing agricultural practices are fundamental elements of the government policies towards ethnic minorities. Luang Namtha has the highest number of ethnic groups of any province in Laos and many living in forested areas risk losing their means of survival if the forests are decreed out of bounds for their use. Likewise unless more sustainable practices are adopted, swidden will gradually become unviable as a means of highland rice production. To allow ongoing use within the NPA some areas have been designated core zones in which swidden and hunting are controlled and buffer zones that can be utilized by the villagers residing in the forest.

6.2 Project Conservation Activities

Project activities in target villages rest on a very basic assumption.

- *Economic and social benefits from tourism for people living in and around the NPA will provide alternative livelihoods that will lead to a reduction in the existing threats to flora and fauna.*

This objective implies that cash income will be used to lessen pressure on the need for swidden and hunting and gathering so that rice supplies and meat products and NTFPs can be supplemented through purchase. There are inherent risks in this assumption such as whether increased income does in fact reduce wildlife hunting and swidden as opposed to simply providing additional cash income that is used in alternative ways. This makes careful design and monitoring of the project activities a crucial element of the projects model.

The project employed a foreign conservation manager over 2 periods to facilitate project activities in the NPA. By the second 6 month contract his TOR included:

1. Provide expertise and guidance in the development and implementation of environmentally and culturally sustainable community based ecotourism projects (as identified by the project)
2. In close cooperation with the Nan Ha national Bio-diversity Conservation Area Management Unit, develop and facilitate the implementation of a pilot Integrated Conservation and Development and protected area co-management plan that is linked to ecotourism.
3. Assist with the development of an ecotourism management plan

6.2.1 Nammat Kao Nature Reserve

To develop a model for the application of ecotourism principles that directly integrate with the national goals of biodiversity conservation, one village was chosen for the development of specialised project activities. In Ban Nammat Kao a wildlife and tourist reserve has been established. After consultation with village members approximately 100 ha of old growth forest close to the village have been selected as a reserve where neither hunting nor clearing are to take place. The immediate benefits are two-fold:

- a) It provides an additional source of tourist income for the village. Each trek pays 30,000 k for a tour through the reserve regardless of how many tourists there are. This money goes directly to one of the 6 village guides trained specifically for this purpose (3000 k of this money goes to into the village-level support fund).
- b) It serves as a breeding refuge for declining populations of wildlife thereby contributing directly to the conservation of the natural resources in the NPA

The village guides take tourist groups into the reserve and attempt to show animal and bird life to them. While larger wildlife is rarely, if ever, seen, the guides' ability with birdcalls is a major attraction. Thus the reserve also strengthens appreciation and reproduction of local culture, a fact commented on by the villagers to the evaluation team. The project has produced signs demarcating the reserve and instigated a system of fines for breaking the reserve prohibitions and a system of bonuses for sightings of wildlife. WCS training has built on the project guides and village guides appreciation of conservation principles and the reserve tours offer a means of putting such lessons into practice.

The villagers comment that the value of the reserve is primarily in the income it generates for the village and that if tourists no longer came then the reserve would soon cease to exist. Nevertheless as a first step, its successful establishment and operation show that cooperative agreements between villagers and tourist organizations that have clear benefits for the conservation of forest areas can be forged. Over time it is possible that other contemporary principles of environmental management can gradually integrate with (and supplant where necessary) existing customary forest management strategies for the benefits of both local people and national objectives.

6.3 Co-Management Agreement

It was initially anticipated that the conservation advisor would work closely with the Nam Ha NPA management unit (within the forestry department) and jointly develop a integrated conservation and development co-management program using Ban Nammat Kao as a pilot case study. Such cooperation has not eventuated for several reasons. According to the CMA the lack of clear mandate for him to work with the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (and specifically the Nam Ha NPA management unit within this office) has been the key obstacle. It is perceived that

his duties and responsibilities lie first and foremost with the PTO and therefore ongoing collaboration has been piecemeal at best.

Although the NPA management unit collects income from the trekking permit, it appears there has to date been inadequate incentives and motivation to sustain more active collaboration in conservation activities with the villagers. To date the CMA has not worked closely with a NPA management unit counterpart staff which has hampered joint development and ownership of activities. This has led to the abandonment or postponement of planned conservation activities in the target villages in the NPA that should directly involve both forestry staff and tourism staff such as: village boundary demarcation, co-management agreements between PTO and PAFO, demarcation of the core zone within the NPA, participatory planning for resource management, biodiversity monitoring and so forth.

6.4 Ecotourism-Conservation Contractual Agreements

While still in the formulation stage it is anticipated that the relevant stakeholders (villagers, PTO, NPA) will sign agreements stipulating precise regulations and benefits entailed in integrated conservation and ecotourism objectives. An important element of this is including the villagers within national protocols that regulate forest use. By having the presence of financial incentives from ecotourism raises the probability of a commitment to national policies of biodiversity preservation.

Strengths

- The project has established a replicable model of utilising local natural resources as a source of direct and sustainable income (with no leakage) to villages in protected areas through the establishment of a nature reserve
- Such initiatives validate local forms of knowledge of flora and fauna that might otherwise gradually disappear.
- The established reserve also provides sanctuary for endangered wildlife.
- Regular movement through the NPA provides a valuable tool for wildlife and resource use monitoring rather than simple tourist activities. The regular presence of tourists and guides in the NPA is also a deterrent to illicit activities such as illegal logging, fishing and hunting by outsiders who come to exploit the NPA resources.
- Clear income benefits from tourism offer a form of leverage by which conservation authorities can negotiate sustainable forest and wildlife practices with the villages
- Villagers themselves have incentives to maintain regulatory standards on wildlife hunting, NTFP trade and forest preservation
- Government agencies increasingly appreciate the benefits of conservation advocacy and the potential income it affords through ecotourism. Recently two proposed logging roads in and near the NPA have been prohibited due to their perceived negative impact on the ecotourism activities
- Trekking permits fees allow other government agencies responsible for the NPA to benefit financially from ecotourism activities. During the first 16 months of trekking activities, the NPA management unit received over \$3000, 40% of which is to be used for trail maintenance

Weaknesses

- Lack of effective coordination and management of NPA initiatives between the CMA, PTO and NPA management unit has led to the abandonment of a number of activities, including a comprehensive NPA management plan
- The knowledge gained through project activities largely resides with the CMA and has not been shared with PAFO staff.

- The nature reserve as a source of income can probably only be used by a limited number of villages in any given trekking route. It is not directly replicable in villages outside the NPA.
- Ongoing maintenance of trekking trails in the NPA needs closer monitoring and delegation of duties
- The presence of income from tourism probably only marginally reduces villager reliance and desire for wildlife as part of subsistence strategies

Recommendations

- Better partnerships need to be promoted between NPA management unit and PTO, this will entail establishing more direct managerial links with the director of the Forestry Department rather than the NPA unit which has little authority to make decisions
- Establish joint development activities in villages in the NPA using a portion of the village development fund
- Produce a field handbook for the reserve so tourists can gain more indepth information of the flora and fauna, in particular the birdlife
- Additional training for village guides to be able to answer tourist queries about flora and fauna

7.0 IMPACT MONITORING SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY BASED ECOTOURISM

The PTO and the NPA Management Unit are the government agencies responsible for monitoring the ecotourism activities. Together they supervise the training of guides in the collection and analysis of data. These operations are financed by the 5% tax on trekking revenues.

In order to gauge the impacts on cultural and material aspects of village life as a result of the regular number of tourists visiting the villages in the NPA (and other target villages) a number of monitoring systems have been developed by the project. These include the visitor feedback forms mentioned previously that give a sense of how the tourists assess the treks. Of more importance to assessing the impact on the material lifestyles and cultural value systems of the villagers themselves are a number of further evaluation systems developed within the first-phase project activities.

7.1 Monitoring Protocols

There are 3 different monitoring protocols that have been developed by the project

1. Village Household Survey (discussed below),
2. Wildlife and Resource Use Monitoring. (monthly) A protocol developed by the WCS in which data is collected by the guides along trekking trails and rafting rivers inside the NPA. The data is intended to be analysed by the NPA management unit for monitoring purposes. It also provides the guides with important responsibilities for wildlife identification and resource use threats, activities in which the tourists on the trails can be included.
3. Trail Maintenance and Impact Survey (monthly) guides monitor trail conditions and logging activities. A portion of the trekking permit revenue is used to hire local villagers to implement trail maintenance under the supervision of NPA managers

With the exception of the bi-annual Village Household Survey, these monitoring/evaluation systems are in the development rather than the operational stages. Difficulties lie in the lack of regular collaboration with the NPA management unit staff who have direct responsibilities in collection and follow-up activities such as track maintenance and biodiversity monitoring. Also planned, but not yet operationalised is an annual Community Workshop wherein the data that has been collated and analysed in the above monitoring systems is presented back to the target village communities for feedback, discussion and modification of project activities.

The development of these monitoring systems has included the development and testing of data collection methodologies, training of data collectors (PTO staff, NPA staff and guides), preparation and training of means of social impact analysis, mechanisms for addressing findings at both the management level and village level. These various monitoring and feedback systems have been compiled in a Manual for Ecotourism Guides and Managers that, if translated into Lao, has potential use in ecotourism activities in other sites in Laos.

7.2 Village Household Survey

As mentioned, outside of the tourist feedback forms and guide evaluations, the biannual Village Household Survey is the only system to have generated data in the first phase of the project. It entails interviews with each household in the target village. The intention is to detect socio-economic, cultural and environmental impacts and thereby be an early warning system for any

emerging problems resulting from the project and the associated presence of tourists in village communities. While cultural impact is notoriously hard to measure with questionnaires, the survey offers a host of indicators that lend insight into how tourism is impacting on village lifestyles. It provides baseline data on socio-economic and environmental variables that will be able to be used over time to document trajectories of change.

While the Village Household monitoring system is being fine-tuned with practice to detect more subtle levels of impact, the immediate and most obvious challenge will be in how the data is acted upon. To date the data has been collected and collated in 3 target villages. The survey gives a concrete means quantifying economic inputs and their distribution within the villages. It should be noted that the chosen indicators (see questionnaire Appendix 3) do not address all the project activities. And while the project has not yet established any specific benchmarks in the various categories being measured that would suggest levels of success achieved, this data nonetheless offers a series of measurements that can be used overtime for evaluation the impact of tourism in the villages.

