



SURAFCO

Support to the Reform of the Luang Prabang Agriculture
and Forestry College in Laos

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Inception Report

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Support to the Reform of the Luang Prabang Agriculture and Forestry College in Laos (**SUARFCO**)

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SURAFCO

Inception Report

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BoQ	Bill of Quantity
CDC	Curriculum Development Committee
CHF	Swiss Francs
CIAT	Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (Intern. Centre for Tropical Agric.)
CMU	Chiang Mai University
CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
DAFO	District Agriculture and Forestry Office
DED	Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst (German Development Service)
GDG	Gender Development Group
GoL	Government of Lao PDR
HDR	Human Resources Development
IG	Income Generation
IT	Information Technology
LAFC	Luang Prabang Agriculture and Forestry College
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAFC	Northern Agriculture and Forestry College (replacement for LAFC)
NAFES	National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service
NAFRI	National Agricultural and Forestry Research Institute
NPD	National Project Director
NPM	National Project Manager
NUoL	National University of Laos
PAFO	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office
SCA	Swiss College of Agriculture
SCM	Steering Committee Meeting
SKAT	Swiss Resource Centre and Consultancies for Development.
SURAFCO	Support to the Reform of the Luang Prabang Agriculture and Forestry College in Lao PDR
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TA	Technical Assistance
TABI	The Agro Biodiversity Initiative
TOR	Terms of Reference
WS	Workshop

1. Project Overview

The **Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)** is committed to modernize the agricultural college education contributing to achieve 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 **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 Luang Prabang Agriculture and Forestry College”.

SURAFCO’s first three-year phase is put into operation from September 2009 to August 2012 with an overall budget of 4,650,000 CHF.

SURAFCO is implemented by the **Luang Prabang Agriculture and Forestry College (LAFC)**¹ with the support of **HELVETAS, the Swiss Association for International Cooperation**. Assistance in curriculum development is provided by **SCA, the Swiss College of Agriculture** and in infrastructure development by **SKAT, the Swiss Resource Centre and Consultancies for Development**.

The three-years project phase was set up to achieve the following objectives and outputs:

1.1 Development Objective (Vision 2020)

The Northern Agricultural and Forestry College (NAFC) is acknowledged by public and private partners as a centre of excellence in sustainable upland farming systems, offering skills-based and market-oriented education, training and services, thus contributing to poverty reduction, food security and income generation in the Northern Provinces of Laos.

1.2 Project Objective

The NAFC, as a well managed centre for skills-based education and training in upland farming systems, offers an attractive study and working environment for students and teachers (taking into account gender and ethnic groups), is linked to a number of private and public partners, and its graduates are in demand for their theoretical and practical skills in the labour market .

¹ Soon the request in change of name from LAFC to NAFC, Northern Agriculture and Forestry College, will be acknowledged, as the college serves the whole Northern area of Laos. Thus in the following the new name will be used.

1.3 Project Outcomes

Outcome 1 – Improved student selection and motivation

Highly motivated students from Northern provinces of Laos, with a growing number of women and students originating from ethnic groups, enrol in the college and contribute to its reputation in the labour market, through their theoretical, practical, technical, managerial and social competence.

Outcome 2 – Better trained teachers (technical and didactic skills)

Highly qualified and motivated teachers compose a pool of experts in upland farming systems of Laos, regularly upgrade their training in technical, teaching, managerial and social skills, transfer their knowledge and skills to their students and develop specific skills in enterprise development, service and applied research.

Outcome 3 – Introduction of Skills-based Curriculum and Student centred teaching

The curriculum is skills based, oriented towards the needs of the market, and teaching is student centred; the curriculum has a good balance between theory, applied theory and practice, includes basics, common skills, as well as specialised skills in private business development, upland crop production systems and upland animal production systems. The programme for on- the-job training and further education is based on the same principles

Outcome 4 – Building up of a national , regional & international Partner Network

The NAFC links up with a network of national, regional and international partners engaged in (upland) farming systems with partners from the public and private sectors, in the fields of applied research, extension, education, teachers' training, services, practical training of students, and job opportunities. These partnerships include close links with other similar colleges under Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Outcome 5 – Improved Infrastructure and Equipment

The infrastructure of the NAFC is functional and attractive for students and teachers, allows optimised teaching and learning in theory, applied theory and practice, offers a broad and modern access to information, while remaining slim and manageable.

Outcome 6 –Modern Management practices introduced

The NAFC is managed according to modern management practices, with transparent accounting system, involvement of students and staff in key management issues, and is governed by a board of trustees that guide the college in its strategic choices.

2. Major activities and outputs during the inception period

2.1 Component 1: Improving students' selection and motivation

Summary:

Work under this component started with the focus on assessing the enrolment of ethnic and female students. Informal sport events contribute to establish informal relationships. Criteria to support motivated and disadvantaged students have been drafted.

