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# Making Livelihoods Work: Employability Skills of Informal Household Garment Workers in the Lao PDR

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## ABSTRACT

This article investigates how the employability skills of household garment workers required a means of living. It is argued that employability is well-making livelihood work in the Lao PDR. The method is taken to outline—a qualitative with in-depth interview with 15 key informants. The study is based on data from four district group—kinships, combines, neighbouring and industrial outworkers. We used contextual content analysis were done using the ATLAS.ti program. As result shows that there are three patterns that reveals of the employability are involved in making livelihood work. The first group, it was considered the kinships with combined household workers are strongly relationship tied into making livelihood work. The second group, it was involved in the neighbouring workers are entailed to high-status of employability activities to enhance the livelihoods. The third group, while continuing changes independently from industrial workers are primarily reliant of employability. In conclusion, although household employability patterned contributed the making livelihoods work are discussed.

**Keywords:** Making livelihoods work, employability skills, informal household, garment workers, the Lao PDR.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

Making a living work in the Lao PDR is based on-farm to off-farm at all household levels (Bouahom, Douangsavanh & Rigg, 2004, Phouxay & Tollefsen, 2011; Vongvisouka et al., 2014; Daovisan, H. & Chamaratana, T. 2017). The growth off-farm employment relied on activity generating incomes to make

their lives through livelihoods. This is because, the household workers are needed to improve human side life quality-oriented playing a growing employment activity (Ellis, 2000; Berling, 2001). As previous research highlights that selling informal is balanced between work and family. Focusing upon the this might need to develop their informal employment for making better livelihoods. Eventually, such informal feature is that livelihood can lead to a high value of at all households have employed. Take as a whole, extending working lives is domain of the family rather than subjective and objective livelihoods (Shacklock, 2006; Manolom & Promphakping, 2016).

Important questions regarding changes informal household employments in the Lao PDR diversity of livelihoods rather than subsistence to cash (Martin & Lorenzen, 2016). Given the central selling labour have sought to further make livelihood conditions (Sychareun et al., 2016). Thus, high activities not full-reaped, but it lacks of continue in employment. These issues doubtlessly influenced the household required a means of living. Many workers employed in informal sectors are suffering economic shocks, vulnerability and seasonality. It is in this highlight that non-material aspect in making livelihood work of the Lao PDR. Quantifying the diversity of employments are seen as cohesion to comprise the capability, assets and activities (Chambers & Conway, 1991; Tirelli & Goh, 2015). Similarly, Boyd, Royer & Zhang (2015) highlights that owner-occupied are pursued by making livelihoods within-household work.

While this may reflect to make livelihoods work are embedded household—social relationship and employability. Writing about making livelihoods work, Rigg, Nguyen & Luong (2014) establishes the fluid connections between the state, society, economy, market leads and the individual. These approaches are primarily concerned with the direct effect of household making livelihood in employability process (Forrier & Sels, 2003). For McQuaid & Lindsay (2005); Samuel & Ramayah (2016) re-caps on livelihood are interchangeable the capability, assets and activities incorporate work-life balance. This then would be seeking to contribute both supply—and demand side are livelihood-involved. The livelihood in employability is ranking mainly economic reasons. As Mare, Promphakping & Rigg (2015) suggest that household natal employment is a new opportunity would allow to make livelihood work.

This article is organized as follows. Section 1 introduces the significance livelihood contexts in the Lao PDR. Section 2 offers to provide guidance the concept of employability. Section 3 describes the particular method used at the study site. Section 4 describes the results of the study. Section 5 discusses making livelihoods work. Finally, section 6 concludes.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Employability concept**

Employability skills can be defined as a crucial economic objective through livelihood-involved (Forrier & Sels, 2003; Blanchard & Summers, 1987; McQuaid, Green and Danson, 2005). The fundamental core concept is upon unemployed for seeking new employment activities. The basic employability approach is interchangeable to comprise initial capability, maintains, and obtain new activities (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). It has covered by labour through policy practicable toward in employment activities. Due to involve a ranged of individual, personal circumstance and external factors (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2002). It has expanded this theoretical further interpersonal still growing-up an economically objective of livelihood activity. The employability can provide into two distinct ‘broad’ and ‘narrow’ interaction—taking place. Whereby the asset-based to motivate employment activities to enable generation income opportunity.

