

Rapid Trade and Environment Assessment (RTEA)

Background Research Paper

**Environmental Impacts of Trade Liberalization in the
Tourism Sector of the Lao PDR**

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National Tourism Administration
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To inform the *Rapid Trade and Environment Assessment* for Lao PDR, seven background papers covering nine key economic sectors were commissioned by the RTEA Expert Advisory Panel, a body consisting of key government and private sector stakeholders established to provide overall guidance to the assessment process. These papers provided vital background information and illuminated key sector-specific policy recommendations for the main assessment and are seen as a valuable contribution to the growing body of in-country research focusing on the complex dynamics between trade and the environment in Lao PDR.

This research exercise was coordinated by the Science, Technology and Environment Agency and IUCN – The World Conservation Union in Lao PDR.

Papers edited by Sabrina Shaw (IISD) and Tom Callander (IUCN)

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Environmental Impacts of Trade Liberalization in the Tourism Sector, Lao PDR

by Sounh Manivong & Somxay Sipaaseuth*

Introduction

The development of the tourism industry in Lao PDR over the last two decades has been striking. In 1990, over 14,000 people visited the country, providing tourist revenue of over US\$2.2 million. In 2006, arrival numbers reached 1.21 million and generated US\$173.2 million for the Lao PDR economy. This export income placed tourism earnings higher than the revenue from garments, electricity, wood products, coffee, agricultural products, and handicrafts (LNTA 2006).

Major regional markets currently include Thailand, Vietnam and China, which make up 54 percent of total arrivals. Other key markets include Europe, the United States, Australia and Japan, and although these countries account for just over 25 percent of tourist arrivals, they account for over 78 percent of total expenditures (CPI & UNDP 2006). Priority regions identified by the Lao National Tourism Administration (LNTA) include: (1) Europe; (2) Asia and the Pacific; and (3) the Americas (LNTA 2006).

The rise of the tourism industry in Lao PDR can be attributed to a number of factors including: economic liberalization and integration policies, starting with the opening of its borders to independent tourism in 1990; successfully implemented tourism development policies such as the current *National Ecotourism Strategy 2005-2008* (LNTA 2005); multilateral and bilateral assistance from donors such as New Zealand, France, the Asia Development Bank (ADB) and the World Trade Organization (WTO); and, importantly, Lao PDR's key assets - the country's natural environment and renowned hospitality of the Lao people.

The *National Export Strategy 2006-2008* (MoIC & ITC 2006) identified tourism as a priority export sector for Lao PDR. As the country moves into a new era of regional and international integration through membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the expected accession to the WTO, the tourism sector is expected to continue to grow. What will be the impacts of trade liberalization in Lao PDR? What role can the tourism sector play in ensuring conservation of the natural environment? This paper, commissioned for the Rapid Trade and Environment Assessment (RTEA) Project, seeks to identify some of the key impacts, both positive and negative of this sector and outline strategic policy recommendations to ensure the increase in tourism results in a sustainable industry that enhances the surrounding environment.

Section 1:

Overview of the tourism sector

1.1 History of tourism

Tourism has been a significant sector of the Lao economy since the country gained independence in 1975. During the period from 1975 until 1986, Lao PDR followed a centrally-planned economy, in which most tourists were official delegations and group tourists. The main purposes of receiving tourists were, in particular, to exchange lessons and experiences in sport and culture, and to create solidarity especially with the former socialist countries. As a direct result, tourism services were not initially aimed

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at generating revenue and income, but served political and social-cultural purposes and was financed by the Government of Lao PDR (GoL).

In 1986, the GoL introduced the New Economic Mechanism (NEM) to move from a centrally-planned economy to a market-orientated economy. In 1990, the country opened its borders to independent tourism. Since then, the tourism sector has grown substantially and now caters to more than one million tourists each year (see Annex 3).

