

Country engagement strategy Lao PDR

RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests

2013-2018



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Bangkok, Thailand

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This publication has been generously funded by Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of RECOFTC and our donor organizations.

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Bangkok 2016

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Acronyms and abbreviations

APFNet	Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASFCC	ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change Program
CBFM	Community-based Forest Management
CBNRM	Community-based Natural Resource Management
CDE	Center for Environment and Development
CDNA	Capacity Development Needs Assessment
CF	Community Forestry
CliPAD	Climate Protection through Avoided Deforestation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAEC	Department of Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives
DAFO	Department of Agriculture and Forestry (district level)
DFRM	Department of Forest Resource Management
DFU	District Forestry Unit
DLMA	District Land Management Authority
DoF	Department of Forestry
DoNRE	Department of Natural Resources and Environment (district level)
EEP	Energy and Environment Partnership
ELM	Enhancing Livelihoods and Markets
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FCPF R-PP	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility Readiness Preparation Proposal
FIM	Forest Information Management
FIP	Forest Investment Program (World Bank)
FLEGT VPA	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement
FOMACOP	Forest Management and Conservation Project
FORCAP	Forest Conservation and Afforestation Project
ForInfo	Livelihood Improvement through Generation and Ownership of Forest Information by Local People in Products and Services Markets
FPIC	Free, Prior, Informed Consent
FPP	Forest Preservation Program
FSCAP	Forestry Sector Capacity Development Project
FSS	Forestry Sector Strategy
FSSWG	Forestry Sub-Sector Working Group
GAPE	Global Association for People and the Environment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GiZ	German International Cooperation Agency
GoL	Government of Lao PDR
GREEN Mekong	Grassroots Equity and Enhanced Network in Mekong
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-region

ICBF	Integrated Conservation of Biodiversity and Forests
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (Credit Facility for Reconstruction)
LDC	Least Developed Country
LEAF	Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests
LFA	Land and Forest Allocation
LIWG	Land Issues Working Group
LUPLA	Land Use Planning and Land Allocation
LSFP	Lao Swedish Forestry Program
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MoV	Means of Verification
MPE	Mekong Partnership for the Environment
NAFRI	National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute
NAWACOP	Nam Ngum Watershed Management and Conservation Project
NCBA	National Conservation of Biodiversity Areas
NGPES	National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy
NLMA	National Land Management Authority
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NRE-SWG	Natural Resources and Environment Sector Working Group
NPF	National Protection Forests
NTFP	Non-timber Forest Product
NUOL	National University of Laos
PAFO	Provincial Department of Agriculture and Forestry
PAREDD	Participatory Land and Forest Management Project
PES	Payments for Ecosystem Services
PFA	Protection Forest Areas
PFCC	People, Forests and Climate Change
PFS	Provincial Forest Section
PLUP	Participatory Land Use Planning
PM&E	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PONRE	Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment
RECOFTC	RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests
	Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries, and the role of conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries

RRI	Rights and Resources Initiative
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SCF	Securing Community Forestry
SIGE	Social Inclusion and Gender Equity
SNV	Organization of Netherlands Volunteers
SUFORD	Sustainable Forestry and Rural Development Project
TFC	Transforming Forest Conflict
TI	Transparency International
ToT	Training of Trainers
TVEC	Technical and Vocational Education Centers
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VF	Village Forest(ry)
VFC	Village Forestry Committee
VFI	Village Focus International
VFMP	Village Forestry Management Plan
VFNTFPM	VF NTFP Management Division
VFO	Village Forestry Organization
VFWG	VF Working Group
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land
WB	World Bank
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature



Executive summary

Almost 90 percent of the land area in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is 'wooded'. Of the total land area of 23 million hectares, 15.8 million hectares (68 percent) are forest with more than 10 percent crown cover and 4.8 million hectares are classified as other wooded land with less than 10 percent crown cover. Most of the Lao population (6.65 million) lives in the Mekong Valley. About 22 percent lives in the midlands and 10 percent in the uplands. Based on data from 2014 (UN Human Rights Council, 2014)¹ out of the total of 8 514 villages, 1 966 (or 23 percent) are classified as poor.

Forest cover is highest in the south (56.5 percent), followed by the Central Region (46 percent) and lowest in the north (28 percent), where degraded or 'potential' forest covers 67 percent of the area (FAO, 2009).²

There has been considerable economic growth in Lao PDR where the economy grew 8 percent per year from 2006 to 2010. It is estimated that about 1 million villagers may be affected by hydropower development, land concession and mining projects.

Recently, the government has attempted to stop shifting cultivation through land-use planning and land allocation. Lessons from these efforts have contributed to recognition of the need for the current revision of land and forest policy and legislation.

Many forestry projects in Lao PDR have been developing and testing innovative arrangements for forest utilization that contribute to rural development. Recently initiated international climate change projects build on these lessons, such as the World Bank/Finland-supported Forest Investment Program (FIP) in Northern Laos which was developed based on lessons from the Sustainable Forestry and Rural Development Project (SUFORD).

In Lao PDR, community forestry (CF) interventions are addressed through village structure. The RECOFTC Laos Country Program therefore proposes to support the Village Forestry³ (VF)-relevant initiatives through enhancing capacity development of key stakeholders, contributing to an enabled regulatory framework, producing strategic communication and demonstrating good practices in pilot projects. For this purpose, the expected outcomes of the Lao- PDR Country Program for 2013-2018 are:

- To secure CF through more effective institutions and resources:
 - Relevant stakeholders are equipped with capacities to enhance VF and develop effective networks;
 - VF policies are advocated to enhance local people's engagement in community-based forest interventions;
 - Information on VF and titling is applied among relevant parties in efforts to secure and enhance VF; and
 - Smallholder titles and village forest titling practice are piloted and replicated.

