

“The NAFC, as a well-managed center for skills based education & training, is committed to develop proficiency for Upland Agriculture by offering an attractive and inclusive study environment.”



QUICK FACTS

Location:

Luang Prabang, Lao PDR and 4 MAF colleges

Project Start:

September 2009

Current Phase:

Phase II December 2012 – November 2016

Budget for Current Phase:

6,400,000 Swiss Francs

Main partners:

*HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

*Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry (MAF)

*Northern Agriculture and Forestry College (NAFC)

* School of Agriculture, Forest and Food Sciences of Bern University of applied sciences, Switzerland (HAFL)

*Swiss Resource Centre & Consultancies for Development (SKAT)

Major Donors:

Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation (SDC)

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THE PERSPECTIVES

SURAFCO's second four-year phase is based on the interlinked approach of phase 1 with four main objectives. It will concentrate on strengthening NAFC, consolidating existing achievements, improving teaching and the relation to the upland context. It will furthermore focus on increased cooperation with other institutions, in particular with the 4 other agricultural colleges to implement MAF's road map supporting the broader reform process.

An increased partner network will contribute to a better outreach in offering quality services for upland development.

Teachers Human Resources Development will increase the education quality and the revised curriculum will offer an optimized combination of theory, applied theory and practice to the students. The teaching methods will focus on student-centered learning, e.g. encouraging analytical skills and education offers will be broadened, including mid and short term courses for farmers and agricultural staffs working in the private and public sector.

Experiences in teaching, management and infrastructure development will be capitalized and spread to other educational institutions, especially the agricultural colleges, with MAF's taskforce for the reform process having a leading role in the expansion process.

Improvement of the practical term and related partners shall provide an opportunity for students to prepare their future (self-) employment project and farmers shall benefit from the students' practical term.

The establishment of a job counseling unit, a related strategy and better linkages to credit institutions will be important efforts for employment or self-employment preparations and job placements.



SURAFCO



“Support to the Reform of the Northern Agriculture & Forestry College”

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SURAFCO's four interlinked components and related activities will contribute to set up the Northern Agriculture and Forestry College (NAFC) to become the center of excellence for skills-based education and training in upland farming systems, able to release graduates in high demand by the labor market and is sharing its experiences and lessons learnt with the other four agricultural colleges under MAF.

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WORKING AREA

SURAFCO is a project aiming to reform agricultural college education in Lao PDR, with a focus on upland agriculture. The project is working in the areas of organizational development & project coordination, human resources development by organizing training & workshops ensuring quality education; curriculum development; monitoring & evaluation; elaboration of students' support schemes; setting up partnerships and infrastructure development.

The project's second four-year phase started in December 2012 and focuses on four interlinked outcomes:

1. Increased outreach through partnering
2. Increased education quality and expanding lessons learnt
3. Transparent, effective and gender sensitive management system
4. Increased employment of graduates



THE CONTEXT

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) is committed to modernize agricultural college education, in order to contribute to achieving food security and better livelihoods for all Lao people.

Detailed steps are formulated in the "Strategy for Reform in the Agriculture and Forestry Colleges towards 2020 in Lao PDR", which was released in January 2008. The reform focuses on all 5 agriculture colleges under MAF to improve their performance and better respond to the needs of the labor market and the objectives of the Government policy.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has opted to assist this reform process by establishing SURAFCO, a project on the "Support to the Reform of the Northern Agriculture and Forestry College"

THE PROJECT

SURAFCO, was set up to assist the implementation of MAF's strategic reform, and is implemented by the Northern Agriculture and Forestry College (NAFC) with the support of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation in Laos.

Assistance in curriculum development is provided by the School for Agriculture, Forest and Food Sciences of Bern University of applied sciences, Switzerland (HAFL), while infrastructure development is supported by SKAT, the Swiss Resource Centre and Consultancies for Development.

The main donor is the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Phase 1 focused on human resources, curriculum, management, partner and infrastructure development at NAFC.

At the end of phase 2, it is expected that lessons learnt at NAFC are consolidated and spread to the other four agricultural colleges under MAF, acknowledged by public and private partners as a centres of excellence in sustainable upland farming systems, agro business, forest & environment conservation, sustainable lowland & gentle slopes development and water in agriculture—offering skills-based and market-oriented education, training and services, and thus contributing to poverty reduction, food security and income generation, especially in the rural areas of Laos.

ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

Inclusive enrolment and support for female students and from ethnic groups: SURAFCO has given high priority to the enrolment of female students, students from "discriminated" groups originating from diverse ethnic groups. Awareness campaigns, establishment of selection criteria, close collaboration with educational institutions in the provinces, establishment of a scholarship fund were the tools used for this purpose.

Improved teachers' competence and confidence: Teachers have increased competence and confidence in teaching (technical, methodological, behavioral) and in managerial issues. Capacity building of all teachers and staff was organized based on specific requirements arising from their tasks:

Practice-oriented and skills-based curricula: Four three-year associate-degree curricula in agronomy, livestock production, agro-business and forestry and three 1,5 year upgrading curricula, with emphasis on upland agricultural systems have been developed and approved by Ministry of Education (MoE). The teaching method is student-centered and emphasis is given to gender and inclusiveness. Gender and ethnic diversity have been mainstreamed into the teaching content and are reflected in the teaching methodologies. The new curricula offer a good balance between theory, applied theory and practice. They place emphasis on practical application of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Linking infrastructure to capacity building and management improvements: One classroom building for 280 students, one laboratory, two student dormitories with 64 beds and outside kitchens, ward house, construction and improvement of 20 livestock and agricultural practical farm units on NAFC compound, eight farm houses for 8 students each, canteen and sports fields have been completed and are operational. One more classroom building and two more dormitories are under construction. Telephone and Internet connections have been installed and an intranet established. Electricity and water supplies have been improved, a waste-water wetland constructed and erosion control measures to divert runoff rain water put in place. Government funds have complemented the constructions, for the various restoration of available buildings, a meeting hall, the library and the construction of 3 biogas units. A maintenance strategy and funding scheme has been developed. MAF has provided means to hire a permanent maintenance team at NAFC with clear responsibilities.

Transparent and clear management practices: a clear and more transparent management system has been developed. Specific instruments are the establishment of an income generation fund, the infrastructure maintenance fund, job descriptions, job performance indicators, transparent planning.

Students' learning attitude has changed already, due to student-centered learning method and the practical skills (practice-orientation) and will certainly lead to better job placement