



Mr Sinsamout Ounboundisane (second right) gathers with officials from the Department of Livestock and Fisheries and other workshop participants.

Workshop launches guidebook to assess fish conservation zones

Sisouphan Amphonephong

The consulting company FISHBIO Laos recently hosted a workshop in partnership with the Department of Livestock and Fisheries of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to explain a new guidebook developed as a resource to improve the assessment of fish conservation zones in Laos.

Few resources exist for conservation practitioners wishing to assess the effectiveness of freshwater protected areas such as fish conservation zones once they have been established.

The guidebook will be circulated throughout Laos and other Southeast Asian countries to improve the management of these zones and strengthen fish conservation.

The workshop was held in Vientiane recently to familiarise participants with the steps involved in fish conservation zone assessment, and how to use the guidebook to select relevant indicators of conservation zone effectiveness for an assessment.

This event represented the culmination of a three-and-a-half-year project funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund to improve the assessment and management of fish conservation zones in Laos.

Director of FISHBIO Laos, Mr Sinsamout Ounboundisane, provided an overview of the project and its deliverables, which included the guidebook and a smaller companion guide known as a field handbook.

Participants also

received copies of a fish conservation zone status report prepared by FISHBIO, the Department of Livestock and Fisheries, and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), which identifies more than 1,300 fish conservation zones in Laos.

Two US-based FISHBIO staff, Communications Director Ms Erin Loury and Fisheries Biologist Mr Dana Lee, presented the training to introduce the participants to 21 indicators of fish conservation zone effectiveness.

Participants learned how to select relevant indicators to make measurements during an assessment based on the goals and desired benefits of a fish conservation zone. Although most of the attendees were from Laos, there were also participants

from Cambodia, Thailand, and Myanmar.

Those present shared lessons learned from their experiences of establishing and monitoring fish conservation zones. The workshop ended with a half-day field trip to visit the site of new fish conservation zones in Sangthong district, Vientiane, that FISHBIO has helped establish with support from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund.

Director General of the Department of Livestock and Fisheries, Mr Bounthong Saphakdy, attended the opening of the workshop, along with more than 50 participants representing a variety of stakeholders including NGOs, the private sector, and government officials.

Power company fuels job interest among college students

Phetphoxay Sengpasouth

The Nam Theun 2 Power Company (NTPC) and its partners gave a talk last week about the hydropower industry for students at the Lao-German Technical College (LGTC) to explain the job opportunities available in this field.

The talk was part of the college's partnership with Electricite du Laos (EDL) to inform young people about jobs in the hydropower industry and the need to build capacity in this sector.

The lecture was led by the Deputy Director of the Lao-German Technical College, Mr Kukeo Phommavongsa; Chief Administrative Officer of NTPC, Mrs Marie Petureau; Deputy Manager of EDL's Power Plant Development Department, Mr Khamhieo Phothilath; and attended by other representatives of hydropower companies and education and training institutions.

More than 200 students and teachers from the college attended the talk.

Speaking at the event, Mr Kukeo referred to the Memorandum of Understanding between the college and NTPC for 2015-2018 that had been extended to 2021 on human resources development for the hydropower industry.

He said the talk would



Mr Kukeo Phommavongsa (centre) chaired the meeting.

strengthen the partnership between hydropower companies and leading vocational institutions in Laos as well as sparking students' interest in the hydropower sector and the employment opportunities it offers.

Students learnt about the hydropower context and its high potential for Laos, and the case studies of the Nam Theun 2 and Theun Hinboun dams were described by staff from EDL and NTPC.

Mrs Petureau said she was pleased that NTPC was involved in longterm cooperation for the development of skilled labour and market oriented human resources development in the hydropower industry.

"We have full confidence that this event will help to strengthen and enhance our cooperation in order to build

capacity in hydropower," she added.

Under the MOU with the college, the two parties are rolling out an action plan aimed at attracting more graduates to the field of hydropower and teaching the necessary skills to meet the growing need for qualified employees in the hydropower sector.

NTPC provides two or three longterm scholarships for higher diplomas in electrical/hydropower studies each year.

The company is dedicated to running a worldclass hydropower facility and to improving the living conditions of people in the areas around its projects. NTPC's mission is to generate electricity in a reliable and sustainable manner, contribute to the development of Laos, and be a reference for the hydro industry.

New impact assessments to improve policy outcomes

Phomphong Laoin

The Ministry of Justice is continuing its roll out of a major training programme in order to professionalise the policy-making process and improve policy outcomes that will benefit Lao businesses and the broader Lao community.

Director General of the Legislation Department under the Ministry of Justice, Mr Inthapanya Khievongphachanh, said "As part of the government's Legal Sector Master Plan to establish Laos as a rule of law state by 2020, regulatory impact assessments (RIAs) have been introduced into law-making processes at both the national and provincial levels in order

to enhance socio-economic outcomes."

Mr Inthapanya said the Asian Development Bank has been supporting the government in its development of RIA's through technical assistance from 2011-2015 and a loan from 2016 through to 2018.

"We recently conducted RIA training with officials from line ministries and provinces. Now it's the turn of decision-making officials from National Assembly and Prime Minister's Office," he said.

"Regulatory impact assessment is a system and methodology to help decision-makers assess the impact of legislation, particularly on the private sector and small and

medium enterprises. It helps put in place an effective and efficient legislative environment that supports the economic and social development of Laos."

An international regulatory expert and consultant, Mr Peter McKenna, is leading the RIA training programme.

"Regulatory impact assessment is in line with international best practice and adopted by several Asean countries. In making and amending legislation, assessments require better consideration of the purpose, options, and impacts including benefits and costs of legislation. This helps to prevent unintended consequences and unnecessary costs on

community, business and government," he said.

"The RIA system provides better information to decision-makers such as ministers, the cabinet and the National Assembly about: whether the draft legislation was developed in accordance with best practice principles; what options were considered; who was consulted (in business, community and government); what the impacts are (on business, community and government); and whether Laos can afford this (cost-benefit)."

As well as education about regulatory impact assessments, it is hoped this training will make for better government engagement and collaboration with

organisations and industries such as the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry in their making and review of regulations.

The training is also a reminder to policy officers that the policy context must now include reference to regional economic integration.

"This professionalisation of the way policy planners, makers and decision-makers go about their work is critical to the future of Laos, Mr Inthapanya said.

"I encourage policy officials at all levels across the Lao government to contact the Ministry of Justice for information on regulatory impact assessments and training programmes."

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