Major activities (September-December 2009):

- a) An overall strategy on gender and ethnicity for college education was developed and documented.
- b) An assessment on enrolment of female and ethnic students has been started among NAFC students and graduates, outside teachers, potential students and their parents to assess conditions, needs and concerns of vulnerable groups in college education.
- c) Start discussion with the gender in development group (GDG) to cooperate for inputs in curriculum development and possible female promoting activities.
- d) Students' sports event has been organised together with the first year students of the Xieng Nguen. Football games, badminton and petanque events with other organisations like Souphanouvong University, PAFO and Pak Ou District have been organised to complement collaborations on an informal way.
- e) Contacts to potential scholarship providers (e.g. PhaTad Ke garden, German private investor, Foundation for education promotion) have been established. Those private and public donors are willing to provide support for motivated, disadvantaged or vulnerable students. Draft concepts and criteria for selection and support have been elaborated.



Students of all grades have fun during various games

Progress towards outcome achievements

- The activities during the inception phase focused on understanding the context and reason of low ethnic and female enrolment and exploring related strategies. Concrete actions to improve students' selection and motivation could not yet be approached in this short timeframe.

2.2 Component 2: Teachers Upgrading

Summary:

Next to the curriculum development workshops for all teachers', activities under this component started with establishing an overall human resources upgrading plan. Several trainings have been organised and eight teachers participated. The library has been upgraded.

Major activities (September-December 2009):

- a) All teachers received upgrading training in curriculum development with a focus on practical application and student centred-learning.
- b) An overall teachers' upgrading training plan has been established. Contacts to training providers are in the process to be established.



The librarians register the new books

- c) Four teachers, including one woman, participated in three upgrading training courses on land use planning, agro eco system and market analysis in collaboration with TABI.

- d) Two male teachers received upgrading training focusing on feed analysis in collaboration with the Souphanouvong University.

- e) One female teacher joined a technical training in pig raising and one male teacher in goat raising in collaboration with the

SCD/ADB funded Northern Region Sustainable Livelihoods through Livestock Development Project.

- f) The library has been upgraded with 428 books providing additional material for the curriculum development and supporting the teachers in their lessons' preparations and their self-studies. All books are also accessible for the students.

Progress towards outcome achievements

- The development of a Human Resources development plan is a good start for organising upgrading training.
- The most pressing training needs identified in the HRD plan are related to issues in Agribusiness. Related training opportunities have not yet been identified.

2.3 Component 3: Curriculum Development

Summary:

Three study programs, including module descriptions for a high-level diploma have been finalised and are ready for approval. Related curriculum development workshops involving all NAFC teachers took place. A Curriculum Development Committee is operational.

Major activities (September-December 2009):

- a) Three topics (agronomy, livestock and agro business) have been identified for developing a new high-level curriculum.
- b) A Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) has been established to take care of the overall process for the curriculum development. The CDC met frequently for supervising the development process.
- c) Three curriculum development workshops have been conducted with the support of SCA (two already before the official launch of the project). The first workshop concentrated on analyses of the framework, need and defined the core elements of the new curricula. The second workshop defined general and detailed curriculum structure. The third workshop concentrated on the module descriptions.
- d) Two consulting workshops with representatives of MAF, the other 4 colleges, representatives from Souphanouvong University and Ministry of Education (MOE) took place in September and December to coordinate the efforts in the curriculum development process.
- e) Draft versions of all three curricula, including detailed module descriptions have been finalised and are available in Lao and English. The versions will be presented to MOE for approval beginning of February.
- f) Teachers start using the new student-centred teaching methodology.



Group work during third curriculum development workshop in September

Progress towards outcome achievements

- The progress related to the curriculum development is in line with the intended timeframe.
- The start of the curriculum development process put a lot of additional workload on the NPM in terms of management and financial organisation as the official project start was not in line with the start of the curriculum development concept.
- The timeline of the curriculum development process is quite tight. The new curriculum requires developing not only a new content but also applying a new methodology. The teachers need to perform all this conceptual development additionally to their core task and mostly in their free time.

2.4 Component 4: Establishing Partnerships

Summary:

A website and basic promotional material has been developed, including a leaflet and a music CD. Partnerships are concentrating on upgrading training for teachers, support to curriculum development, experience and information exchange.

Major activities (September-December 2009):

- a) A directory for partnerships has been drafted, identifying the partners' potentials for collaboration, e.g. for support to upgrading training, teaching, information, practical term, employment, curriculum or material development.
- b) Regularly coordination with all the other 4 colleges under MAF, the Souphanouvong and Nabong Universities has been established. Representative from the four colleges joined all curriculum-consulting workshops.
- c) A website www.Lao-Agric-College.org has been established. So far it is operating in English only, but will soon operate bilingual. The website includes information on the NAFC and the overall reform process. It is intended that the website will be jointly used in collaboration with the other four colleges.



Finalising the NAFC leaflet

- d) Promotional material has been developed, e.g. a NAFC leaflet. Furthermore 12 songs have been composed about the NAFC to document and promote the college education. A related CD has been recorded and a songbook has been printed.
- e) Collaboration with the German Development Service (DED) has been re-established to launch a one-year support program through young professionals (NFP) from Germany. Two staffs have been requested to support

the farm development.

