

## **Enhancement and Entitlement - the impact of stocking on rural households' command over living aquatic resources; a case study from the Lao PDR**

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Enhancement of inland waterbodies, through stocking, can potentially increase fisheries production in developing countries and improve rural livelihoods. However, results of stocking are often unexpected in terms of benefit distribution. Taking an environmental entitlements approach, this paper details the nature and extent of institutional change that accompanied stocking in Savannakhet Province, Lao PDR and quantifies its impact on households from different socio-economic groups.

Stocking was a catalyst significantly affecting people's command over living aquatic resources. New rules changed who could go fishing for what and when, and how the fish could be utilised. Customary rights were transformed and decision-making power concentrated. Despite this, household surveys demonstrated that no socio-economic group was benefiting disproportionately and this was due to the specific social, political and institutional context into which enhancement was placed. However, in different contexts, increased benefits for resource users, even in cases of increased fisheries production, cannot be assumed.

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