7.2.1 Sample Data

Following is a sample of data from two villages in the NPA (additional data is in appendix 2)

Income Statistics

B. Nammat Mai Village Income Statistics/ Oct – Dec 2001

Income Category	Kip
Total Household Eco-tourism Income	1,510,000
Village Fund Income *	1,088,000 kip
TOTAL Eco-tourism Income	2,598,000 kip
TOTAL Non Eco-tourism Income	3,546,000 kip
GRAND TOTAL Village Income	6,144,000 kip

B. Nammat Kao Village Income Statistics/ Oct – Dec 2001

Income Category	Kip
Total Household Eco-tourism Income	2,236,000 kip
Village Fund Income *	1,088,000 kip
TOTAL Eco-tourism Income	3,324,000 kip
TOTAL Non Eco-tourism Income	14,710,000 kip
GRAND TOTAL Village Income	18,034,000 kip

* The Village Fund is sourced from guest house revenue and calculated from the total number of tourists who stayed in the village over the period Oct – Dec 2001 / 136 people @ 8,000kip / person

B Nammat Mai: Statistical Analysis of Eco-tourism Income / Oct – Dec 2001

Household Eco-tourism Income / MINIMUM	0 kip / family
Household Eco-tourism Income / MAXIMUM	300,000 kip / family
Household Income Income / AVERAGE	45,484 Kip / family
No. families which earned <u>more than 50 %</u> of their income from eco-tourism	12 families (or 36% of village households)
No. families which made <u>no income</u> from eco-tourism.	5 families (or 15% of village households)
% Contribution of Eco-tourism Income to Total Household Income (averaged for village).	30%

% Contribution of Total Eco-tourism Income (household and village fund) to TOTAL VILLAGE INCOME	42%
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B. Nammat Kao: Statistical Analysis of Eco-tourism Income / Oct – Dec 2001

Household Eco-tourism Income / MINIMUM	0 kip / family
Household Eco-tourism Income / MAXIMUM	476,000 kip / family
Household Income / AVERAGE	62,111 Kip / family
No. families which earned <u>more than 50 %</u> of their income from eco-tourism	11 families (or 33% of village households)
No. families which made <u>no income</u> from eco-tourism.	2 families (or 6% of village households)
% Contribution of Eco-tourism Income to Total Household Income (averaged for village).	13 %
% Contribution of Total Eco-tourism Income (household and village fund) to TOTAL VILLAGE INCOME	18 %

Nammat Mai and Nammat Kao are neighbouring Akha villages about 8kms apart. Despite a common history, (Nammat Mai separated off from Nammat Kao about 11 years ago) it can be seen that there are marked differences in everyday livelihood characteristics in these 2 villages. The data from the Household survey (appendix 2) provides an immediate source of comparison of a range of basic indicators and the manner in which tourism is becoming a powerful presence in the lives of the villagers. This is not just in terms of material income but also in terms of cultural impact that is far harder to measure. The various elements of this data will be further discussed in section 9 but already it can be argued that the monitoring systems adopted by the project are essential aspects of ecotourism that is committed to its goals of improving livelihoods in a sustainable way. The evaluation team finds that the project has made significant progress towards establishing sophisticated but appropriate monitoring protocols that will help to ensure that project goals can be carefully assessed in a timely fashion. Future project operations will have to ensure that such initiatives are maintained and the capacity to collect, analyse and act upon the socio-economic data is consolidated and strengthened.

The above data shows that already there is significant difference in the percent of village income that is generated by ecotourism. After less than 12 months of trekking, ecotourism now contributes a sizeable 42% of the income to B. Nammat Mai compared to only 18% of that in B. Nammat Kao. Its impact on the village economy and systems of dependency are therefore very much greater in this village even though the number of tourists visiting is not dramatically different.

A simple point can be emphasized by the patterns already evident in the first round of data collection. The presence of ecotourism is a huge presence in the lives of villagers in B. Nammat Mai and Kao. Social impact monitoring is therefore essential to ensure that material impacts are noted, less quantifiable cultural impacts are assessed, and the unintended consequences of tourist presence and increased cash income are carefully examined. The Household Survey addresses cultural impact in two questions detailing reactions to tourist presence, but further development of cultural and social measurement criteria will be necessary as monitoring continues. For instance, questions on gender distinctions in the activities and impact of ecotourism are not yet investigated.

Strengths

- Monitoring protocols provide a mechanism that encourages regular dialogue with communities over issues of mutual importance concerning ecotourism and larger development goals
- Allows long term changes in resource management to be detected.
- Monitoring provides a means of measuring social and economic change over time and being pro-active in mitigating negative consequences
- Develops social and environmental research skills and the ability to address the complexity of targeted development activities

Weaknesses

- Unless the PTO and the management unit of the NPA have the motivation and the capacity to act on the information collected in the monitoring protocols, monitoring itself is almost worthless
- Commitment to follow-up is hard to sustain in the absence of shared goals between the PTO, NPA, guides and villagers
- Existing capacity to conduct monitoring and follow up is currently low amongst PTO and NPA staff and guides. Despite high quality training, monitoring guidelines operate at an optimal level of sophistication beyond the existing capacity of most project staff
- Conceptual and practical aspects of social and environmental research are new to most project staff – institutionalization of monitoring practices will need sustained support from other sources such as donor or development agencies, and/or local Lao research institutes and rural extension/community development specialists.
- Monitoring benefits beneficiaries in the target villages most of all - motivation to continue monitoring is hard to sustain without clear incentives for project staff
- Monitoring guidelines have not yet been translated into Laos

Recommendations

- Increase capacity of PTO, guides and NPA management unit to maintain monitoring protocols on a regular schedule
- Broaden scope of monitoring to include more focus on socio-cultural variables including gender roles and expectations
- Increase capacity to follow up on findings
- Provide computer training in data presentation and analysis
- Provide mechanisms for Lao cultural and environmental research institutes in Vientiane to provide interns with research skills to assist in monitoring activities

8. ACTIVITIES IN OTHER DISTRICTS

8.1 Tourism in Muang Sing

Muang Sing is a Tai-Lue town of historic significance both in pre-colonial and colonial times. It has Buddhist shrines and colonial sites that are of appeal to a range of tourists. Its rich mix of ethnic groups who converge on the market at early morning and wide range of handicrafts for sale make it a stopping point for many tourists travelling across northwest Laos. Because of its relative isolation, 2 hours bus ride from Luang Namtha, and the condition of the roads that access it, in the past it has been popular only with backpacker tourists. While backpackers still dominate the numbers of visitors, Muang Sing is increasingly popular with up-market tour groups coming from Vientiane. In high season the town is flooded daily with bus and truckloads of tourists coming from Luang Namtha and Chiang Kok on the river route from Chiang Khong in Thailand. It

is only 10 kms from the Chinese border and Chinese trucks and traders pass regularly through the town.

The total population of Sing district is about 23,500 and the population density is a low 14.3 persons per sq. km. The ethnically diverse population comprises 68 Akha villages, 26 Tai Lue villages, 5 Tai Neua villages, 1 Tai Dam village, 5 Yao villages and 3 Hmong villages. Muang Sing is smaller than Luang Nam Tha but the greater number of tourists has led to a more obvious impact. Each evening in the high season the few restaurants overflow onto the main street. Apart from straining the capacity of local accommodation and restaurant services, during the day many tourists have, in the past, sought to visit the ethnic groups who live in villages on the slopes surrounding the town. Some tourists manage to get further afield than others do and visit the Akha villages lying deeper in the hills. The majority of the ethnic villages are Akha many of whom have traditionally grown and smoked opium. Travel guidebooks make very clear that there is plentiful opium in this district and a considerable number of tourists come specifically to try it.

At times this has led to the unfortunate deaths of tourists reportedly from overdose. But more generally it has promoted an underground trade that is becoming increasingly clandestine as the authorities attempt to control it. Until recently Akha villagers would allow tourists to smoke in their houses for a small cost. Nowadays, the police are soliciting large fines if they catch tourists with opium, so some villagers make small bamboo pipes and lead tourists surreptitiously in to the ricefields to smoke there. Gradually, there has developed an atmosphere where tourists are approached on the main street and offered opium in much the way dealers and pimps sell drugs in other places around the world. Most commonly, it is Akha women from one or two nearby villages who are struggling to support their addict husbands. It is not only opium that is hawked in the main street of Muang Sing, women from a number of ethnic groups regularly approach tourists with bracelets or weavings for sale.

It was this context of uncontrolled tourism that first prompted the development of the project poster that advised appropriate behaviour when visiting ethnic villages in Muang Sing. Guesthouse owners, police, tourism officials and villagers have all expressed a great need for tourist information addressing issues of culturally appropriate behaviour. The Lao authorities have tried their own forms of regulations at different stages: banning the use of bicycles so as to limit the reach of tourists and requiring that tourists not enter ethnic villages on their own. These regulations have largely been ineffective and soon rescinded. A number of private guides used to offer guiding services to villages around the perimeter of the valley, in these instances offering nothing in return to the villagers they visited.

8.2 NHEP initiatives in Muang Sing

In early 2001, as activities and treks were beginning in Luang Namtha to pilot villages, project staff made an exploratory visit to Muang Sing to consider establishing operations and a pilot trek there also. GTZ, a large development agency operating in the district, offered logistical and financial support. From September to November 2001, a training was held for 17 Muang Sing guides. After completing the training the PTO and NHEP decided that, in order to organize the newly trained guides and to provide a means of disseminating information about culturally sensitive tourism a satellite office should be established. A Muang Sing Visitor Information and Trekking Guide Service Office was set up in late December in an old colonial building owned by the District Education Department. A representative of the PTO was seconded to Muang Sing to act as project manager. Treks began to a number of villages in January.

The following table is a summary of trekking operations in the first 3 months of 2002.

Number of treks	96
Number of tourists	437
Treks receipts	\$5,018
Treks Expenses	\$3,432
Office receipts	\$3
Office Expenses	\$743
Balance	\$846

Because tourists were already going to most villages within walking distance of Muang Sing, pilot treks were not tested in the same way as in the NHEP activities in Luang Namtha. Many of the activities were initiated in a reverse sequence to that successfully established in Luang Namtha. Treks have not been developed in consultation with village communities. No village awareness workshops were conducted before the treks began. There are many ethnic villages within walking distance of Muang Sing and many more within one or two days trekking. No exploratory surveys were done to determine optimal routes. Rather existing routes were chosen and a large number of villages have been included on the criteria that they are readily accessible and roughly the right distance from the town.

In practice, a framework of guide services and an information centre has simply been transposed upon an existing tourism context of unregulated village visits. While this was a necessary strategy to reign in the large number of tourists moving in to the villages at will, there are shortcomings in terms of being able to plan such activities in a measured fashion with the automatic collaboration of the villagers themselves. Already, there are 14 different 1-3 day treks operating in Muang Sing and as recent survey indicated that 60% of the tourists taking the treks came specifically for that purpose.