- f) Regularly coordination, information exchange and visits took place with PAFO, NAFES, NAFRI, research, training and extension centres. In collaboration with CIAT a cassava research project could be conducted.
- g) Partnerships with foreign educational institutions have been established with the main objective to support teachers upgrading. Close cooperation is prevalent with the Issan University at Kalasin Compound, who visited the college in December. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been drafted with "Agrostudies", the international Centre for Agriculture Studies in Israel to be signed soon.

Progress towards outcome achievements

- The establishment of Internet and telephone connection contributed enormously to an easier cooperation especially with the partners abroad.

2.5 Component 5: Improving Infrastructure

Summary:

Infrastructure development proceeded quite quickly and resulted in the establishment of an infrastructure master plan. Detailed construction plans for the intended buildings are prepared. Feasibility studies on water, wastewater and electricity operations have been completed.

Major activities (September-December 2009):

- a) An overall topographic study of the whole compound has been prepared to serve as a basis for the infrastructure development of buildings and farm activities.
- b) An assessment of infrastructure needs have been conducted in a participatory process. The assessment included visits to other educational institutions in the north identifying clearly what is needed and what should be avoided.

- c) A Master plan for NAFC infrastructure development was developed with the support of SKAT, including the agreement on a land-use pattern. The plan has been endorsed by MAF and SDC. The plan has been documented and is based on a stepwise implementation. Potential other donors for construction phase 2 have been approached.



Infrastructure Master Plan after full completion

- d) Detailed construction plans for the school buildings, laboratories, dormitories, guardhouses and canteen have been prepared. In combination with the master plan they serve as a model for other colleges.
- e) Feasibility studies for improving water access, waste water management, electrical supply and erosion control have been conducted. The studies include options for improvements including financial requirements.
- f) Development of farm units has been started. Plans for the nursery are being finalised and will be implemented beginning of February 2010.
- g) Infrastructure improvements of the available buildings, like painting, roof improvements and establishment of new sport facilities, have been conducted combining government and project funds.

Progress towards outcome achievements

- Infrastructure development matches the timeline indicated in the PoO
- The budget requirements of the overall infrastructure master plan exceed the available budget by 2 times. However with the available budget basic need as outlined in the project document can be covered. A step-by-step implementation is envisaged, utilising the available buildings.
- Also the budget for the farm units is rather underestimated. With the focus to build up practical skills and competence it is suggested that the unallocated budget shall be used for farm development and equipment.

2.6 Component 6: Improving Management

Summary:

The NAFC organisational set up has been adjusted in line with the MAF reform strategy. Coordinators for each project component and management guidelines have been established. The college received connection to telephone and Internet.

Major activities (September-December 2009):

- a) The NAFC organisational set up of the college has been revised to be in line with the requirements of the reform strategy. Related job analysis has been conducted and TORs for the divisions and sections have been agreed.
- b) A proposal has been prepared to change the status from a medium-level college to a high-level college. This includes the official request to confirm the change of name to NAFC.
- c) Management guidelines to agree on operational measure between the project and the LAFC have been established with the focus to assure smooth operations.
- d) Coordinators for each of the six project components have been identified. Regularly meetings of the coordinators and the project management team have been taken place.
- e) All coordinators, the college leadership and the library have received basic office furniture, computers, printers, telephones, and two fax and photocopy machines.
- f) The college has been provided with telephone and Internet access. The whole administration and teaching area can be connected wireless. Each coordinator and the leadership have been issued an Internet address.



One of the frequent coordinators meetings

Progress towards outcome achievements

- During the establishment of the new organisational set up the problem of NAFCs operations from two compounds became obvious. The project document considers a one-campus strategy, but the reality is based on two-compound operations. Various options have been considered, but a final decision needs still to be agreed.

3. Assessment of Progress by the Chief Technical Adviser

The following assessment is based on experiences made during the first months of implementation. It focuses mainly on identifying issues which need further considerations and put the objectives into a realistic picture, that everybody is aware what can be achieved and where problems might occur. The issues have been discussed with the NAFC director and the NPM. The core findings will be presented during the Steering Committee Meeting to open up for ideas.

3.1 Overall assessment and achievements

SURAFCO had a good start and was operational from the first day. On first September the TA team, except the civil engineer, have been in place and already in the first week a stakeholder workshop and a curriculum development workshop could be conducted. Progress could be achieved in all the six components with major concentration and achievements and on curriculum development (C3), infrastructure improvement (C5) and management improvements (C6).

Significant achievements during the inception phase can be summarized as follows

- Project staff, office and equipment is in place
- Coordinators for all 6 components are identified and operational
- Assessment on female and ethnic enrolment conducted
- Access for the whole college to telephone and internet created
- Curriculum framework for 3 majors, including detailed module descriptions, are developed and ready for approval
- Master plan for infrastructure development established and acknowledged
- New organisational set agreed and related TOR established

The SURAFCO project document is based on 6 outcomes, 20 outputs and 132 activities. The 6 outcomes are based on MAF's reform strategy and build a solid basis for implementing the reform. The 20 outputs and 132 activities are quite ambitious considering the human resources available and the quite tight time schedule. In the following issues, which need special attention, are summarized.

