



IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON WATER ACCESS AND GENDER IN PHONGSALY AND SALAVAN PROVINCES

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Introduction: Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is one of the most climate vulnerable countries in the world, experiencing a rise in extreme weather events in recent years, including floods and droughts. Gender equitable access to water and sanitation remains a persistent challenge in rural communities. Investigate interconnected challenges of climate change, land use, inadequate clean water access, health, and gender inequality, including adverse impacts on women, girls, and disadvantaged groups in Phongsaly and Salavan Provinces.

Methodology(s): Mixed-methods approach; open-ended within quantitative questionnaires, with questions related to: perceptions and attitudes toward climate change and its impacts on water sources, inclusive clean water supply management, gender social norms, and expected coping strategies.

Result(s): There has been an alarming decline in forest cover, with deforestation exceeding **56%**, impacting availability of clean water, reflecting the need to sustain livelihoods with small-scale agriculture. Focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) revealed two key challenges hindering effective community water supply management by Village Water User Committees (VWUCs): insufficient post-construction support and unclear responsibility allocation. Limited awareness of gender equality restricted women's participation in planning, decision-making, and management of the community water supply system. **70%** of respondents were not involved in the process of village water supply development. **74%** of women have responsibility for securing and managing water for household needs, including drinking, cooking, washing, sanitation, and subsistence agriculture.

Conclusion: Climate change poses significant challenges to water supply management. Deforestation exacerbates these challenges. Challenges remain in managing water supply at the community level, including insufficient support, unclear responsibilities, and limited participation of women and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Access to sanitation facilities varies among villages.

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