The division of employability at least fourfold: assets, presentation, deployment, and context factors (Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Evans, Nathan & Simmonds, 1999). Employability can occur informal patterns to comprise the capability, assets and activities required a means living. Thus, Scoones (1998) built-on the progressive in employability which is led to diversify of making livelihood work. As noted, Bebbington (1993) established livelihood is based on assets motivated the livelihood activities. While Finn (2000) argued that the employability is broaden range therefore groups focus not just individuals. The expects of 'narrow' rather than 'broad' livelihood-involved. The quest of new existences of the continuing for employing are evoked (Peck & Theodore, 2000; Belt & Richardson, 2005). For the purpose of this work is extending to cover 'make work pay' relatively new 'the kind of supply-and demand-side'. It seems to be 'low-paid' activities enhancing the effectiveness of active workers to required employability.

It was dealing with worker capabilities to achieve—a central goal of making livelihoods work. There are, none the less, significant gaps of employability through the sale of informal household workers are lowed activities to pre-existing their diversity of livelihoods (Ellis, 2000). Despite increasing of activity, it has inexplicit, but not well-contributed to endow a means of living. However, increasing has not helped meet the seasonality, including ex-ante and ex-post (Deverux, 2001). As Rigg, Nguyen & Luong, 2014; Promphakping, 2006; Samuel & Ramayah (2016) suggest that sale of informal workers is migrating, but lack of investment to require both subjective and objective well-being. These issues doubtlessly influenced the competence required to employ for earning and living. Even though, perhaps the most thorough time and space ability to to serve their livelihood.

In the Lao PDR has sought to further improve the employability conditions selling informal labour for making livelihoods work. This is still remained confront seasonality, discontinue of employment and domestic migration. Its effects to their livelihood activities may be led in trapping low wage-payment. Of course, the sale of informal workers is interchangeable their assets into activities which is continued effort of livelihoods. While locating of employment activities in the Lao PDR is raised unequally full-reap the diversification. However, the workers employed in confronting in rapid growth, but not at all become wellbeing in livelihood. These household workers are not comprised the capability, assets, and activities required a means of living. The number has increased in informal employment, although employed in household have also been investigated.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1. Scope

The study conducted in Danexang, Xaythany district, Vientiane—the capital—in the Lao PDR. It was found that this village is densely employed between household-to-household at all levels. As current 4<sup>th</sup> Population and Housing Census 2015 conducted over large sites in the Lao PDR (NHD, 2009). According to a household survey, there are 732 families and 680 employed workers (National Statistical Centre, 2011). Each other worker shows that 150 to 200 workers reveal a similar pattern of passive employment. Close to this opportunity for the household migrants employed in the community.

#### 3.2. Research design

The study adopted a qualitative method Teddlie & Tashakkori (2011) to investigate the community employment contexts in the Lao PDR. Design is reflected because participants have been shown to respond well to empirical phenomenology (Farber, 1943). The design is being a well-established to explore the

contexts, community employment through livelihoods. In this study, a specific respondent of an in-depth interview guideline as key element methods. It comprehensively explored both the holistic perspective and carries on to describe the long view of community livelihoods.

### 3.3. Sources of data

The study was determined household levels as the unit of analysis to set household inquires (Maxwell, 1997). The key informants were divided five-distinct groups—including kinship, combines, neighbouring and industrial outworkers. In this source of data, we were interviewed three rounds for an in-depth interview from March to May 2016. In the first round on March, the second round on April and third round on May. We used an in-depth interview centred on the question in employment activities in the household a means of living. Specific questions explored, How are household “employed”?; How are household employed?; How are household transformed ‘activities’?; How are household generated “livelihood”?; and How are household “achieved” a means of living?. The following final key informant listed prior interviewed (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Characteristics of home-based garment workers participated by interviewed**

<i>KIs</i>	<i>Background</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Garment experience</i>		<i>Incomes (US\$)</i>
				<i>Household</i>	<i>Industrial</i>	
Onta	Luang Prabang	Single	28	4	-	9-10
Som	Vientiane	Single	29	5	-	7-9
Thongsy	Luang Prabang	Married	40	12	-	12-15
Vanh	Luang Prabang	Single	28	5	1	10-12
Ny	Borikhamxay	Married	45	16	2	14-15
Donh	Luang Prabang	Married	27	18	5	15-16
Doung	Luang Prabang	Married	30	7	2	9-10
Ging	Vientiane	Single	28	10	3	7-8
Vonh	Vientiane	Single	26	4	0.3	8-9
Hat	Luang Prabang	Married	55	25	9	15-17
Lek	Luang Prabang	Married	37	8	-	10-12
Saeng	Vientiane	Married	32	6	-	10-12
La	Samnuen	Married	40	10	0.3	13-15
Thong	Luang Prabang	Married	45	15	3	15-17
Noi	Champasak	Married	31	9	4	12-15