3.2 Students

The first SURAFCO objective and major aim of MAF's strategy puts strong emphasis on making education accessible to all, in particular to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Thus improvement of student selection, with a special focus on women and ethnic people is considered as an important component. Although more women are involved in agriculture than men in Laos they are so far ineffectively reached by the agricultural education system and consequently underrepresented in the government's service provision.

The college is expected to release graduates with broad and practical skills, capable to work in the private sector, but also as government staffs, e.g. as extensionists at kumban level or as facilitators or operators of small or medium scale businesses in the remote areas of the northern provinces. A large part of those potential students should be recruited from remote and poor areas. It is however still not enough known about the reason for low involvement, especially of women from those areas. The related assessment started in December is a first step and will provide deeper insights on

reasons for low enrolment. The study will be the basis to elaborate promoting measures for women and ethnic groups.

3.2.1 Support Schemes for vulnerable groups

The new skills-based curriculum focuses on better and diverse employment opportunities. Together with the infrastructure improvements this will certainly contribute to a higher attractiveness, also for women. It will however take time to prove real improvements and changes – at least one batch of graduated students. Moreover a new curriculum and infrastructure only is not enough to increase enrolment numbers. Support schemes for the core college education, but also for bridging periods need to be set up to assure a substantial increase in enrolment. Those support schemes need to be established in a way that they can continue beyond the project support.

A complementary option should be the set up of a quota system, helping to establish positive role models for potential female and remote-area students to enrol. Establishing a tuition fee system based on wealth indicators - either through reduced school fees or through a support system from external sources – is another option. All those options need to be based on sustainable financial support schemes. Support schemes could be facilitated through a combination of income generating activities of LAFC, support from external private businesses and through projects, but also need a government commitment by increasing numbers and budget of the prevalent support scheme.

3.2.2 Entrance requirements and bridging courses

In many of the districts formal education covers only lower secondary or even only primary education. With the new standard for formal education released in 2009 a 12-year curriculum is introduced which even decreases college education opportunity for those not been able to meet the regularly admission requirements. Under these circumstances the question how to increase enrolment of vulnerable groups becomes even more apparent. Taking the intention to create better access for female and ethnic students for granted requires special set ups like preparatory or bridging courses. Those could be best offered locally at the provincial levels or at the college through the above mentioned subsidy options.

A concentration on the development of the high level curriculum only could be contradictory to the aim of achieving a higher female enrolment and an balance among ethnic groups representing the population share. However we need to be rational and increase student numbers and develop content and curriculum step-by-step. Taking all those issues into account the level of female, ethnic and poor students enrolment in this first phase has to be put into a realist picture and can probably not reach more than 30 %.

3.3 Human Recourses

3.3.1 Additional Staff requirements and staff support

Teachers in the college are overall very motivated to extend their knowledge. Providing upgrading training will certainly lead to higher quality. However, additionally it is important to recruit new staff with basic education covering the new fields like agro business, economic development, environment, extension, or marketing skills to really offer an attractive and labour market based education. NAFC needs to assure to look for upgrading possibilities and potential new suitable staffs. MAF needs assure that additional positions can be created.

Reforming the organizational set up is interlinked with the new curriculum and the modern management requirements. It is important to differentiate between teaching and non-teaching staff, even in the beginning it might be likely that non-teaching staff need to be involved in teaching. Thus implementing the new set up requires not only additional teaching staff e.g. in agro business, but also skilled staff in management and communication for the new outreach and the management unit. Similar as above suitable staffs need to be employed and trained, formal positions and finances need to be assured.



Support to involve more female students has been raised above. Additionally there is a need for encouraging measures to strengthen female teachers. This becomes even more important as the new curricula and the related employment opportunities focus on content and soft skills, which need a gender balance. The creation of equal opportunities for upgrading training and participation in decision-making is necessary. To this end a code of conduct could help to agree on gender and culturally sensitive practices. There is also a need to enrol more female staff, not only to support available female teachers. All those measures depend on the acceptance of stakeholders and representatives and require a stable cooperating team within the implementation process.

In addition, it must also be considered that the general attractiveness of the teacher's profession has to be increased in order to get suitable candidates. Therefore in the frame of the overall reform process an "old" issue needs to be named: adequate payment of public servants and recognition of teachers as a main development force. Adequate payment would decrease the high workload of teachers due to their side incomes, and would lead to more time for preparation and subsequently, an increase in teaching quality.

3.3.2 Two-compound operation

The additional staff requirements become even more pressing considering that the college is presently operating from two locations. Year-1 students are based in Xieng Nguen compound and Year 2 and 3 students in Pak Sueang – with a distance of about 50 km. The planning of the project focused on a one-compound solution, clearly pointing out that both locations should be merged and all students and teachers are located in the Xieng Nguen Compound. However the real situation is a two-compound set up. Teachers in Xieng Nguen have their houses, families and side incomes at this location. Travelling to Pak Sueang every day is time and money consuming. Additional teachers accommodation at Pak Sueang are not available and not considered in the project budget.

Several scenarios have been envisaged but need to be elaborated in more detail and endorsed by MAF. Any option will require additional staffs.