Clearly there is a large market for trekking in Muang Sing, but compared to Luang Namtha, the district administrative capacity to handle this process is minimal. The tourism office in Namtha has 8 full-time staff who are either available fulltime to work with the NHEP or accessible on demand. The centre in Muang Sing has one fulltime tourism representative and one fulltime guide coordinator. It seems likely that the system will not be sustainable in its current arrangement. Likewise it is hard to make any claims at this stage about the development potential of such visits for improving the villagers livelihoods.

One very important issue is the sustainability of ecotourism based on cultural capital. Unlike Luang Namtha, Muang Sing has no NPA and little in the way of heavily forested areas. The tourists are primarily experiencing cultural interests when they visit ethnic villages. Unlike conservation areas, it is far harder to set in place sustainable practices to 'conserve' cultural elements of ethnic lifestyles. Culture change is inevitable and already the villagers in Muang Sing are modernising rapidly. How much tourism contributes to this is a very difficult thing to gauge and even more problematic to control.

Nevertheless some positive results of the project's presence should be highlighted. The evaluation team visited the Muang Sing project office briefly and noted its aesthetic appeal and clear organisation of information. No in-depth information was collected but a few comments can be made.

Strengths

- All the guides taking tourist to villages now operate out of this centre.

- Restaurant and guesthouse owners seem happy that there is now a permanent source of information for the tourists.
- Guides themselves (some of who were operating privately before the project started) are happy with a more structured format and the provision of specific information to offer the tourists.
- The project offers a clear set of guidelines that they can refer to for avoiding tourist use of opium in villages.
- Handicraft sales have consolidated around the information office and most saleswomen no longer approach tourists on the street
- Most tourists use the service to go to villages with guides, it is cheaper and more convenient than hiring private guides
- There is far more readily available information about cultural sensitivity and appropriate practice

Weaknesses

- There exists no district level plan for the management of tourism in Sing district
- Carrying capacity of respective villages has not been well assessed. One 3 –day trek was increased to 3 times/week without consultation with the PTO
- Guide monitoring is poor, at times no tourist orientation is given before the treks
- In all the overnight villages, the accommodation money goes exclusively to the headman as does most of the money for food provision. In other words, there is no mechanism for spreading the income benefits throughout the village
- Many pre-existing problems still remain that indicate entrenched levels of cultural damage. For example, tourists are not always welcomed; there are reported instances of begging and stone throwing at tourists in some villages. These villages were taken off the trek routes for a brief period of time before the guides decided to reinstate them without any consultative agreements about how to handle such affairs.
- Villages on one day treks receive no money; in the absence of any formal mechanism, reports indicate that headmen sometimes ask for recompense for visitors to enter the village and be received by the village leaders
- Guides raised the prices for the treks but there was no equivalent increase in what was paid to the villages
- The Visitor centre is not owned by the tourism office so no further financial investment is thought appropriate
- The Muang Sing manager has had minimal training in accounting and does not yet have the capacity to handle all the day to day management duties
- Although 3 village guides have been trained they are under-utilized and tourists report minimal interaction with the villagers during the treks. Feedback comments often express the desire for more Akha speaking guides

Recommendations

- Expand tourism projects beyond just ethnic village visits. Muang Sing has a wide range of cultural sites of interest outside of ethnic villages that should become part of ecotourist activities
- Provide a stronger management and staffing structure for project operations
- Enact stronger monitoring guidelines on village visits
- Establish clearer criteria for which villages are visited and improve consultation with village communities to find mechanisms whereby a greater number of villagers can benefit from tourist visits

- Integrate activities with other development agencies in Muang Sing such as GTZ and district staff in areas of agriculture and health to establish means by which the village development fund can contribute more directly to livelihood improvement

8.3 Vieng Poukha District.

It was initially anticipated that a trek from Vieng Poukha to Muang Sing would be established but logistical difficulties led this idea to be abandoned by project staff. Vieng Poukha has an abundance of natural resources and a series of caves that could prove to be a valuable tourist attraction. Already the PTO is anticipating beginning tourist services here. With the completion of the ADB financed road from Luang Namtha to HouayXai in Bokeo expected in 2006 the number of tourist passing through this district will rise dramatically.

Careful consideration needs to go into the preparation of tourism activities here. Environmental impact assessment should be carried out in the caves and immediate vicinity thereof before guided tours begin. Adequate time for controlled development of access to villages and careful consideration of carrying capacity is crucial. Likewise the timely development of district institutional capacity to manage tourism is essential before rather than after the fact (as in Muang Sing)

9. ECOTOURISM AS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

9.1 Development Objectives

In the original project document tabled in early 1999 the following overarching objective notes “The objective of this project is to assure the long term preservation of the environmental and cultural resources of the Lao PDR so that they may serve as the basis for sustainable economic and social development – particularly in the tourism sector. Project activities will emphasize the sustained economic development of the nature and culture resources through the planning for, and promotion of environmentally sound and culturally appropriate ecotourism which is community based and ensure that the benefits derived from this tourism will be shared directly with the affected communities through the generation of employment and other economic activities.” (528/Lao/70 1999:7)

In practice this goal has been split up into a series of more specific working objectives

9.1.1 Working objectives

1. To develop a viable and competitive ecotourism industry in Luang Namtha
2. To generate ecotourism income in the village that will account for at least 20% of the total village income and to ensure, as far as possible, that it is equally and fairly distributed within the village
3. To contribute to the economic development of Luang Namtha province
4. To contribute to positive village development and an improved standard of living through income generation in a way that does not harm the environment or the welfare of the village
5. To ensure that ecotourism minimises impacts on culture and where possible promises the preservation of the cultural heritage of participating communities
6. To ensure that ecotourism minimises environmental impacts and contributes where possible to the conservation of Nam Ha NPA
7. To provide the NPA management unit with regular information on the presence of wildlife and conservation threats along the eco-trails, rafting rivers and in the tourism villages which will assist in the management of the NPA and which will provide a basis for monitoring the impacts of ecotourism on the abundance of wildlife and level of threats inside the NPA

This series of goals places an onus squarely on project advisors, managers and staff to ensure that, amongst other things, social and economic benefits accrue directly to the villagers who play host to the tourists. In other words, the Nam Ha ecotourism project stakes its success on the delivery of these improvements and as such it seeks to achieve specific development goals. Certain development benchmarks have, in fact, clearly been achieved. The question to be subsequently addressed is whether they are sustainable in the long term.

9.2 Income generation

The project has provided a range of opportunities for income generation in the target villages including accommodation fees, guiding, food provision, cleaning and cooking, massage, handicraft sales. In this respect the project has clearly achieved its stated objective of raising the economic livelihood. The data (figure 3) shows that 18% of the income charged for the treks goes directly into the villages in food, accommodation and guiding services. The gross revenue generated by Nam Ha Ecoguide Service trekking and river tours from October 2000 – February 2002 was US\$34,400. This would indicate that \$6,192 has gone directly back into villages. Additional amounts are generated through the sale of handicrafts and massages. A further 8% is earmarked for project orchestrated village development activities (to be discussed below).

A specific breakdown of income for the above activities in the 2 Akha villages is shown in Appendix 2. In each village that the evaluation team investigated, this was the overwhelming reason for satisfaction with the project. All villagers interviewed felt that the tourists dramatically improved their income. As mentioned, the percent of income relative to alternative forms of income varies but in one Akha village it is as high as 40%. This will also vary with the season but it does raise immediate questions of dependency on this income should specific treks be changed or tourism tastes alter.

9.3 Income Distribution

The project has established guidelines to attempt to ensure equitable distribution of income from the above activities. Food provision, cooking and cleaning are rotated through a roster system of households in the village and appears to offer most if not all the families the opportunity to benefit. The project and villagers have agreed upon the price of foodstuffs per kg and villagers report this is a good system in so far as the food items are sometimes priced higher than the Namtha market and have the added bonus of being sold right in the village. It did not appear at this scale of operation that either women's or men's workload was being unrealistically aggravated by project activities.

Some activities will have more exclusive distribution within the village. Trained village guides are at this point limited to 8 per village and in all but one village include only men. On the other hand, women benefit from handicraft production more than men in most instances. In one village, Ban Piang Ngam, handicrafts are included as part of the package that the tourists buy. Weaving these handicrafts is organized by the village Woman's Union and supply rotated through 80% of the village households (women receive 17,500 Kip per item). These non-contributing households lack either the skills or the weaving equipment to contribute. At this point there is no plan to include those families in subsequent operations either through training or credit.

9.4 Use of income

Income from the tourists is used in different ways. Accommodation fees (10,000 kip/person) go into a village fund of which 50% is kept by the headman to maintain the lodge should it need repairs, new sleeping equipment etc the other 50% is used to pay the villagers who clean the lodge and sleeping gear. The individual families keep income from food provision, handicrafts, guiding, handicrafts. Women said they themselves were able to keep whatever money they made.

Graphs in Appendix 2 show the uses of the money in the 2 Akha villages; it can be seen that it is mostly used on household provisions, such as food and blankets, although the poorer village (Nammat Mai) uses a far greater percent on medicines than does Nammat Kao. In the other two villages that have overnight stays (B Pieng Ngam, and B. Nalan), money from tourists has allowed some families, (the guides and the handicraft producers) to use this capital to employ other families, both within the village and from outside, as wage labor leading up to and during the rice planting season. This is a very clear indication that the tourist income is having a marked effect on the local village economies with a spillover effect into other communities. It is unlikely that this is yet happening at a scale that is dramatically altering village economic stratification but it is a trend that will need to be monitored over time

9.5 Handicraft Production

Handicraft production primarily includes bracelets and occasional clothing in the Akha villages, weavings (shoulder bags and cloth wraps) in the Tai-Daeng village, clothing and weaving (bags) in the Khamu village. Other handicrafts are available in other ethnic villages along the treks such

as Lanten villages that make masks and bamboo paper compiled into booklets. In the Khamu village it was reported that machine made ethnic clothing was now purchased in town and sold back to the tourist. A SUNV volunteer has attempted to institutionalize the handicraft production and provide an outlet for sales in Luang Namtha but this endeavor has not functioned well due to logistical problems and the lack of a productive relationship with a government counterpart. To date most handicrafts are sold to tourists when they visit the village.

It is recommended that there be ongoing concentration on encouraging the production of high quality handicrafts that are made by the villagers and in ways that maintain traditional techniques and aesthetic styles.