### 3.4. Data analysis

An empirical qualitative data was instantly drawn to the contextual content analysis (McTavish & Pirro, 1990). The intent of data processing in computation predetermine codes of field note fed into Microsoft Word. Thus, we drank on thematic coding as grouped was done using the ATLAS. it program. To begin interviewing, we recorded 30 minutes per each key informant selection. The interviews guideline was

recorded on MP3 files as the method of data collection and then transcribed into Lao and translated to English. Field-based ethical approval for human research was obtained from the Khon Kaen University. An in-depth interview guide was utilized as a tool to encourage both privacy and confidentiality. Data processing was performed to ensure the validity of data triangulation and we verified the consistency. This guideline was developed with triangulate: field data recording techniques, inductive reasoning, and interpretation.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Finding

Blending a qualitative element of the method as in-depth interview guideline. We conducted with 15 key informants provided four-groups involved of livelihood activities (e.g. kinship, combine, neighbouring, and industrial outworks). In the first group, it was involved of kinship worker—including Onta, Som, Thongsy. In the second group, it was involved of the combine worker—including Vanh and NY. In the third group, it was involved of the neighbouring worker—including lake, Saeng, La, Thong and Noi. In the last group, it was involved of the industrial outworker—including Donh, Doung, Ging, Vanh and Hat. Making livelihoods work of informal the selling labour at all household levels. Besides talking about their livelihoods, are differenced ranking to describe high and low activities. The majority of these workers are lived in these area-based on employment to serve their livelihoods.

The empirical evident outlines the employability are significantly of making livelihoods work required a means of living. Our definition in finding can provide into threefold are involved in historical livelihood in the Lao PDR. In the first definition is related in—local term as ‘dham-ma-ha-kin-lieng-seep’ which is providing the subsistent occupants. In the second definition, we classified as the stereotype of participant highlighted that ‘dam-long-see-vid’ means which occurred to earn for a living. In the last definition, we described the importance of livelihood activities, they stated that ‘If I go with you [...] I can eat fish [...] if you come with me [...] you can eat rice’. As various indicted of culturally-context, social processes of employability motivated the livelihood activities. It is attempted to create proper client—provider required a means of living. The finding reveals that the three patterns of employability activity are livelihood-involved in the Lao PDR.

In the first pattern, it was involved of kinship with combined workers comprised making livelihood work. The majority of these workers are sole of labour to offer their livelihood activities. The study found that the relationship can build-up formed to high engagement in employment activities. As two kinship workers, Onta & Som stated that, ‘We further close-relationship through employment activities [...] that is necessary to make us employed to earn incomes’. Both explained that the employer offered to employ as an individual because they are co-resident. Also Thongsy indicates this important for strengthening the close-relationship, ‘I’m living with my brother [...] he is my employer [...] he employed me in the first [...] then selected other workers. With the case to progress-pull employment diversity in livelihood for earning income. This created a situation in which it was imperative as a kinship employment required a means of living.

In the second pattern, we provided further considerable of the neighbouring workers relied on the seasonal of employment activities. As a key element of this worker is provided to employ in transitional peri-urban areas. For example, as two neighbouring workers, Lek & Saeng demonstrates that ‘We ability to employ [...] because we are free after farming harvested [...] it makes us earned more income to help

the family consumption [...] before we started in the farming plantation'. While La's mentioned that 'I being engaged to employ [...] because its facilities and nears my family'. Furthermore, Noi shared her experiences 'I returned from the factory [...] then employed with my aunt in this village [...] it involves of my livelihood'. For Thong's explained her opinion 'It is more involved [...] because employed in-home it facilities than industrial workers'. For several of these workers stated 'most of us changed from salaried into wage-payment [...] we worked, we earned incomes'. This finding is corresponded that the sales of informal worker activities to full-recap of livelihood activities.

In the third pattern, which is involved of industrial outworkers intuitively non-subcontracted piece rate wage payment. These participants were migrated from the factories and then returned to employ at all household levels. The characteristics of these workers are hired on a piece rate for the button hole and stitching. Throughout the interview, an industrial worker, as Vanh noted 'they paid me as I can sew [...] it pays in piece-rate'. Similarly, Donh pointed out that 'I earned as I can sew for them [...] they paid me only  $\square 300$  [...] especially small size'. For example, the median—and big size approximately  $\square 400$  to 500 per piece-rate. This average depends on size of the cloth. These findings revealed to Doung echoes that 'they are equally in pricing equivalent to  $\square 500$  per piece-rate. Compared with Ging, she noted her incomes 'It is nice for selling of worker [...] I earned incomes is about  $\square 80,000$ – $100,000$  (\$US 10-12) per day'.