Option a: Keeping the present set up, with one year education at the Xieng Nguen compound; either for the year one students or for the year three students. This would help to overcome the presently still limited teaching and accommodation facilities, but should not be considered as an option for a long-term reform process. During the year at the Xieng Nguen compound the students could not access the newly-build facilities for applied theory and practical application, which would limit the quality of their education. Establishing those facilities in both compounds is financially and strategically a non-option. There is also a risk that the teaching schedule and responsible teachers are organised according to their locations rather than being placed according to their knowledge and skills.

Option b: Operating the Xieng Nguen compound as a forestry division under a joined NAFC leadership would have the advantage to offer additional subjects related to forestry and forest development. However this would require the development of a completely new fourth curriculum. Even the curriculum from the national university of Laos (NUoL) could be used and adjusted at a later stage, teaching cannot be implemented by the teaching staff from Xieng Nguen only. Operating from two compounds requires a double management team, thus even more additional staff. It could be possible to offer upgrading, bridging or short courses instead of a full master study, but this would imply that the present Xieng Nguen staffs are not available for the 3 new high-level master study programs.

Option c: Converting the Xieng Nguen compound into a separate forestry college would have the advantage that both locations could operate independently. NUoL could hand over the full responsibility to offer a high-level forestry-study program to the new forestry college. At a later stage upgrading, bridging or short courses could be developed. However the problem of additional staff requirements and utilization of Xieng Nguen teachers, presently involved in the project activities, remains the same. It also needs to be clear that the present set up of SURAFCO would not consider any support for a separate forestry college.

Option d: Handing over the Xieng Nguen compound to the extension service to become a technical service centre was discussed as another option. This would be a suitable solution in the light that all the NAFC facilities and students would be located in one compound. However, it again needs to be discussed how the present staff at Xieng Nguen can be utilized. If most of them are handed over to work with the extension service, well-trained teachers involved in the curriculum development process will be lost. If the

staff will be shifted to Pak Sueang additional financial requirements for travel or accommodation are needed.

A decision on this issue is not depending on the college or project only, and should be made as soon as possible. Implementation of the new organization set up, the upgrading training plan and the further curriculum development process are depending on the respective decision.

3.4 Employment opportunities

A core element of the project is the improvement in the quality of education. Thus the newly developed curriculum focuses not only on technical skills, but also includes e.g. entrepreneurial and soft skills. In addition, the skills have a strong labour market orientation. With achieving the status of a high-level diploma college a big step is be made to acknowledge the value, need and quality of the skills-based education.

3.4.1 Employment opportunities for graduates in the public and private sector

However, even the college will be able to release those highly knowledgeable and skilled graduates, the market-absorption capacity in the **public sector** remains a risk factor. Provincial and District agriculture and forestry offices are the traditional clients of the colleges. However, the employment capacity by the public sector amounts so far to only about 10 % of the graduates, as stated in the tracer study from 2007. MAF plans to expand the number of staff to work at the sub-district level and therefore to employ additional 600 to 1200 extension and technical staff. By 2020 PAFOs, DAFOs and technical service centres are expected to absorb 50 % of the graduates. However, so far the financial resources for those staffs are not yet secured. The project shall be involved in a policy dialogue in order to elaborate adequate budget options.

The transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture certainly fosters employment opportunities. Even so presently only 10 % of the graduates work for agricultural companies, the **private sector** will become a main employer of skilled agriculture technicians. However, in times of the economic crises those opportunities might not look as good as promised. The crises could lead to a reduced investment. It could lead to a rather short-term commitment of foreign investors utilising natural resources in an unsustainable manner. Furthermore the mainly regional foreign investors, e.g. from China, Vietnam or Thailand are likely employing staff from their own countries than Lao graduates. The project will pay special attention to facilitating the building of a network of potential employers – but also to suitable host organisation for the practical term. Past experiences show that the practical terms provide valuable experiences for a future professional career. It has proven to be crucial that preparation and coaching by the training institution and by the host institution must be of high quality.

3.4.2 Working opportunities in remote areas

A more general problem is linked to disparity of the rather quick development in urban and accessible areas in contrary to the slow or even stagnating development in remote areas. All over the country we can observe a high migration of young people towards the urban and developed areas. In western countries a lot of graduates return to their hometown or village and work on their own farms or for the regional government services. Experiences in Laos as well as in other developing countries show, that students once educated are not likely to return and rather try to look for jobs in more developed areas. It is also quite

attractive to continue education on a higher level. Thus the issue of educating young people to return working in remote and underdeveloped areas needs to be seen in a broader context.

The project will address the issue improving the attractiveness working in those remote areas e.g. by establishing partnerships with government, projects and private organizations from the beginning and by providing information of legal and management aspects in business establishment. However it needs to be understood that the attractiveness is not solidly depending on the project, the college and the educational program offered. It needs joined efforts from the government to create more working opportunities and related positions on the kumban level, to simplify opening business, to offer financial support schemes, to improve infrastructure and marketing to make it more attractive for the graduates to work in those areas.

3.5 Infrastructure Development

The provision of appropriate infrastructure is regarded as an important project component and absorbs a major part of the overall budget. Success and sustainability of the utilization will strongly depend on proper planning and supervision. In order to achieve sustainable solutions that can serve as a model for other educational institutions, social, ecological and economical aspects have to be considered. Thus instead of going ahead with simply planning the facilities mentioned in the project, a careful prioritization of needs, requirements and conditions has been carried out in a participatory process.