9.6 Conservation of Culture and Nature.

The project has developed guidelines and monitoring protocols that will aid the NPA management unit in maintaining the conservation area. Project guides actively assist the NPA unit in data collection that allows for more effective conservation of flora and fauna in the NPA. Trekking permit fees are used by the NPA to assist in the administration of their conservation activities, maintain the trails and monitor the wildlife and flora. More importantly with respect to the villager livelihood in and around the NPA, mechanisms have been set in place that provide incentives for villagers to manage the forest and its resources in alternative ways that are beneficial to both them and others in Lao PDR in general. On the one hand, cash income from tourists reduces the economic reliance on NTFPs and wildlife sales from the NPA. On the other hand, the creation of a nature reserve has offered an incentive to actively conserve forest resources, probably the first initiative of this kind in Laos. The development of productive ecotourism conservation activities is an element of the project activities that has enormous importance as a model for other parts of Laos as it is likely that ecotourism will be increasingly marketed in other NPAs throughout the country.

Some recommended changes in practice, such as reduced hunting, have had minimal effect short of raising awareness that there is a wide array of parties interested in wildlife preservation. Additional planned activities intend to reduce pressure on the conservation area even further: irrigated rice production is one such initiative that will reduce the need to conduct swidden rice production, constructed fish ponds is a further proposed activity that will reduce pressure on wildlife hunting.

In the above respect of minimising natural damage and forest exploitation through the introduction of ecotourism, project objectives relating to assisting conservation have been successfully met. Government policies on ethnic minorities have confronted the complex tensions of both preventing swidden, protecting ethnic minorities civil rights and providing alternative livelihoods. In many situations, the de facto solution has been for minority groups to relocate to lowland areas where irrigated rice and cash crop production is easier. The project has shown that ecotourism can now enter the equation for those assessing whether relocation is the preferable option. This however is a highly fragile situation and the project needs to be carefully aware of forces that promote highland movement in to the lowlands.

Conservation of culture is a more difficult concept to measure and operationalise. The highly attuned regulation of tourist activities in the Luang Namtha villages certainly minimises cultural damage from either over-exploitation or inappropriate practices. The same can not yet be said of tourism in Muang Sing although some recent advances have been made.

Ecotourism inevitably promotes cultural change. While tourists are not the only force bringing changes to ethnic villagers, nor in all likelihood, the most powerful, the sheer number of tourists

and their relative economic weight usher in a wide array of changes. In a nutshell, most of these fall under the rubric of capitalism. Money income is now more widely available because of ecotourism than before. This can mean many simple changes. For example, ethnic women feel great desire to replace traditional clothing with 'modern' and easily purchased lowland Lao attire. Various traditional subsistence lifeways will disappear as cash income brings a market economy into the more remote areas. As mentioned this is both inevitable and not necessarily bad as poverty is lessened in the process. Villagers want modernization and are unlikely to place traditional lifeways ahead of this. In one village they said that tourists were good but if it meant a choice between tourists and electricity and road access, they would opt for the latter with no second thoughts.

However, money is not always used in ways that contribute to ongoing village well-being. At times, local economic stratification can exacerbate intra village tensions. Care needs to be taken therefore that some money is used in ways that support village cohesion and benefit the poorer sectors of the community. Already there is evidence of this in one Akha village where a portion of the accommodation fees are earmarked for 'social welfare' distributions to poor families who regularly suffer annual rice shortages. Similarly in the Khamu village a credit union has been established with tourist funds that has allowed a wide range of entrepreneurial and welfare activities.

Ultimately, the Nam Ha project has neither the responsibility nor the right to tell villagers how to use the money gained from tourism. However assisting in the collaborative establishment of sustainable activities that promote social capital is a good means of leading by example. The village development fund has been established as a means of doing this.

9.7 Village Development Fund

The village development fund takes 8% of all the income raised through the tourist treks. It is intended as an institutional mechanism for ensuring specific activities are carried out in village communities that contribute to a more broad based and ongoing livelihood improvement. Amounts raised in this fund total \$9,423 from March 01-June 02. So far this money has been used in somewhat piecemeal fashion occasionally assisting in the construction of, and purchasing utensils and sleeping gear for, the accommodation lodges. One difficulty constraining its direct application in more conventional development activities is the lack of a shared vision of what these should be. Different project staff feel the fund should be utilised in different ways; likewise it is probable that villagers would similarly have divergent wishes for the use of this fund.

The project has built its operating philosophy on the notion that ecotourism can be a development tool. This Village Development Fund offers the very real possibility of creating a model whereby specific activities follow the presence of tourists that not only mitigate social change but enhance local lifestyles in ways not normally considered by tourism initiatives. The difficulty to date has been in operationalising effective strategies that would achieve these goals. Certainly, this is not an easy task. Successful development activities with limited budgets need very careful planning. But nonetheless, if sustainable ecotourism is to introduce cash economy to village communities, and to consider that this process is a development tool then it is necessary to orchestrate approaches and activities that genuinely lead to ongoing livelihood improvement. The strength of this is not just in the benefits for the villagers, but in the precedent it creates for the constructive interactions between tourists and the local populace.

More detailed allocation of the VDF will have to be addressed in Phase 2. It must serve as an example for villagers (and other stakeholders) of appropriate use of financial resources garnered by the ecotourism. This example will inevitably stand next to the myriad ways villagers will feel

inclined to use the individual income they now receive. In other words, the VDF offers the chance to not only promote sound and appropriate small scale development activities, but while the material impacts of the fund will be modest due to the small amounts of money available its key value is in the example that it sets. It will ideally demonstrate that sound economic practices can have broad benefits for the community rather than simply increasing the profits of a select few. Thus the inevitable modernization that tourism both represents and facilitates is integrated into village communities in a moderated fashion.

10. SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

On all ostensible fronts the project has been a tremendous success. While some activities in the initial project document have been modified, strategic decisions of how best to employ resources and energy have led to satisfying all the objectives listed at the start of this evaluation report. A checklist of operating principles in the original project document includes the following

- 1 Use tourism as a tool in an integrated approach to rural development.
- 2 Ensure that tourism contributes to rather than detracts from conservation of natural heritage
- 3 Use tourism as a means of validating traditional cultures, thereby promoting and supporting their continuity
- 4 Ensure community participation and management in tourism development and activities with the aim of protecting cultural rights
- 5 Enable local communities to protect their environments while simultaneously developing their economic potential through ecotourism and cultural tourism
- 6 Provide essential training and human capacity building
- 7 Integrate public and private sector investment activities

One can walk into any one of the village target communities and tick off (to varying extents) each of these goals. Most importantly, in each of these villages the local residents want tourists to keep visiting; they see them as both an economic boon and a social attraction.

By bringing tourists to villages in large numbers, the project has set in place a form of social interaction that is powerful in its implications and to date has managed to create a framework and mechanisms that make the process proceed cautiously and sensitively. With the exception of Muang Sing operations (and handicraft marketing), the quality level of all operations ranging from promotional materials and monitoring guidelines through to food distribution rosters in the villages has been outstanding – this has led to the wide range of stakeholders to date benefiting on many fronts. The high profile effectiveness of the project is evident on many fronts; one might equally consider, as just two examples, the cancellation of the intended logging road into the NPA next to the rice and medicine bought by the B Nammatt Kao headman for families with inadequate means.

But the question remains, what would happen were the project to extract all forms of outside assistance at this point in time? The evaluation team is of the opinion that activities would not continue with the current emphasis on careful attention to detail and ability to fine-tune approaches as difficulties arise. Tourism is a tremendously powerful and complex force. If anything, the broad pathways (both material and conceptual) established by the project could lead to far greater damage for target communities if the frameworks of the project and operating principles were not able to sustain themselves into the future.

The project has been successful in its Luang Namtha operations for a number of reasons. Judicious choices were made that did not attempt to spread project activities too far too quickly. This has allowed a concentration of resources and expertise that has provided a productive mix of learning activities and positive feedback examples so that participants at all levels feel they are benefiting suitably. To date the same can not be said of Muang Sing.

The project has had at its disposal the (virtually) fulltime presence of 3 foreign TA's, an additional presence of 3 part-time foreign volunteers, and the full-time secondment of 3 NTA personnel with substantial tourism management skills. If one considers the limited number of target villages (no more than 8 in Luang Namtha) it almost equates to 1 TA per village. Clearly this is simplifying the job requirements, but it is unlikely there is a development project in the world that has maintained this level of expertise relative to the number of target communities. While this has directly led to the high standard of project achievements, it is impossible that this level of assistance (per target site) be sustained.

The project has had consistent and concerted national and local political support, coupled with a effective and somewhat flexible financing system, that has allowed the project to set ambitious yet achievable goals. In the space of just over two years it has established a working model that generates cash for the province and the target villages, alleviates poverty (somewhat) and assists conservation.

It is the evaluation team's decision that a second phase is warranted so that the very real successes can be more carefully integrated into existing (and improved) capacity of the Lao institutes to manage it. Despite the positive achievements there are a number of issues that will need careful attention in the planning and implementation of Phase 2.

10.1 Capacity Building

This must be an ongoing activity with the specific goal of satisfactory local management capacity at the end of the next phase. The current project has focussed on setting up successful examples of ecotourism as a development tool, and while tremendous progress has been made in the local tourism office's capacity to pursue this goal, at times the foreign TAs have moved several steps ahead of their counterparts. It should be noted that the low government salaries are a considerable obstacle facing Phase 2 operations. Whatever capacity is built up will be wasted if motivation and commitment is siphoned off into other directions that offer greater financial benefits.

- **Consolidate and expand existing activities through more systematic planning, regular meetings and better coordination**

Phase 2 activities must both consolidate the activities already begun and develop the ability to spread these activities to a larger scale. More transparent record keeping and regular meetings to schedule workloads and plan activities are needed. More reliable annual budget streams can assist this. Better coordination with other government stakeholders is also needed. This requires that the NPA has representation at the same level of authority as the existing PTO director – at present the NPA feels it cannot take its place at the table under even terms as the PTO.
- **Integrate, and delegate responsibility for, expanding activities more effectively with other government departments**

As project activities expand, other government offices will need to be included. For instance in districts without a conservation area, it is more likely that the project will need to coordinate with agriculture or health in order to have ecotourism embrace its potential of assisting with micro level development activities. The project cannot do development in a vacuum.
- **Replace steering committee with a smaller and higher level management board**

It is likely in the second phase that the NTA will either replace or remove 2 of its staff in Luang Namtha. This will leave a huge hole in local capacity. If they are replaced at the local level within the PTO then an important watchdog element will have been lost. This will

increase the importance of the establishment of a viable and effective steering committee/board. It is recommended that this board be a small number of high level local officials chaired by the Director of Provincial Cabinet, Madame Khamyaeng. The board will need to have the authority to orchestrate effective collaboration between government departments at both province and district level. It should also have a monitoring role in how the VDF is spent.

