

# Women migration issues in rural areas: the case of Luang-Nam Tha province in Northern Laos

By  
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# Content

	page
<b>Content</b> .....	2
<b>ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS</b> .....	3
<b>Executive summary</b> .....	4
<b>PART 1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	5
1.1 Migration in Laos and the demand for migrants in Thailand.....	6
1.2 Migration and trafficking in Lao PDR.....	6
<b>PART 2 PROBLEM STATEMENTS</b> .....	10
2.1 The main concerns in terms of rural development .....	10
2.2 Villagers difficulties.....	12
2.3 From being migrant to being a victim of trafficking.....	13
2.4 Research area.....	15
<b>PART 3 DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS</b> .....	16
3.1 Migrant.....	16
3.2 Trafficking in human beings... ..	17
<b>PART 4 OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b> .....	18
4.1 Objective.....	18
4.2 Comparisons.....	18
<b>PART 5 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION</b> .....	18
5.1 Example of day to day investigation in the village.....	19
5.2 Limitations due to the field circumstances.....	19
<b>PART 6 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA ANALYSIS FROM OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEWS</b> .....	20
6.1 Village displacement and migration.....	20
6.2 Analysis of the results.....	33
6.3 Women skills and trafficking.....	34
6.4 Discussion.....	37
<b>PART 7 CONCLUSION</b> .....	38
<b>PART 8 REFERENCES</b> .....	39
<b>PART 9 ANNEXES</b> .....	41
9.1 Recommendation.....	41

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADRA	Adventist Development Relief Agency
AFESIP	Agir pour les Femmes en Situation Précaire
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CCL	Comité de Coopération avec le Laos
CPC	Committee for Planning and Cooperation
EU	European Union
EFE	Education for All
GOL	Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic
GTZ	German Technical cooperation agency
GRID	Gender Resource Information & Development Center
IUED	Institut Universitaire d'études pour le développement
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IINGO	International Non-governmental Organization
LNT	Luang Nam Tha province
LYU	Lao Youth Union
LRC	Lao Red Cross
LWU	Lao Women's Union
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NHDR	National Human Development Report
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSC	National Statistics Centre
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Products
NUOL	National University of Lao
SC-UK	Save the Children United Kingdom
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
TOT	Training Of Trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNIAP	United National Interagency Project
WB	World Bank
YFA	Youth Fighting Aids

## **Acknowledgement**

Before to have the idea about doing this research, I used to travel to Luang Nam Tha province and I did pass through Muang Long. Then I had a chance to work with AFESIP about human trafficking and I could get a lot of information from some reports. I wondered what will be happen in Luang Nam Tha, a province situated close to the borders of 3 countries. I got a chance to study about research with a DFD course so I could write this report. The information is not very detailed as I had very limited time on the field (only 3 months), and the research about human trafficking there in Luang Nam Tha would needed further investigation.

First of all I would like very much to thank the two organizations AFESIP and ACF that supported me for my field research. My academic supervisor from Institut Universitaire d'Etudes pour le Développement Dr. Alexandre Domeir Freire followed with a patient and supportive attention my research project and report writing.

AFESIP Laos was really helpful and supported for the information and some logistic that was really needed on that time. I thank Dr. Didier BERTRAND (AFESIP Director) for his kindness; he gave me very good comments and advices for my report.

I would like specially to thank Action Contre la Faim who provided me the logistic and accommodation when I was on my field work at Luang Nam Tha province. I did appreciate the warm welcome of ACF staff that was always friendly and helpful. ACF director Laurent was very supportive and allowed me to do my research as an ACF staff. Boris in Luang Nam Tha was very careful, he made me feel very comfortable and followed up closely my investigations. He also provided a very good logistic for transportation and excellent translators for my field research. I am sure that if I did not have ACF support that I could be successful with my report.

## **Executive summary**

Laos is a small landlocked country the population density of the Lao PDR is 5.9 million (UN 2005), 19 per sq km in the area of 236,800 sq km (91,400 sq miles) divided into 47 to 68 ethnic groups according to the ways to differentiate them. Most of the ethnic groups live in the mountainous areas (2/3 of the country). According to the classification and 75% live in rural areas. According to several studies and my fieldwork, the populations concerned by migration are women and young people (15-25), from poor families but not always the poorest.

First causes of migration are economic and social changes, harsher living conditions, lack of education and local job opportunities as well as the attraction of consumer good that it is difficult to buy with the traditional subsistence economy system. One major issue of concern is the risks for the migrants to become victims of human trafficking.

Muong Long district is located Long district is situated 109 km in the North Western part of Luang Nam Tha. Luang Nam Tha is a mountainous province situated in the North of Laos sharing border with China, Thailand and Myanmar with two check points one on by land and one on the Mekong River. Most of the habitants are ethnic minority groups and especially in Long, Akha represent about 60% of the population.

This province is facing tremendous changes due the building of new roads linking China to Burma crossing Thailand and Laos and to the massive presence of Chinese companies.

Rural development policies raise also major problems in terms of reduction of slash and burn cultivation without other alternatives, sudden eradication of poppies fields without substitution crops, deforestation, and lack of health centers and schools as well as local job opportunities, forced displacements of villages along the road combined. There is not vocational training provided in the province.

The objective of this study is to try to issues migration in the rural areas where many things are changing in term of the globalization or development so my research objective is to understand better the issue of migration why they decide to leave. How do the villagers especially women migrants think about migration? Is migration used as coping strategy to solve their problems? Why some woman decided to move or migrate and some stay?

I planed to use kind of participatory assessment to collect people voices and concerns using, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions and some deep biographical interviews recorded and translated with women (study case).

I interviewed 50 women in 11 villages (3 villages far from the road, 8 Akha ethnic, 2 Kui and one Mouseu) and more than 20 key persons in villages, including consultants, researchers, districts and province and other organizations concerned.

The main methodological problems I faced are that most of the ethnic women do not speak Lao at all. They are not used to be asked to talk about social issues or to speak with other men. It was the crops collect season so in the day time people were in the field and I had to do it in the early morning or in the night time. Access to the villages far from the road was not easy and the hygiene standard not high. Migration is a sensitive debate as crossing border is illegal and might be repressed so it was not easy to collect information on this issue. Last I had not enough time to collect complete information (inequalities, market study, and feasibility study).

I spend 5 weeks on the field mostly, I could interview 50 women and 8 men from 11 villages (8 Akha dominant ethnic group in the district with many along the border and there are many Chinese Akha in China, 2 Kui and 1 Muser), and collected some information concerning the women who left the villages for two countries China and Thailand (21 person left -most of them are women-, and only 8 came back or returned and in this 8 people there are 3 persons who died from HIV/AIDs). From staying and spending over nights in

some of the villages I understood the real difficulties situation that the villagers (mostly women) are facing in their life that was very interesting to share.

## **PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

Lao PDR is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the East Asia region which surrounding with China, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Thailand and its classification as a Least Developed Country (LDC) and Laos with Its economy is also vulnerable to external shocks and natural disasters.<sup>1</sup>

Lao is facing several changes mostly for the last few years, about the society and economy; deforestation, dam construction, and the displacement of villages in order to regroup diverse ethnic groups are forcing many to adopt new ways of life while the availability of local natural resources is decreasing. Roads, markets, and access to modern communication such as TV are there opening rural population to a new world for which they may not be well prepared.

Economic and social changes are influencing the values, beliefs and way of life of Laotian people, most rapidly in urban areas and especially in the border areas as Lao borders with big 5 countries. With the increase of purchasing power, people may have started to become more materialistic and consumerist.

### **1.1 Migration in Laos and the demand for migrants in Thailand**

Most of the people who live on the frontiers can go to another country by any type of transportation and come back as normal as they used to do so long for centuries. In the south of Laos, now there are many people migrant just cross the border or Mekong River to Thailand both in Parkse and Savannaket province, but now it becomes a big problem as they migrated and some of them became victims of trafficking.

In some provinces in the North such as Bokeo, Sayaboury and Luang Nam Tha there are many migration, the recent SCF study found that migrants are typically young (between the age 15-25) from poor families (though rarely from the very poorest), and have pre-existing connections (usually through relation) in Thailand.

“We found the migrations are typically young (between the ages of 15 and 25), from poor family (though rarely from the very poorest), and have pre-existing connections (usually through relatives) in Thailand. A slight majority are male, and, somewhat to our surprise, often not Lao speakers<sup>2</sup>”.

Luang Nam Tha province where I conducted my study is a place where many changes happened and it is growing so fast, in terms of economy (some

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<sup>1</sup> KHAM, Lee Social Challenges for Lao PDR, p 109-121, unquoted document Afesip Ressources centre, p 112.

<sup>2</sup> SC UK, Migrant children & youth in Lao PDR, p.1

Chinese companies and individuals came to invest), new roads are built to the border. Luang Nam Tha shares several borders by river and by land with China, Thailand and Myanmar, that is why the study should be there mostly in Muong Long districts a big district in Luang Nam Tha province where social life has changed a lot.

## **1.2 Migration and trafficking in Lao PDR**

While Lao PDR is a country of origin and transit for migrant people, most of the trafficking<sup>3</sup> takes place within labour migration to Thailand or through Thailand to other countries. Considering internal migrations in Laos, it is a similar process that leads many females to leave the village to work in other provinces, usually in the garment industry or as service girls in restaurants, hotels, or in beer gardens.

“The recent report by the Asian Migration Centre suggested that there may be more female than male migrations in Thailand (reinforced by a Thai Immigration report that of 42,085 Lao workers who applied for renewal of their work permits, 59.2% were female), our own research found a higher proportion of male migrants. Longstanding part of life in these villages labour migration is involving up to half the population, villager migration for both positive and negative reasons<sup>4</sup>”.

ILO study done by National Statistic Centre found in 2003 that 1810614 Lao were registered in Thailand; the average age was 16-24 years old are the majority and 55% were women, it is estimated that there are 200 000 to 300 000 more Lao workers in Thailand that makes more than 10% of the total Lao work force<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Woman and Children (supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime), defines trafficking as follows:

- a Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of - a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;
- b The consent of the victim of trafficking to the intended exploitation set forth in the subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in sub-paragraph (a) have been used;
- c The recruitment, transportation, transfer and harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons“ even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in sub-paragraph (a) of this article;
- d “Child” shall mean any person under 18 years of age. The Protocol states that even if fraud and deception are not used, it is a case of trafficking if the victim is under 18 years of age. While international standards recognize and attempt to distinguish between consensual acts and those involving abduction, force, fraud, deception or coercion, under international law, children cannot consent.

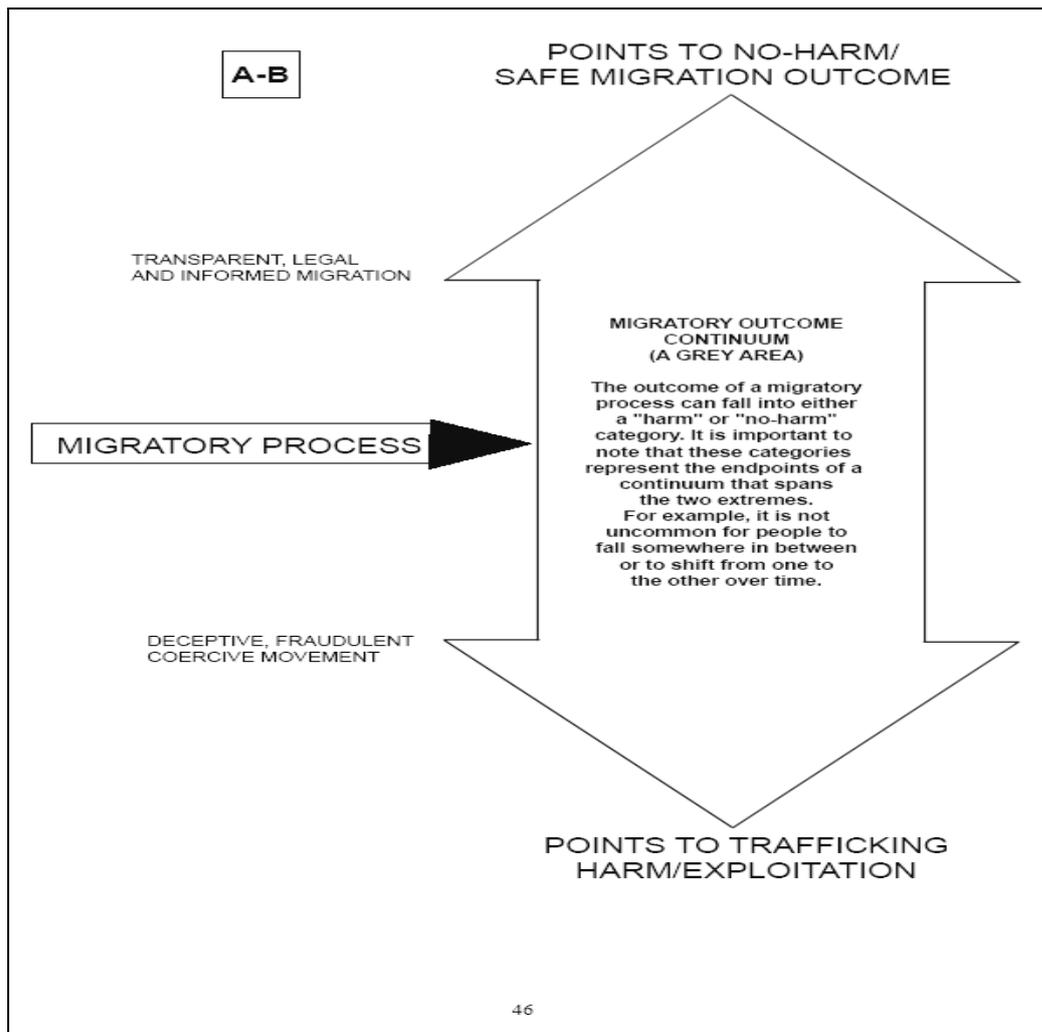
Furthermore, the Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 35 states that:

State Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.

