



Resettlement: an alternative



for upland development ?

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Resettlement: an alternative for upland development ?

Introduction (1)

Majority of the country is mountainous and many villages remain very isolated and poor.

National rural development policy aims at poverty reduction, which objectives, are:

- Eradicating opium production by 2005;
- Eradicating slash and burn cultivation by 2010, with a target of a decrease of 50% by 2005;
- Poverty reduction by 2010, and a decrease of 50% by 2005;
- Education for everybody by 2020, or scholarship for all the children, at least three years after primary school.

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Introduction (2)

Village consolidation and resettlement is an important element to achieve these goals.

This above approach is seen as the 'only cost-effective way of making services available'.

It is also viewed as an instrument to stabilize and eventually abolish shifting cultivation and eliminate poppy cultivation.

Therefore moving villagers has been exposed as a good option to fulfil rural development objectives

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Rational

Such a theory leads to an identification of displacement as an ideal strategy for development and rural planning.

However, reserves can be expressed on the implementation of this strategy

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Point of View of Villagers

Villagers are generally happy with their lives and their occupation.

It does not mean, that they would not grasp the opportunity to change their lives to the better.

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Point of View of Villagers (2)

Information on resettlement plans has generally been poor.

- Each of the villages has different stories to tell
- Villagers ready to be resettled are conditioning their displacement by the guarantee to see an improvement of their living conditions.
- In some cases, the community will not wait for the authorization of the district but just even move before in order to reserve land.

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Positive aspects of village resettlement

■ In Language & Education

Increasing of people who claim to speak Lao.

Attendance to school seems to be higher

■ In Health

Better circulation of advisory information

Better access to medicines and vaccinations

■ In Economic activities

Rapid integration into a market economy

Increase of domestic goods and equipment

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Negative aspects of village resettlement (1)

Years after the resettlement are characterized by:

- a brutal degradation of the living condition of the population involved.
- Increased food and rice shortage,
- high incidence of diarrhoea, malaria,
respiratory diseases, ...
- and social and cultural breakdowns
- Resettlement also involves decapitalization,
both financial or in kind

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Negative aspects of village resettlement (2)

Higher Mortality rate

As part as our project, surveys have been carried out, in order to:

- *Estimate the mortality rates in Long district in the last 5 years*
- *Evaluate the evolution of the mortality following the implementation of the resettlement plan of upland villages toward the lowlands*

The results are compared with

- **the national mortality rate (1.4% / year);**
- **the “serious” mortality rate (3.5% / year);**
- **the “alarming” mortality rate (7% / year).**