- **Seek other donors to fund district level tourism management positions**

District level capacity is the biggest challenge facing Phase 2 activities. The lack of an operating district level tourism staff will need to be addressed. In the short term, it is likely that donor funds will have to provide for designated tourism staff and positions to be established at the district level (it is possible funds for local consultants/staff positions can come from existing agencies working in the province, EU has expressed a provisional willingness to provide this assistance in Muang Long; ADB is another possibility). As ecotourism activities generate their own funds this should become locally sustainable but careful attention will need to be given to budget and policy management plans. The alternative of workload sharing to other district staff in other departments is likely to be inefficient and counterproductive in the absence of a district level ecotourism coordinator/manager. The project will need fully dedicated staff to manage activities at the district level.

- **Upgrade English skills and translate documents into Lao**

English language capacity needs to be gradually improved for many guides; likewise more attention needs to be paid to ensuring that English documents, plans and guidelines are translated into Lao.

10.2 Replicability

The project needs to ascertain that it can reproduce its successes in other areas. In Phase 2 this process needs to be established. There are two instances in which this should take place. Muang Sing needs ongoing development of sustainable ecotourism strategies. At present a guide service has been established, but it is unclear whether any of the above-defined objectives have been achieved. The second is Viang Phoukha where there is more opportunity to be proactive in approaches.

- **Continue to expand/upgrade activities in Muang Sing to establish a model for replication of ecotourism in areas with existing tourism**

Muang Sing will be the litmus test by which the project's replicability and its flexibility as a model can be assessed. Phase 2 will allow the project the opportunity to develop specific protocols tailored to reproducing project activities in other sites. If the project can be taken up successfully as a model in Muang Sing then it can be taken up elsewhere. This process will entail assessment of the opportunities and needs; appropriate logistic, policy and managerial support, and appropriate consultation and training. Most importantly the Luang Namtha model will need to be adapted to suit the needs of an area where nature based eco-tourism takes second place to culture based eco-tourism. In the absence of the NPA different forms of monitoring will need to be developed to assess village selection, carrying capacity, preventive measures to avoid cultural damage, and development activities.

- **Begin activities in Vieng Poukah as a model for replication in areas with little or no existing tourism**

Muang Sing activities must get immediate attention. Viang Phouka should develop its activities more slowly beginning with the establishment of a district tourist representative who should be pro-active in developing a tourist management plan that will anticipate the increase in tourists after the ADB road is completed. It is likely that the Luang Namtha model can be more readily replicated here, as many of the resources are similar with the added addition of highly scenic caves. A key issue will be the district capacity to handle ecotourism.

10.3 Policy

- **Develop detailed ecotourism management plan at provincial and district level**
 A stronger and clearly defined tourism management plan for the provincial and district levels needs to be formulated as a blueprint for action. This will assist the Board in its ability to oversee and/or delegate activities amongst different departments and monitor the developments in the different districts. This must be made a priority for PTO and Luang Namtha based project staff in Phase 2 and requires collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. It should be integrated with the developing NTA national ecotourism guidelines. A NPA management plan also needs to be produced independent of the Provincial tourism plan but with a section that covers the role of ecotourism.
- **Plan for increase in other forms of tourism**
 Policy development needs to be pro-active in anticipating tourism as a dynamic growth sector well beyond just ecotourism, which *in toto* needs careful regulation. This is not just a product of Lao's increasing appeal to a wide array of tourists. It is equally a product of infrastructure improvements (the new roads and airports) and also the projected influx of huge numbers of Chinese tourists in the years to come.
- **Prepare more detailed plan for use of Village Development Fund**
 Policy within the project activities also needs more details. For example, the type of initiatives with which the Village Development Fund is used needs more planning and transparency, and in particular more participation from the intended beneficiaries.

10.4 Data Collection/Monitoring

The process of introducing ecotourism to Luang Namtha has begun. Ecotourism is increasingly being supported by international donor agencies as a means of assisting economic and social development. Appropriate monitoring is crucial to ensure the process proceeds in a sound and culturally appropriate fashion. The project has set in place sophisticated monitoring protocols suitable for villages in and around the NPA. Existing capacity to sustain these protocols is currently inadequate. Without support it is likely they will soon be dropped. Even if data is collected for a period, if it is not used as a guide for action then motivation to keep monitoring will subside.

- **Modify existing monitoring protocols for use in other districts**
 Monitoring protocols for additional ecotourism sites will need to be developed by modifying the existing guidelines. Cultural impact issues in Muang Sing will not be the same as in the NPA. Likewise for sites that include cave visits.
- **Maintain regular and committed monitoring and follow-up activities**
 In order for donor agencies and the Lao Government to be clear that ecotourism is a boon and not a damaging force, Phase 2 must support on-going capacity building in this area. Here the need is not just to provide adequate skills but to institutionalise the process of analysis of

the impact of project activities. This is essential so unintended and negative consequences can be detected and controlled regardless of when and where they take place. If the process of monitoring is carried out regularly with appropriate mechanisms and actions for problem-solving over the course of Phase 2 then the chance of activities carrying on after that are greatly enhanced.

- **Establish links with other Lao research institutes to assist with monitoring and impact assessment/analysis**

This will require specific project based donor support. A further mechanism that can assist in the institutionalization is the establishment of links with other existing research institutes in Laos, for example the Lao Institute for Research on Culture, which successfully provided assistance for research and training during Phase 1. Having Lao researchers either intern or be seconded to the project will allow local Lao skills to be utilised in social and environmental impact assessment with direct cost effective benefits to the project. It will also allow the knowledge gained through the culturally appropriate measures taken to address any problems concerning ecotourism in Luang Namtha to have a far larger audience in Laos. It can also provide a mechanism for linking data with national databases and information systems.

10.5 Community Development/Village Selection Criteria

Ecotourism is based on claims to assisting local communities with sustainable development. This is easily said but far harder to achieve. The project has made enormous achievements in the short term. But as time goes by these claims will be far harder to maintain and validate.

- **Employ fulltime community development specialist**

It is recommended that the project employ a full-time community development specialist to carefully monitor and devise ways that sustainable community development can proceed as part of the outcomes of introduced ecotourism. This will entail a foreign (or Lao) TA whose primary job is to liaise with other government and donor agencies to provide technical and advisory support for ways in which the villagers can benefit from the income of ecotourism through broad based livelihood improvement strategies. At the same time, his/her role will be to assist Lao agencies in monitoring and mitigating the negative impacts of the modernization that accompanies the regular presence of both tourist and money.

- **Establish more detailed and rigorous village selection criteria**

One key issue that needs careful attention is the criteria used to select villages for ecotourism projects. If development objectives are one platform of the project's goals, then economic and social issues relevant to different villages need to be considered carefully. To date villages have been chosen more for their practical and strategic locations than any particular development criteria. B. Pieng Ngam is not a relatively poor village, yet it receives a large number of tours.

There are more than 60 Akha villages in Muang Sing. If the project intends to monitor its impact and maximise its potential for specific means of alleviating poverty with very limited VDF funds, then villages need to be chosen carefully. To simply send tourists to all villages is probably counterproductive in terms of the ability to deliver benefits and minimise damage in a controlled way.

- **Establish clear guidelines for working in villages with high level drug use**
Opium smoking is widespread in Muang Sing (and other districts) – tourists are both attracted to, and concerned by, its presence. The project will need to have a clear set of operating principles with regard to either helping or contributing to the difficulties opium can cause for tourists and villagers alike. It is possible that ecotourism can be a means to promote drug reduction; but at the same time it is possible that it inadvertently sets up alternative routes and market opportunities for narco-tourism.
- **Increase village level consultation in project activities**
On-going community participation and consultations need to be strengthened with target communities, particularly in Muang Sing, to determine the commitment to, and direction of, project activities

10.6 Training

- **Upgrade Guide skills**
On-going training is needed for all the above sectors/issues. This should not be reduced or minimised in Phase 2. In particular monitoring and guide skills need to be consistently refreshed and/or upgraded.
- **Develop Training Centre for ecotourism trainees from other provinces**
In addition, it is envisaged that the Phase 1 experiences offer a highly developed model that can be utilised to further develop skills and opportunities. The project information centre is an ideal base that can be used for training with external trainers to upgrade skills and as a source of practical experience and lessons learned for trainees from other districts or provinces.
- **Establish Field-based Study site using existing project activities**
In this respect, the project has already established the potential for a field-based site that can operate as a study centre and a practical example of how to do sustainable ecotourism. The villagers on existing treks are now very familiar with showing visitors how they have gained from the project in the first two years. This process can and should continue. As the burden becomes too great for existing trails and communities, new sites in the development stage can replace them as training opportunities.
- **Utilise project staff as mobile trainers/advisors for developing ecotourism projects in other provinces**
It is recommended that NHEP staff who have gained and demonstrated particular expertise in any of the many facets of ecotourism management and practice be available for travel to other project sites for assistance with local activities. This is most pressing in the other Luang Namtha districts but as the NTA develops more clear-cut national guidelines in conjunction with incoming ADB assistance (projected \$12 million) there is the logical opportunity for productive cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences with other provinces. The development of ecotourism activities in other NPA sites is the most obvious example.

10.7 Guides

Guides remain the crucial factor governing the success or failure of many of the project activities. The project has set in place a self-financing system of recruitment, training and employment of a

large number of guides. It has begun the process whereby guides do more than just lead tourists around the hills and villages. Guides themselves are active change agents.

- **Expand training and definition of guide activities**

On-going training and institutional support is needed to maintain this vision of guides as the vital link between tourist money and desire for exotic experience on the one hand, and the villager's supply of natural and cultural wealth and their desire for money on the other. In other words, the term guide itself is perhaps misleading. Rather they can and should be perceived (and perceive themselves) as performing a role far broader and more complex than this. Training sessions address some of these issues, but at times guide-villager relationships are still problematic for reasons that go beyond the simple notion of a village visit. Both parties have much at stake in the process of 'entertaining' tourists. Inevitably to some extent, each seeks to maximise their gain.

- **Provide careful monitoring and support of positive guide-villager relationships**

Future training will need to pay careful attention to the relationships between guides and villagers. Firstly, tourists, even without the requisite language skills, are nonetheless highly attuned to the atmosphere established in the villages. Secondly, if sustainable development is to be included as part of the package, the guides will set the tone for whether the trust (social capital) is established that will allow ongoing tourist based activities to deliver on this promise.

10.8 Private Sector

The Lao government cannot manage and run tourist activities indefinitely. Sooner or later private sector companies will take a larger role.

- **Establish clear regulations for private sector involvement in ecotourism**

The PTO must have in place clear guidelines and regulations for monitoring and controlling private sector tourism operations. There is a worry that if money and efficiency is at stake, then certain sustainable principles may be sacrificed. The private sector's entry into ecotourism in Luang Namtha must be gradual and regulated carefully by the PTO, with the trade-off being the collection of trekking and other tourist activity licence fees.