<sup>4</sup> Save the Children UK report “Migrant Children & Youth in Lao PDR, 2004, p 6

<sup>5</sup> ILO “the study of national statistic” 2003, p 5

Trafficking remained largely taboo in Lao PDR until recently revealed by an officially released report<sup>6</sup>. Victims are rarely abducted from their village; instead they tend to go willingly with a recruiter or friends and relatives who promise employment<sup>7</sup>. When they go to Thailand, most are considered as illegal migrants more than victims of trafficking. But they are also the migratory process which shows that migrate person could points of trafficking or harm exploitation.



There are intricate push and pull factors in this important migration movement, economic migration is only one motivating factor, thus interacting motivators are in need of investigation.

<sup>6</sup> In October 2004, UNICEF reports: “*Trafficking networks were found to be well structured, with connections to organized crime networks in neighboring countries. Victims may be bought and sold several times over with the price the trafficker receives often portrayed as an employment agent’s fee.*”

<sup>7</sup> “*Several communities along the Mekong report the existence of a local cross-border labor recruitment/trafficking network. In each of the villages, the network advertised available jobs and wages. The district authorities reported that they often saw minibuses they believed belonged to the traffickers entering the villages and then emerging carrying young girls.*” ILO-IPEC p

<sup>8</sup> IOM “*Revisiting the human trafficking paradigm*” 2004, p 48

While these main push and pull factors have been also described yesterday, I will not get into it again but I would like to stress the psychological and cultural aspects (it doesn't mean that I consider them more important)

Cultural optimism, deny of risks, risk taking behaviour and spirit of adventure, the trip to Thailand is considered as a matter of luck<sup>9</sup>, youths feel self confident enough that bad things will not happen to them. Because of this view a bad experience does not prevent a person from trying again, nor does it prevent others from going to try their own luck. This cultural faith is combined with treasure-hunt propensity so that the proof of unrealistic expectations or dangers has not prevented people from crossing the border to seek fortune.

"Poverty, the lack of economic opportunities, and difficult farming conditions within their home villages, family problems are major "push" factors. Earning a cash income, living in a more environment, and gaining access to a higher standard of healthcare are all significant "pull" factors". However, difficulty of geographic access to school and a lack of financial resources to support further education seem to be factors in the decision to migrate<sup>10</sup>". This was confirming by my observation and the interviews I had with women.

Several studies showed that most of the women and girls suffer from harsher living conditions in their home villages because of their much heavier workload in term of both reproductive and productive tasks. In the village I could see that women work more, they have less time to rest and enjoy life and they have less access to education and job. So they decided or they have been proposed to leave by other persons, to leave the village to work in another place where they become migrants, they face risks to end as victims of human trafficking. So it would be to know if they would like to have some vocational skills training for them to be able to stay in the village to access to the local economic or enterprise and not to migrate and what kind of skills to propose them to learn.

The study, however, will just only examine about the migration issues in the rural areas which is changing a lot, it is very important because the migrant people could be a victim of trafficking, and this study will use by qualitative method to know and understand why the people decide to leave the village to be a migrant in another places or countries which is the factor according to the impact of issues above. In this study I will focus more in women because women are considered to be more vulnerable than me.

The study will help to identify the case of women migration that is very intricate, with many issues such as the education, cultural and poverty, but also it will show that in the research areas of Long district in Luang Nam Tha province is can be more which located in the border with Myanmar, Thailand

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<sup>9</sup> *"Nothing, including large fines and horror stories of what has happened to others seems to have a great deterrent value, given both the fatalistic attitude towards luck, and the potential for making money. Police complain that many people caught upon return have been caught more than once, not always in the same province, indicating that they have found work at different locations throughout Thailand"*.

<sup>10</sup> Save the Children UK report "Migrant Children & Youth in Lao PDR, 2004, p 7, *ibid* p 27

and China, local people used to migrate to Thailand and China, but there are also some Chinese migrate to Luang Nam Tha province and that has an incidence on the migration of women to China.

## **PART 2: PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Rural development policies supported by International agencies raise major problems in Northern of Laos districts as explained in several recent and alarming reports<sup>11</sup>, these problems are causing migration of women and young people mostly the women and the girls who have lack of education and role in the society aspect.

Several problems affect to the local people in the rural areas to have more demands to migrate. So the rural development projects were built as though for help but it is also following with some a big changes which is very difficult for the local to apply such as the village displacement policy. To access to the services such as the education and health is a very important for this period when important social changes are induced by the globalisation. The poverty problem become larger scale and it made the local people have need for more thing, so to have access to that, they have very limit choice to should for improve their life and the easiest way is to migrate to another place where they think it is more civilised but it is quite risky because they could become a victim of trafficking.

### ***2.1 The main concerns in terms of rural development***

Most of these people are poor and living in the rural areas, they do the cultivation such as the rice and corn, but because they live in steeply mountains it is hard for them to find a land. They practice slash and burn cultivation but now the government do not allow it anymore. Most of the villagers are farmers and hunters, especially women are involved of collecting products from the forest. When it is not the crops season it becomes more difficult for hill tribes to survive as they used to find plants and wild animals for food that are very rare and while forest disappears.

#### ***2.1.1 Health issue***

Many villages face real health insecurity, some villages do not have a health centre, so when villagers are only very sick they will go to the hospital in the town that is far and costly for them in terms of transportation and treatment as their income is very low). So to access to health care also counts among the motivations for migration.

#### ***2.1.2 Education in gender issue***

Despite consistent emphasis on education since its formation in 1975, the educational system of the Lao PDR is very poor. One-third of primary school teachers have not been trained at a teacher training school. Resources, such

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<sup>11</sup> ACF 2003, Lytleton 2004, Cohen 2005, Rattavong and Alton 2003, Evrard and Goudineau 2004

as schools, books and qualified teachers, remain scarce. Many people, especially ethnic minorities, have had no schooling. Preschool education exists only in a few urban areas. Very few children in rural areas complete more than two years of primary school, and only 20% of the people make it beyond secondary school. Nevertheless, there is only one university in Laos in Vientiane the capital call National University of Lao (NUOL). The Lao Women's Union is the only mass organization that promotes women's participation in economic development. It carries out a number of projects for rural and urban women.

The ones who go to study are the boys that have more advantage than the girls (as the decision is made by their parents). As mentioned in (Save the Children report), it is impossible to state categorically that a higher education level would reduce the migration rate; we can nevertheless expect that better access to schooling within the village would at least delay the decision to migrate and give young migrants to a stronger capacity to avoid risks and exploitation while they are in abroad.

### **2.1.2.1 *Reasons commonly cited as to why girls and women lack access to formal and non-formal education:***

According to the cultural and customs, girls are responsible for carrying out domestic chores and for watching over younger siblings also another dialy house works. In term of education, in rural villages tend to lack of primary school facilities and the parents are concerned about their daughters' safety such as if the girls must walk in the distant location which is not safe. But there are also the girls in urban areas drop out of school because they do not see improved job opportunities resulting from education.

Some ethnic group, especially the patriarchal groups such as the Hmong and the Yao, have a cultural bias against girls acquiring education, it is difficult as they are supposed to do the house works. In some ethnic groups such as the Akha where I stayed, girls marry at very young ages so it is really difficult to continue with education. (Many villagers suggested that day-care centres be attached to the school). By following education policy Education for All (EFA) up to primary level the Government requires that all formal and non-formal education training be carried out in Lao, a language barrier for ethnic minorities who for many of them in Muang Long do not speak Lao. The relevance of literacy, basic education and vocational training to the lives of girls and women is not readily perceived<sup>12</sup>.

In the North, the secured functionality literacy rate is for the Sino-Tibetan group such as Akha who are majority in Long district, 22.1 % for men and 14.6% for women so 18.3% that is well above not only the regional rate 23% but also the national rate 30.8%<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> UNESCO, Girls' and women's education in Laos, Undated document (1998), p4.

<sup>13</sup> CPC, Lao People's Democratic Republic : northern region development strategy executive summary, draft final report, the Committee for Planning and Cooperation, ADB, February 2004,p 86

Finally, at all levels of education, there is an imbalance between the education received by boys and girls. This gap widens as the level of education raises. For example, while girls make up 43% of primary school enrolment, this figure drops to 37% at the upper secondary level, and to 17 % at the university level. If we distinguish literacy figures by gender, we discover that 65% of the males are literate compared to 35% of the females<sup>14</sup>.

While girls and women may be equal under the constitution of the Lao PDR, they are still considered to be more vulnerable than boys and men. Parents worry about the safety of young daughters when they have to walk long distances to attend school. Some marry at age thirteen. These facts suggest that reasons other than sexual discrimination come into play when education.

### **2.1.3 Social changes in terms of economic (foreign investor)**

Other changes induced by globalisation and regional exchanges which can be a factor to push the villager to become migrants, such as the new construction of roads, especially the N°17 highway from China to Thailand in Muong Sing district (In Luang Nam Tha province) as a result the prostitution is increasing in newly built brothels along the road. The hill tribe villagers become workers as they do not have many skills. They have to work very hard, so they use drugs and switch from the locally grown and consumed opium to ATS (Yabaa) that is used to be strong to work in the fields and to make more money. The massive Chinese migration and enterprising such as the sugar cane to import to China, induces major changes from subsistence agriculture to intensive agriculture on the few flat fertile plains. The Chinese companies import workers to China and women are smuggled for forced marriages. The hill tribe people migration for work increases the risks of human trafficking, mostly the young women.

## **2.2 Villagers' difficulties**

### **2.2.1 Poverty in ethnic villages**

It is recognised that most migrants come from the poor families but not the poorest in the village, even though everyone goes to work in Thailand in order to make some money, poverty is not the only causal factor involved, absolute poverty is a driving factor, but our interviews show that the desire to improve living conditions (through, say, building a new house or buying a new thing) is also among migrants' motivation.

Poverty and social cultural development is a very important issue. The Committee for Planning and Cooperation (CPC), report mentions that:

“Cultural poverty is important to socio cultural development; it exists where ethnic groups essentially define poverty as a loss of culture. Ethnic communities who are in control of their own destiny commonly do not consider themselves to be poor even if they are perceived by outsiders as

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<sup>14</sup> All the figures in this paragraph are from the document UNESCO, Girls' and women's education in Laos, Undated document (1998), 20p.

being poor and deprived in terms of cash income, social service, and total calories per day measurements. Furthermore, breakdown of the moral community, coupled with internal conflicts that arise from this process creates stress, and frequently leads to a culture of self destruction (depression, suicide, violence, alcoholism, drug addiction) disintegration, destitution and out migration. The existence of cultural poverty was found to be a major issue in the PPA (where it was possible to separate production systems from religious systems) and in subsequent studies where all these types of self destructive behaviours were prominent<sup>15</sup>”.

Therefore, I think that rather than simply saying that minority peoples are poor, it is more appropriate to focus on the process of impoverishment. I could see that most upland peoples, for example have been impoverished through a number of processes which are out of their control and which often are irreversible. They explained to me how these processes have dispossessed them of their traditional lands, have restricted or prohibited their access to natural resources, have resulted in breakdown of their communities and have led to the degradation of their environment thereby threatening their subsistence.

Some reports especially from ACF show how the villagers become sicker, poorer while their social networks are dismantled after the eradication of their poppies fields (opium cultivation) without planning crops for substitution and the subsequent migration of impoverished villagers who lost their major income is one of the result. One of the main causes of migration is the lack of job opportunities in the villages, to developing income-generating activities would encourage more people to remain in the village as they do not have many skills that the market demand or can help them to be able to be in the village.

The policy of villages’ displacements and merging (gathering) without adequate preparation increase tensions with already local lowland populations to share limited local natural resources. Because of the government interdiction of (slash and burn) cultivation the hills tribe people feel like losing everything as they can not do many things that they used to do and it is very difficult for them to move from their home to be in another place where they do not use to live such as along the roads where it can be very dangerous for their children. This is the result of development priorities decided without appropriate consultation of the concerned population.

### **2.3 From being migrant to being a victim of trafficking**

Many trafficked persons began their journey as volunteer migrants. Several were contacted by a broker to assist their illegal movement or looked for some help to get a job somewhere else, others in the North moved to China with Chinese men to be married. Mostly at the level of departure from Laos often

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<sup>15</sup> CPC, Lao People’s Democratic Republic: Northern region development strategy executive summary, draft final report, the Committee for Planing and Cooperation, ADB, February 2004,p 83.

facilitated by friends or relatives, it is difficult to know what direct or indirect profit these persons had in bringing others back with them or helping them to find a job and how much they are informed of the outcomes of the situation for the future victim. While getting into contract, migrants might have to pay back important sums of money supposed to be covering the transport fees.

At this stage, the trafficking situation becomes more obvious; the person might be facing debt bondage with use of force or violence leading to highly exploitative and forced labour or prostitution.

There are many levels of debt and exploitation that make this link between brokers and victims difficult to analyse in order to identify the trafficking process. It is sometimes at the very end of the process; at the time of requesting salary or permission to leave that the person understands that he/she is not only an illegal immigrant but also a victim of trafficking. We collected several stories of women illustrating this process.

### **2.3.1 Conditions of vulnerability to trafficking**

The overwhelming majority of trafficking victims surveyed in Lao PDR are girls aged between 12-18 years. Young girls and women are the most vulnerable to trafficking because they face high risk to be enrolled in sexual exploitation that is the main cause of exploitation within trafficking.

Most victims (35%) interviewed in the UNICEF survey ended up in forced prostitution. Other forms of employment were domestic labour (32%), factory work (17%), and fishing boats (4%). Those working in domestic household situations experienced some of the most extreme cases of abuse and mistreatment. Most victims come from rural areas, although few of the victims came from extremely remote areas or from situations of severe poverty.

The connection between ethnic background and child trafficking issue needs further study, since *“the majority of non-Lao trafficking victims come from villages that have been resettled or relocated”*.

These victims were found to be from Lao and Tai ethnic groups, with Tibeto-Burmese being over-represented in trafficking data compared to the percentage of the population<sup>16</sup>.