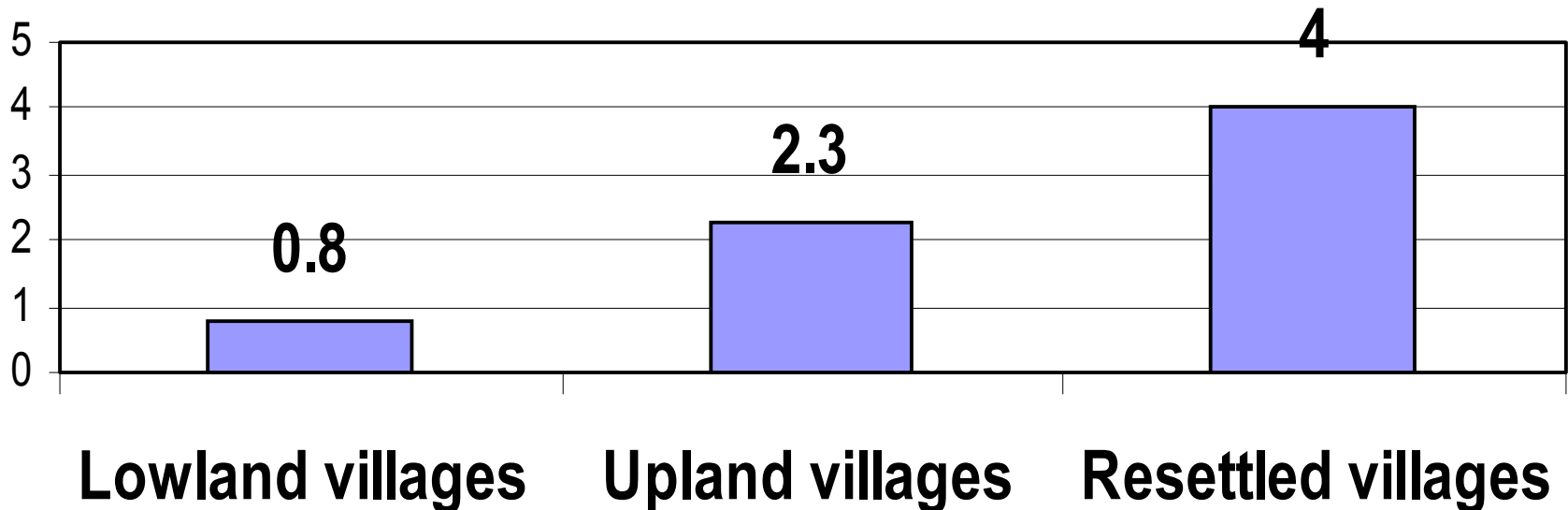
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Negative aspects of village resettlement (2)

Higher Mortality rate

Results:

Average mortality rate (% / Year)
for the last 5 years for each category of villages:

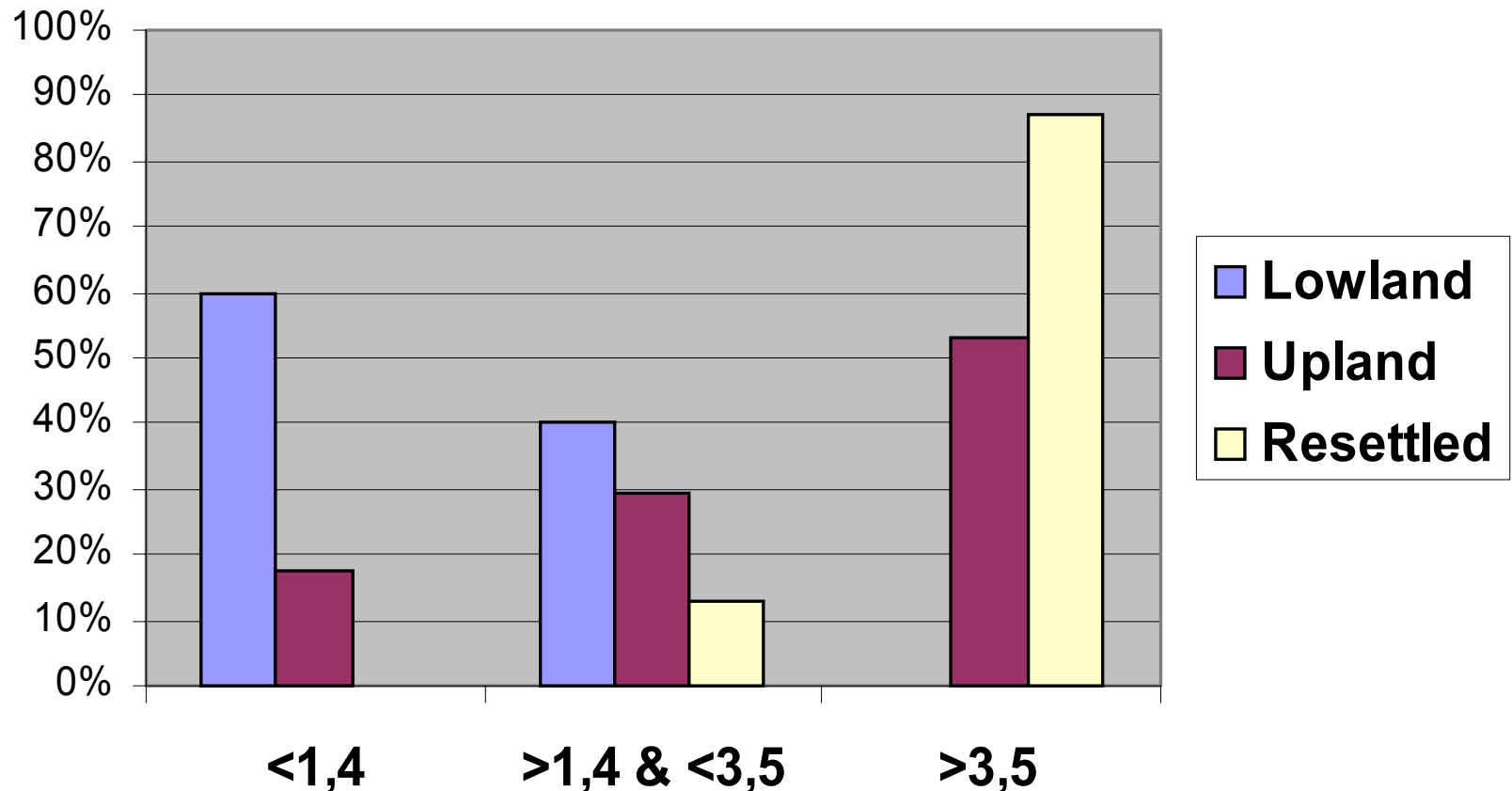


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Negative aspects of village resettlement (2)

