Study of the provincial context in Oudomxay

1 – Geography and demography

Oudomxay province is a province in the north of Laos, covering an area of 15,370 km² about 85% of which is mountainous.

Oudomxay is divided in 7 districts, with totally 584 villages, 42 419 families which means 263 000 people. The villages are relatively small and mainly concentrated along the roads. The population density is quite low (17 people per km²).

The exact localization of the villages was quite difficult, and has been done by crossing different sources of information.

The province borders China and Phongsaly province to the north, Luang Namtha and Bokeo province to the west, Xayaboury province to the south and Luang Prabang to the east.

Although Oudomxay has only a short international border with China, it is a transit point between China, Vietnam and Thailand, with a large flow of products.

Yet, only 66% of the households have a road access in comparison to the northern regional average of 75% and national average of 83%.

14 ethnic groups are present in the province, 85% are Khmu (who are generally included in Lao Theung ethnic group) and Lao Loum are in minority.
2- Agriculture and local development

The main agricultural crop practiced in Oudomxay provinces is corn, especially located in Houn district. Oudomxay is the second province in terms of corn production: 84 900 tons in 2006, for an area of 20 935 ha. These figures have increased a lot within the last few years.

Rice is also cultivated in upland areas, with totally 15 125 ha for a production of 25 850 tons in 2006, but the rice production cannot meet the needs of the entire province. Vegetables, fruits and tobacco (in Beng District) are also grown.

Several development programs are in progress in Oudomxay, mostly working in the field of agriculture and livestock farming: CISP (Community Initiatives Support Project), GAA (German Agro Action), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), Helfer Project (Swedish NGO), LFSP (Lifestock Farmer Support Project).

The table below describes the activities and specificities of each district of Oudomxay province:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>La</th>
<th>Tourism, fishing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Namo</td>
<td>Border with China: a lot of exchanges and businesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nga</td>
<td>Poor and difficult to access, because of the mountains Border with Luang Prabang province, Some handicrafts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beng</td>
<td>Good development of the agriculture, Diversified crops, Good average revenues for the population.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Houn</td>
<td>Good soil quality and agricultural yields =&gt; good revenues Population known to be active for development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakbeng</td>
<td>Tourism, thanks to the Mekong river: travels on boats from Pakbeng to Luang Prabang</td>
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<tr>
<td>Xay:</td>
<td>Capital city of Oudomxay, good services, trade and business</td>
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12% of the active population is doing non-farming activities, whereas in Vientiane city the rate is 65%.

The industrial sector mostly consists of food processing, candle and battery factories and small repair shops.

Mining has a potential, but is still under investigations. According to provincial authorities, cultural and eco-tourism has great potential.

Here is the map of the markets in Oudomxay province:
3- Social infrastructures

Access to education and healthcare is improving. There are 470 primary schools, with 1250 teachers and 49 083 students. However, only 30% students complete primary school. There are 92 secondary schools in the province. The adult literacy rate is 50%.

In 2005, the life expectancy in the province was 62 years and the birth rate was 37%. There are 44 health centers in the province. 64% of the population has access to clean water.

Here is the map of the schools and health centers in Oudomxay province:
Here is the map of health centers:
4- Energy context

In 2007, 75 villages (i.e. 6500 families) were electrified in Oudomxay, all of them thanks to DRE projects. 12.8% of Oudomxay villages - 15.3% of the families - had access to electricity. Large grid extension project are currently under implementation with EDL (Electricité du Laos). In 2013, 269 villages, which represents 45.8% of the villages, will be electrified increasing the household electrification rate up to 59.5%.

The map below illustrates the currently electrified villages and the future extension plans:
Location of electrified villages and included in extension plans.