D. Bertrand summarised the main factors of vulnerability toward trafficking can be summarised as such (also we cannot provide a comparative incidence of each of them):

*“-Going alone.  
- Having no family links in the place where they go.  
- Recruitment process through unknown person or caught into brokers’ networks on the Thai side specially.*

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<sup>16</sup> Unicef 2003,4 p

- *Being a young, pretty woman*
- *Being illiterate or with a low level on instruction.*
- *Not speaking local language or Thai fluently.*
- *Being impressionable, naïve or psychologically weak as recruiters abuse confidence and ignorance*
- *Facing poor conditions of living (also not the extreme miserable ones)*
- *Living in a recently displaced village*
- *Having faced family problems including sexual harassment or love and marital deception.*
- *Having single parenthood, being orphan and living with stepparents.*
- *Having sister, friends or relatives working in the service sector.*
- *Being consumerism orientated.*
- *Being addicted.*
- *Being a single mother without qualifications.”*

The process that leads migrant females to step from migration to prostitution and might end up in trafficking<sup>17</sup> and sex slavery is complex. The idea commonly shared by anti-trafficking groups is that traffickers use deceit to get women to leave home, while in fact several of the migrants women engaged in prostitution did know what they were going to do might have a “sexual component” but not much about the real work conditions. The migrant’s project is built on a complex weaving of ideals and constraints, advantages and disadvantages, while facilitators or brokers take advantages on the vulnerable situation of undocumented or illegal women.

## **2.4 Research area**

### **2.4.1 Northern Laos, Lounag Nam Tha province**

While Northern Laos is an increasing popular destination for visitors, it is also facing dramatic changes due to the opening of new roads and the overwhelming Chinese presence.

The beautiful romantic images of green rolling mountains flanked with paddy fields and colour full hill tribes villages hides other realities such as the poverty of the local hill tribes, the low level of education and the harsh changes that they have to face in their life to keep a sustainable livelihood.

Luang Nam Tha province situated in the North of Laos shares border with China, Thailand and Myanmar with two check points one on by land and one on the Mekong River. Area (km<sup>2</sup>) 9325, population 2001 NSC 134900, Density (per km<sup>2</sup>) 14,5, number of villages 403, number of households 23034 divided in to 5 districts: Nalae, Nam Tha Viengphouka Sing and Long.

### **2.4.2 Long district**

Long district is situated 109 km from Luang Nam Tha.

Name of the district	Moung Long
Surface	2273 Km <sup>2</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Unicef (2004) mentions that of the victims that return to Laos, most have escaped their employer on their own or with assistance from local citizens. There were almost no cases of victims being voluntarily released by the employer, except in situations where victims had contracted HIV and were too sick to continue working.

Population	27793
Families	5083
Villages	188 physical and 84 administrative

Name of ethnic	Akha	Kui/Musseu	Hmong	Leu
Percentage of population	68%	12, 5%	7%	12, 5%

Muong Long district is located in the North Western part of Luang Nam Tha province bordered by Burma on the West, China on the North and Viengpukha district and Bokeo province in the South. Apart of the legendary *Golden Triangle*, the access of Luang Nam Tha provincial capital is available only since 1996. The overall population turns around 25000 personnes and most of the villages are located in the uplands and relay mainly on swidden cultivation poppy cultivation is widespread<sup>18</sup>. Akha ethnics compose more than half of the population.

I choose this district because it is one of the biggest districts in Luang Nam Tha province, and the situation there now is changing very fast, facing the tourists industry, village displacements and Chinese migration enterprises but the final decision concerning the villages was made with (ACF or Action Contre La Faim my host organisation).

“In Luang Nam Tha villagers earned cash income from crops including sugarcane, corn and tea (59, 7 percent), livestock (19, 9 percent), NTFPs (10.4percent) and off-farm employment (10.1 percent). A surplus of cash income over expenditures (excluding their rice deficits), this amounted of kip 3.8 million in cash income was about kip 3.8 million and expenditures for a surplus of kip 1.3 million<sup>19</sup>.

Rice self-sufficiency is inadequate in 15 study villages and situation and is reported to be worse than in previous years; this is attributed both to natural population growth (Approximate 3.0 percent) and growth due in migration. But plainly there is not enough agricultural land to cultivate sufficient paddy rice, upland rice and crops.

Displacement of population is nothing new in Muang Long by 1996<sup>20</sup> relocations either within the district or from neighbouring district involved 84% of the population.

Young people are more likely to respond to the plans of local authorities to resettle than their elders, lured by the prospect of paddy land, wage labour for cash and consumer goods.

### **PART 3 DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS**

<sup>18</sup> The Long district estimates that poppy cultivation is actually done on a 661 hectares surface, compared to 600 hectares in 2000. The NCA estimates the surface around 550 hectares in 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Alton Charles, Houmphanh Rattanavong. 2004, pages 135.

Service delivery and resettlement: Options for development planning. 2004, 135 p.

<sup>20</sup> COHEN Paul, and LYTTLETON Chris, The Akkha of Northwest Laos: modernity and social suffering, article photocopied 28 pages, undated, Afesip resource centre p4.

The aim of the concept that the study will make is follow by:

### **3.1 Migrant**

A migrant: is a person who has left her village or her usual place of residence and travelled to a location primarily at a minimum distance. It can involve more than a single migrant a family or even a village may migrate together. Labour migrant implies the spatial movement of workers both internally and internationally on short or long distances<sup>21</sup>. There is also another style of migration such as regular & irregular migrants and also forced & unforced migration:

Regular migrants: Authorised labourers who find employment with the help of legal employment agency and who have received pre-occupation training and signed employment contract.

Irregular migrants: People who migrate out for work but have no specific offer of employment before migration, people who leave without the necessary help from any agency, people who have no received any pre-occupational training, people who find employment without any contract with the employer.

Forced migration refers to the coerced movement of a person or persons away from their home or home region. It often connotes violent coercion, and is used interchangeably with the terms "displacement" or "forced displacement". A specific form of forced migration is population transfer, which is a coherent policy to move unwanted persons, perhaps as an attempt at ethnic cleansing. Someone who has experienced forced migration is a "forced migrant" or "displaced person"<sup>22</sup>.

Unforced migration is referring to the movement of a person away from their region by their own decision making as 'Unforced migration', though one hardly ever comes across this usage. What we usually find instead is 'voluntary migration', with forced migration being treated as synonymous with 'Involuntary migration'<sup>23</sup>.

#### **3.1.1 Temporary and seasonal migration**

A type of move which occurs at regular or irregular intervals; seasonal migration is considered a special case. The term seasonal does not necessary mean crop seasons although this applies for many migrants. It also

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<sup>21</sup> Definition on migration inspired by **ILO-IPEC**, The Mekong Challenge, analysis report of a baseline survey for the TICW project phase II in Yunan Province, Bangkok 2005 p7-8.

<sup>22\_23</sup> Definition of the migration into a single framework - are Anthony Richmond and Nick Van Hear (1994, p. 59).

refers to other seasonal activities such as construction work or tourism including long distance movements<sup>24</sup>.

### **3.1.2 Cross-border migration**

It is a widespread phenomenon with a long history, and involves a high proportion of young people, migration people are known to be a vulnerable sector of the population, and most of these people will end with to being the victims of trafficking.

### **3.2 Trafficking in human beings**

Trafficking in human being (or human trafficking) involves the movement of people (mostly women and children but also adult men) against their will by means of force for the purpose of sexual or labour exploitation or trafficking in person shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other form of coercion, of abduction, of fraud of deception, of abuse, giving or receiving of payment benefits to achieve the consent of a person to control over another person<sup>25</sup>.

## **PART 4 OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **4.1 Objective: The issue of migration why they decided to leave.**

- 1 How do the villagers specially women migrants think about migration?
- 2 Is migration used as coping strategy to solve their problems?
- 3 Why some decided to move or migrate and some not to do so?

### **4.2 Comparisons**

I would like to know:

- If being along the road increase migration or not?
- Are there differences in terms of ethnic groups and migration patterns?
- Are recently displaced villages experiencing a more intense migration?

Because the road brings outsiders to the village, I want to know who tries to take/trafficked/recruit the villagers and mostly the women. Do the people who left to China are living near the road?

Other comparison sub factors might be: main resources and income generating activities, ownership of rice field (Na), and history of the settlement (old village or recently displaced village), having or not school and health clinic, help received by NGO's and transformation induced the villages will be choosing with the main partner Action Contre la Faim.

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<sup>24</sup> Dang Nguyen Anh, international migration; opportunities and challenges for the renovations and development in Vietnam, Hanoi 2005, p41-71, photocopied document at Afesip resource centre.

<sup>25</sup> SC UK report "Migrant children and young in Lao PDR, 2004 p.11

## **PART 5      METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

I planned to use qualitative method based on different interviews and focus group discussion.

The main idea is to collect people voices and concerns through participatory assessment, to define what they experience in their own world and, what is their own meaning for changes?

The causes they identify for their migration and what is the recommendation that they make for the improvement of their life.

In deep biographical interviews recorded and translated with women were planned to be used as a case study (exploratory, descriptive and explanatory), but I could not do this because of the girls (women) are quite too shy and very difficult to interview.

Interviews with key persons in villages, districts and province and other organisations working in the area as well as in Vientiane were done and brought me substantial information.

Main methodological problems encountered:

Generally speaking it was difficult to interview young women or girls about migration even with interpreters, as they are not used to speak to some people whom they do not know and because of culture women are not used to speak too much about their life and social issues. Most of them have never been to school and they have not been educated to express their opinion.

Akha are good sellers so it is easiest to interview them compared to other ethnic groups. There is some Akha group in China, so the Akha people go to China more than other groups. Kui are shyer than Akha but the Muser group is very shy and very difficult to interview also as these people need trust, and one researcher told me that *“to build trust with them I should stay in their village at least one month”* but according to the time limited I could not do so.

### **5.1      Example of day to day investigation in the village**

My plan is first of all to have a description of the village context and the history of the settlement, demography, environment, economy, culture, social organisation and leadership (see annex to be added), then discussion with villagers on development issues in general how do they see their future, after that will be about the migration and women like why did some women leave the village? How are they perceived? And finally do the collection of migration stories or biographies from the migrants themselves.

### **5.2      Limitations due to the field circumstances**

This project meets some limits due to social cultural and time constraints for example we will focus on women only while men and women have different migration patterns.

Time-season: The times that I was on my field work is the season for the farmers to collect the crops so it is very difficult to interview them in the day time and I had to do it in the early morning or in the night time, but also they sleep very early (because they do not have electricity and they are very tired

after the whole day working) and go to work in the early morning (because some they have to walk about 2-3 ½ hours to reach their rice fields).

Communication cultural barriers between men and women are another obstacle increased by language as many ethnic women in the North do not speak Lao (increasing with age), they are not used to be asked, to talk about social issues. It was very difficult to talk and interview them, because they are too shy and sometimes could not answer. More over migration is sometimes a sensitive issue to debate as it refers to illegal crossing of borders.

As mentioned in TRACE report “the researcher gender was an important factor, with female researchers more likely to get access to the ‘world of women’ especially with stories including abuse. Interestingly it is with mothers (more than victims themselves) that female researchers managed to build stronger bridges than male researchers and collect more and more meaningful information.”<sup>26</sup>

Sometimes while collecting story of migration or trafficking, it involve highly emotional materials bound to be painful to recall and that the person who tell with embarrassment or with shame depending on what happen to her.

Due to the short time of stay in the village I can not provide extended information concerning income and inequalities between the different villagers and have no time to do a market study or assessment and to see how far the solutions proposed are realistic on a long term.

Due as the level and the time limited I could not reach to interview the authority or the government official in the migration office.

## **PART 6 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA ANALYSIS FROM OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEWS**

### ***6.1 Village displacement and migration***

There are differences of opinion within government, donor and NGO communities concerning out-migration of villagers from mountainous to lowland areas. Many government officials, particularly at the central level, contend the relocation is voluntary because most out-migration in about individuals believing a better life is available in the lowlands where they can access government services and ambitious relocation targets and the speed with which villagers are moved. Neither opinion describes the situation completely.

Alton reports showed “The main problem uncouncted with migration to the lowland concerned inadequate available agriculture land and this led to conflicts with neighbouring village and earlier migrants. Another major

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<sup>26</sup> TRACE, lessons learnt through TRACE, human trafficking from Laos to Thailand, draft for comments, October 12, 2004, UNIAP, p 17.

problem was the incidence of human disease including mosquito born fevers, gastrointestinal tract disease, parasites and upper respiratory disease. Among new migrant, death rate was high in some villages<sup>27</sup>”.

It is clear that the opium eradication program was the key contributing factor (followed by the lack of alternatives to opium poppy cultivation) for villages from Chaphoukeun and Chaleunxay leaving their original villages. This was verified by affirmative answers from Phiyeu Phaya Luang respondents. The third most frequent response was that of poor roads followed by concern about human and animal diseases.

The Akha culture is experiencing change through market exposure and induced by the government policies. Small changes in gender roles for women are starting to happen, but women still bear a disproportionate share of the burden of household work.

The weather and access roads are important factors in livelihood systems, but the roads must be maintained if they want to have continuing value.

### **6.1.2 Migration reasons push-pull**

As the Charles Alton<sup>28</sup> reports I found that the push factors influencing villagers to resettle to the valley included the lack of alternative to opium cultivation, insufficient rice, poor road and communications, concern regarding human and animal health, lack of income generating opportunities and few public services. The pull factors enticing families including hopes for paddy land and land for cash crops, other income generating activities e.g. livestock, NTFPs handicraft, cottage industry, off-farm employment and access to market and public services.

In the villages Phayaluang and Sompaa Mai livelihood systems are not doing well. Inadequate agricultural land has proven to be a major constraint for all cropping sub-system, e.g. swidden, upland field crops and paddy land. Livestock is still important for consumption, but because of the distance to markets it does not really contribute much for household cash income. Relatively little forest land limits their access to Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) for both consumption and sale and puts their safety net at risk.

Gender rules are changing with cultural and livelihoods. Programs and project have already had an impact on this process.

There is an increasing need for gender awareness and skills training in all aspects of livelihoods including agriculture, NTFPs, livestock rearing, fisheries, handicraft, off-farm employment and public health.

