

CONSTITUTION OF THE INGO NETWORK LAND ISSUES WORKING GROUP

I GOAL

Members of the local communities to have enhanced ownership and control over land and natural resources. This shall be achieved through cooperation with civil society organisations, communities, government, donors and other stakeholders.

II SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Support the civil society, development partners and private sector so that they are better able and willing to enhance gender equitable community ownership and control over land and natural resources.
- Promoted collaboration and engagement of different stakeholders, national and international, leading to enhanced dialogue and sharing of information in view of increasing leverage of advocacy activities.
- Government policies, legislation and practices concerning land protect the interests of people of Laos and enhance gender equitable local communities' ownership and control over land and natural resources.
- Increased wealth of in-depth information on specific cross-cutting issues is available to enhance and support the advocacy work.

III MAIN ACTIVITIES PER OBJECTIVE

| Specific objectives | Possible Activities |
|---|--|
| Support the civil society, development partners and private sector so that they are better able and willing to enhance gender equitable community ownership and control over land and natural resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate awareness raising, training and capacity building activities to different stakeholders • Produce and disseminate training and information materials • Organise study tours |
| Promoted collaboration and engagement of different stakeholders, national and international, leading to enhanced dialogue and sharing of information in view of increasing leverage of advocacy activities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate information sharing amongst group members and other stakeholders • Mainstream land issues by participating, facilitating and reporting on the debate on land issues in different forums • Engage development partners and other international bodies to include enhanced community ownership and control over land and natural resources in their country strategies and supported programmes. • Build and strengthen relations with civil society organizations and networks from surrounding countries • Organise stakeholder meetings • Support paralegal approaches in communities |
| Government policies, legislation and practices concerning land protect the interests of people of Laos and enhance gender equitable community members' ownership and control over land and natural resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and strengthen relations with the National Assembly and other land/forest related Government agencies • Support the Government in creating and implementing land policies which enhance community ownership and control over land and natural resources |

| Specific objectives | Possible Activities |
|---|---|
| Increased wealth of in-depth information on specific cross-cutting issues is available to enhance and support the advocacy work, including the gender impacts of land-related policies and practices. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission and conduct research on key land related themes aimed at improving land management and/or tenure security • Translate and disseminate research findings and other materials • Involve Lao media in documenting and disseminating cases |

IV MEMBERSHIP

LIWG is primarily comprised of civil society organisations working on land issues in Lao PDR. Membership of the LIWG is two-fold, consisting of core membership and supporting membership. As a general rule, core membership can be held by individuals working for civil society organisations in Laos (INGO/NPA), or civil society organisations themselves. However, under special circumstances core membership can also be extended to include non-civil society actors, even those outside of Lao PDR, if all the Chairs so agree.

Core members have full membership to the LIWG, are eligible to receive invitations to all LIWG meetings, minutes of meetings, suggest agenda topics, and receive and participate in all correspondence related to LIWG activities.

Supporting membership includes organisations or individuals who have a general interest in land issues in Lao PDR, but who are outside of the core membership requirements as stated above. They have an important role in strengthening information sharing and advocacy activities. Under these terms supporting members are eligible to receive minutes from open LIWG meetings (see definition of open meetings below) and regular updates on LIWG activities.

INGOs and NPAs have equal rights within the LIWG. If a vote needs to be taken at core member meetings only core members working for an INGO or NPA in Laos will be eligible to cast a vote, at one vote per organisation. Decisions can be made at member meetings or through e-mail consensus.

Mode of designation of new member: To become a member, a candidate has to submit the name of his/her organisation, a short description of his/her position and an email address to the LIWG Secretariat. If the candidate is working for an INGO or an NPA in Laos he/she is automatically eligible for core membership. Only when the candidate does not fit these criteria do the Chairs decide if the person can be eligible for core or supporting membership. To approve a membership the Chairs need to be unanimous.

Responsibility of members: Active rather than passive involvement in the group is encouraged and members are expected to review and comment on LIWG activities, suggest meeting topics, attend and/or host meetings, share information, etc. No feedback is considered as supporting on-going and proposed actions.

Meetings and modes of communication with members: All members are eligible to be part of the Lao Land Issues Google Discussion Group (lao-land-issues-working-group@googlegroups.com). E-mails can be used as an additional means of communication between the core members. The Secretariat is responsible to widely disseminate relevant information to members about meetings and activities undertaken.

To make the collaboration and information sharing as effective as possible the LIWG meetings are separated into internal and open meetings. Internal (core members') meetings are targeted at the core membership only whereas anyone can attend open meetings.

V ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS AND THE SECRETARIAT

Chair (1): The Chair is an individual working for an INGO or a NPA in Laos who is responsible for general facilitation of the group.

Vice-Chairs (2): The Vice Chair is an individual working for an INGO or a NPA in Laos. The Vice Chairs' role is to assist the Chair in the facilitation of the group.