This finally led to the endorsement of the Master plan, including the agreement on a land-use pattern which separates farm, academic, students residential, administration, teachers' residential and sports areas. The two last mentioned had not been considered in the project planning. However, sport facilities can considerably contribute to the attractiveness of the college. Suitable accommodation for teachers attracts more and qualified staffs, especially in an area where not much opportunity for accommodation is available.

With the emphasis on an appropriate architectural style and sustainable construction technology to meet the requirements for studying and applying regional agriculture, the project phases the challenge of satisfying the needs of modern times such as gender, hygiene, comfort, space, etc. while respecting traditional values and habits.

Facility management is considered as crucial. Thus the simple but efficient designs developed endorse preventive maintenance. However facility management needs a well-trained facility management team and thus additional staff as well as an adequate operational budget.

Even the master plan (3.3 Million US) cannot be fully implemented with the available financial resources, the available budget for buildings will cover all facilities identified in the project document. The sound and attractive design of the master plan makes it likely that support for construction phase 2 or 3 can be facilitated through donors' or the government's support. The NAFC leadership appreciates that activities are carried out in a step-by-step approach. This approach leaves room to utilize the available resources and buildings efficiently and will allow the college to be functional at any time, even further financial resources cannot be accessed.

Nevertheless as already mentioned in the Helvetas tender document the approval of the overall design for both theoretical and applied teaching and learning might need budget adjustments. With the overall master plan in place and the new curricula focusing on the practical skills, high emphasis has to be put on developing the farm areas and related equipment. In total 11 farm units are planned. It is therefore suggested that a major portion of the unallocated budget should be utilized to make those units operational as well as set up sports areas for the students.

3.6 Priorities until September 2010

The detailed activities related to each of the component are identified in the operational plan. Following the core priorities have been summarized.

- C1: Develop ideas for support schemes based on the identified criteria for improved students' selection
- C2: Finalise teachers upgrading plan and start related implementation
- C3: Receive official acknowledgement of the curricula and the college's high level diploma status
- C3: Launch of the new curricula for the academic year 2010-2011 (3 majors)
- C4: Establish additional partnerships to a) support content and material development and b) create suitable conditions for students' practical semester in line with the new curricula
- C4: Improve library service to match with the requirements of the new curricula
- C5: Compile tender documents for dormitories, teaching building, lab and canteen and launch bidding process
- C5: Start construction of all four building with ground work to be completed before the raining season
- C5: Complete concepts for at least 5 farm units and start utilisation
- C5: Improve clean water access for the whole college based on options identified during the assessment
- C6: Finalise the detailed job descriptions of each staff, including a decision on the status and task of the Xieng Nguen compound

4. Decisions to be taken during the Steering Committee Meeting

Presentation and discussion on Project Report and issues for discussion:

- Endorse Progress Report
- Reconfirm decision on one-compound operations
- Decide on request to staff requirements
- Decide on improved criteria for quota system
- Decide on options for bridging courses
- Decide on land titling process

Presentation and discussion on Finances and further Activities

- Endorse Financial Report for September to December 2009
- Endorse Financial Proposal for 2010
- Endorse Request on use of unallocated budget
- Endorse Plan of Operations

Other issues:

- Agree on next Steering Committee Meeting

Annex A: SURAFCO Expenses September to December 2009 in CHF*

<i>Component</i>	<i>Plan CHF</i>	<i>Actual CHF</i>	<i>% Delivery</i>
C1. Students selection & motivation	5,000	1,509	% 30
C2. Teachers Upgrading	50,000	7,486	% 15
C3. Curriculum Development	60,000	8,692	% 14
C4. Partner Networks	5,000	3,747	% 75
C5. Improving Infrastructure	160,000	115,867	% 72
C6. Improving Management	5,000	3,089	% 62
Project admin and steering	49,958	45,431	% 91
Total	334,958	185,821	% 55

*The 'planned' and 'actual' figures are for operational costs only and exclusive of technical assistance and overheads

Justification:

General: The absorption capacity at the beginning of a project – to be settled before the project start - is always a bit difficult to assess. Thus the expenditures' utilisation of more than 50 % during those four months can be considered as reasonable.

C1: There is an under-utilisation in this component due to the fact that planned workshops with GDG and SCA could not yet be implemented.

C2: Teachers upgrading depend on the Human Resources Development plan. As the plan was completed only recently, only some training courses took place and a difference between the planned and actual budget occurred. It was seen important to concentrate on the curricula development first and elaborate adequate training opportunities accordingly.

C3: This component started already beginning of 2009, before the official start of the project. SDC agreed to cover all related curriculum development activities before the official start additionally to the available budget. Thus the financial figures show a low utilisation compared to the plan, even a lot of activities and higher expenses occurred.

C4: This component utilises the budget mainly due to plan. However some activities are still ongoing and have not yet been consolidated in the budget summary.