Therefore, being the sale of informal worker part of this group is highly income with a strong set of their capability to sew. The finding is similarly with Hat, she stated 'I earned for living [...] because I sole of labour [...] that is my income. For instance, 'sometime I can sew approximately 100 to 150 per piece [...] an average that I can make  $\square 70,000$  to  $90,000$  (\$US 9-10) per day'. As Vanh noted 'I have just done in employment [...] it makes me earn more incomes'. Eventually, as with other participant stated that 'the sale of labour is a mainly income [...] employment come to be lived and worked [...] earning for human living'. In considering the sale of informal workers are related to earn income being created their livelihood opportunities. A good sale of informal worker has often led to self-transform their assets, rather than undermines, a positive sense of employability. The continuity of activities having enough for sustainable living in wellbeing. From all statements, there are showed about the importance of the livelihood in employment activities in the Lao PDR.

A central place for living domain as sale of informal worker are reflected to traditional livelihood activities. For some others interviewed, Ging describes her experiences in employment—actually it is all incomes. She stated 'I employed [...] because I haven't choice [...] employment is only one way that can help me earn for living'. And as was also the case for Som being addressed her experience in employment activities. She stated 'It would have been nice to be able sew at home-based [...] with my job, you know, I earned income unit I got home'. Added to the logical of employability to both in working (*e.g.* time) and those seeking (*e.g.* money). Whilst this may the fundamental premise behind much involvement 'time and money' tended to view employability. In seeking to diversify the manner in which space be created for the livelihood activities.

Through these informal workers relying on the time and duration of the activity. As Daung stated 'I employed in outsourcing [...] could not fit the time during to work [...] but I worked every day [...] it's starting at 7 A.M. to 17 P.M. a day'. Throughout the interview, Hat described her experiences to make incomes. She expressed 'I make more incomes [...] you know, I also worked hard [...] it is the way of life [...] others from my husbands [...] he is a police [...] but he salaried less than me employ in home-based worker'. This point is concerning of employability opportunities to extend their livelihood activities. In

their cases, employability—status is linked at work seeking greater levels. Although the sale of informal workers is contributed to improve the quality of life. Regarding employability to comprise the capability, assets, and activities required a means of living. This role of activities force in their lives interplay with employability are livelihood-involved.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This article adopted qualitative method domain as in-depth interview guideline. We interviewed 15 key informants categorised four-distinct groups (*e.g.* kinships, combines, neighbouring, and industrial outworks). The study used a contextual content analysis to thematic coding as grouped on core conceptual issues of livelihood activities (McTavish & Pirro 1990). In this context—building on the socialist norms of employability are informed by cultural, traditional and practices. We illustrated in differentiation and similarity the concept of employability (Forrier & Sels, 2003; Blanchard & Summers, 1987; Hillage & Pollard, 1998). Making livelihoods work are seemed economic-involved then generated activities through incomes (Fiske, 1991). The main difference seems to be comprised capability and assets offered their livelihoods. This is thus empirical evidence shows that the workers shift in separating patterns required a means of living.

Based on the finding, making livelihood work in the Lao PDR are comprised both employability and subjective wellbeing. For instance, as empirical stated ‘If I go with you [...] I can eat fish [...] if you come with me [...] you can eat rice’. Accordingly, this word corresponds to the history of social relations in the Lao PDR. Such as, it is reflected to the locality, place, and cultural economy activities crucial in economic-involved and received (McQuaid, Green & Danson, 2005). In seeking to understand the workers tie appears to be more important in the employability of forces that lead to livelihoods. Therefore, even the better-off diversities may still be in need progress-pull of the increased opportunity available employability. As Seaman (2015) making livelihood work that creating a space of livelihoods whereby individual capabilities to employment activities. This finding that progress-full the greater opportunities for richer workers, which are domain as employment activities.

According to the authors, such as Martin & Lorenzen (2016) described the household in the Lao PDR is deskilled through single assets further leaving of high activities. As the discussion, we extended into three patterns of employability contributes significantly to the livelihood activity (Daovisan, H. & Chamaratana, T. 2017). Originally described the household are migrated could be fulfilled a means of living (Rigg, Nguyen & Luong, 2014). In this way, informal employment is mainly economics reason could be utilized higher activity generating incomes. It was further therefore fulfilment activities to continue sincere making livelihoods work. Illustrating further difference results, the informal household employment is risky-version social protection, low return activities, discontinuity of employment, economically damaging, and health disparity. The study provides three patterns that reveals of the employability are involved in making livelihoods work in the Lao PDR.