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<sup>27</sup> **ALTON Charles, RATTANAVONG Houmphanh**, Service delivery and resettlement: Options for development planning. 2004, p 44.

<sup>28</sup> **ALTON Charles, Houmphanh Rattavong**, Service delivery and resettlement: Options for development planning. 2004, p 44.

This study and others have elaborated the aware the push-pull factors influencing villager's decisions to migrate including factors them to return to their original villages.

“Development planners should be aware of these factors when planning development interventions either in the upland village or in the lowlands. Push factors are those deemed by villagers as limiting <in the original villages> and are in fact the challenge of developing those village in situ. Pull factors are those that attract people to the lowlands and usually concern the hopes for access to public infrastructure and government services. Planners should address these in wither the case of trying to improve development in the original village or to better realize the hopes and aspirations of those villagers when they relocated to the lowlands.

As people migrate to the lowlands, they usually relocate near existing lowland villages. They invariable experience conflict over resources (especially land) with either neighbouring villages or with earlier migrants in the new village<sup>29</sup>”.

### **6.1.2.1 Livelihood style**

There should be courses in the primary school curriculum on appropriate livelihood activities including enhances performance of swiddens, improved animal husbandry and aquaculture.

Local economics are rapidly changing with planned liberalization. Villagers, even those in remote villages, are becoming increasingly market responsive. This results in many changes and impacts e.g. the reduction of handicraft production, changes in behaviour and culture, trade relationships and road accessibility to both market and public services. Villagers understand of the dynamics of markets is still lacking-leading to many unscrupulous dealings with intermediaries, traders and their representative.

Villager need to become better educated about market development. This includes the fundamentals of supply and demand, competition, input and output markets, seasonal price fluctuations, backward and forward linkages, the dynamics of group production for agro industry, quality, timing and contractual agreement.

Government official, especially those in agriculture and commerce lack adequate knowledge and skills to support villages and households in a market economy. Far example, many agriculture and forestry official still promote centrally planned production technologies with little or awareness of responsiveness to market requirement.

Upland and highland are dynamic and undergoing rapid social, cultural and economic changed from their traditional values, attitude, belief and behavioural patterns, their existing system are the basis for all purposed intervention changes recommended by the government and projects and are

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<sup>29</sup>ALTON Charles, Houmphanh Rattanavong, Service delivery and resettlement: Options for development planning. 2004, p 49.

not simply obstacles to be overcome. Their systems have to be built upon and not discarded as being backward<sup>30</sup>.

While some older villages are economically viable after their relocation, livelihood systems in a number of newly resettled villages are not doing well due to inadequate land, lack of ability to raise and sell livestock and limited access to forest products for use and sale. Poor implementation of land and forest allocation programs can lead directly to increased poverty.<sup>31</sup>

**Table 1: Ethnic diversity in Muang Long (2002)** <sup>32</sup>.

Ethnic group	Villages	Households	Population
Lue	11	677	3,596
Lanten	2	74	434
Hmong	3	125	850
Kui	6	261	1,844
Doi	2	84	438
Akha	60	2,565	13,679
Muser	2	39	151
Yao (mixes with Lue)	1	77	419
Tai khao, Tai Daeng.	1	84	438
Tai Dom, Lue, Akha	1	84	503

More recently rubber is being aggressively promoted as an agricultural alternative in both upper and lower slopes, development agencies are also promoting improved fallow systems and terracing for rice production and livestock raising as highlands alternative to opium and swiddening. But so far most examples are in the experimental stage and cannot compete with the obvious cash crop successes that have immediate market value amongst Chinese populace.

“In 2004, Chinese growers moved to the 2 districts in significant numbers this time renting the field themselves and the area under cultivation rose to 74 ha in Sing. As rapid influx of disease (root parasites), a significant amount of the watermelon cultivation moved from Muang Sing to Muang Long in 2004 where 173 ha have been planted this year (up from 51ha the year before). The increasing number of agricultural products exported from (and through) Muang Sing to Muang Long to China (and Thailand) underscores the expansion and transition of the agricultural sector within the valleys. While commercial trade and industrial investment is slowly diversifying enterprises in

<sup>30</sup> Chris Lyttleton and Humphanh Ratanavong Watermelons, bars and trucks: dangerous intersections in Northwest Lao PDR, p 14-20,

<sup>31</sup> Chris Lyttleton and Humphanh Ratanavong Watermelons, bars and trucks: dangerous intersections in Northwest Lao PDR, p 102.

<sup>32</sup> Chris Lyttleton and Humphanh Ratanavong Watermelons, bars and trucks: dangerous intersections in Northwest Lao PDR, p18.

Sing and Long, the agricultural sector remains the social and occupational context into which most enter as they come to live close to the road. It is therefore necessary to explore in adequate detail the changing dynamics of the local agricultural sector before turning to social and health implications of the presence of the new road<sup>33</sup>”.

“Regardless of the provision of adequate capital, rapid social and economic transformation is underway for highland populations in Sing and Long. It comes as the government policies increasingly control the traditional practices of opium production and slash and burn techniques. The presence of the road is a key facilitation factor in the new economic choices faced both long term and newly arrive local inhabitants in the lowlands. As such, the road provides a key symbol for the co-ordinated expansion for lowland enterprises that can now move beyond national borders with the designated Mekong corridor. At the same time, it offers a concrete beacon for those wanting to partake in the optimistic visions of a growing local economic base. A diversifying agricultural landscape typifies livelihoods where crop production is the mainstay of economic livelihood and in keeping with national policies there is a deliberate shift to maximize export-generated income in this sector<sup>34</sup>”.

#### **6.1.2.2 The cultivation in Long district**

The overall land area of Muang Long valley is only about a third the size of that of Muang Sing. Not surprisingly, the area of wet-rice (paddy) in Muang Long is much less, with only 25% land in Muang Sing. The difference in total volume of wet-rice production is little less due to the higher wet-rice yields obtained in the Muang Long plain (3.7 to 4 tones per ha). Nam Ma, Nam Long, Nam An rivers and smaller watercourses provide irrigation for wet-rice cultivation, though the area of dry-season wet-rice (paddy) is minimal, with only 59 ha were 222 irrigation facilities (dams, weirs). Local agricultural officials have planned for a maximum area of wet-rice cultivation of 2,095 ha in 2010. Predictably Muang Long is much more dependent on dry-rice.

#### **6.1.2.3 Non-rice sector**

Vegetables and other consumption crops (such as corn) are usually inter-crops with the rice and opium. Rubber trees are being increasingly planted in highlands and lowlands in Muang Long but have not yet reached maturation which comes roughly 8 years after planting.

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<sup>33</sup> Chris Lyttleton and Humphanh Ratanavong Watermelons, bars and trucks: dangerous intersections in Northwest Lao PDR. p 22.

<sup>34</sup> Chris Lyttleton and Humphanh Ratanavong Watermelons, bars and trucks: dangerous intersections in Northwest Lao PDR.

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Livestock –rising is also important for subsistence and as a source of cash income. However, villages which moved down to the lower-slopes in the 1990s often suffered serious livestock disease epidemics, mainly from haemorrhagic septicaemia (Gebert 1995, Cohen 2000b).

This need for land has spread southwards each year peaking at 173 ha. Grown in Long in the first few months of 2004 the watermelons are grown by Haw Chinese and Akha immigrations from Yunan, PRC, on paddy rice land rented from lowland Lue, Lanten, Akha and Kui.

#### **6.1.2.4 Non-timber forest products**

The remaining forest in Long holds many NTFPs that have potential and already accessed value to highland communities. Up to 15,000 kg per month of bark from certain species of tree used for the manufacture of glue passes through Xiengkok on its way to Thailand. Orchid sold to China for medicinal purposes are a less sustainable marketable commodity; select varieties fetch high prices (150,000 kip/kg)<sup>35</sup> but they increasingly hard to find in the Long forests. Like the fragrant woods Mai Kessana (a Mai Hom) they will soon be commodities no longer in existence in this part of the world.

The sale of palm nuts began in Muang Long in 1998; sometimes assisted by small private companies who organize the collection and delivery to the sales point on the bank of the Mekong at Xiengkok. At first, the most that was collected 300 tones per year. The amount exported dropped for several years as local swiddening in the highland reduced the number of accessible palm nut tree.

Palm nuts are found in the south-west reaches of Muang Long and rarely in areas closer to Muang Sing. However for those in this area the crop is lucrative and some villages this is now the primary form of income to the extent that they in longer grown rice at all. Villages collecting palm nuts and delivering them to the port get 10 baht/kg. A steady steam of Akha men and wormn lug tree can yield up nuts between 30 and 50 kg for hours to reach the port. One palm tree can yield up to 60 kgs of palm nuts during its fruiting season (Nov-Feb), Palm nuts delivered at the company's collection point that are not properly prepared only get 2 baht/kg.

#### **6.1.2.5 Opium**

In the highlands of Long opium has been grow extensively to be used both as an effective medicine for range of illnesses and as a crucial source of income, especially to obtain rice in times of shortage. In addition opium has been consumed by the sizeable highland addict population in Long, at times averaging approx 9% of total Akha population in this district.

In 2002 and 2003 after the confiscation of poppy seeds and destruction of poppy fields a number of villages have re-engaged in opium cultivation in some cases officials have destroyed poppy fields as many as three times. Towards the end of 2003, Muang Long district report claimed that 267

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<sup>35</sup>ALTON Charles, Houmphanh Rattanavong, Service delivery and resettlement: Options for development planning. 2004, p 15.

households in 14 villages were still cultivating a total area of 54 ha. Ostensibly this falls within the State policy of allowing a certain amount of ongoing production until 2005 to allow for the elder opium addicts who are unable to reasonably rehabilitate.

#### **6.1.2.6 Crop substitution**

Near-eradication of opium over such a short period has placed a heavy economic burden on highland communities, both in terms of the elimination of a major source of income and the rising cost of opium to addicts (prices double between 2002 and 2003). The burden is exacerbated by a fragile and low-production tie economy. Effort to lighten this burden through crop substitution has also taken place in Muang Long.

Despite efforts by development agencies to provide alternatives to poppy cultivation in the highlands, the lure of lowland opportunities is proving a major enticement for many. This is clearly linked to the perception that economic diversity promoted by access to markets relies on proximity to lowland commerce and trade. There is no doubt this perception is based on the recent economic growth in the lowland valleys.

#### **6.1.2.7 Chinese and Chinese investment**

While only a small number of petty traders come from Thailand and Burma, they are eclipsed by the current Chinese influence, which ranges from individual traders selling any number of items from vegetables to nail-clippers in the market of travelling medics selling injections and vitamins in the more remote villages or the entrepreneur who trek through the mountains collecting human hair for doll factories, or less scrupulous traders buying endangered turtles through so small factories producing animal feed, processing rice, liqueur or wood, and a copper mine. In total, the District Governor estimates around 100 in and around Muang Long.

Rubber trees has huge appeal to Akha people who wish to have a commercial crop that will allow them to stay in the high lands but it is not sure yet that rubber tree will be a viable alternative for a long term.

Due to the technical skills needed to grow watermelon Akha and Lue prefer to rent their land to Chinese investors who send teams of technical advisors and labourers during the growing season. Akha might provide labour during planting and harvest season. The Chinese prefer to hire women rather for their apparent subservience and superior diligence<sup>36</sup>.

#### **6.1.3 Migration trends for women**

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<sup>36</sup> Chris Lyttleton and Humphanh Ratanavong Watermelons, bars and trucks: dangerous intersections in Northwest Lao PDR, 118 p.

Few women left the village. In some villages most of the young women I interviewed wanted to go, but in some village not. It is seem to be like according to the village area near/far from road and according to the presence of Chinese as well. Married women usually not want to leave their family.

***The reason not to go:***

Because of their society is very small. They have a little knowledge about outside the village and they are afraid because they do not speak Lao. Man and women do not exchange life stories much. And they want the village to be developed rather than to leave the village.

***The reason to go:***

Some wanted to go because they have known other places, they have been somewhere and they want to a better life, live nice place (beautiful houses, have electricity, roads, vehicle and things such as the clothes). And most of them are single or divorced. And another reason to leave is to marry.

In resume, the reasons of the women wanted to go is to live in a nice place, and the reason to stay (not to go) is do not want to separate from the family, fear.

#### **6.1.4 Poverty and migration**

As a case in Cambodia detailed by, R. Mazur<sup>37</sup> shows that: the traditional Laotian social safety net relies on most people having almost enough land water and forest to produce almost enough food to feed their family. Most Laotian survives by seasonally switching different modes of production. Access to farmland, wetlands and forests as resources help to face chronic food insecurity.

Environment destruction or restricting public access to these domains could suddenly end this diversified range dependant survival strategy with consequences for many rural people.

The PPA mentions<sup>38</sup> that *“the primary indicator of poverty in the view of the people who are poor in the Lao PDR is rice sufficiency”*

In the reality I found that, there are still have the situation of poverty claimed by some families (who divorced and or father died) have not enough yield for consume so they have to work for other people in the village or go to work in other place close by to get some money or exchange with rice for their work which they will get by wage (pay by day).

##### **6.1.4.1 Livelihood**

“The primary indicator of poverty in the views of people who are poor in the Lao PDR in the rice sufficiency, from the PPA, average annual rice sufficiency for the poor can be estimated at approximately 7 months. Land forest allocation implementation, which has been poorly implemented, is a major

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<sup>37</sup> MAZUR Robert, Development and insecure livelihoods and migration in Cambodia, DANG Nguyen An, SUPANG Chantanavich, Uprooting people for their own good, human displacement, resettlement and trafficking in the Mekong Sub-Region, social sciences publishing house, Hanoi, 2003 p 43.

<sup>38</sup> PPA, ADB 2001, p XV

cause of poverty had imposed severe hardships on many swidden cultivator. The worst problem has been the reduction of fallow periods, which in the majority for cases now average 3-4 years compared with 14-15 years previously.”<sup>39</sup>

Cultural dimension are also important in understanding rural poverty. The poorest are considered to be those who cannot accumulate the valuable types of capital (development knowledge, full strength family workers, political contact...) <sup>40</sup>

We collected testimonies from the villagers complaining of an increasing feeling of poverty mostly related to food insufficiency or the increasing difficulty to collect enough food due to the deterioration of the environment. This has some incidence in the decision to migrate.