1.2 The development of ecotourism

Ecotourism is a large component of Lao tourism development, recognizing the country's strong competitive advantage – its natural environment. Ecotourism is defined in the LNTA (2005) as “*Tourism in rural or protected areas that minimizes negative impacts and is directed towards the conservation of natural and cultural resources, rural socio-economic development and visitor understanding of, and appreciation for, the places they are visiting.*” The country has an extensive system of 20 National Protected Areas (NPAs), covering over 14 percent of the country (IUCN 2007), which the ecotourism industry has come to rely on as its primary business asset.

Popular activities in and around these protected areas include trekking, ethnic village home-stays, rafting, boat trips, canoeing, kayaking, visits to waterfalls, sightseeing, bird-watching safaris, mountain-biking, elephant-riding, photography, and camping. Furthermore, local people have key roles in the ecotourism sector, for example, as tour guides, natural resource managers, producers of traditional goods such as food and handicrafts, in the accommodation sector, and also play a role in protecting ecotourism resources.

The LNTA has established eight ecotourism projects in cooperation with international partners. There is the UNESCO-LNTA Nam Ha Ecotourism Project in Luang Namtha Province's Nam Ha NPA; the Phou Xang Hae Ecotourism Project in Sannakhet Province; the Phou Hin Boun Ecotourism Project in Khammoune Province; the Sustainable Tourism Programme in Luang Prabang Province; the Phou Khao Khouay Tourism Development Project in Bolikhamxay Province; and the Xe Pian NPA Ecotourism Project in Champasack Province. There are also other, smaller ecotourism projects established together with regional partners. However, in some of these the concept of “ecotourism” has been loosely defined.

All of the above projects work to conserve biodiversity and culture by creating various types of ecotourism activities, not only for tourists but also local people, capturing the tourist revenue while contributing to nature and cultural preservation..

1.3 Overview of environmental impacts in the sector

By definition, ecotourism is environmentally friendly; however poorly-planned tourism can lead to adverse changes in culture and destruction of the environment. This section outlines some of the positive and negative impacts of the tourism industry building on the results of studies conducted by Schipani (2007) and Schipani & Marris (2002). The positive and negative impacts of tourism are summarized below:

1.3.1 Positives impacts of tourism

- Nature is an ecotourism business asset - It is in the best interests of those in the tourism industry to protect this asset and the profitability of their businesses.
- Conservation advocacy – Ecotourism and its economic benefits can be used to advocate for the continued protection of key resources such as National Protected Areas. The tourism sector is currently concerned about inappropriate rubber development in the Nam Ha Protected Area, Luang Namtha (Schipani 2007).
- Villager involvement – Tourism involves people and communities at all levels. One of the positive impacts of involving villages is the alternative income it provides, leading to lesser pressures on resources, the potential creation of nature reserves around villages to preserve tourist assets and/or

the adoption of conservation contractual agreements between communities and other key stakeholders. In Luang Namtha, 50 villages have signed such agreements with the local tourism authority.

- Funds for protected area management – Tourism has the potential to generate funds that can be spent on nature conservation and management (see Annex 1).
- Presence of tourism reduces threats to resources – The very presence of tourism operators can hinder and even prevent illegal resource activities that deplete the natural environment. The Gibbon Experience in Bokeo run by local villages patrols over 25 percent of the Bokeo Nature Reserve (Gibbon Experience 2007).
- Conservation, education and awareness-raising - Ecotourism provides a means for raising awareness of the importance of nature and its conservation among tourists, guides, business owners/operators, government and local communities.

1.3.2 Negatives impacts of tourism

There are also potential negative impacts on the environment that can arise from tourism, mostly concerned with unplanned and unregulated development. A key concept to note is the carrying capacity of an area – this refers to a threshold level of tourist activity beyond which damage to the environment will occur (Mason 1990). In other words, there is a limit to how many natural resources an area can supply and the level of impact that an area is able to process or absorb. There are two broad impact categories that should be considered:

1. Impact on the quality of natural assets resulting from tourism operations, including:
 - Habitat/forest destruction (e.g., destruction of sensitive vegetation);
 - Solid waste generation and poor disposal practices;
 - Water pollution (e.g., increased sewage effluent released into the environment) and poor treatment/disposal;
 - Aesthetic pollution (e.g., unsightly building and infrastructure development); and
 - Noise pollution.
2. Impact on the availability of natural resources, including:
 - Water availability;
 - Energy availability; and
 - Food availability.