In the first pattern, it was involved of the kinship with combined workers are highly livelihood-involved. This pattern has directly linked between between relatives and members to the progress-full of co-residential in extending to capture livelihoods (Falco, 2012; Li and Wu, 2013). These are enforceable in connections between people and place through employment activities (Hewage, Kumara & Rigg, 2011). Similar to the connection in disconnecting between workers, employment, incomes, workplace and activities

are embedded in which they lived (Chamaratana et al., 2010; Sunarjan, Atmadja & Romadi, 2017). In this regard, the aim of the study is to opt out almost neatly to identify the drivers in making livelihood work. The kinship feature that have been strongly to establish social ties motivated livelihood activities. The trust in employment in kinship family workers are bestowed involves of relationship, work together, and socio-historical identity (Gupta and Levenburg, 2012; Shukla & Singh, 2015; Schmidts & Shepherd, 2015).

In the second pattern, the neighbouring workers are engaged of specific identity-work relationships contexts for making livelihoods work (Cortez & Lynch, 2015; Gan et al., 2016). Writing migrant livelihoods in China, Lin and Gaubatz (2016) identifies the neighbouring are employed to migrate usable space in expectation of income for living. The workplace on employing through transitional area's creative economy. But it is not just risk as employed, in fact, may lead to the adversity in seasonality. The employability in transitional areas is varied competitive to change activity tends to divers a means of living. As Muyeba & Seekings (2012) discussed that household workers are social exchanged of familiarity, neighbourhood, engagement and networks. However, these matters would help them survive upon economic-involved of livelihoods.

In the third pattern, it was responded the pattern of industrial outworks are actively labour market making livelihoods work (Agnete, Carter & Ljunggren, 2013). In a tight labour market, a highly assets building lead to more regain work-related may depend on the type of activities (Ting, 2016). Beside that, it might be reasonable to think in progressive asset-generating-incomes opportunity-seeking established a means of living (Morse, McNamara & Acholo, 2009; Paloniemi & Piispanen, 2015). In spite of negative effect, informal worker lacks of continuity of employment activities in seasonality. It reduces employing in seasonality which may transform intangible into intangible assets (Allee, 2016). However, in other studies, the poorer groups are usually continued of employability rely on progressive assets to serve livelihoods (Perth, 2007).

It is clear that negatively and positively dimension of household employability encourages of making livelihoods work. It is, of course, there are also needed to put in the close-text-based fully—reap activities required a means of living. The household work is rapidly in changing on-farm into off-farm may cause them to work in seasonality. To be truly effective, the informal is close-related to persisting their livelihoods based on capability, assets and activities. Taking into account this poor contextual, it has many patterns are strengthening, but it needed specifies, not at all work holding in making livelihood work. With this mind-set, we introduced cues to action as the central household worker is based on employability supply-side rather demand-side factors. The significant livelihood feature comprised the continuity rather than capability, assets and activities for making livelihood works at all household levels.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This article adopted in-depth interviews with qualitative methods. The study explored the making livelihood work of household garment in the Lao PDR. In this context—building on transitional in changing on-farm to off-farm employment rupture close-text-based endeavours a means of living. We believed that this concept is useful when interpreted 'narrow' to set a specific close-text-based on the platform of livelihoods. The finding reveals that the three patterns of employability are involved in making livelihood work in the Lao PDR. The first pattern, which is considered the kinships with combined workers are strongly relationship tied in employment activities. The second pattern, which is involved of neighbouring workers entail high-status of livelihood activities. The third pattern, while changing from industrial workers returned to employ in household garment work.



Findings made regarding household differences is based on supply-side rather demand-side that may motivate livelihood activities. Although the finding that sheds light socialist norm of employability in familiarity rather individual making livelihoods work. Emphasising on ‘narrow’ of employment demand-side rather than supply-side dominated as active labour (*e.g.* capability, assets and activities). All these the key interest groups—workers are full-reaped highly livelihood activities. The household worker that arose of informally to create activities are highly livelihood-involved. However, we instinctive of employability tends to be developed in a variety of close-text-based related to livelihood platforms. Moreover, it seems justified to look at different making livelihood regarding work–life values within one household and in another step to compare these findings on a cross-household levels.

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