Migration as a part of livelihood strategy may assume different forms with varying consequences. It may be from a rural area to another rural area, to an urban area, on a temporary or seasonal basis or to an urban area on a permanent basis.

ADB<sup>41</sup> report is alarming concerning poverty in Northern Lao, “while severe poverty declined in the Lao PDR from 1992-1993 to 1997-1998, it increased in the North at an annual rate of 1, 8%...Luang Nam Tha experienced increased level of severe poverty.

The ethnic communities when faced with poverty and at a time increase cost for health, education and consumer goods, had four coping strategies

- increase reliance on natural resources
- sale of produce and livestock
- handicrafts
- sale of their labour

However, the sale of labour would in most cases result in migration as the ethnic community members leave their villages in search of employment”.

In the absence of viable local alternatives many people undertake a seasonal migration to avoid debt and food shortages as well as to earn income for costly events.

The poverty is not the main reason for the people to leave. Because people do not complain or tell me that they feel poor. They do not want more or to be rich but just want to improve their life in the village to access to the clean water or education as people are happy when the village have the school for their children.

### **6.1.5 Distance to the road and migration**

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<sup>39</sup> Participatory poverty assessment ADB, 2001, P xiii

<sup>40</sup> MAZUR Robert, Development and insecure livelihoods and migration in Cambodia, DANG Nguyen An, SUPANG Chantanavich, Uprooting people for their own good, human displacement, resettlement and trafficking in the Mekong Sub-Region, social sciences publishing house, Hanoi, 2003 p 62

<sup>41</sup> ADB “Participatory Poverty Assessment Lao PDR” 2001, p 3

The road brings outsiders to the village, which try to take/trafficked/ recruit them mostly Chinese. I found that all of the persons who left to China are living near the road. But also many women did not leave the village as they feel that they have more facility already by leaving along the road.

So being near the road has a mixed impact both pushing for migration as outside come to recruit young persons and keeping them in the village because they do have already more facilities.

### **6.1.6 Chinese presence and migration**

I found that relation between Akha and Chinese is an important factor for migration.

Some long term migrants take local wife

“The elders in some Akha villages prohibit sexual interactions between visiting Chinese Akha men and village women precisely out of concern that their young women will be lost to Chinese households across the border. However in many villages there are no sanctions on liaisons between local women and visiting men even in light of rapidly growing number of cross nationality relationships. Not infrequently the informal and unregistered unions results in the women moving to China accompanying their partners.

It is becoming increasingly common for Akha and Kui women to establish sexual relationships with Chinese men whom they met when working together in sugar cane and watermelon fields<sup>42</sup>”.

Ethnic women either they go altogether to nearby Lao village or men come to visit them in their village, the Kui village Ban Pholdsanphan provide a clear example of the growing network of sexual liaisons occurring since water melon arrived. It is a village that has undergone considerable stress in its relocation to the lowlands and were according to ACF the negative impact of resettlement are more obvious in terms of poverty and health standards.

In relocated villages local labour is readily available in the fields along the road due to investment from migrant Chinese. Labour relation also bring outsider into a geographic and social orbit that encourages increased sexual exchange.

In some villages near the road after the Chinese came to invest (banana or water melon garden), there will have some people in the village (girls) left to China with the Chinese man.

China is the main destination for migration to abroad. This can be explained not only by the presence of Chinese men but also by cross border ethnic links and history of cross border trade for Akha.

### **6.1.7 Development policies and migration**

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<sup>42</sup> EVANS Grant, HUTTON Christopher, ENG Kuah Khun (Eds), *Where China meets Southeast Asia. Social and Cultural Changes in the Border Regions*, White Lotus, Bangkok, 2000, p 14

Among the factors leading to the selling of girl children in the North is the arrival of electricity and television in rural areas, the new found “need” for consumer good and the diminishment of the old sense of community where neighbour helped each other with the planting and harvesting of crops. Filmmaker Supachai Surongasian says: Electricity has become a part of our lives so now everybody must have a refrigerator, a TV and a radio. Motorized ploughs that require gas and oil have now replaces buffaloes. All these things require money, of course. People no longer help each other for free; they want to be paid for their time. Consumerism has severely weakened the villagers’ traditional customs and values. (“Fishing for the green”, Nation, 30 April 1997).<sup>43</sup>

The villagers most of all are farmers (do Hai), and they still continue to do that, but after 5 more years they will have to stop this because of the government policy to stop slash and burn agriculture. They still can not see another way to grow rice and vegetable. Some want to do Na (flat rice fields) but they have problem with water as they do not have enough water.

The problem for most of the villagers in the villages is they do not prepare any plan about what they want to do in the future; some they said “*I want to do the rubber tree, but I do not know any thing about that*” (or they do not have any skill or knowledge about the rubber at all). What they though and known is rubber tree will make a good income for them.

Some men and women are working as waged labourer in the field rent by Chinese companies nearby the villages where they grow watermelons and banana.

### **6.1.8 Ethnicity and migration**

Akha are a good sellers, and easiest to interview compared to other ethnics minority. There is some Akha group in China, so the Akha people go to China more than other groups.

Toyota<sup>44</sup> provides interesting historical perspectives concerning the cross border mobility and social networks sustained by Akha caravan traders between Southwest China Myanmar and Thailand.

According to this author Akha have always been aware of other economic possibilities because agriculture didn’t always supply enough food. Food shortage is not new and the fear of hunger is chronic. In order to survive villagers were involved in trading for century’s maintaining interactive relationship with other ethnic groups including interethnic marriages that also took place and have nothing new.

We share Toyota point of view, writing that it would be wrong also to consider that the Akha are able to take advantages of the new business opportunities are representative of their whole ethnic group members, “due to exposure to rapid deterioration of their environment and to considerable political and economical pressures, the majority in fact are in a fairly destitute and

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<sup>43</sup> Fact book on Global Sexual exploitation. Thailand. P17 (26) Author unkown

<sup>44</sup> TOYOTA Milka, Cross border mobility and social networks Akha caravan traders, p 204-221 in EVANS Grant, HUTTON Christopher, ENG Kuah Khun (Eds), *Where China meets Southeast Asia. Social and Cultural Changes in the Border Regions*, White Lotus, Bangkok, 2000, 346 p.

depressed condition, drug addiction among the highlanders has recently grown to an alarming rate and prostitution is not an uncommon choice among young Akha girls from broken families<sup>45</sup>.

### **6.1.9 Women and migration**

Many young Akha turned to wage casual daily labour

*Ms. Yor 19 years old said: Because of my father died so in my family has only my mother and me. Just two of us and my mother is started to be old so it is often that we do not have rice to eat as only me and her do the work in the field. So to continue my our life I have to try do as much works as I can do to earn some rice (it is very comment that people give the rice instead of wage for the works) or some money, I used to go to Xiengkok to work as the loading goods at the port or in the Chinese banana or water melon field. But I can earn only 15,000 or 20,000 kip per day (for all day work) maximum.*

While in Muang Long has land for paddy fields is scarce, those who have skills or capital rent and exploit these lands profitably turning the owner into workers.

“Another portentous development is the emergent commercialization of sex among local Akha. In the past couple of years, there has been a rapid expansion particularly in Long district of watermelon cultivation by Chinese and Akha Chinese from Yunan who rent land near the main road from local Akha and Lue. It has now become common practice for these men to visit Akha villages at night and arrange sleep with Akha girls with permission of the head of the village youth group who will get some gifts of cigarettes or whisky. This could be seen as a form of hospitality, especially as Chinese Akha often acts as intermediaries. However, some of the more ‘modern’ Akha women are accepting direct financial payment from visiting Chinese men for sexual services and in some cases without the customary mediation of the youth group head”<sup>46</sup>

Migration is a matter of adapting to a new life style that made new social and new emotional requirements.

In Muang Long villages young women are at distinct disadvantage they work in the field but they have no control over the cash, or debts that new crops brought in. traditional because of cultural restrictions they have little access to education. They are expected to marry, not to accumulate non household knowledge and skills. They are prevented from meeting the new needs and desire generated by the socio-economy around them. I found that seeking employment out the village seems to be the single option to gain access to the products and activities that seemed increasingly enticing.

<sup>45</sup> TOYOTA Milka, Cross border mobility and social networks Akha caravan traders, p 204-211 in see project books to read about south china from Grant EVANS 221p.

<sup>46</sup> COHEN Paul, and LYTTLETON Chris, The Akkha of Northwest Laos: modernity and social suffering, article photocopied 28 pages, undated, Afesip resource centre p20

This can be illustrated by some story in Northern Thailand, Montreevat described about “young tribal girls and young women with little education and a near total lack of knowledge of the world outside became prime targets in the sex industry which was lucrative for owners and appears to be lucrative for the new recruits as well.”

Most of them were lured into prostitution with the promise of paid employment in urban areas, knowing little Thai language and having little education; villagers are easily fooled in this way<sup>47</sup>.

Life in the villages is more and more focused on cash or money how to acquire it in order to support lives which can no longer be supported through agriculture to support the needs and taste for consumer goods.

### **6.1.10 Labour migration**

There are some Chinese who came to invest in some agriculture, and they are many Chinese workers for the road did not go back to China, and some in Xiengkok (the port), right now there are some Chinese restaurants and also guest house (which just build in few years ago), and also some Lao people from another district like Na Lea and Borkeo who came to work as a workers in the wood factory in Xiengkok. Chinese take some local opportunity for job but they created some job mostly in farming.

### **6.1.11 Migration and trafficking**

I have told story of women trafficked for prostitution in Thailand who came back to die from AIDS in the village.

Also I met one case of a lady trafficked to China for forced wedding (to be second wife) who escaped after some months and married now in her village and got two children.

*Mrs. Cho Le, 26 years old, Akha women said:  
Before I just live as normal villagers in my village, and then a Chinese-Akha man came to our village to sale the things, he offered me and my cousin to go to Sing district to visit my cousin there, and when I arrived at Sing town my cousin left me as she said that she had to go to pick up some one, she let me with other 2 Akha girls. After that the Chinese man said he will bring us to meet another cousin in Ma district (near the Chinese border), after arrived there he said again that our cousins are not there, and go to Muang La in China, and then Muang Xieng Houng, and then stay there for a few days then*

<sup>47</sup> **MONTREEVAT** Judy & **PONSAKUNPAISAN** Margaret, *Prostitution & Aids. The risk of being a young tribal woman*, pp. 289-306, in Mc Caskill Don & Kampe Ken (Eds), *Development or Domestication*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai, 1997, p 292 .

*go again until Koune Ming and pass until arrived at a village name Hu Go in Xee Young district in China. Finally I know that I was felt on his tric, he forced me to be his second wife (small wife), when I was there I had to do all the house works, also vegetable garden and raise the goats.*

*After I lived there for sometimes I started to think about how to come back to Lao, so I had save all of money little by little that they gave to me when there were some special occasion in the village and the people gave to me. Then I decided to leave by cough a bus, but after I arrived at Koune Ming my money is finished so I can not go farther more with the bus, so I had to walk for 4 days from Koune Ming until Oe Xe district. Over there I met a poor Chinese old couple who do not have any child, they asked me to stay with them, and I stayed with them for 5 months, after I asked them for some money to pay for the bus to comeback, and they gave me. When I came back I met some Akha in the border who helped me to cross the border and came back with them and since stay in the village and do not go to any father place. Now I married and live with my husband who is very kind with me and our 2 daughters together.*

Story of trafficking are difficult to report mostly if it is for sexual exploitation, and I think these people are vulnerable, because many of them have no idea about it.

Rende Taylor<sup>48</sup> reports that “poverty, lack of education and vocational training, unequal access to education and employment for girls and ‘cultural perceptions of their inferiority’ are they key contributing factors for the trafficking of women and girls” in Northern Thailand.

## **6.2 Analysis of the results**

### **6.2.1 Poverty, insecure livelihoods and migration**

An additional impact of the destruction of the environment, limitation on land use low yields poor weather condition, and lost to pests in upland farming plots...is the heavier work load taken on by ethnic women in the home. The loss of forest and water due to mining logging and plantations or the declaration of parks and forest reservations make it difficult for women to maintain the needed supply of water and fuel at home. They are forced to walk long distances to carry heavy pails of water in the few remaining natural water sources. The biodiversity of the forest is decreasing and the forest as a safety net especially in times of rice shortage is not longer as reliable. Rice shortage coincides with the most labour intensive period in swidden agriculture for women.

### **6.2.2 Gender and poverty**

“Lao women play critical roles in agriculture and other economic activities, and are primarily responsible for maintaining their families’ food security and health; women continue to work on the farms and within the household. They

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<sup>48</sup> **RENDE TAYLOR Lisa**, Dangerous traded-offs, the behavioral ecology of child labor and prostitution in Rural Northern Thailand, current anthropology vol 46, number 3, June 2005, 411p.

are also involved in informal small-scale income earning activities, and handicrafts production in order to supplement family incomes. Generally, Lao women are providing security at household level through their income generation activities, handicrafts production and agricultural production. The vegetable gardening for family and some extra for the market is usually under the responsibility of women, as well as for pigs and poultry raising<sup>49</sup>

“Gender roles, however, are heavily ethnic-specific and many variations were found throughout the survey. To some degree family labour imbalances are factor of traditional male roles-such as hunter, protector, warrior, or feller of large tree-having been eroded or having disappeared entirely, whereas female roles have remained the same or increased. The increased presence of grasses in swiddens due to ecological problems associated with land-allocation have increased women’s labour inputs as cutting grass is considered “women’s work” Like raising of small livestock is women’s responsibility and when epidemics affect livestock women labour investment is lost. There is a vital need for research and investigation of gender roles among the various ethnic groups and the provision of good ethnographic description. This would in turn provide a foundation for gender studies and action plan in the multicultural context”.<sup>50</sup>

I could see in the villages that women are generally working harder than men and to play less a role in decision-making and discussion.