C5: Same as C4

C6: Same as C4

Annex B: SURAFCO Budget Plan for 2010 in CHF

Component	TOTAL SURAFCO Budget (without TA and overheads)	Plan 2010 Jan to Dec
C1. Students selection & motivation	64,000	37,000
C2. Teachers Upgrading	330,000	167,000
C3. Curriculum Development	256,000	128,000
C4. Partner Networks	136,000	61,000
C5. Improving Infrastructure	1,884,000	1,108,000
C6. Improving Management	45,000	33,000
Project Admin & Steering	545,000	160,000
Unallocated	215,140	
TOTAL	3,475,140	1,694,000

Comments:

Budget allocations for each component are used as identified in the Project Agreement.

The project agreement includes an amount of 215,140 CHF as unallocated budget. It is suggested to use this money for component 5, to strengthen the practical teaching and farm development as well as include an amount for sports facilities and erosion control

C5 Infrastructure	Budget in PRO DOC		NEEDS	
	CHF	US \$	US \$	Difference US \$
New infrastructure & renovation*	1,055,000	959,091	1,057,460	-98,369
Farm Facilities	384,500	349,545	385,800	-36,255
Equipment & IT	315,500	286,818	255,000	31,818
Vehicles	129,000	117,273	112,000	5,273
Expertise for farm & facilities	0	0	45,000	-45,000
Sport Facilities	0	0	32,335	-32,335
Erosion Control	0	0	20,000	-20,000
TOTAL	1,884,000	1,712,727	1,907,595	-194,868
Unallocated Budget	215,140	195,582		714

* At the time of Master Plan development the exchange rate CHF to US \$ was nearly equal. The costs will be summarized based on the actual exchange rate during date of expenditure. There will be always a slight difference between the exchange rate in the budget and the actual expenses on the day of expenditure.

Annex C: Plan of Operations for 2009-2010

Outputs	Activities	Indicators	When
Outcome 1: Improved student selection and motivation			
Output 1.1 Highly motivated students, with a growing number of women and students from ethnic groups, enrol in the NAFC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess access criteria for entering college, especially for women and ethnic Elaborate solutions to increase enrolment for women, ethnic and poor people Organise WS on how to organise related promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Assessment on ethnic and female enrolment Cooperation with at least 3 organisation supporting vulnerable students At least 2 WS on gender and ethnic issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dec/Jan 2010 Jan to June 2010 March and Aug 2010
Output 1.2 The students are respectful of the rules and regulations in the college and on the campus, and have a positive attitude towards the college, inside and with outside partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop regulations for use of college facilities Organize sports, social and cultural events Training on waste management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 3 cultural and sport events At least 30 % female participation in the events At least 1 batch with min 30% women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feb and March 2010 March and June 2010 April 2010
Output 1.3 New skills introduced in the curriculum positively affect the students' performance in the studies, on the college farm, and on the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaborate ideas on support scheme for disadvantaged students Testing different schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 1 cooperation with project or private sector to support disadvantage students 100% support for vulnerable students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mai 2010 Until June 2010
Outcome 2: Better trained teachers (technical and didactic skills)			
Output 2.1 The teachers of NAFC are trained (according to a detailed plan taking into account the restrictions imposed by normal college activities) in their technical fields and have developed new skills in student centred learning, communication, language and extension methods, (project) management, and enterprise development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish TOR for each teacher & HRD plan Organise related upgrading training Organize skill training for income generating purpose (e.g. handicraft, farming, enterprise development, IT) Organise upgrading training in other countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 training and 2 WS At least 15 topics with min 30% women At least 10 topics with min 30% women At least 2 topics with min 30% female 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oct. 2009 to Feb.2010 Whole year Whole year Whole year
Output 2.2 The teachers have a clear understanding of their duty, their performance is monitored, and they are generally satisfied of their situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise WS for all teachers on roles and responsibilities Set up performance indicators for teachers Outline M&E schedule for teaching performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 training and 2 WS (presentation and discussion) 1 WS on performance indicators 1 Teachers assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dec/ Jan 2010 March 2010 Sept 2010

