

Project leaflet



EAST • WEST
MANAGEMENT
INSTITUTE



A project implemented by RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests and partners



Project is co-funded by
The European Union

Background

The Mekong region is home to an estimated 85 million forest-dependent people, of whom more than a third are indigenous peoples. Overall, an estimated 30% of the rural population in the region are living in poverty. Forest loss averaged 4.9% between 1990 and 2015, with forest communities in the Mekong region facing many challenges in ensuring that they can make a sustainable living from the forest landscapes.

While much progress is being made in addressing these issues, forest governance remains a fundamental challenge in the region. There are many initiatives trying to support the efforts of local forest communities, while at the same time trying to address illegal logging, deforestation and forest degradation, rural poverty, and protecting biodiversity. At the heart of these efforts is governance. Without strong governance, built on foundations that include effective participation, transparency and accountability, these efforts are proven time and again to fail.

Non-state actors (NSAs), particularly civil society, play a fundamental role in strengthening governance. However, despite some advancements in recent years, they face many challenges including the fact that they are often not recognized or effectively engaged as equal partners in forest and/or governance processes -- due to a lack of participatory processes in policy making; capacity of the NSAs to effectively participate in dialogues and exchanges with state and private actors; and a lack of appropriate data to strengthen forest governance. In recognition of this, the European Union is supporting the project '**Voices for Mekong forests (V4MF)**,' which aims to strengthen NSAs' voices for improved forest governance in the Mekong region.



Project overview

The overarching rationale of the project is that for forests to be sustainably managed, civil society must have the capacity to organise themselves to share information, strengthen their negotiating positions and effectively present their concerns and solutions to policy-makers. The project recognises that many national, regional and global initiatives offer opportunities for NSAs to become actively involved in government-led forest landscape dialogues and decision-making processes. This project therefore leverages and contributes to these initiatives, particularly the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade - Voluntary Partnership Agreements (FLEGT-VPA) initiative and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), by helping to ensure they are built on multi-stakeholder processes.

Objective

The overall objective of the five-year (2017-2021) project is that by 2021, empowered and networked NSAs in three transboundary landscapes assess, monitor and respond appropriately to strengthen forest governance, particularly in FLEGT-VPA and REDD+, and effectively engage in policy processes. This objective will be achieved through the four outputs as shown in Figure 1.

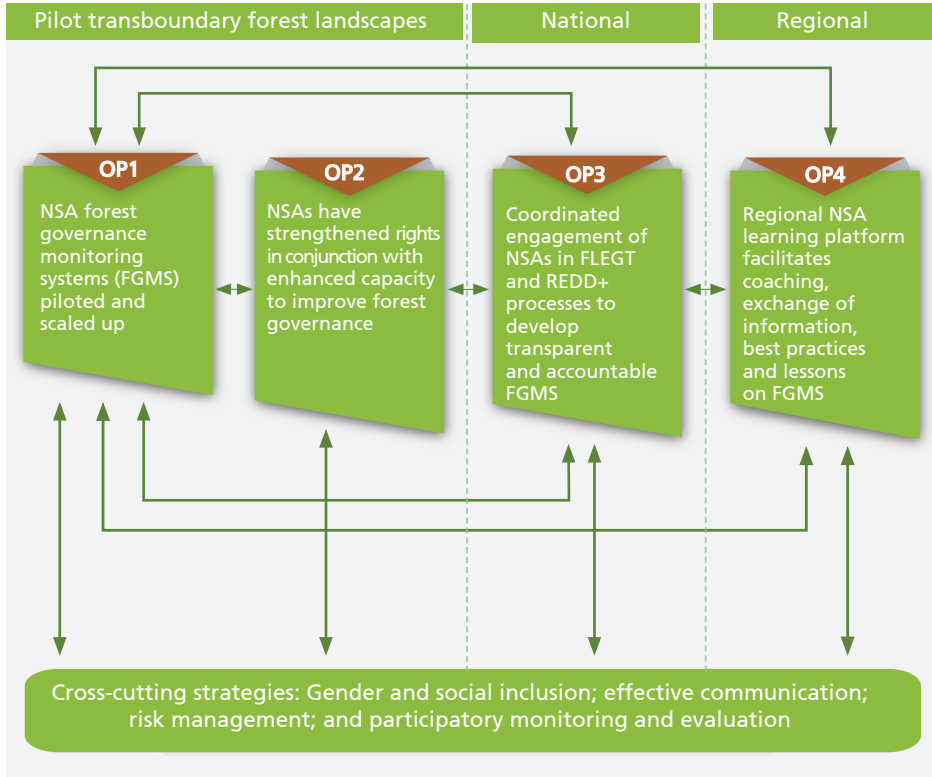


Figure 1. The Project output (OP) linkages from landscape to regional level

Project area

Recognizing that efforts to address the challenges facing forest governance in the region need to take a holistic approach, the project works on regional, national and landscape levels.