To avoid these negative impacts on the environment, the GoL has strongly promoted ecotourism and established both broad policy and specific guidelines for its development. These guidelines emphasize careful capacity management, the sustainable use of resources, respect for cultural and nature diversity and the involvement of local communities in the decision-making process.

1.4 Policy and regulatory framework for the tourism sector

The LNTA is the leading agency in the development and management of the tourism sector in Lao PDR (GoL 2004c). It is an independent authority at ministry level. Accordingly, it is obligated to draft tourism development strategies, regulations and laws related to the tourism industry. The administration is also responsible for implementing these strategies, regulations and laws once they have been adopted by the GoL.

The LNTA maintains a networked coordination with all local authorities at the provincial and district levels, in which local tourism offices are established. Those offices are obligated to consult the local government to develop tourism in accordance with tourism development policies, regulations and laws

adopted by the central government.

To manage and develop the tourism sector effectively, the GoL has adopted a number of laws and regulations related directly or indirectly to tourism, which can be viewed in Annex 2. These policies are strongly correlated with the key sustainable growth and poverty reduction objectives outlined in the *National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy* (NGPES) 2020 (GoL 2004a).

There are three key policy documents that guide the development of the tourism industry in Lao PDR, all of which mainstream environment and social considerations:

- National Tourism Development Strategy 2006-2020
- National Ecotourism Strategy and Action Plan 2005-2008
- National Export Strategy for Lao PDR 2006-2008: Sectoral Strategy – Ecotourism

Today, the main objectives of tourism development policy in Lao PDR are to contribute to economic growth; conserve and develop socio-cultural heritage, traditions and livelihoods of the Lao people; and protect the environment.

The *National Ecotourism Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2005-2010* (LNTA 2005) pinpoints four objectives for developing tourism in Lao PDR, namely:

1. To strengthen governance, planning and research;
2. To improve service quality, education and training;
3. To diversify products based on Lao PDR's unique natural attractions; and
4. To take into account equity considerations, including ways to spread the benefits to remote and minority communities.

The main aim of this strategy is to focus on the sustainable development of ecotourism, culture, historical tourism, and archaeological tourism to become the first choice of destination for tourists bound for Asia.

In addition, the Ministry of Industry & Commerce (MoIC & ITC 2006) has recognized the importance of tourism in the development of the country and has highlighted it as a priority sector in the *National Export Strategy for Lao PDR 2006-2008*. The vision of this strategy is:

To develop sustainable tourism and achieve poverty eradication by distributing benefits to local people and communities through the development of backward linkages between sectors in relation to the tourism industry and conservation of natural and cultural and historical sites, and to disseminate Lao cultural and historical heritage information around the world.

Section 2:

Trade-related environmental impacts and national experiences in improving environmental sustainability in the sector

According to the World Tourism Organization, significant growth in international arrivals to Southeast Asia will occur over the coming decade (MoIC & ITC 2006). Future estimates of the number, revenue and average stay of tourists visiting Lao PDR in the coming years, provided by the NTA statistics unit, predict up to a 20 percent growth over the next three years (see Annex 3). Much of this growth is expected to result from increased regional cooperation in the tourism sector, which is striving to make the region more attractive to both ASEAN and international tourists.

In 1997, Lao PDR became a member of ASEAN and in turn a party to the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). These closer regional ties have helped to develop the tourism industry. To promote tourism regionally, ASEAN leaders signed an ASEAN Tourism Agreement on November 4, 2002 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia with the aim of enhancing integration and cooperation in tourism between members, to strengthen the tourism industry in ASEAN, and to compete with countries outside the region. For example, ASEAN has jointly implemented projects to promote tourism under the slogan "Promoting the region as a single destination". The agreement also aims at getting rid of barriers and to provide mutual conveniences, such as Entry-Exist visa exemption for some ASEAN citizens. A single-entry visa for all ASEAN countries is also on the agenda. Cooperation among private and public sectors, such as cooperation through the ASEAN Tourism Enterprise Association, the ASEAN Association of Restaurants and Hotels and ASEAN Aviation, are also important developments for the industry.

