Background

Rural communities in northern Lao PDR are highly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods. This is particularly true in the uplands of Oudomxay province where high rural population densities and poverty rates prevail. Numerous factors, including population growth, new market opportunities and the implementation of government policies on land use, are changing rural people’s access to natural resources. In order to facilitate effective and appropriate project interventions, site specific information on natural and socio-cultural resources is required. Against this background, research was conducted to examine how livelihood strategies have changed between different wealth categories and in relation to natural resources access over the last 10 years.

Objectives

Some objectives of this study were:
(i) to generate site-specific information on the natural resources utilized for certain important rural livelihood strategies.
(ii) to identify with rural dwellers how their livelihood strategies have changed and are expected to change.
(iii) to determine if and why access to certain natural resources has changed.

Methodology

The study employed the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (Scoones, 1998). Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews in Mang village, Oudomxay. Participants ranked their most important livelihood strategies with photographs (Fig 1). Statistical analysis was conducted to determine if significant differences existed between wealth categories.

Recommendation

In order to support livelihood transitions in the uplands of Lao PDR, targeted development interventions may often be required to address the capacities of families within different wealth categories. For example, interventions supporting upland rice cultivation will benefit mainly the lower wealth categories, whereas improving lowland rice cultivation will benefit mainly the richer wealth categories.

Reference