The transboundary focus of this project covers three landscapes across five countries. These landscapes are home to many forest-dependent communities, and are among the most biodiverse in the region, providing a range of ecosystem services:

1. Dawna Tenasserim Transboundary Landscape (DTL) - covering Tanintharyi Nature Reserve (Myanmar) and Western Forest Complex (Thailand)
2. Northern Thailand - Lao PDR Transboundary Landscape (NTLL) - covering Doi Phu Kha National Park (Thailand) and Bokeo and Xayabury provinces (Lao PDR)
3. Viet Nam - Lao PDR - Cambodia Transboundary Landscape (VLCL) - covering: a) Eastern Plains Landscape (Cambodia bordering with Viet Nam); b) Quang Nam province, Central Annamites; Kon Tum province, Central Highlands (Viet Nam bordering Cambodia and Lao PDR); and c) Xe Pian and Dong Amphan National Biodiversity Conservation Areas (Lao PDR)

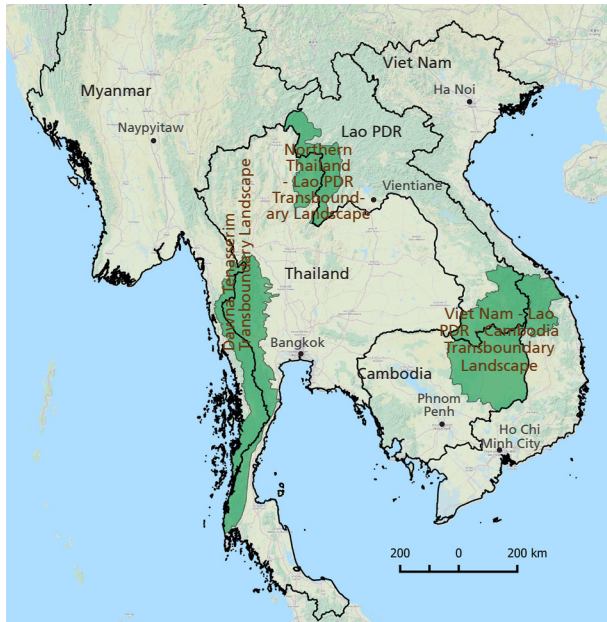


Figure 2. Project target countries and transboundary landscapes

Activities

The Project focuses on activities at landscape, national and regional levels:

1. Establish a Forest Governance Monitoring System (FGMS) to monitor and strengthen forest landscape governance. The Project will assess and develop effective FGMS that can build the capacity of NSAs to generate reliable information using GIS/web-based systems, and mobile technology to pilot FGMS in the Mekong countries, particularly in the three transboundary landscapes.
2. Provide capacity development for NSAs to assess and monitor forest landscape governance. This will occur through a series of participatory learning interventions so that NSAs can subsequently support local communities and indigenous peoples to utilize FGMS in pilot sites in the transboundary landscapes.
3. Enhance NSAs' abilities to capably respond to relevant policy and governance-related challenges and opportunities.

Project partners

Regional partners



RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests

The project lead, RECOFTC (www.recoftc.org), is a capacity development organization working to ensure that local communities can actively manage their forests to ensure optimal social, economic, and environmental benefits. Working throughout the Asia-Pacific region, RECOFTC's headquarters is in Bangkok, along with program offices in the project target countries.



WWF (Germany and Greater Mekong)

WWF (www.worldwildlife.org/places/greater-mekong) is working in the Mekong region to protect species, encouraging sustainable forestry and non-timber forest product management, supporting communities and governments with climate change adaptation, and promoting the sustainable use of freshwater resources. WWF has program offices in the project target countries.



East West Management Institute - Open Development Initiative (EWMI-ODI)

The EWMI's ODI (ewmi.org/ODI) is an open data and information network that sheds light on development trends in the lower Mekong Countries. Through transparent sharing and analysis of data, the platform aims to inform fact-based constructive dialogue and decision-making to promote sustainable and equitable development.



NEPCon (Nature Economy and People Connected)

NEPCon (www.nepcon.org) is an international not-for-profit organization that works to build commitment and capacity for mainstreaming sustainability. The organization is fostering solutions for safeguarding our natural resources and tackling climate change. This includes facilitating responsible forest management and trade, building capacity and providing solutions for responsible sourcing of forest commodities.

National partners



NGO Forum on Cambodia (Cambodia)

NGO Forum (www.ngoforum.org.kh) works to improve life for the country's poor and vulnerable people. It is a membership organization that builds NGO cooperation and capacity, supporting NGO networks and other civil society organizations to engage in policy dialogue, debate and advocacy.



Lao Biodiversity Association - LBA (Lao PDR)

LBA aims to contribute to biodiversity protection and sustainable development, contribute to poverty alleviation and support the country's efforts to address climate change. It works with government agencies at multiple levels as well as international institutions and funding organizations to develop research and conservation projects in the country.



Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network - MERN (Myanmar)

MERN (www.mernmyanmar.org) is a national network of local and national NGOs with an environmental focus. From forestry and environmental policy development, to community improvement, capacity building, social mobilization, agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and social infrastructure projects, MERN's members are improving Myanmar's environment and society.



Raks Thai - A member of CARE International (Thailand)

Raks Thai (www.raksthai.org) strengthens the capacity of poor and disadvantaged communities to analyze root causes of problems, determine solutions and participate in development activities. It works in climate change adaptation and natural resources management, health, youth development, women's economic empowerment and humanitarian support.



People and Nature Reconciliation - PanNature (Viet Nam)

PanNature (www.nature.org.vn/en/) is working to protect and conserve the diversity of life and improve human well-being in Viet Nam by seeking, promoting and implementing feasible, nature-friendly solutions to important environmental problems and sustainable development issues.





RECOFTC's mission is to enhance capacities for stronger rights, improved governance and fairer benefits for local people in sustainable forested landscapes in the Asia and the Pacific region.

RECOFTC holds a unique and important place in the world of forestry. It is the only international not-for-profit organization that specializes in capacity development for community forestry. RECOFTC engages in strategic networks and effective partnerships with governments, nongovernmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, local people and research and educational institutes throughout the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. With 30 years of international experience and a dynamic approach to capacity building – involving research and analysis, demonstration sites and strategic communication – RECOFTC delivers innovative solutions for people and forests.

All photos courtesy of RECOFTC.

This programme is implemented by RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests and partners. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

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