### **6.3 Women skills and migration:**

With the building of the road and the extension of trade with china, places for entertainment with women in prostitution were established in Muang Long and Xiengkong with ethnic women coming from other districts but also some akha Chinese women from China<sup>51</sup>

“ another portentous development is the emergent commercialization of sex among local Akha. In the past couple of years, there has been a rapid expansion particularly in Long district of watermelon cultivation by Chinese and Akha Chinese from Yunan who rent land near the main road from local akha and Lue. It has now become common practice for these men to visit Akha villages at night and arrange sleep with Akha girls with permission of the head of the village youth group and with gifts of cigarettes and whisky. This could be seen as a form of hospitality, especially as Chinese Akha often acts as intermediaries. However, some of the more’ modern’ Akha women are accepting direct financial payment from visiting Chinese men for sexual services and in some cases without the customary mediation of the youth group head”<sup>52</sup>

*p 22 “in the more recently relocated villages the lack of rice to eat or opium to trade has enforced all the émigrés to hire themselves out to Chinese*

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<sup>49</sup> World Bank “Gender profile in Lao PDR” by (GRID), October 2004 p 1.

<sup>50</sup> Page xiii-xvi Participatory poverty assessment ADB, 2001

<sup>51</sup> COHEN Paul, and LYTTLETON Chris, The Akkha of Northwest Laos: modernity and social suffering, article photocopied 28 pages, undated, Afesip resource centre p 20

<sup>52</sup> COHEN Paul, and LYTTLETON Chris, The Akkha of Northwest Laos: modernity and social suffering, article photocopied 28 pages, undated, Afesip resource centre p20

*employers. Young Akha women cross the border to assist with rice planting and harvesting Chinese fields.”*

In muang long villages young women are at distinct disadvantage they work in the field but they have no control over the cash, or debts that new crops brought in. traditional because of cultural restrictions they have little access to education. They are expected to marry, not to accumulate non household knowledge and skills. They are prevented from meeting the new needs and desire generated by the socio-economy around them. *“Seeking employment out the village seems to be the single option to gain access to the products and activities that seemed increasingly enticing.”* P 290

In Northern Thailand, Montreevat<sup>53</sup> described how *“young tribal girls and young women with little education and a near total lack of knowledge of the world outside became prime targets in the sex industry which was lucrative for owners and appears to be lucrative for the new recruits as well.”*

*Most of them were lured into prostitution with the promise of paid employment in urban areas, knowing little Thai language and having little education; villagers are easily fooled in this way.*

Life in the villages is more and more focused on cash or money how to acquire it in order to support lives which can no longer be supported through agriculture to support the needs and taste for consumer goods.

### **6.3.1 Women involved in trade (women trader)**

There are much more women than the man who sale the things in the market, they walked from the village to sell the small things such as the vegetables or the wild plants. And then they used to buy the things that they need back as well, so it means they have to carry the things two times go and come back.

A recent World Bank study reports that there is an increasing number of ethnic women migrating to urban centres in search as job as labourer in the formal and informal sectors<sup>54</sup> and there are many examples reported from neighbouring countries in the Mekong region of ethnic women being trafficked and exploited in prostitution in the cities.

### **6.3.2 Women daily work**

There are very few materials available in Lao PDR to describe the situation of ethnic (non Lao) women. We can however draw some picture in broad terms I could see women play an important and often primary role in production in ethnic communities which are largely subsistence agricultural communities. They engage in swidden farming and their workload is heavy. Farming by ethnic women is usually augmented by other productive activities such as weaving, knitting, basketry, and embroidery. It is also usually the women who

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<sup>53</sup> **MONTREEVAT** Judy & **PONSAKUNPAISAN** Margaret, *Prostitution & Aids. The risk of being a young tribal woman*, pp. 289-306, in Mc Caskill Don & Kampe Ken (Eds), *Development or Domestication*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai, 1997, p 292.

<sup>54</sup> World Bank, ethnic groups, gender and poverty eradication, case study from a Khmu Lue community in Oudomxay province, World Bank, Washington, 2003. p10-11.

forage for food and other forest products while the men do the hunting and trapping.

I observed that women had many duties to do for the daily life and also some routines such as to do the sewing (make their own clothes or for their family members), house works, go to the forest to collect plants to eat or to sell, wood for fire, some palm leaves to make the roof of the house, cook, take care of their child...etc all this keep them very busy in the villages.

#### *Skills to migrate*

Women think that they have no skills that allow them to go and they don't know what to do to go. Some young women would like to study about sewing to be tailor and escape from the hard work in the hai.

So this means that introducing new skills might be also a factor to push for migration, as young women will be stronger and having skills for the job market.

#### *Skills to stay in the village*

Most of the women expressed the wishes to receive training and fund to raise animals, grow vegetables and fruits, so they don't need to buy it and they can sell some also. They want not any much to earn money for the future but to be self sufficient for everyday life.

About handicraft only Akkha can do some but they feel it is difficult to sell and many stopped to do. The Kui have good skills to make bamboos baskets to keep the clothes that are very famous in Luang Nam Tha province, they received support from EU to produce ethnic products that are sold on the local market in a special shop built by EU.

Kui men and women are also producing very popular Lao rice alcohol but they don't have enough rice to sell it on the market.

Mouseu are making bag with cloth that they weave.

In the case of our study in Muong Long, considering that most of the women we interviewed never enrolled at school one of the first steps in terms of training would be to teach them literacy and numeracy and then consider some vocational training in the villages as informal training opportunity.

While Lao PDR as Vietnam are now oriented to market economy skills development can be understood as a way to provide access to market through appropriate training.

Skills are professional or technical for one activity such as basketry in this case the community might have some skilled professionals who could act as trainer but at large skills development means the ability to deal with market that supposes language skills (in the national language Lao) and innumeracy skills as well and business skills to be empowered to sell at the best price.

So skills development refers to capacity building to be defined according to the objectives of the training and the skills that are selected

Generally speaking capacity building should include some social component of life skills as well even some being already taught by some organizations

(primary health care, sanitation, opium desintoxification etc...) and promotion of women and child rights.

Challenges for changes to promote livelihood security, reduce poverty and migration. Agriculture development will be an essential component of efforts to improve rural livelihoods. Key elements include improving crops varieties and complementary inputs, diversifying farming approaches, increasing agro processing, reducing marketing costs and increasing agriculture support services. It involves also promotion of community forest management in a sustainable and equitable way. This will require more education and development skills mostly for women, access to credit and training in business skills for micro enterprises, as well as to secure land property rights, improve infrastructure, increase access to market and development of non farming activities.

### **6.3.3 From training to income generation activities**

Rende Taylor<sup>55</sup> reports that “poverty, lack of education and vocational training, unequal access to education and employment for girls and ‘cultural perceptions of their inferiority’ are they key contributing factors for the trafficking of women and girls” in Northern Thailand.

*Similarly more than 50% of women in Lao PDR are classified as self-employed or household workers (NSC 1995). While work in the informal sector provided women with flexibility to carry on their traditional domestic responsibilities, it is insecure and there is usually little employment protection.*

*Apart from providing cheap labour to fuel economic development, women globally remain heavily represented in the agricultural workforce as men move out of the agricultural sector at a faster rate. This is particularly true for the Mekong Region where many women still live in rural areas.*

*While women’s labour participation in the secondary and tertiary sectors is significant in Thailand and China, where export-oriented and service industries have been prominent during the last three decades, the participation of women in formal employment in other Mekong region countries is still relatively low. It follows that the poverty and exploitation of women in the region may not be directly or readily linked to the trade liberalization, deregulation and increased foreign investment association with the globalization phenomenon. (Page 4)<sup>56</sup>*

## **6.4 Discussion**

Can rural to urban migration improve the well being of the rural areas of origin of migration or are these rural areas impoverished through the rural exodus?

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<sup>55</sup> **RENDE TAYLOR Lisa**, Dangerous traded-offs, the behavioral ecology of child labor and prostitution in Rural Northern Thailand, current anthropology vol 46, number 3, June 2005, pp 411.

<sup>56</sup> Kobkun Rayanakorn, Gender Inequity, p 28

What are the implications of the migration in terms of gender for women who left as migrants or the women left behind?

The ones who leave in one community are very often not the poorest and to migrate one needs some funds.

Some recommendations to promote

- awareness raising and advocacy concerning the dangers of illegal employment and trafficking
- promotion of education for girls
- Alleviation of poverty via capacity building and vocational training with the goal of subsistence production and enough to care of their family.

By sending remittances the migrants can help to alleviate poverty in the rural sector so preventing migration cannot be the aim as such of antipoverty reduction projects

## **PART 7 CONCLUSION**

The implementation of government development programs in Northern Lao have most often been carried out with little regard for the context, at least that concerning the local residents the project beneficiaries, ignoring the values, beliefs, and practices of the local ethnics populations resulting in a breakdown of traditional culture and believes and social links. When I talked with the villager and I felt that it is very difficult for them because they felt that they lost their mind as after they moved from their birth place, that they still have a very strong feeling in their mind according to their religion and beliefs.

The incidence of poverty in usually greatest on women, their level of literacy, education is lower. Many migrant women initially leave home because they are ambitious, want to succeed financial and socially, and /or hope to contribute to larger house-hold welfare because of the society and economic changed which made more demands for them. They are often willing to take risk; yet, some have no choice and were sold by their family or friends. Women themselves are often seeking better lives and meeting family and kinship obligations. Urban labour intensive units are creating labour opportunities for women but these jobs are highly exploitative and extremely low paid (such as the garment industry).

The ones who leave in one community are very often not the poorest and to migrate one needs some funds.

By sending remittances the migrants can help to alleviate poverty in the rural sector so preventing migration cannot be the aim as such of antipoverty reduction projects

As Skeldon<sup>57</sup> mentioned attend to promote informal activities based upon remittance income are likely to be far more effective in alleviating poverty in

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<sup>57</sup> Skeldon, Ronald, “ Rural to urban migration and its implications for poverty alleviation”, Asian pacific journal, Vol 12, N01., March 1997, p3-16.

both urban and rural sectors than any attempt to restrict migration. Migration can also play an important role in development and poverty alleviation.

The cases of human trafficking we met show that it is really a serious regional concern, awareness programs to prevent trafficking and exploitation to teach about women rights are necessary in order to avoid that migration turn to a disaster for the women who left their house in a risky journey to China or Thailand.

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## **PART 9 ANNEX**

### **9.1 Annex Recommendations**

To promote

- awareness raising and advocacy concerning the dangers of illegal employment
- promotion of education for girls
- Alleviation of poverty via capacity building and vocational training with the goal of subsistence production and enough to care of their family.

Most of the children in the upland/highlands will stay there and follow similar livelihoods and lifestyle as those of their parents if they do not migrate abroad or to the valley. Virtually everything they learn from their parents and grandparents.

"Many trafficked women initially leave home because they are ambitious, want to succeed financial and socially, and /or hope to contribute to larger household welfare. They are often willing to take risk; yet, some have no choice and are sold by family and friends. Most come from societies that place little to no value on the individual women's welfare while they are trafficking into societies that value female body even less. In the globalize economy system, the contemporary promotion and organization of sexual trafficking by both sending and receiving societies commodities all girls and women bodies and existence of trafficking devalue all women. Trafficking also inherently involves

an exchange between suppliers and consumers and both are implicated in trisection<sup>58</sup>”.

When trafficking become an issue, it may be used to control women’s and girls’ bodies and is often based on policies of fear rather than empowerment. The threat of trafficking is used to remind the girls and women that if they do not behave in certain socially acceptable ways and particularly if they are too mobile, they place themselves at great risk.

**Annex 1: Time table and organization of the field work.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> - 15 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Preparation for the field research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collect documents.</li> <li>- Interview with national administrators.</li> <li>- Meeting with people working in NGO and development institutions (SC UK, ACF...)</li> <li>- Develop the questionnaires.</li> <li>- Exchange with the supervisor.</li> </ul>
16 <sup>th</sup> Nov -7 <sup>th</sup> Dec	On the field first interviews and results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting with some NGOs which are based over there.</li> <li>- Meeting with village leaders.</li> <li>- Interview the villagers.</li> </ul>
8 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup> Dec	In Vientiane: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting with ACF and AFESIP to report to them about the first result.</li> <li>- Draft the first report and consult with the supervisor.</li> </ul>
16 <sup>th</sup> Dec – 7 <sup>th</sup> Jan	In the field, more in deep and targeted interview. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interview the target group like in the village such as the women and girls.</li> <li>- Collect the data and write the second draft of the report then consult with the supervisor.</li> </ul>
8 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup> Jan	In Vientiane. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write the plan of the coming report and the main results from interviews.</li> <li>- Final draft of the report and consult with supervisor.</li> </ul>
15 <sup>th</sup> – 25 <sup>th</sup> Jan	In Vientiane. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final checks with the supervisor and complete the draft.</li> </ul>

**Schedule for field research study (LNT and VT)**

<sup>58</sup> Anthropological Perspectives on the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation. Lynellyn D.Long p 25 ,International migration vol. 42 (1) 2004 pp-31

Activities	November	December	January
ACF office LNT + Long district	16 to 19		
Meet AFESIP Lao	20		
Mangla China	21		
Meeting at Mangla China	22		
Come back to LNT	23		
ACF office Long district	24		
First Village	25 to 01		
ACF office Long district		02 to 03	
Second Village		04 to 08	
ACF office Long district		09	
Third Village		10 to 15	
ACF office LNT + Long district		16	
Leaving for Vientiane		17	
Vientiane ( meeting with ACF, AFESIP )		18 to 25	
ACF office LNT		26	
Forth Village		27 to 01	
Back and write the report in Vientiane			07 to 25

### **Annex 2: List and description of villages**

Villages	Ethnic	Habitant	Women	Families	Houses	Left	Re	Unre
Phoug Cai mai	Akha	220 p	75 p	39	38	5	3 died	2
Tao Hom	Akha	383 p	183 p	82	71	3	1	2
Phoug Cai Kao	Akha	159 p	81 p	37	32	0	0	0
Payalouang	Akha	178 p	87 p	77	73	2	0	0
Done Yeing	Akha	298 p	146 p	71	65	7	3	4
Phor Chane	Kui	283 p	148 p	57	48	0	0	0
Pha Tea	Akha	313 p	152 p	71	62	0	0	0
Pold Som Phan	Kui	1156 p	599 p	189	125	3	1	2
Som Phan Mai	Akha	162 p	89 p	37	34	1	0	1
Som Phan Yao	Akha	207 p	122 p	35	25	0	0	0
Ca Yee	Muser	206 p	97 p	43	39	0	0	0

### **Annex 3 List of persons interviewed and main answers (attached file)**

### **Annex 4 Villages women and migration**

Some real story

3 Lao women are arrested in Malaysia and sent back to Hat Yai police station under charge of illegal immigration, coming from Bokeo (Northern Laos) two are minors and one is 18 or 20, they worked in Singapore in the sex sector (and in Malaysia as well). They still be connected by phone to traffickers (or their boss or pimps) who managed to give them money to give to the Thai

police to free them (but it didn't work as several NGO's follow the cases while refusing to help them because it seems that they are themselves recruiting for a Singapore man, and five other cases should be coming from Malaysia after being recruited by them and rescued before having been sold, we don't know all the story yet). Now the 3 women have been sent back to Nongkai where the Lao police should pick them up but in the same time as under 18 two of these girls are also victims of trafficking, they should be sent to the MSLW centre for victims of trafficking and come back under a lengthy but safe repatriation program supported by IOM. From what we heard from Thai colleagues, the women are very uncooperative, they always tell different stories and they claim that they will come back to Singapore, that they will not get into Laos again, so the Thai NGO want them to be kept under investigation.