10.9 Gender

- **Provide gender based outreach and workshop activities**

Gender focussed activities have, to date, received little direct attention. So far this has not been a major shortcoming as activities and benefits are widely spread out in village communities, and amongst male and female guides. However in Phase 2 workloads that emerge as a product of increasing numbers of tourists need to be monitored carefully to assess whether there is an emerging imbalance in work done versus material gain. More attention needs to be placed on monitoring to ensure that women receive adequate opportunities to a) take part in training's so they might become guides and b) receive an appropriate portion of the income generated.

Appendix 1 Financial Statements

1. Use of NZODA Funds during years 1 and 2.

	Description of tasks	Year 1		Year 2	
		Amount (US\$)	Total (US\$)	Amount (US\$)	Total (US\$)
	<i>Project Personnel</i>		79,357		53,942
1	International Project Coordinator	34,205		27,959	
2	International Anthropology Expert	15,509		8,562	
3	English Language Instructor	1,800		5,637	
4	Project Administrative and Finance Officer	16,358			
5	Programme Coordinator Consultant	11,048			
6	Travel for Ecotourist Field Expert to Vientiane	437			
	<i>Sub-Contracts</i>		29,994		13,930
1	Fee Contract with NTA (11/10/99 - 30/04/00)	17,494			
2	Fee Contract with NTA (01/05/00 - 31/10/00)	12,500			
3	Fee Contract with NTA (01/11/00 - 30/04/01)			13,930	
4	Fee Contract with NTA (01/05/01 - 31/10/01)			12,500	
	<i>Equipment/supplies</i>		29,316		1,070
1	Dell Computer XPS T600	2,650			
2	UPS 1000VA / 500VA	400		80	
3	Laser printer HP 1100	460			
4	HP Deskjet Color 895C Printer	470			
5	Scanner HP 6200C	495			
6	Canon B150 Plain Paper Fax/phone	500			
7	35mm Canon Camera EOS500N	1,089			
8	Office furniture and supplies	303			
9	Generator–Diesel YSG 6600TE, 6KVA	3,799			
10	Motorcycle Honda Wave (Model: NF110)	2,400			
11	Toyota 4WD HiLux Pick-Up Double Cab	16,750			
12	PC Computer Pentium III 700 MHz			990	
	<i>Other Expenditures</i>		1,510		800
1	Installation/delivery charges of the generator	150			
2	NEX procurement support service charges	385		616	
3	Freight charges for the field vehicle	650			
4	Delivery/installation/training of equipments	200			
5	Miscellaneous (mailing cost, develop film etc)	125		184	
	TOTALS		140,177		82,442

2. Actual and budgeted expenditure of NZODA funds for year 3.

Description	Amount (US\$)	TOTAL (US\$)
INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANTS		57,488
International Project Manager (grade III) Fee: 6 mo@\$3,499/mo Travel and per diem	20,994 1,500 <i>Subtotal:</i>	
Ecotourism and Conservation Advisor (grade III) Fee: 6 mo@\$3,499/mo Travel and per diem	20,994 1,500 <i>Subtotal:</i>	
Guide Trainer/English Language Instructor Fee: 8 mo @ \$1,000/mo Travel and per diem	8,000 1,500 <i>Subtotal:</i>	
UNESCO/RACAP preparatory and interim missions <i>Subtotal:</i>	3,000 3,000	
Total Personnel		57,488
SUBCONTRACTS		10,200
Sub-Contract with Lao PDR Government (National Tourism Authority) for provision of national counterparts		
4 Lao counterparts in Luang Namtha (12 months)		
1) NTA Full-time Project Coordinator 12 mo@\$250/mo	3,000	
2) Project Office Manager/Accountant 12 mo@\$225/mo	2,700	
3) Full-time Interpreter 12 mo@\$225/mo	2,700	
2 Lao counterparts Luang Namtha Provincial NTA Office 12mo @\$50/mo x 2	1,200	
1 Lao counterpart Luang Namtha Provincial Info & Culture Office 12mo @\$50/mo	600	
<i>Sub-Total:</i>	10,200	
Total for Subcontracts with National Authorities		10,200

3. Actual and budgeted expenditure of NZODA funds for year 3 (continued).

Description	Amount (US\$)	TOTAL (US\$)
EQUIPMENT/PROPERTY/SUPPLIES		2,450
Expendable Equipment		
Office supplies and stationery	1,200	
<i>Sub-Total:</i>	1,200	
Non-Expendable Equipment		
Computer Equipment 1 set	1,250	
<i>Sub-Total:</i>	1,250	
Total for Equipment/Property/Supplies		2,450
OTHER EXPENDITURES		15,600
Field Operating Expenses		
Maintenance of vehicle (petrol, repair, etc.)	2,400	
Office/house rental \$800/mo x 12	9,600	
Electricity \$200 x 12mo	2,400	
Communications \$100 x 12mo	1,200	
<i>Subtotal</i>	15,600	
Total for Other Expenditures		15,600
TOTAL YEAR 3		85,738
+13% UNESCO Support Costs		11,146
GRAND TOTAL		96,884

4. Project income from the Japan IFC Trust Fund:

Ecotourism Field Expert and Trainer 6mo @\$3,499 mo plus other support costs	\$26,094
National Tourism Guide Training Facilitator 2 mo @ \$1,000 mo plus support costs	\$3,420
National community Marketing Advisor 2 mo @ \$1,000 mo plus support costs	\$3,420
National PRA trainer 2 mo @ \$1,000 mo plus support costs	\$3,420
(UNESCO) Project Administration Finance Officer 12 mo @ \$2,000mo = \$24,000 plus support costs	\$31,860
<u>Training/Workshops</u>	
Study Tour Thai & Nepal	\$6,000
PRA Workshop	\$2,000
Guide Training	\$5,000
Guesthouse Management Workshop	\$5,000
Development of Training Materials	\$3,000
<u>Other Expenditures</u>	
Communications	\$2,400
Printing	\$5,000
Rented Transportation	\$6,084
(Budgeted but not yet received) Reporting costs	\$4,000

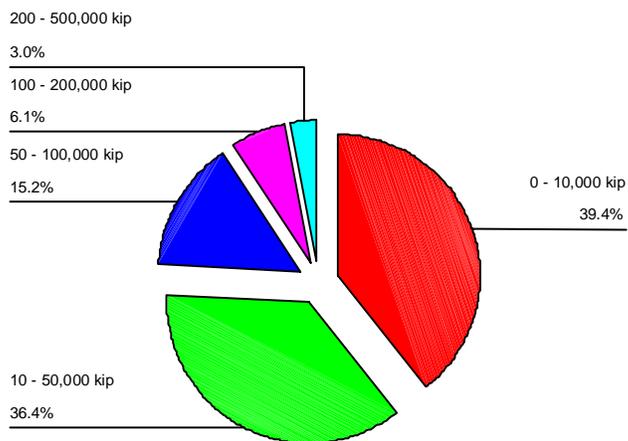
An additional \$23 083 was provided to meet the costs of international experts in private sector ecotourism and community marketing. These activities were not implemented.

Appendix 2

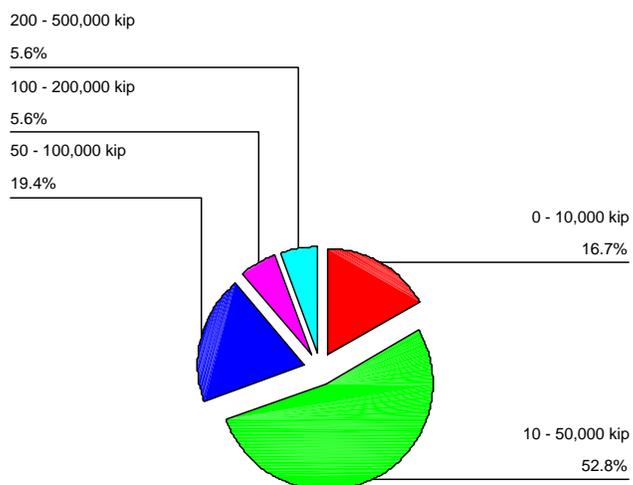
Data from Household Survey in B. Nammat Kao and B. Nammat Mai

