



Integrated Landscape Development Planning

Lao PDR is undergoing rapid development. How can integrated landscape planning help ensure that this development is sustainable?

People and the Environment

Linked by the life-giving Mekong River, the Greater Mekong* is one of the fastest growing regions in the world. Its natural resources and globally significant biodiversity support the livelihoods of over 300 million people and supply rapidly growing economic sectors such as agriculture and forestry.



Annual rice harvesting in Champasak Province, Southern Laos

Recently, Lao PDR has been experiencing a proliferation of large-scale land concessions, mostly to foreign investors, because of its lower-cost labour and relative availability of land.

The Government of Lao PDR has targeted, by 2020, a total area of 500,000 hectares for industrial tree plantations for pulpwood and agriculture products like rubber and sugarcane.

* Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and China (Yunnan Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region).

The people most affected by such changes to the landscape are the rural communities who depend directly on natural ecosystems to supply their water, food, fuel, and materials for housing.

Integrated approaches to land-use planning and economic development must be implemented to ensure that demand for land concessions does not conflict with existing land allocations.

The Challenge

How can Lao PDR, with its increasing population, fulfill the sustainability goals of its government and meet its aspirations for economic development, without further converting and degrading the natural systems on which its people and economy depend?

Existing planning efforts are jeopardized by a significant lack of technical capacity and resources within relevant government institutions. Strengthening this capacity at all levels of government can help to avoid negative social, economic and environmental impacts, including:

- loss of local livelihoods
- increased land-related conflict
- forest conversion leading to biodiversity loss
- non-optimum soil and natural resources use

The fact that Lao PDR is now building new institutions, and ways of planning, means that it has an excellent opportunity to learn from, and avoid, the mistakes that have led to many of these problems in other countries.

The Project *Addressing Environmental and Social Challenges Resulting from Large-Scale Land Concessions* is a project being implemented by WWF and its partners in Lao PDR.

WWF is supporting the development of landscape planning processes that are:

Participatory – to include the knowledge and perspectives of stakeholders whose future will be affected.

Integrated – many land-related problems arise from poor communication and realisation of the effects of one sector's plans for land use on another's.

Fully informed – including an understanding of the social and economic implications of land use change.

WWF piloted this project with Pathumphone District in Champasak Province in 2008 with further expansion expected in 2009.



Integrated landscape development planning model

Project partners include the National Land Management Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the governments of Champasak Province and Pathumphone District.

The project has been supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and WWF's Macroeconomics Programme Office (MPO). This project forms a subcomponent of the Biodiversity Corridors Initiative (BCI).

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption

Project Goals

- Expanded government capacity for land-use planning at all levels
- More integrated land-use planning at a landscape level
- Greater participation of all stakeholders in planning processes
- Coherent and consistent policies and donor programs

Project activities

- Collaborate with government agencies to better understand land conversion issues.
- Promote awareness amongst policy and decision makers on environmental and social issues associated with land conversion.
- Provide the tools to assist informed decision making.
- Support District development and land-use planning processes.
- Support communities in their development planning.
- Build capacity of communities and government agencies for development planning.

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