Higher Mortality rate

Results: Mortality rate by category of village

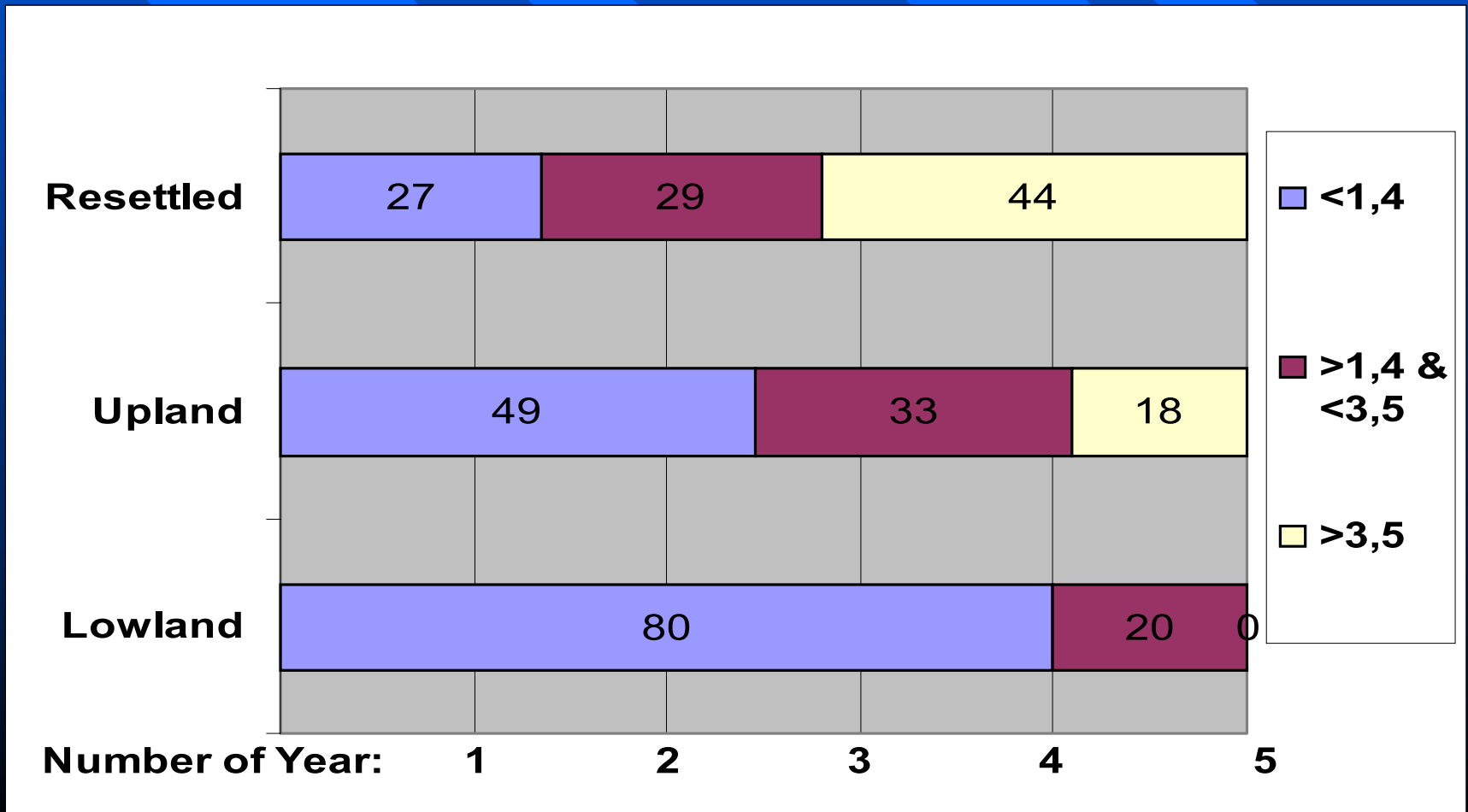


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Negative aspects of village resettlement (2)

Higher Mortality rate

Distribution of years per class of mortality and typology



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Negative aspects of village resettlement (3)

- Land Conflict

Availability of land suitable for paddy cultivation remains a crucial issue

- De-capitalisation

In many cases villagers lose their capital (cash or animal) to face the resettlement problem

- Proletarian class

Resettled populations often turn to low-paid wage labour

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Conclusion

**Displacement has the reverse effect
from the initial plan to these
populations.**

**Instead of poverty reduction,
displacement is
jeopardizing and impoverishing
ethnic minorities that it has targeted.**

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Note / Remark

“Stabilisation of shifting cultivation and eradication of poppy cultivation” does originally not mean resettlement.

“Village consolidation and services delivery” does not necessarily mean resettlement in lowland

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Recommendations (1)

To remind that

**- under specific conditions –
slash-and-burn agriculture
is a sustainable practice
and is not dangerous for the forest.**

**Effort has to be made
to provide highland villages
with access to services.**

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Recommendations (2)

In case of resettlement, initiatives should be implemented before the displacement and continue for many years :

1. Appropriate means for the respect of the conditions of the populations before, during and after displacement are mobilised and provided,

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Recommendations (2)

In case of resettlement, initiatives should be implemented before the displacement and continue for many years :

2. All engagement taken with the population displaced is granted prior to the displacement of the village,

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Recommendations (2)

In case of resettlement, initiatives should be implemented before the displacement and continue for many years :

3. The resettled population is accompanied with:

- Provision of assistance during the first year of their installation,
- Long term support to their transition and integration in their new livelihood during the time needed for their reinstallation

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Recommendations & Conclusion

The national objectives show its willingness to implement a sustainable development policy.

Nevertheless, the strategies operated to reach these objectives are detrimental to socio-cultural development, one of three pillars of development in NPEP.

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Recommendations & Conclusion

Sustainable livelihoods development policies, particularly the ones concerning upland areas, should be explored and promoted.

These development strategies would constitute alternative to option that would lead to displacement; preventing all the negative consequences.

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Recommendations & Conclusion

**When resettlement is unavoidable
or requested,
a government policy aiming at
protecting health and livelihoods
of population concerned
must be adopted.**

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**Thank You
for Your Attention**



By Laurent Romagny