### ***Annex 5 Chinese presences in the villages, displacement and distance to the road***

Villages	Ethnic	Far/Near the road	Displaced Y/N	Chinese invested Y/N	Percentage of women who left
Phoug Cai mai	Akha	Near	Yes	Yes near by	6.6
Tao Hom	Akha	Near	Yes	Yes	1
Phoug Cai Kao	Akha	Far 2 h walk up	No	No	
Payalouang	Akha	Near	Yes	Yes	
Done Yeing	Akha	Near	Yes	Yes	
Phor Chane	Kui	Far 2 h walk up	Yes	No	0
Pha Tea	Akha	Near	Yes	No	0
Pold Som Phan	Kui	Near	Yes	Yes	0.5
Som Phan Mai	Akha	Near	Yes	Yes	
Som Phan Yao	Akha	Far 2 ½ h walk	Yes	No	
Ca Yee	Muser	Near	Yes	No	

### ***Annex 6 Villages close to the road: reasons to leave and to stay***

The village close to the road						
No.	SEX	M/S/D	Stay	Leave	Single	Married
01,	w	m	family			
02,	w	m		money		1
03,	w	m	family and language			1
04,	w	s	family		1	
05,	w	s	family and language		1	
06,	w	s		family	1	
07,	m	s		money and better	1+	

				life		
08,	w	m	afraid and family			1
09,	w	m	family			1
10,	w	m		money and better life		1
11,	w	m	family			1
12,	w	m	family			1
13,	m	s		money and better life	1+	
14,	w	s		money and better life	1	
15,	w	s	afraid and family		1	
16,	w	s	family and language		1	
17,	w	s	afraid and family		1	
18,	w	s	family		1	
19,	w	s	family		1	
20,	w	m	afraid and family			1
21,	w	m	family			1
22,	m	s	family		1+	
23,	w	s	family		1	
24,	w	s	afraid and family		1	
25,	w	s	afraid and family		1	
26,	w	m	family and language			
27,	w	s	family		1	
28,	w	m	family			
29,	m	s	afraid and family		1+	
30,	m	s	afraid and family		1+	
31,	w	s		money and better life	1	
32,	w	m	family			1
33,	w	s	afraid and family		1	
34,	w	s	do not know, maybe go or not			
35,	w	m	family and language			1
36,	w	m	family			1
37,	w	m	family and language			1
38,	w	s	afraid and family		1	
39,	w	s	afraid and family		1	
40,	w	m	afraid and family			1
Result	5 men		32 in 40 people	7 in 40 people	5 in 22 people	2 in 14 people

### ***Annex 7 Villages far from the road: reasons to leave and to stay***

<b>The village close to the road</b>						
<b>No.</b>	<b>SEX</b>	<b>M/S/D</b>	<b>Stay</b>	<b>Leave</b>	<b>single</b>	<b>Married</b>
01,	w	m	family			1
02,	w	m		money		1
03,	w	m	family			1

04,	w	s	family		1	
05,	w	s	family		1	
06,	w	s		family	1	
07,	m	s		money and better life	1+	
08,	w	m	afraid and family			1
09,	w	m	family			1
10,	w	m		money and better life		1
11,	w	m	family			1
12,	w	m	family			1
13,	m	s		money and better life	1+	
14,	w	s		money and better life	1	
15,	w	s	afraid and family		1	
16,	w	s	family		1	
17,	w	s	afraid and family		1	
Result	2 men		11 in 17 people	6 in 17 people	4 in 9 people	2 in 8 people

***Annex 8 List of the person interviewed in Vientiane and in Luang Nam Tha (out of villages)***

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Dr. Soukiet	UNIAP in Vientiane
Mr. Chansamone	SC.UK in Vientiane
Mr. Somsack	ILO-IPEC in Vientiane
Mr. Xuan	NCA in Vientiane
Mrs. Ny Luangkot	Consultant sociologist In Vientiane
Mr. Vanpheng	YFA in Vientiane
Mr. Khomsavath	NHDR
Dr. Keith	LRC in Vientiane
Dr. Didier Bertrand	AFESIP Lao in Vientiane
Dr. Jame Chamberlain	Consultant anthropologist In Vientiane
Dr. Lurrong	ACF in Vientiane
Dr. Phillip	GTZ in Sing district in LNT
Dr. Charles Alton	Consultant rural development in Vientiane
Mr. Humphanh Rattanavong	Consultant ethnologist in Vientiane.
Mr. Champy	EU project in LNT
Mr. Douangchan	ADRA in LNT
Ms. Mai	ADRA in LNT
Mr. Lapaserd	Lao Youth Union in LNT
Mr. Boris	ACF in Long district in LNT
Ms. Khamla	ACF in Long district in LNT
Mr. Home	ACF in Long district in LNT
Governors	Head of Long district in LNT
Mrs. DoungDune	NCA in Long district in LNT

## ***Annex 9 article the vicious triangle***

### **Vicious triangle**

Aug 11th 2005 | VIENTIANE

From The Economist print edition

#### **An opium ban is a mixed blessing**

IN A rush to comply with its promise to eradicate poppy cultivation this year, Laos last month proclaimed itself opium-free. It is not, but a survey by the UN's drugs unit has confirmed that there has been a very substantial reduction in opium production, bringing it to about a quarter of its level in 1998. Antonio Maria Costa, head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, even forecasts that the end of the infamous "Golden Triangle" could be in sight—if present progress can be sustained. That is a big if, though. Mounting evidence of the drug war's casualties is meanwhile starting to emerge, to the embarrassment of both donors and the Laos authorities. More than 65,000 Akha, Hmong and other Laotian hill-dwelling tribespeople, for whom opium production is the main livelihood, have been cajoled and coerced to abandon the crop. Now they are dying from disease and malnutrition in the resettlement villages to which many have moved.

Charles Alton, a consultant for the UN Development Programme, reported in 2004 that hill-tribe people moving to new villages were not only short of rice but also faced diseases—malaria, gastro-intestinal problems and parasites—that were seldom experienced up in the mountains. An international NGO has documented mortality rates among such people at almost four times the national average.

The Laotian government long tolerated opium cultivation, in the absence of alternative livelihoods. But since 2000, increased pressure from America and the EU has persuaded it to take a tougher line, as has the promise of millions of dollars of extra aid money.

Laotian opium—about 100 tonnes a year in the 1990s—has only ever made a marginal contribution to the global drugs trade; Laos has never been in the same league as Afghanistan and Myanmar. Moreover, few Laotians have traditionally been addicted to the stuff. Besides being a cash crop, it is used as medicine and, as part of tribal culture, smoked on special occasions. Yet, perversely, the victory over opium production has triggered worsening drug abuse.

One leading Laotian researcher says that, for lack of opium, people are turning to far more dangerous drugs such as heroin and *yaaba* (amphetamines), which flood across the Burmese border. Another critic, David Feingold, an anthropologist, says that the opium-eradication programme is ill conceived and badly executed. He predicts that increasing heroin use, and the impoverishment of highland women, which increases their vulnerability to trafficking, will assist the spread of AIDS.

In response to such humanitarian concerns, Mr Costa of the UN's drugs office has appealed for more international aid to compensate the tribespeople for their loss of opium income. But aid workers in Laos query how long such a policy can be sustained, given that alternative crops often provide miserly returns from uncertain markets, not least because of Laos's appalling infrastructure. One says that the hill-tribes will always go back to opium, "unless the government uses repression to stop them".

**Annex 10 Ethnic diversity in Muang Long (2002)<sup>59</sup>.**

Ethnic group	Villages	Households	Population
Lue	11	677	3,596
Lanten	2	74	434
Hmong	3	125	850
Kui	6	261	1,844
Doi	2	84	438
Akha	60	2,565	13,679
Muser	2	39	151
Yao (mixes with Lue)	1	77	419
Tai khao, Tai Daeng.	1	84	438
Tai Dom, Lue, Akha	1	84	503

**Annex 11 The Akha and Kui/ Museur ethnic group**

*The Akha are ethnolinguistically Tibeto-Burman and belong to the southern branch of the Lolo (Akhoid sub-branch) and comprise the Akha, Akheu and Sila ethnic groups. The Akha are originally from southern China and are now dispersed throughout northwestern Viet Nam, northern Laos, Thailand and Myanmar (LeBar, Hickey and Musgrave 1964). They are believed to have arrived in northern Laos in the early part of the nineteenth century and this migration continued into the twentieth century. They moved across the Mekong River during a civil war in the Shan States of colonial Burma (circa WWI). The Akha in Sing and Long districts comprise about 60 percent of the population and is one of the highest concentrations for Akha anywhere. Page 35*

The Akha livelihoods system remains upland rice-based under shifting cultivation; however, in some relocated villages paddy rice cultivation has become increasingly important. Villagers cultivate cassava, corn, taro, vegetables, chilly peppers, garlic and onions around their swidden fields. The better off and mid-level social economic households raised larger animals (e.g. cattle and water buffaloes) while mid-level and worse-off households raised small pigs, goats and poultry. Villages traditionally made handicrafts for their own use, but in many of the relocated villages this is no longer the case.

<sup>59</sup> Chris Lyttleton and Humphanh Ratanavong Watermelons, bars and trucks: dangerous intersections in Northwest Lao PDR.

. Page 118.

They now still the handicrafts in the market and villagers increasingly work off-farm for cash income.

Nonetheless, opium is an important cash crop or item of barter in Akha economic exchanges with high land and lowland villages (including the use of opium to obtain rice in time of short age). It is important of consumption as a medicine (for example, for diarrhea, and as an analgesic and tranquillizer) and for recreational, regular, or habitual consumption by those who have become addicted. Other activities for the Akah depend for their livelihood included vegetable gardening, the raising of livestock (oxen, buffaloes, pigs and poultry), hunting, and the collection and sale of forest productions (e.g. medicine barks and fruit).

During the past 10 years, more than 30 Akha villages have been established on the lowland slopes, within half-a-day's walk to Muang Sing town. This has been partly to the Lao government policy on shifting cultivation and forest presentation and consequent pressure by local official on Akha of the mid slopes to resettle close to the lowlands and to take up wet-rice cultivation. Another factor that has encouraged resettlement, particularly among the young generation, has been the steady decline of highland soil fertility and swidden rice yield<sup>60</sup>s.

Despite much greater proximity to the various arms of government bureaucracy, most of those lower-slope villages have continued to grow opium. In the past several years, however, previously tolerant state attitude had hardened and there has been an increase in official directive prohibition opium cultivation. Increased attention opium reduction programmes have been actively included within foreign-funded and implemented development programmes that target livelihood security throughout the mountainous regions of northwest Laos.

Gender: Akha women.

“Akha social organisation is both patrilineal and patriatchal. The Akha of Muang Sing are divided into a number of different sub-ethnic group: Pouly Nyai, Pouly Noy, Kopien Nyai, Kopein Noy, Tchicho, Chapo Nyai, Chapo Noy, and Botch (Chazee 1995, p. 156). Resident after marriage is patrivirilocal and the wife is incorporated into her husband's patrilineage. This has important implications if there is divorce. The wife has no claim on the children of the marriage as they are considered to belong to the husband and to be under the protection of his ancestors. It follows that sons are also more desirable than daughters, as at least one son is needed to perpetuate the patriline.

Men are giving top priority in almost all matters (Walker 1975, p 174). Male dominance and privilege are reflected in the domestic, political, ritual/religious, and economic spheres. The Akah house is divided into a men's room and women's room, often with separated fireplaces. A wife can only eat after she has served her husband. The village head-man, village ritual experts, and village as a whole; women are denied any formal role in community decision-making. Although shamans (Nyi Pa) are often women”

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<sup>60</sup> Paul T. Cohen & Chris Lytleton., Opium-reduction Programmes, discourses of addiction and gender in Northwest Laos. 23p

But in this respect we see that gendered expectations place women in a paradoxical bind. Following tradition, it is the wife's duty to take care of her husband, particularly in times of stress or duress. If he is ill or just plain weary from the arduous labour required to support the family, then it is his wife's responsibilities to do all she can do to help. We were told that this would at time include the provision of opium. In essence she has no choice; she must do something to help particularly if her husband is badly hurt or sick. On many occasions, in the face of an absolute lack of any other medical provisions (or access to them), giving opium is the only possible thing she can do to lessen her required role as wife. Then, should her husband subsequently become an addict (related or not to her initial administrations), she must bear burden of his decreasing contributions to the household economy.