The outcome of this cooperation between ASEAN member countries can be highlighted by the latest tourism figures. In 2005, the ASEAN region welcomed more than 50 million international tourists; 15.7 million from Malaysia, 11.7 million from Thailand, 1.4 million from Cambodia, 1.1 million from Lao PDR, 1 million from Brunei, and 656,000 from Myanmar (ASEAN Secretariat 2007). Continued regional cooperation and strengthened trade relationships internationally are set to aid in the continued growth of the sector. Recent developments include:

- Exemption of visa requirements for Japanese nationals (April 2007).
- The completion of the Lao/Thai Friendship Bridge 2 in Savannakhet in 2007 and agreements to build other major transport infrastructure with regional neighbours, such as a 3rd bridge across the Mekong in Bokeo, current construction of road links between China and Thailand in Northern Lao PDR and Vietnam and Thailand in Southern Lao PDR, and the extension of key airports in Luang Namtha, Luang Prabang, Pakse and Savannakhet.
- The World Tourism Organization, in which Lao PDR has been a member since 1975, has also agreed to support three community-based tourism projects in Lao PDR commencing in 2007. The New Zealand Government has committed US\$5 million to develop ecotourism over the next five years and the 2nd phase proposal of the ADB Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism project is currently under consideration.
- Strengthening of domestic policy, such as the establishment of a one stop investment process for foreign investors seeking to invest in Lao PDR, which is likely to draw a wave of new investment in the sector (GoL 2004b).

Given the expected growth in the ecotourism sector, it is useful to flag some of the positive and negative impacts that may arise. This paper draws on a series of case studies that have been completed by researchers in recent years to highlight priority areas of concern, and examples of enhanced environmental protection that should be replicated.

3.1 Potential negative impacts of tourism

Section 1 lists some of the negative impacts on the environment that tourism can bring. This is mainly the result of unplanned and ill-informed development. While such a situation is yet to occur in Lao PDR, Vang Vieng, a prime ecotourism destination, is now showing signs that stronger efforts must be made to minimise impacts and thus ensure the sustainability of the local industry.

Case study: Vang Vieng

Nestled in a beautiful valley surrounded by impressive limestone mountains, Vang Vieng town and district is one of the most visited tourist attractions for nature-based tourism in Lao PDR. Over 80,000 tourists visit annually and there are now over 70 hotels and guest houses providing accommodation.

While Vang Vieng has enjoyed rapid economic expansion, infrastructure improvements and increases in local income and living standards, at the same time there are also noticeable negative impacts in the district. For example, the once quiet, rural town is becoming quickly urbanized and crowded. Noise and air pollution are increasing, and the amount of solid waste produced by the district rises each year

without the existence of a municipal landfill. With the recent completion of a concrete bridge spanning the Song River, there is concern that urban sprawl will cross the river, resulting in a reduction in the attractiveness of the town if the view of the surrounding karst landscape is obstructed.

Perhaps the most troublesome issue is water pollution in the Song River – the premier tourist attraction in the area. There are no adequate facilities to treat increased volumes of liquid waste and sewerage. Currently, this waste is discharged by guesthouses and hotels into the river mainly untreated. While there are various government policies and regulations in place, such as Article 65 of the *National Law on Tourism* (2003) which provides that all tourism businesses are legally required to be responsible for environmental issues associated with their operations and hence install on-site treatment facilities, little progress has been made in dealing with this issue.

These impacts should be taken seriously. In a recent survey of tourists in Vang Vieng, Phiapalath (2007) found that tourists were concerned about over-development and did not want to see hotels constructed on the west side of the river. Those interviewed also noted solid waste and declining river health as important issues that needed to be better addressed. It is therefore important for the government and private tourism operators in Vang Vieng to ensure that the level of tourism is balanced with the area's carrying capacity. If not, there is a risk that over-development and increased impacts on the key attraction – the environment - will ultimately lead to the collapse of the local industry.

