Failure of the Livelihoods Resettlement Program on the Nakai Plateau

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The Five Pillars of Livelihood Restoration

- Commercial Forestry
- Fisheries
- Agriculture
- Livestock
- Off Farm
Nakai Neua 2004
Forestry Pillar

The Plan

- Sustainable logging through VFA to provide dividends
- VFA has exclusive rights to harvest timber from 25,000 ha community forest area
- International support to manage VFA
- Envisioned to provide 1/3 of livelihood incomes.

The Result

- ...an experiment which has failed the resettlers – PoE, 2018
- Influential companies remained on plateau operating logging operations and saw mills until 2012
- GoL tax income on VFA logging operations at up to 42%
- Dividends haven’t be paid in 4 years (POE,2018)
- Finally the entire VFA to be disbanded and communities manage their remaining areas for conservation, NTFP consumption
Fisheries Pillar

The Plan
• Biomass clearance “vital importance” for healthy reservoir
• Ensure exclusive fishing rights to resettled communities
• Avoid introduction of invasive species of fish
• Create a complex fisheries authority based on licencing of resettled communities

The Result
• Biomass went largely uncleared resulting in dead zones
• Tilapia and Carp species introduced into the reservoir in the first year.
• 20 year exclusive fishing rights under presidential decree.
• Enforcement is problematic - Illegal Fishing camps have been continually reported
• “unnecessarily complicated and cumbersome system of regulation” – PoE, 2018
• Fisheries livelihood is reported as moderately successful, however, sustainability is questionable?
Oxygen levels following impoundment
Agriculture Pillar

The Plan

• 0.66 ha farms / family including 0.16 ha paddy.
• Establish irrigation pumps for dry season farming.
• Establish pilot village to demonstrate techniques.
• Establish new farms during construction phase to supply food for construction workers.
• Soil Quality Improvement – 2-5 tn/ha of lime for acidity, 50kg/ha/year inorganic fertiliser

The Result

• Resettlement delayed until impoundment in 2008
• Pilot village families employed by the pilot farm
• Following impoundment, villagers quickly move into uplands to do shifting cultivation.
• Necessary inputs not made
• Cassava contract farming depleting soils further
• Plans for Ag development AfD supports agriculture, livestock, Fisheries project in resettled area for 5 years.
• Dealing with constraints of poor quality soils “not yet clear” – PoE 2018
Livestock Pillar

The Plan

• Reduce stocking before impoundment
• Maintain livestock as a business enterprise rather than as a ‘bank’
• Alternative Forage Production
  • Forage production
  • Reservoir drawdown

The Result

• Failure to reduce numbers results in mass starvation following impoundment
• Villagers move buffalo into WMPA
• Improved pasture
  • May 2014 – 0 ha
  • Nov 2017 – 97.44 ha
• Culturally villagers keep tradition to maintain financial security in buffalo
• Current overstocking “unsustainable”
• “I have 15 buffalo. They are not healthy because of the lack of grass” MW, Feb 2018
Off Farm – Tourism?

“Seeing this large area of environmental destruction made me reflect on the environmental damage ‘green’ projects can sometimes cause”
– Rob Arnold. Personal contribution to National Geographic website
“Nam Theun 2 confirmed my longstanding suspicion that the task of building a large dam is just too complex and too damaging to priceless natural resources.”