The Akha people are speakers of a Tibeto-Burmese language. Akha legends describe their slow migration, for more than 2000 years ago, from their ancestral homeland in Tibet into Southern Szetchuan and Yunan in China and more recently into Burma, northern Thailand and northern Laos. Estimates for the Akha population vary considerably from 60000 (Chazee, 1995) to between 92000 and 100000 (Gueau 2000), they are concentrated in the northern provinces of Phongsaly and Luang Nam Tha. Historically the Akha have practiced swidden agriculture (including opium cultivation during the last two centuries) and hunting and gathering in highland in highland areas. Opium has never assumed the same economic importance for Akha as for other ethnic groups in the Golden Triangle region; the Akha have preferred to settle in mid slope locations that are ideal for swidden rice but no opium.

Before the opium eradication campaign started in Long district about 60% of highland villages grew opium...Akha are rarely surplus producers of opium but it has been a crucial cash crop or item of barter in Akha economic exchanges with highland and lowland villages. It is also an important item of consumption as a medicine for recreation and for those who have become addicted.

Other activities on which the Akha depend for their livelihood include vegetable gardening, the raising of livestock (oxen, buffaloes, pigs and poultry) hunting and the collection and sale of forest products (e.g. medicinal barks and fruits) although to date none of these come close to the economic value of opium in terms of an item of exchange.

Opium eradication imposed a heavy burden on highlanders in particular the sudden elimination of a major source of income as opium specially to make up for rice shortfalls. In many areas, opium elimination has been achieved without the farmer having the opportunity to develop other sources of income. Cohen<sup>61</sup> reports that these three policies elimination of shifting cultivation, resettlement and opium reduction have combined to accelerate the migration of the highland Akha to the low lands in a way that has created a number of distressing problems: increased morbidity and mortality, poverty and wage labour exploitation, intra-village competition, marginalization etc.

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<sup>61</sup> COHEN Paul, and LYTTLETON Chris, The Akkha of Northwest Laos: modernity and social suffering, article photocopied 28 pages, undated, Afesip resource centre.

### ***Kui and Museur***

They refer to themselves as “Lahu”, which is the name they prefer. Other ethnic group refer to them as “Museur”, the word Lahu is from Lahou which means “to breed Tiger” in the Lahu language. There are many sub-group of Lahu, namely Lahuna (White Museur), Lahusy (Black Museur) and Lahuseley (Red Museur or Kui).

The Lahu originally lived in southwest China; some migrated to northern part of Laos in the end of nineteenth century. The Lahu prefer to build villages in mountainous valleys above 1000 meters. However, today Lahu can be found at lower areas, villages are small, about twenty to thirty houses.

The Lahu have traditionally slash-and-burn agriculture, growing crops such as dry-land rice, maize and opium poppies. They also grow a variety of vegetables and fruits. For religious reasons and for food, chicken, ducks and pigs are raised. The Lahu men are famous for hunting and spend time in the forests.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Annex 12 Description of ACF (Action Centre la Faim)***

Actually ACF or Action Contre la Faim, is a very good NGOs which is very helpful for the society and quite a big organization as it has more than 90 staffs, most of them were kind with me (and some are really kind). I always have a short meeting with the director of the organization after I came back from the village, and then we plan about next village, for every village I discussed with him or some staff before to go, and if I need some more information I just need to spend more time with them, and I felt that they are always really ready to help. They provided some interpreters in ethnic languages (Akha, Kui and Muser) for me, also some vehicle to reach some villages, some facilities and the accommodation when I am at Long village. When I arrived at the ACF office in Long, I had a meeting with the head of the office (director Boris), and he advised and convince me to change my plan to be more than 4 villages.

### **Justification**

#### (a) Relevance of the action to the objectives of the programme

ACF objectives correspond to those set out by the European Commission.

- Supporting and stabilizing food availability and access through the year and in periods of shocks.
- Reducing household’s vulnerability through improved income resources, access and health status.
- Building local capacity and strengthening sense of ownership at community and local governmental level to ensure sustainability; as well as to enhance the above-mentioned objectives.

ACF principle of intervention is based on grassroots level. The project activities respond to problems directly identified by villagers. The activities are carried out on a small scale; they are based on training in addition to external inputs and require an active participation of the beneficiaries.

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<sup>62</sup> Lao National Front for Construction “The ethnics group in Lao PDR” 2005, p238.

(b) Relevance of the action to the priorities of the programme

ACF has identified the most important causes why food insecurity prevails in the proposed district of intervention. The action aims at addressing these causes, as detailed below.

***Availability of food is limited and unstable<sup>63</sup>:***

- Production of upland rice is decreasing due to the national policy of reducing shifting cultivation<sup>64</sup>;
- Wetland rice-farming is not a common practice
- Women are overloaded with daily chores with no time left for food production / income generating.

***Access to food and other basic goods is limited:***

- Elimination of the main source of cash income following the eradication of opium cultivation<sup>65</sup>;
- The number of animals (main trade commodity), is limited as a result of high mortality rate<sup>66</sup>;
- Other income-generating activities are little developed (due to inadequate technical training);
- Transportation is only possible to a limited extent (due to the lack of access road infrastructures).

***The prevalence of water borne diseases and malaria are extremely high<sup>67</sup>:***

- Access to drinking water exists in a limited number of villages (almost only where ACF set it up)
- Hygiene and prevention practices are not developed (due to lack of knowledge and materials);
- Access to medical care is limited.

These issues were translated into specific objective and activities corresponding to ACF's technical knowledge and expertise, forming the basis of the attached logical framework:

- Increasing and securing rice production and diversifying food availability through gardening
- Increasing household income through cash crops development
- Improving access and communications
- Reducing the risk of morbidity and mortality due to diarrhoeas diseases and malaria
- Strengthening local capacity and sense of ownership.

Those actions fit with the European Commission priorities in terms of food security intervention towards the reduction of poverty in Lao PDR.

(c) Identification of perceived needs and constraints in the target countries and in the location identified for the Call for Proposal;

Ethnic villagers in the mountain of Long District are extremely isolated and disadvantaged. The general level of infrastructure is poor. The traditional livelihoods system is one of subsistence economy, based on the practices of

63. The rice harvest ranges from 28 kg/capita to 584 kg/capita in 2003. Following the rice harvest of 2003, 49% of villages had under 7 months of rice sufficiency. In 2004, the average of rice sufficiency was close to 8 months with 28% of villages under 7 months.

64. "Shifting cultivation" is also called "slash-and-burn agriculture" and/or "swidden cultivation"

65. In 2002 area of poppy cultivation in 53 villages was estimated as 638ha. In 2002 and 2003 after the confiscation of poppy seeds and destruction of poppy field, a Long district reported that at the end of 2003, 14 villages were still cultivation a total of 54ha.

66. Surveys indicate that the mortality of pigs due to epidemics in above 60 % of 43 villages surveyed, epidemics have decimated almost totally the herd in few days at least once in the past five years. On each event, the village has lost about 100 to 250 animals.

67. Average global mortality rate among upland villages: 2.3% compared with 1.4% at the national level

slash-and-burn cultivation with rotation periods of up to 15 years, NTFPs<sup>68</sup>, hunting and fishing. Opium has been cultivated extensively in the highlands, to be used both as medicine for a range of illness and as crucial source of income to obtain rice in time of shortage.

Following the 7<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, one of the 3 main objectives of the long-term development strategy is “to eliminate opium production by 2005 and phase-out shifting cultivation by 2010”. It was refined in the “National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy”, in order to reach these objectives as well as bring people closer to public services. Thus, the government decided to move highlanders toward lowland and alongside roads. Such answer resulted in precariousness for the resettled population. The uncertainty linked with resettlement planning also contributes to increased vulnerability for mountainous villages, whose livelihood is further threatened by the reduction of slash and burn practices and opium eradication.

### ***Annex 13 Introduction about Laos PDR***

#### **1 Laos in general:**

Lao PDR is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the East Asia region. Its classification as a Least Developed Country (LDC) lies not only in the extremely poor living standards of its people. Its economy is also vulnerable to external shocks and natural disasters.<sup>69</sup>

The population density of the Lao PDR is 5.9 million (UN 2005), 19 per sq km in the area of 236,800 sq km (91,400 sq miles), the life expectancy for women is 56 years old but for men only year (UN), the main exports are the clothes, timber products and coffee, the GNI is US \$ 390 (World Bank), it is estimated that more than 85% of the population of the Lao PDR is agriculturally based, approximately 40%, or 300,000, of whom practice swidden agriculture. Authorities speculate that the current 2.4% population doubling within the next 30 years. This will create significant stress on available agriculture land<sup>70</sup> and it will be a factor for migration as other countries in the region<sup>71</sup>.

#### **Religions:**

Buddhist 60%, animist and other 40% (including various Christian denominations 1.5%)

#### **Languages:**

Lao (official), French, English, and various ethnic languages

#### **Literacy:**

Definition: age 15 and over can read and write

Total population: 66.4%

Male: 77.4%

Female: 55.5% (2002)

68. Non Timber Forest Products

69 KHAM, Lee Social Challenges for Lao PDR, p 109-121, unquoted document Afesip Ressources centre, p 112.

70 UNESCO, Girls’ and women’s education in Laos, Undated document (1998) p 1.

71 MAZUR Robert, Development and insecure livelihoods and migration in Cambodia, DANG Nguyen An, SUPANG Chantanavich, Uprooting people for their own good, human displacement, resettlement and trafficking in the Mekong Sub-Region, social sciences publishing house, Hanoi, 2003 p 61.

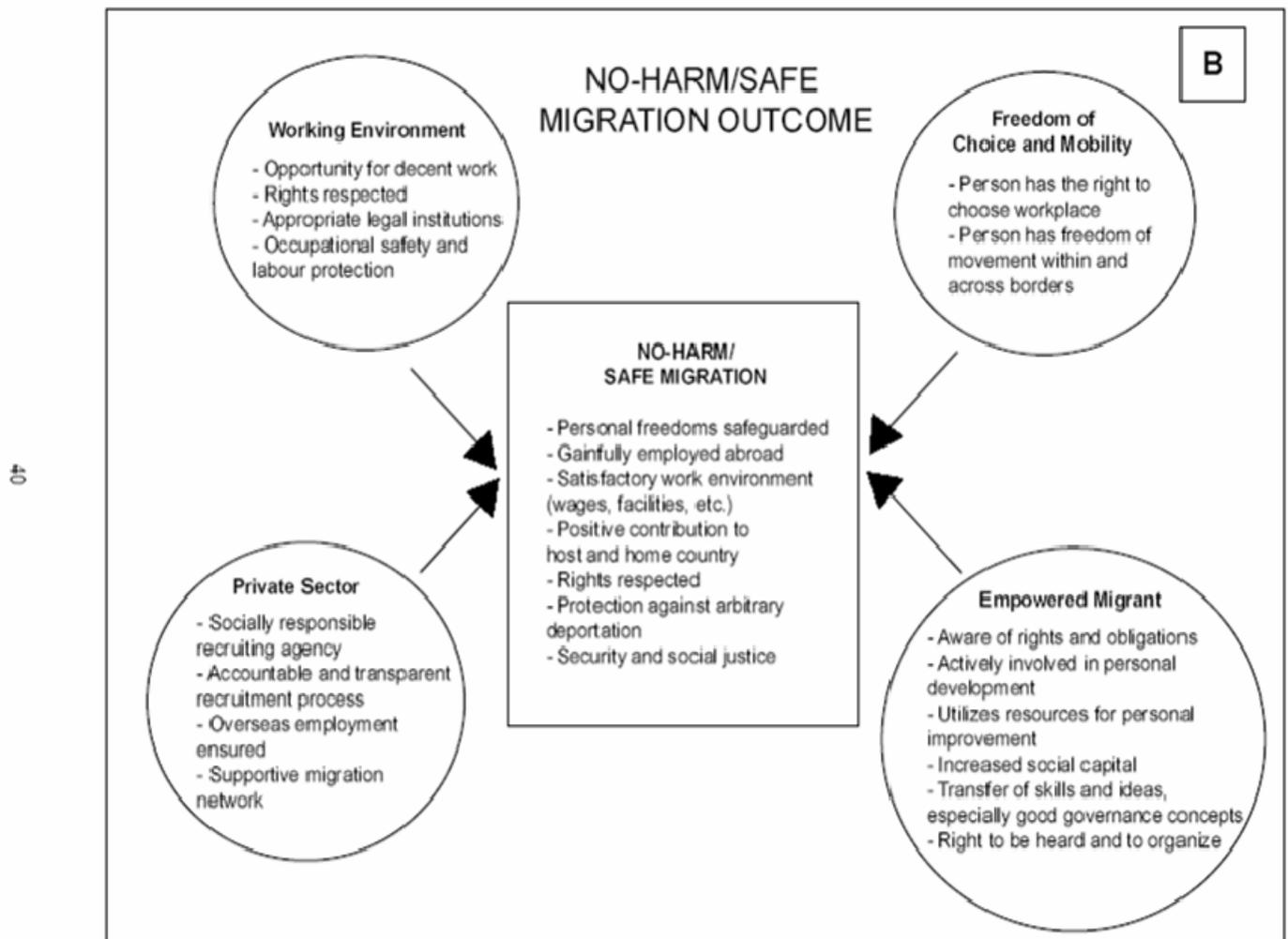
## 2 Ethnic composition of the population of the Lao PDR

Lao Loum (lowland) 68%, Lao Theung (upland) 22%, Lao Soung (highland) including the Hmong and the Yao 9%, ethnic Vietnamese/Chinese 1%. The population of the Lao PDR is distinguished by its ethnic diversity. The Lao, the politically, socially and culturally dominant population, make up only a slight majority in the Lao PDR population that is divided into 47 to 68 ethnic groups according to the ways to differentiate them. Most of the ethnic groups live in the mountainous areas (2/3 of the country).

The dominant ethnic Lao group makes less than one third of the population<sup>72</sup> and the other Tai groups combined makes up 37% but they comprised less than 20% of the poor population (7% and 13% respectively).

The non low land minority groups make up about 80% of the nation poor while they are only 35, 5% of the total population.

### Annex 14 No harm migration outcome



<sup>72</sup> ADB, Participatory Poverty Assessment Lao PDR, Manila, 2001, p XI