Several innovative management interventions are outlined in Phiapalath (2007), including:

- The establishment of an Environmental Trust Fund, led by the GoL but steered by the community, which would take contributions from local tourism businesses and allocate funds to addressing key environmental issues.
- Local certification or a 'green label' scheme for businesses, which encourages the adoption of better environmental performance measures. Businesses would be rated and tourists informed about the system. Tourists would then provide the catalyst for change.

It is also important that the GoL continue to provide better services to the sector. In the case of liquid waste and sewage, the LNTA has recently submitted a proposal to the ADB for Phase 2 of the Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Project which requests loan assistance for the construction of sewage and water treatment infrastructure in Vang Vieng (APP 2006).

3.2 Potential positive impacts of tourism

Case Study 2: Nam Ha Ecotourism Project (SNV 2002)

The Nam Ha Ecotourism Project involves travel to natural destinations in Luang Namtha district, where there are many forest treks and river excursions on offer. Overnight treks are conducted in the buffer zone surrounding the Nam Ha National NPA, visiting Khmu, Lataen, Hmong and Tai Dam and Akha ethnic minority villages.

Nam Ha treks use only existing forest trails and require that tourists consume only local food and products. Each tour generates less than one kilogram of non-biodegradable waste, by using reusable water containers and solar electricity for overnight tours. Regulations are also in place limiting group size and departure frequency.

One of the primary objectives of the Nam Ha Project is to ensure that tourism contributes to the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of Lao PDR. This objective could not be met without the environmental awareness program that the project team has put firmly in place. The Nam Ha Project also has direct financial benefits for conservation (see Annex 3). All tourists who enter the Nam Ha Pa on treks or rafting tours are charged a US\$1 per day user fee that is bundled into the price of their trip. A permit is also required for the overnight buffer zone treks. Since the permit system was introduced in October 2000, over US\$10,000 in fees has been collected.

To ensure carrying capacity is not overextended, the Nam Ha Project is based on small groups and small-scale business models. Each overnight trek is restricted to 2-3 departures per week and the group size is generally limited to 8-10 tourists.

Good ecotourism should not only set out to limit environmental and cultural impacts, but also actively work towards enhancing the natural resource base that supports it. The Luang Namtha Provincial Tourism Office and Nam Ha National Protected Area Management Unit are the government agencies that have taken the lead in monitoring the ecotourism operations. To finance monitoring activities under its jurisdiction, the Provincial Tourism Office (PTO) imposes a 5 percent tax on provincial tourism operators, including the Nam Ha Eco-guide Service. Guides, NPA staff and the PTO perform regular biodiversity threat and cultural impact monitoring funded by this tax.

The broader role of the tourism industry as an advocate for environmental protection can be viewed in the latest edition of Juth Pakai, in which Schipani (2007), an ADB consultant to the LNTA, highlights the growing concern of rubber cultivation inside the Nam Ha NPA. Schipani (2007) argues that ecotourism should be viewed as a more economically, environmentally and socially beneficial industry in these nationally protected areas which by law have been set up to conserve biodiversity and protect watersheds. While tourism can work in harmony with these goals (as seen above), other industries, such as rubber, which require the clearing of forest and subsequent loss of biodiversity and watershed value, cannot and should be conducted in more suitable areas. Schipani (2007) calls for better land-use planning and enforcement to ensure that both industries can continue to contribute to the sustainable development of the province.

