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Changes in Land and Forest Resource Uses of Rural Laos

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Rural residents of Laos in mainland Southeast Asia obtain essential commodities such as food, materials and biological resources for the main cash income source from their natural surroundings. They had been getting along better with nature for many centuries. From the end of 20th century, however, Laos has faced the powerful tide of globalization and implemented economic reform as in many other socialist countries. As a result, forest in Laos is rapidly started to develop by promoting foreign direct investment due to the transition to a market economy. At the same time, by increasing momentum toward environmental conservation, the government created national biodiversity conservation areas and enforced the Forest Act and the Land Act in order to control swidden agriculture in the late 1990s. At present, forest use by rural residents was heavily restricted. The change of the relationship between nature and human activities that Laos is experiencing presently represents the environmental issues among developing countries.

In the presentation, the mechanism that occurs problems related land/natural resource uses would be discussed from the viewpoint of political ecology in addition to clarifying the current status of diversified natural resource uses of rural residents in Laos.

Keywords: land use, forest resource use, political ecology, laos