1. Income Distribution

B Nammat Mai: Household Eco-tourism Income Distribution % of total households

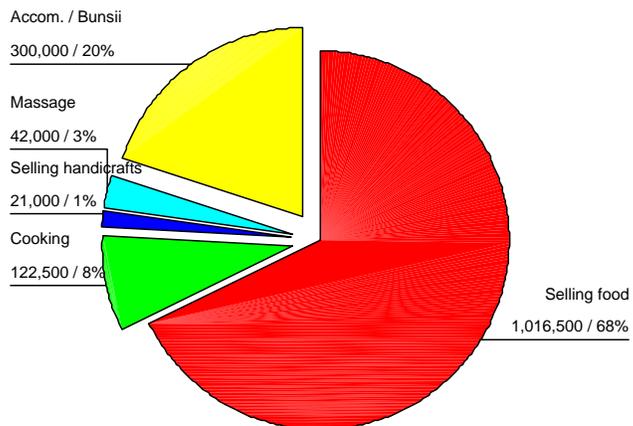


B Nammat Kao: Household Eco-tourism Income Distribution % of total households

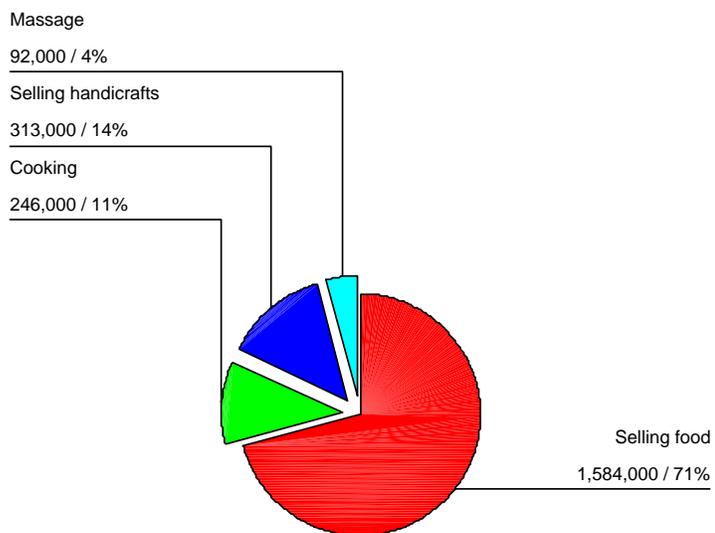


2 Source of Ecotourism Income

B. Nammat Mai: Source of Eco-tourism Income

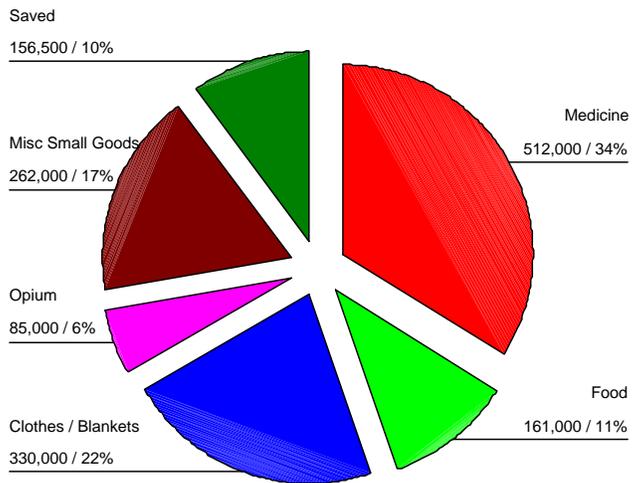


B Nammat Kao: Source of Eco-tourism Income

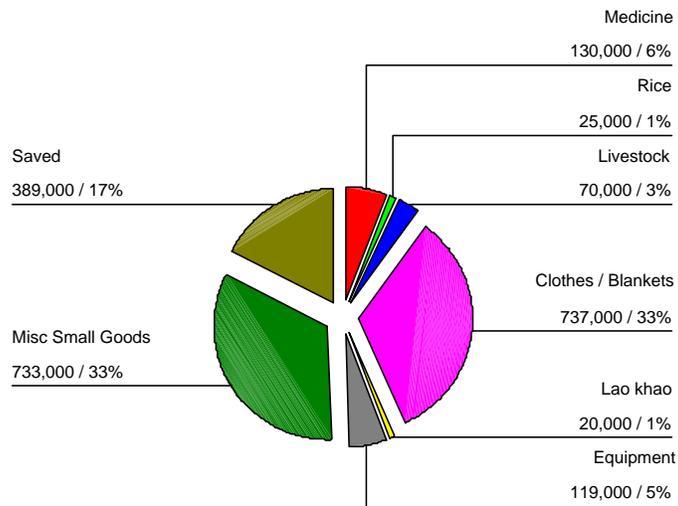


3 How the ecotourism income is used

B. Nammat Mai: Eco-tourism Income Expenditure

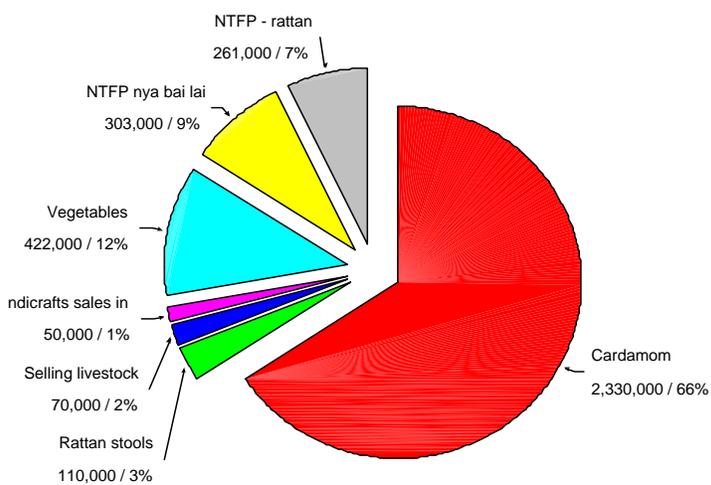


B. Nammat Kao: Eco-tourism Income Expenditure

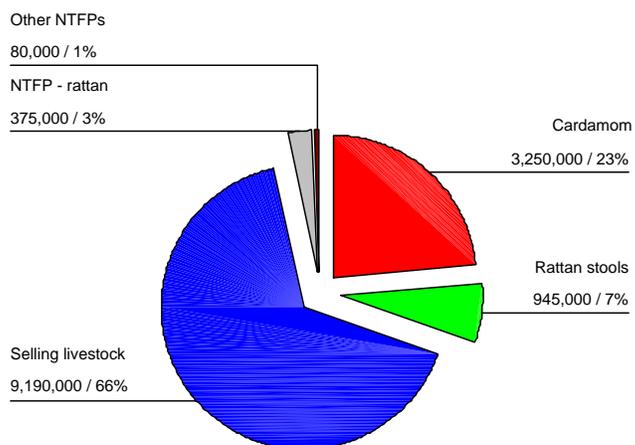


4. Other Sources of Income

B Nammat Mai: Sources of Non Eco-tourism Income



B. Nammat Kao: Source of Non Eco-tourism Income



5. Time spent on ecotourism activities

B. Nammat Mai: Total hours spent on ecotourism activities / Oct – Dec 2001

Minimum : 0 hours / family

Maximum : 18 hours / family

Average : 3.4 hours / family

Village Total : 112 hours

B. Nammat Kao: Total Hours Spent on Ecotourism Activities / Oct – Dec 2001

Minimum : 0 hours / family

Maximum : 18 hours / family

Average : 6 hours / family

Village Total : 214 hours

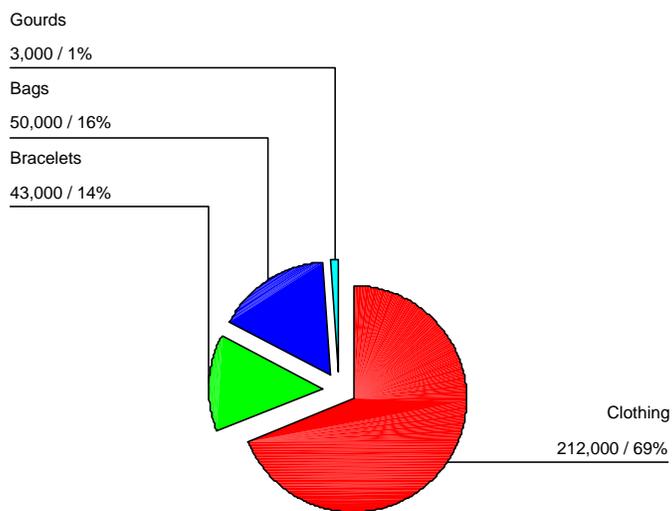
6. Handicraft Production

B. Nammat Mai: Value of Handicrafts Sold (4 families)

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Sum	Mean
Handicrafts Sold - clothing	33	.00	.0000
Handicrafts Sold - baskets/bags	33	.00	.0000
Handicrafts Sold - bracelets / jewellery	33	21000.00	636.3636
Handicrafts Sold - knives	33	.00	.0000
Handicrafts Sold - other	33	.00	.0000
Valid N (listwise)	33		

B Nammat Kao: Total Value of Handicraft Products Sold (9 families)



Appendix 3 Village Household Questionnaire

Village Eco-tourism Monitoring Form 6 Monthly Household Survey

Village : _____

Date : _____

Name of Household : _____ # of House (from village map) : _____

Name of Interviewer : _____

INCOME GENERATION

1) What is the estimated total amount of money you have made from tourists in the last 6 months ?

0 kip 1– 10,000 kip 10 – 50,000 kip 50 – 100,000 kip 100 – 200,000 kip

200 – 300,000 kip 300,000 – 500,000 kip 500,000kip +

2) From which of the following activities did you earn the money over the last 6 months ?

Selling food *Selling Handicrafts* *Cooking for tourists* *Massage*

Guiding tourists *Selling Lao Khao* *Other(specify)*

3) In the last 6 months how have you spent the income that you have earned from the tourists ?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Medicine / hospital visits | <input type="checkbox"/> | Miscellaneous household equipment (e.g cooking pots, glasses, tools, etc) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Clothes / shoes / blankets | <input type="checkbox"/> | Guns and /or ammunition |
| | Rice | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fishing Gear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other food items for <u>own consumption</u> . | <input type="checkbox"/> | Luxury goods (e.g cassette players, music, watches, jewellery, CD players, televisions) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other food items for <u>sale to tourists</u> (e.g eggs, mii wai wai etc) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Alcohol / cigarettes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Miscellaneous small household items (e.g salt, bang nuua, candles, cooking oil, fuel etc) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Opium |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (specify) |
| | | | Saved |

4) Over the last 6 months how much income did you earn from sources other than tourism ?

(Note : these are products that are sold in the market, to other villages and within the village to other households – not products sold to tourists)

Resource or Product Sold	Quantity Resource or Product Sold (approx) in last 6 months	Total Income Made (approx) over the last 6 months from product sales
Cardamom (season Nov – Dec only)		
Rattan stools		
Doc Khem or brooms (season Feb – March only)		
Rattan vine		
Rattan shoots (sold in the market)		
Rattan fruit		
Bamboo		
Bamboo shoots (sold in the market)		
Nya ba lai		
Nang thiang		
Other forest products (specify)		
Garden vegetables (e.g ginger, cabbage, chilli, pumpkin, potato, squash etc)		
Livestock sales (sold in the village or the market – not to tourists) 1. Buffalo 2. Cattle 3. Pigs 4. Chicken / duck 5. Goat 6. Dog		
Wildlife (list species) 1. 2. 3.		

Resource or Product Sold	Quantity Resource or Product Sold (approx) in last 6 months	Total Income Made (approx) over the last 6 months from product sales
4.		
Fish		
Other aquatic products		
Rice		
Opium		
Lao whisky (sold in the market or to other villagers)		
Woven cloth (sold in the market)		
Labour (note need to calculate for all able bodies in the family)		
Hiring / renting of equipment		
Sale or renting of land		
Other products sold (specify)		
GRAND TOTAL (approx) income earned from <u>non eco-tourism</u> sources <u>over the last 6 months</u> :		
		_____ kip

IMPACTS ON TIME, VILLAGE ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCE USE

1) Do you ever feel that your family is spending too much time on tourism activities (such as finding food, cooking, making handicrafts, guiding etc) and that as a result you sometimes have less time available to do other activities? Yes No

If 'yes' which of the following activities are being impacted ?

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Yes there is an impact</u>	<u>No impact</u>
Making hai or naa		
Collecting forest products		

Hunting		
Fishing		
Household activities (e.g cleaning, cooking, making clothes, repairing the house,, looking after children etc)		
Other (specify)		

5) **Do members of your family collect forest products to sell to tourists e.g rattan shoots, bamboo shoots, mushrooms, mak pii, forest vegetables ?**

Yes No

6) **How many hours do you have to walk from the village to find the following natural resources ?**

Natural Resource	Number of Hours it Takes to Find the Natural Resource			
	Less than 1 hour	1 – 2 hours	2 – 4 hours	More than 4 hours
Colour dyes (for weaving)				
Forest vines (for bags)				
Rattan shoots				
Bamboo shoots				
Mak pii				
Mushrooms				
Forest vegetables				
Fish				

7) **Do you catch fish to sell to the tourists to eat?** Yes No

8) How much time does it take on average to catch 1 kg of fish using a throw net ?