Section 3:

Conclusions and strategic policy recommendations for the tourism sector

3.1 Conclusions

This paper outlined some of the key environmental concerns and opportunities arising from regional integration and trade liberalization in the tourism sector. Key conclusions are as follows:

- The tourism sector in Lao PDR is growing, as a result of better regional integration through ASEAN, increased relationships with countries beyond Asia such as the US, Europe and Australia, and successful national policies and projects. However, the country's natural assets form the cornerstone of this growth, and every effort must be made to ensure their conservation.
- Tourism in Lao PDR is a key sector which meets all of the GoL's key development objectives by generating a substantial amount of foreign currency each year. It is labour-intensive, thus providing jobs, is inherently pro-poor as earnings are made by many small businesses including poor villages in and around key attractions, and above all works in harmony with nature.
- Tourism, if done well, can have many positive effects on a country's natural environment, but without careful planning and a strong commitment by all stakeholders, negative impacts affecting the very asset on which the industry relies, can arise. The domestic framework for investment in tourism needs to be firmly set in place to avoid jeopardising the growth potential of this key sector to contribute to sustainable livelihoods.
- Ecotourism can be an advocate for conservation, particularly in those areas designated by the GoL as NPA, due to the economic, social and environmental benefits that the industry brings to an area.

3.2 Strategic policy recommendations

The LNTA (2006) forecasts 2 million tourist arrivals per annum by 2010. This is a doubling of tourist

arrivals in just five years and it is important that the country is well-equipped to handle the environmental impacts of these increased numbers. While current policy, legislation and projects are all providing good direction, they will need to be strengthened to meet this growing market. Specific recommendations include:

■ **Continue to engage closely with the regional and international community to facilitate and promote the regional adoption of policies, practices and approaches to ecotourism.**

Through mechanisms such as ASEAN (the ASEAN Tourism Agreement), the ADB GMS Tourism Project and the WTO, representatives from the LNTA, senior levels of government and the private sector should continue to represent Lao PDR at international tourism conferences and meetings. It is recommended that provincial and district stakeholders be given the opportunity to scale up experiences from the ground to this international level. It is also suggested that environmental governance be strengthened at the regional level to deal with cross-border concerns related to tourism in general, as well as to foster regional harmonization of environmental policies and standards.

■ **Strengthen the Lao National Tourism Authority's ability to engage with the private sector and investment decision-makers.**

The GoL's relatively new 'one-stop' investment policy (GoL 2004c) has the potential to provide further encouragement to foreign investors, and if forecasted tourist arrivals are going to be met with services, investment will have to increase.

- ▶ During the next five years, it will be extremely important to improve ways of engaging with the private sector to ensure that the ecotourism ideas present in the ecotourism strategy, and government and civil society projects like the Nam Ha Ecotourism, project are maintained. This could be done through a combination of regulatory (monitoring) and incentive-based tools (e.g., certification).
- ▶ The LNTA could usefully facilitate national and international investment in ecotourism activities, including the identification of sites with strong ecotourism potential, and taking potential investors to identified sites; liaise with regional actors concerned with tourism promotion (Pacific Asia Travel Association); organize and participate in investment workshops nationally and regionally; and seek to develop partnership agreements to link investors with local communities, protected area management bodies, NGOs and development agencies.
- ▶ Increased cooperation between the Committee for Promotion and Management of Investment and relevant sections of the LNTA at central and provincial levels will be required. Currently, two staff members have been delegated this liaison task. It is recommended that staff resources and mediums of communication/collaboration be strengthened.

■ **Explore the potential of certification for the tourism industry in Lao PDR both at the national and provincial levels.**

Certification can be a useful tool in ensuring that core principles of ecotourism are being met by stakeholders in the sector. In addition to current standards, such as the minimum standard of guest houses (see Annex 2), it is recommended that the GoL explore and test options such as international and national certification and the institutional arrangements needed for successful programs in Lao PDR. Such a scheme will not only yield benefits in ensuring a high standard of ecotourism practices, but may also help attract more visitors to Lao PDR.

■ **Strengthen central/provincial cooperation in the tourism sector.**

The LNTA, together with the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) has put a great effort into ensuring cooperation between central and provincial institutions, not only in the tourism sector but also with the conservation community and forestry officials through the multi-sector ecotourism taskforce and the Sustainable Tourism Network. It is recommended that forums bringing together provincial and central level government, civil society and the private sector continue to be supported, and knowledge and experiences from these forums are scaled-

up to the regional and international level (see first recommendation above).

