

## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

### Linking food security and conservation in Lao PDR

**Linking food security and conservation. Capacity and sustainability of enclave villages within Nakai Nam Theun National Protected Area (Lao PDR).**  
(2009 – 2013)

**Strategic Research Area:** Improving Rural Livelihoods and Environments in Developing Countries

**Funding:** Volunteer International for Development Australia (ViDA)

**Investigators/researchers:** Michelle Smith, Dr Joanne Millar and Dr Penelope Davidson

**Description:** Achieving a balance between conservation, development and traditional cultures is a key challenge in protected area management in developing countries. Yet, despite wide recognition and implementation of intervention strategies; success has been mixed.

The research is based on a case study of one community in the Nakai Nam Theun (NNT) Protected Area, Lao PDR. The relationship within the village, between villagers and outside organisations, surrounding communities and the environment were explored in order to understand the current livelihood issues and changes.

#### Research Questions:

1. What are the livelihood changes experienced by Korbong villagers?
2. What are the current livelihood systems issues for Korbong villagers living in NNT NPA?
3. What are the potential livelihood options for villagers? (From their perspective and the protected area agency)
4. How can these options be facilitated by village elders, WMPA and their partners to improve food security whilst maintaining biodiversity and cultural values?

**Methodology:** Research methods include a combination of semi structured interviews, focus group workshops, study trip and observation. The methodology is designed to engage every household in Korbong and stakeholders in the learning process.

**Key Findings:** Preliminary analysis of data reveals an immense desire to develop their village, whilst protecting the local environment and village heritage for future generations. Development was defined as improved infrastructure, social services and food security, with village priorities for change including permanent housing, electricity, irrigation and education and health care facilities. The discussion of livelihood options in terms of income and food sources highlighted many barriers such as information, financial, the physical environment and fear of the unknown.



*Korbong villagers being interviewed*

**Outputs:** Key Informant Interviews, focus groups and field trip village feedback session conducted. Presentations at two international conferences.

**Outcomes:** Recommendations from the research will be used to implement livelihood strategies in Korbong. The researcher will also propose a method to identify and implement livelihood options in other villages, based on the Korbong case study.

**Albury-Wodonga Campus**  
PO Box 789  
Elizabeth Mitchell Drive, Thurgoona  
ALBURY NSW 2640  
Australia

TEL +61 2 6051 9992  
FAX +61 2 6051 9797  
EMAIL [ilws@csu.edu.au](mailto:ilws@csu.edu.au)

**CONTACT:** Date October 2011  
Michelle Smith  
CSU Albury  
[michellesmith\\_81@hotmail.com](mailto:michellesmith_81@hotmail.com)