Outputs	Activities	Indicators	When
Output 2.3 New teachers are recruited according to the changing needs of the college, and the share of women and representatives of ethnic groups is increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on responsibilities for content dev. • Establish TOR for new teachers, including special encouragement for women and ethnic people • Recruit new teachers based on assessment by setting inclusiveness targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of female teachers min 30%, ethnic teachers min 20 % 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sept 2009 • June 2010 • Aug/Sept 2010
Outcome 3: Introduction of Skills-based Curriculum and Student centred teaching			
Output 3.1 The existing curriculum is assessed in order to assure a continuity wherever possible and tool for the elaboration, assessment and monitoring of the new curriculum are developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WS on analysis of framework and identification of needs • WS on structure, methods and teaching aids of curricula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 WS, involving all teachers • 2 WS, involving all teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March, June 2009 • Sept to Dec 2009
Output 3.2 The contents and the structure of the new curriculum are defined based on the skills required by the labour market (demand-oriented and market oriented), with a focus on micro-enterprise development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WS on development of module content and details • WS on testing new modules • WS on official launching of new curricula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 WS, involving all teachers • 1 WS involving all teachers • 1 WS involving all teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb 2010 • Mai 2010 • June 2010
Output 3.3 The specific requirements of student centred learning and modular curriculum with respect to the infrastructure development (outcome 5) are clearly defined and documented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify physical areas for self learning possibilities and related needs for improvements • Include areas for self learning in the infrastructure development plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WS and Master plan development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dec 2009 to March 2010 • Oct 2009
Output 3.4 An optimised programme of refresher courses for “returnees”, extension agents, and farmers is elaborated and offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess demand for refresher courses • Develop outline for at least 2 courses, including 1 course addressing women only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview returnees (women, ethnic group) • At least 2 courses (1 address women) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2010
Output 3.5 The key staff of the college are trained on curriculum development and student centred learning methods and issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish HRD plan for curriculum development and student centred learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 training and 1 WS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb and July 2010
Outcome 4: Building up of a national , regional & international Partner Network			
Output 4.1 Various networks are set up and result in regular exchange between agricultural colleges, applied research partnerships, improved linkage with the private sector for better job opportunities for graduates, synergies between projects, and closer links with extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise open door event • Organise exchange event with other colleges • Study visit to abroad • Set up partnership with research centre and extension service centre • Applied research with PAFO and private sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 2 events • At least 2 events • 1 visit to CMU and Maejo, Thailand • At least 3 joined activities with at least 3 partners • At least 4 topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March and Sept 2010 • Feb and Aug 2010 • March 2010 • April 2010 • April and June 2010

Outputs	Activities	Indicators	When
Output 4.2 The improved capacities and performance of the college are promoted and the college is gradually acknowledged for its competences in upland farming systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate present promotion and information processes • Based on assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Install and extend internet ○ Develop leaflets, newsletter, etc ○ Set up college website, identify responsible person and train ○ Establish collaboration with media ○ Improve library service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 1 time • Internet access in all renovated buildings • At least 10 leaflet and 1 edition of newsletter • 1 training for responsible persons • At least 50 % participation of media in core workshops • Library move to renovated building with new equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until March 2010 • Jan to Aug 2010 • May 2010 • Whole year • Febr 2010
Output 4.3 The 5-month practical term is managed in a professional way and the access to job opportunities for graduates is facilitated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop framework for directory of partner institutions for students practice and potential employers • Set up quality criteria for students practical performance • Establish format for reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directory established • At least 1 WS • At least 1 WS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until March 2010 • June and July 2010 • June and July 2010
Outcome 5: Improved Infrastructure and Equipment			
Output 5.1 The infrastructure and equipment are regularly maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set infrastructure maintenance plan, including required financial and human resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 1 WS with support of SKAT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2010
Output 5.2 The infrastructure and the equipment of the college are upgraded to meet the requirements of skills based, student centred learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess complete college infrastructure and related needs • Establish infrastructure development plan • Develop detailed designs for teaching, labs, canteen and dormitories • Prepare tender documents (BoQ) • Local bidding for construction implementation • Finalise land titling process • Start construction • Set up maintenance team • Finalise plans and requirements for farm units • Start measures for erosion control • Develop details for improved water supply • Explore options to finance constr. phase 2 & 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topographic study, assessments on clean water access, waste-water, electricity, erosion • Master plan establish and endorsed • Detailed designs • 4 BoQ documents • At least 6 companies involved to bid • Official land title received • At least 2 companies selected for construction • 2-3 staff identified and TOR developed • 11 farm units • based on feasibility study • based on feasibility study • contact to at least 2 potential donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oct 2009 to Feb 2010 • Oct 2009 • Until 31 Jan 2010 • Begin Feb 2010 • Feb to March 2010 • March 2010 • April 2010 • April 2010 • March 2010 • April 2010 • Start April 2010 • Start May 2010

Outputs	Activities	Indicators	When
Output 5.3 The college farm is upgraded to a level that allows to reach at the same time the learning objectives for the students and the production objectives of the farm (economic and self supply), however without equipment that is out of reach of farmers in the uplands of Laos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise training in farm development, processing and marketing (theoretical and practical applications) Start farm activities by increasing farm area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 4 batches At least 5 farm activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start from March to July 2010 Start from March 2010
Outcome 6: Modern Management practices introduced			
Output 6.1 The college is well managed, and the introduction of the new curriculum does not negatively impact normal college activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce system of entrepreneurial management for vocational educ. & training for the college Outline entrepreneurial management system for the college Develop system for benefit share Outline M&E for college activities and income generating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System for IG developed At least 2 WS with whole management WS on regulation of benefit distribution WS on M&E 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April to Sept 2010 March and Sep 2010 March 2010 April 2010
Output 6.2 Strategic options of the college are guided by a board of trustees that represents public and private perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess options for college support system Agree on board concept, roles & responsibility Board Meeting with involved stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 2 meetings with potential stakeholders At least 30 % women involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mai 2010 June 2010 July 2010
Output 6.3 The project structure is operational and provides the needed support (technical and financial) to the college for its reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering committee meetings (SCM) organised before beginning of the semesters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 SCM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jan and Oct 2010