■ **Continue to support conservation with particular emphasis on National Protected Areas and linking with regional initiatives that promote tourism and conservation in the Greater Mekong Subregion and ASEAN.**

Finally, it is important that the ecotourism sector, in Lao PDR continues to contribute to the conservation of its key business asset – the environment. The following areas of work are recommended:

- ▶ Working with provincial and district governments to ensure that knowledge of the benefits of ecotourism are known and considered in land use planning decisions.
- ▶ Continuing to raise local awareness of the relationship between ecotourism activity and good conservation practice.
- ▶ Continuing to develop and promote ecotourism funding mechanisms for protected area management. One possibility is to develop and test the concept of a government-led, community-administered Environmental Trust Fund in key tourist areas such as Vang Vieng, which could be used to contribute to efforts to improve and maintain natural assets.
- ▶ Strengthening conservation advocacy at the national and local levels and increasing vigilance against illegal activities.

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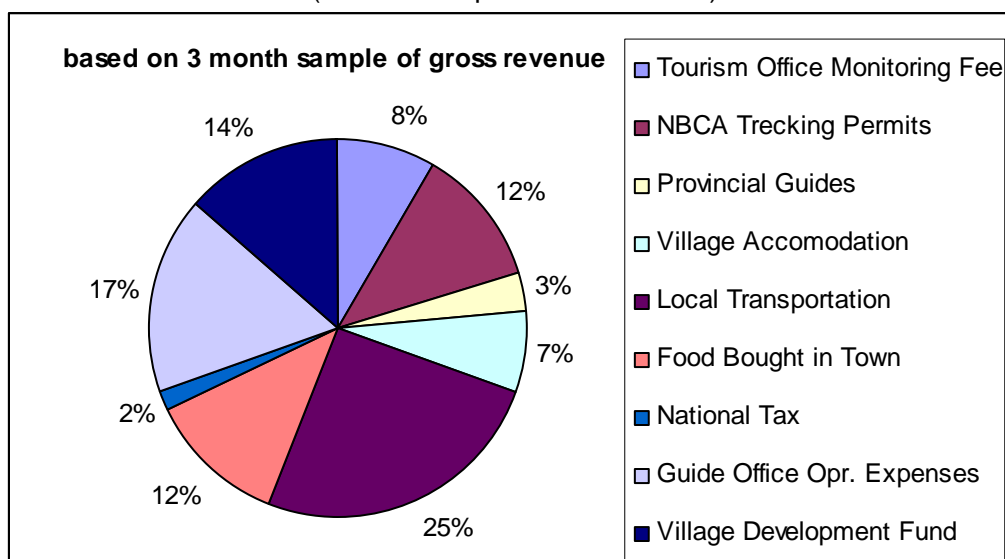
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Annex 1: Distribution of gross revenues NHEP Eco-tours

(source: Schipani & Marris 2002)



Annex 2 : Laws and regulations in the tourism sector of Lao PDR

(source: LNTA 2006)

- Law on Tourism, September 9, 2006
- Regulations Number 1150/PMO on Establishment and Business Activities of Tour Service Enterprises, October 25, 1993
- Regulation Number 81/CPMO on Immigration of Tourists, January 21, 1994
- Instruction Number 02/PM on Improving Tourism Management on February 14, 1995
- Regulation Number 1107/LNTA on Minimum Standard of Guest Houses
- Regulation Number 159/PMO, on Hotel and Guest House Management, June 30, 1997
- Regulation Number 626/LNTA on Standard of Tour Guides
- National Tourism Development Plan, Lao PDR, November, 1998
- National Tourism Development Strategy 2005 to 2015 (draft)
- National Socio-Economic Development Plans (2001-2005, 2006-2010)
- Industrialization and Modernization Strategy (2001-2020)

Annex 3: Future estimate of the number, revenue and average stay of tourists to visit Lao PDR

(Source: LNTA Planning and Cooperation Department Statistic Unit, 2006)

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
tourist arrivals	1,095,315	1,215,106	1,400,000	1,606,000	1,840,000	2,000,000
revenue (US\$)	146,770,074	173,249,896	193,000,000	220,000,000	253,000,000	290,000,000