Although the Chair is the lead individual of the Group the Vice-Chair roles and responsibilities are similar. When nominated, the Chairs cannot solely represent the organizations where they work but are expected to stand above their employer organizations to be able to represent all members of the LIWG.

Secretariat (unlimited): The Secretariat is a group of individuals hired by the Chairs to be responsible, in cooperation with the Chairs, for the implementation of the LIWG strategy and work plan, as well as for the development of the LIWG.

Roles of Chair, Vice-Chair and the Secretariat may include but are not limited to:

- Group *representation* at meetings (donor, INGO, Government, etc.)
- Main *facilitator* of the group for communications and group meetings
- *Organizer* of group activities (e.g. meetings, study tours)

Chair and Vice Chairs are:

- Ultimately responsible for the progress of the LIWG
- Responsible for making final decisions on the direction and actions of the LIWG (in consultation with the membership as described below)
- Responsible for ensuring and supervising the progress of the Secretariat in implementing the direction and actions of the LIWG

Responsibilities of Secretariat may include but are not limited to:

- Coordinate awareness raising, training and capacity building activities
- Promote dialogue, networking and collaboration among national and international stakeholders
- Coordinate and support research and documentation activities
- Conduct advocacy work on land issues among Government agencies
- Manage the finances and secure funding of the LIWG

VI PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRS AND SECRETARIAT

Change in Chair or Vice-Chairs

The Chairs are elected through a vote at the LIWG Annual General Meeting. All members that have been nominated and seconded by other members are eligible to stand for election. Chair and Vice-Chair positions are held between both the individual and the organisation. If there is a contested position a vote will be taken by the group at a member meeting or via e-mail. If there are no candidates, the Chairs will remain on if so desired. If a Chair wishes to vacate their seat and no other candidates want to replace them, the Group will operate with a lower number of Chairs.

If a Chair leaves the INGO/NPA they are employed by they must resign their position as Chair. If the Chair relocates to another INGO/NPA and wish to remain a Chair, they must be re-elected at the next member meeting under the new organization they area employed for. Other candidates may simultaneously be appointed to run for the Chair.

The Chairs can be removed at any time by a vote of no confidence from the core members and the other Chairs (majority rule). Any of the Chair or Vice Chairs can call for such a vote, also any group of 3 core members can call for such a vote. This vote would be held at a meeting and announced two weeks before the meeting so that all interested members can attend.

Change in Secretariat

Employees of the LIWG Secretariat shall be appointed through an open tendered process; this would include advertising positions in relevant job sites. Assessment of candidates and final appointment decisions shall be made by the Chair and Vice-Chairs. The initial salaries of the staff shall be decided on the basis of assessed capacity and the funds available.

Employees of the LIWG Secretariat can be removed by a decision of the Chair and Vice-Chairs through a standard employee-supervisor termination clause in all LIWG Secretariat employment contracts.

VII DECISION MAKING

The Secretariat, under the guidance of the Chairs, will make day to day decisions for the group which is related to internal matters. These will include for example meeting place and date, information to be circulated, which meetings to represent the group at, and general direction of the group. As shown in the above activity log-frame, there are some activities such as LIWG commissioned research that will need participation and decision making by the larger group.

For decisions on making external representations on behalf of the group or positions which have not already been approved by the membership, making new binding agreements between the LIWG and individuals or organizations, or deciding on themes and agendas of new LIWG meetings; the following process shall be applied:

The Secretariat will release the proposed position/action via email to the core members, providing 3-8 working days for comment (based on the significance of the statement). Members will be informed that they have the opportunity to ask for a longer time if they believe this is justified by the significance of the statement. If at least two members ask for an extension then the LIWG must grant this.

Proposed positions/actions shall be released 'fait accompli' to the members, that is, if no feedback is given against the statement, or if at least three quarters of the feedback agrees with the statement as it is, then this statement will be considered as accepted. If not accepted the LIWG Secretariat shall issue a new statement based on the feedback and the process will start again.

VIII ORGANIZATION

The Secretariat is located at the Learning House for Development, Vientiane.

Frequency of core member meetings: Meetings are organised on an ad-hoc basis whenever needed but at least four times per year

Meeting location: Member organisations' meeting rooms or the Learning House for Development.

Preparation of meeting:

Chair and Secretariat produce a draft agenda which is sent to Vice Chairs and then core members for comments and additional topics. Finalisation of agenda by Chairs and Secretariat. Distribution of agenda by the Secretariat.

Reporting: Minutes are taken by the Secretariat. Draft of minutes is sent to core members by the minute taker. Minutes endorsed and finalized at next meeting by the group.

IX CHANGING THIS DOCUMENT

This document can be changed through a unanimous decision of the chairs or a 70% majority vote of the core members.

END.