0 –1 hour 1-2 hours 2 -3 hours 3-4 hours 4 + hours

HANDICRAFT PRODUCTION

1) Over the last 6 months what types of handicrafts have you produced to sell to tourists ?

Type	Quantity Sold / # units	Total Income Earned / kip
Clothing		
Bracelets / jewellery		

Type	Quantity Sold / # units	Total Income Earned / kip
Baskets / bags		
Gourds		
Knives		
Woven cloth		
Masks		
Handmade paper		
Paintings / drawings / calligraphy		
Mats		
Other (specify)		

2) If you produce handicrafts for sale has any effort been made over the last 6 months to train unskilled members in the family how to make handicrafts ?

Yes No If 'yes', how many people ? _____

IMPACTS ON DIETARY PATTERNS

1) How frequently does your family eat the following foods ?

(Note : if the person questioned responds that they eat some of the following foods either ' Very Rarely' or 'Do not eat' please give the reason(s) why according to the categories given below. If there is more than one reason please record)

Reason #

1. Sell mostly to tourists.
2. Disease has reduced the number of my livestock.
3. No time available to collect forest products, catch fish, hunt wildlife or make gardens because too much time is spent on tourism activities.
4. Other

Type of Food	Frequency				Very rarely	Reason #	Do not eat	Reason #
	Daily	2- 4 times / week	Once a Week	1-2 times / month				
Rice								
Chicken, duck								
Pork								
Beef								
Buffalo								
Eggs								
Fish								
Garden vegetables								
Village fruits								
Forest fruits, vegetables, nuts								
Wildlife								

2) Does your family have enough of the following food items to sell to tourists ?

Type of Food	Yes	Sometimes	No	If only 'sometimes or 'no' explain why
Chicken and duck				
Rice				
Garden vegetables				
Fruit				

3) Have you ever sold food to tourists over the last 6 months and as a result not had enough food for your own family to eat ? s o

CULTURAL IMPACTS / GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH ECO-TOURISM

The following questions are to help us understand how you and your family feel about eco-tourism. Please be very honest. If your family has any problem or concern we want to know about it so that we can work together to solve it.

1) Please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following questions.

Problem Category	Yes	No	If 'Yes' there is a problem please explain why
Do you think the behaviour of tourists is ever rude or offensive ?			
Do you ever feel tired or bored with seeing tourists ?			
Do you think that tourists come to your village too often ?			
Do you feel uncomfortable with tourists taking photographs ?			
Do you feel satisfied with the level of income you get from tourism ?			
Have you ever seen tourism causing conflicts between people / families in the village? (for example over how much money different families make, or number of handicrafts they are able to sell)			
Do you think tourism is having a bad effect on your children ? (for example, tourists teaching them bad habits, tourism making your children want to			

Problem Category	Yes	No	If 'Yes' there is a problem please explain why
leave the village)			
Do you think tourism is having a bad effect on your culture ?			
Do you have any other problems with tourism which haven't been described above ? (please detail)			

2) Overall how do you feel about tourism in your village ?

Very Happy Sometimes happy, sometimes not happy Don't like it

Why _____ ?

Appendix 4

Promotional Materials Produced by the Nam Ha ecotourist Project, Phase 1

Posters

- A Message from Your Local Host...

Pamphlets

- One day Boat Trip
- One day trek: Ban Pieng Ngam
- Two day trek: Ban Nalan Trail
- Three-day trek: Ban Nammat Kao Trail
- Nam Ha Ecotourism Project
- Luang Namtha Museum: A Guide to the Collection

Brochures

- Trekking Gently in Luang Namtha

Other

- Table Tent
- Website <http://www.unescobkk.org/culture/namha>

Appendix 5

Nam ha Study Tours March 2001-June 2002

Luang Prabang	5-day	financed by SUNV
Savannakhet	5 day	financed by SUNV
Phu Khao Kwai	10 day	financed by DED
Savannakhet-Khamouane	3 day	financed by NTA
Oudomxai Province	3 day	financed by NTA/Nam Ha
Champasak	3 day	financed NTA/Nam Ha

Conference Presentations by Nam Ha project representatives

World Ecotourism Summit, Quebec, Canada May 2002

SE Asia Regional Preparatory Conference for International Year of Ecotourism. April 2002

ESCAP National Ecotourism Seminar, Laos and Myanmar, April 2002

Appendix 6.

List of Persons consulted in external review

Mr Richard Engelhardt, UNESCO, RACAP, Bangkok
 Dr Heather Peters, Coordinator UNESCO Cultural Projects in Lao PDR
 Mr Pieter Stoer, SUNV Laos
 Mr Heng Daovannary, Secretary General, UNESCO National Commission for Lao PDR
 Mr Phaythalong Douangsavanh, Vice Chairman of NTA and Nam Ha Project Director
 Mr Paul Eshoo, English Instruction and Guide Trainer, Nam Ha Project
 Mr Steven Schipani, Chief Technical Adviser, Nam Ha Project
 Mr Guy Marris, Conservation Monitoring Specialist, Nam Ha Project
 Mr Somsak, Owner Adima Guesthouse Muang Sing
 Mr Sompawn, Muang Sing Guide Service
 Mr Gaew, Muang Sing Guide Service
 Mr Apu, Muang Sing Guide Service
 Mr Phillipe, GTZ Muang Sing
 Mr Joost Foppes, EU manager, Luang Prabang
 Professor David Harrison, Consultant for the ADB
 Mr Khamliene Tanyakeo, Head of Luang Namtha Tourism Office
 Mr Poutan, Ban Pieng Ngam
 Mr Khamjan, Ban Pieng Ngam
 Mr Khamlay Sipaseuth, Nam Ha Project Coordinator (NTA)
 Mme Khamsaeng Vivansay, Head of Provincial Cabinet
 Mr Phimkeo, Nam Ha NPA Management Unit
 Mr Souksan, Nam Ha Project Staff (NTA)
 Mr Bunpeng, Nam Ha Project Staff (NTA)
 Luang Namtha District Governor
 Ms Chanta, Nam Ha Guides Association
 Ms Somala, Nam Ha Guides Association
 Mr Aroon, Nam Ha Guides Association
 Ms Alinda, Nam Ha Guides Association
 Ms Laong, Nam Ha Guides Association
 Villagers in Ban Nammat Kao
 Mr Suk, Ban Jalernsuk
 Mr Khamin, Ban Nalan

Appendix 7:

Schedule of Meetings conducted during External Review (except where otherwise noted, meetings were jointly conducted by Dr Chris Lyttleton and Alison Allcock)

Thurs 4th July (Bangkok) (Chris Lyttleton only)

Mr Richard Engelhardt UNESCO, RACAP
 Dr Heather Peters UNESCO
 Mr Ricardo Favis UNESCO

Friday 5th July (Vientiane)

Mr Peter Stoer SNV
 Mr Sisaveuy Chanthavisack SUNV
 Mr Heng Daovannary, UNESCO Lao PDR
 Mr Phaythalong Douangsavanh, NTA
 Mr Joost Foppes EU (Chris Lyttleton only)

Saturday 6th July (Luang Namtha)

Prof David Harrison ADB

Sunday 7th July (Muang Sing)

Mr Somsak, Owner Adima Guesthouse Muang Sing
 Mr Sompawn, Muang Sing Guide Service
 Mr Gaew, Muang Sing Guide Service
 Mr Apu, Muang Sing Guide Service
 Mr Phillipe, GTZ Muang Sing

(Luang Namtha)

Mr Paul Eshoo, English Instruction and Guide Trainer, Nam Ha Project
 Mr Steven Schipani, Chief Technical Adviser, Nam Ha Project
 Mr Guy Marris, Conservation Monitoring Specialist, Nam Ha Project

Monday 8th July (Luang Namtha)

Mr Khamliene Tanyakeo, Head of Luang Namtha Tourism Office
 Mr Khamlay Sipaseuth, Nam Ha Project Coordinator (NTA)
 Mr Souksan, Nam Ha Project Staff (NTA)
 Mr Bunpeng, Nam Ha Project Staff (NTA)

Tuesday 9th July (Ban Pieng Ngam)

Mr Poutan, Ban Pieng Ngam
 Mr Khamjan, Ban Pieng Ngam

(Luang Namtha)

Mme Khamyaeng Vivansay, Head of Provincial Cabinet

Wednesday 10th July (Luang Namtha)

Ms Chanta, Nam Ha Guides Association
 Ms Alinda, Nam Ha Guides Association
 Ms Laong, Nam Ha Guides Association

Thursday 11th July (Luang Namtha)

Village representatives

Mr Suk, Ban Jalernsuk
Mr Khamin, Ban Nalan

Mr Paul Eshoo, English Instruction and Guide Trainer, Nam Ha Project
Mr Steven Schipani, Chief Technical Adviser, Nam Ha Project
Mr Guy Marris, Conservation Monitoring Specialist, Nam Ha Project
Mr Khamlay Sipaseuth, Nam Ha Project Coordinator (NTA)
Mr Souksan, Nam Ha Project Staff (NTA)

Friday – Saturday 12-13 July (B Nammat Kao – Chris Lyttleton only)

Tourist group taking trek to B Nammat Kao
Ms Somala, Nam Ha Guides Association
Mr Aroon, Nam Ha Guides Association
Headman and villagers in B. Nammat Kao

Sunday 14th July

Writing

Monday 15th July (Luang Namtha)

Mr Phimkao Thamlasine, Nam Ha NPA Management Unit
Mr Paul Eshoo, English Instruction and Guide Trainer, Nam Ha Project

Tuesday 16th July

Writing

Wednesday 17th July

Luang Namtha District Governor
Mr Steven Schipani, Chief Technical Adviser, Nam Ha Project
Mr Guy Marris, Conservation Monitoring Specialist, Nam Ha Project

Thursday 18th July (Luang Namtha)

Debriefing
Mr Khamliene Tanyakao, Head of Luang Namtha Tourism Office
Mr Khamlay Sipaseuth, Nam Ha Project Coordinator (NTA)

Friday 19th July (Vientiane)

Debriefing
Mr Sisaveuy Chanthavisack - SUNV Programme Assistant

Tuesday 30th July (Vientiane – Alison Allcock only)

Mr Heng Daovannary, UNESCO Lao PDR

Thursday 1 August (Vientiane – Alison Allcock only)

Mr Phaythalong Douangsavanh NTA