¹ <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/54c0d60c4.pdf>

² FAO, 2009. Proceedings of the regional land degradation assessment in drylands (LADA) workshop for south-east Asia, Bangkok. 27-30 April 2009.

³ The term 'community forestry' is used overall in RECOFTC's strategy, whereas, 'village forestry' is used specifically in the Lao context.

- To enhance local livelihoods and market access through sustainable CF practices:
 - Capacity is developed to apply knowledge on tree and non-timber forest product (NTFP) valuation and harvesting for enhancing local communities' livelihoods and markets and to ensure an active marketing network on forest products is operational;
 - Forest livelihoods and commercial benefits are better reflected in VF policy and barriers for biomass export are removed;
 - The potential of VF for delivering various forest products and for using forest resources as collateral is communicated to enhance local livelihoods and access to financial resources by attracting increased investments; and
 - Adoption of appropriate, financially viable and innovative harvesting, processing and marketing of teak and bamboo for local use and export. Additionally, a model of 'trees as collateral' for loans is adopted.
- To strengthen enabling conditions for local people's engagement in the governance of forested landscapes in the context of climate change:
 - Capacities and knowledge of local people and professionals on climate change impact mitigation and adaptation are developed;
 - Climate change-mainstreamed VF policies are advocated to enhance local people's engagement in climate change interventions;
 - Local people's awareness on the role of forests in mitigating and adapting to climate change impact is raised; and
 - Climate change mitigation and adaption strategies are piloted at local levels, such as fuel load reduction via bamboo biomass (for mitigation) and hill irrigation (for adaptation).
- To enhance the effectiveness and support the establishment of institutions to transform forest conflicts:
 - Officials at the district level apply conflict transformation skills and knowledge in their local jurisdictions;
 - Conflict transformation mechanisms at the local level are recognized in VF policy;
 - Different communication products, including case studies and conflict transformation manuals are used for conflict resolution at the local level; and
 - Improved practices of participatory mediation techniques for forest conflict transformation are identified and tested in the northern region.
- To enhance effective coordination and cooperation among agencies and development partners:
 - Consultation and discussion workshops/meetings held for sharing best practices and creating synergy; and
 - Participation in relevant sectoral working group meetings, e.g. the Forestry Sub-Sector Working Group (FSSWG), Village Forestry Working Group (VFWG).



1

RECOFTC's vision and mission

RECOFTC's vision is that "empowered local people are effectively and equitably engaged in the sustainable management of forested landscapes." To achieve the vision, RECOFTC's mission is to enhance capacities for stronger rights, improve governance and ensure fairer benefits for local people in sustainable forested landscapes in the Asia and Pacific region.

RECOFTC's vision and mission in national CF development is based on its Strategic Plan for 2013-2018 (RECOFTC, 2013a) and its analysis of the status, prospects and priorities for national CF/VF development in Lao PDR. In this section, a brief description of RECOFTC's past activities, the current status of RECOFTC's country programme in Lao PDR and the strategic programme framework are presented.

1.1 RECOFTC's history of CF/VF development support in Lao PDR

In the 1990s, RECOFTC mainly contributed to VF development in Lao PDR through the involvement of Lao participants in regional training and seminars. In-country support activities included collaboration with the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) in the development of a model for joint forest management of production forest, and assessment of the potential for integrated watershed management. In addition, a senior official from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) contributed much to the development and governance of RECOFTC, initially as member and later as Chair of RECOFTC's Board of Trustees.

More recently, while continuing to involve Lao participants in regional training and seminars, RECOFTC has become more actively involved in Lao PDR through regional initiatives such as the ForInfo: Livelihood Improvement through Generation and Ownership of Forest Information by Local People in Products and Service Markets project in Bokeo, the RECOFTC-RRI partnership and REDD-related regional projects, such as Grassroots Capacity Building for REDD+ and the Grassroots Equity and Enhanced Network in Mekong (GREEN Mekong). Currently RECOFTC has a national office in the compound of the Department of Forestry (DoF) in Vientiane housing three programme staff and one project staff member to support the development and implementation of national VF actions. In March 2014, RECOFTC and the DoF officially signed a five-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) that targets capacity development for sustainable community-based forest management.

Two planning studies were commissioned by RECOFTC to assess the status of community-based forest management (CBFM) and the needs for capacity development for VF development (Manivong and Sophathilath, 2007; Prixar and Thongphanh, 2013). The findings and recommendations from these studies are reflected in the sections below in the context of VF development and the priorities, strategies and partners for RECOFTC's community development support in Lao PDR.

1.2 RECOFTC's Strategic Plan 2013-2018

RECOFTC's thematic areas and functional approaches are outcome-driven and focus on addressing key issues to achieve measurable progress towards positive changes in rights, governance and benefits (Table 1).

Table 1. RECOFTC's thematic areas

Thematic areas	Strategic outcomes
Securing community forestry	Institutions and resources for securing CF are more effective.
Enhancing livelihoods and markets	Institutions are actively enhancing local livelihoods through sustainable CF practices.
People, forests and climate change	Enabling environments for local people's engagement in forested landscapes in the context of climate change are strengthened.
Transforming forest conflicts	Institutions to transform conflict are in place and becoming more effective.

These results will derive from achieving intermediate outcomes that are the result of four functional approaches applied in each thematic area both regionally and in programme countries (Table 2).

Table 2. RECOFTC's functional approaches

Functional approaches	Intermediate outcomes
Training and learning networks	Enhanced capacities are used by key stakeholders to provide quality support and professional advice to local communities.
Research, analysis and synthesis	Enabling policies and regulatory instruments are adopted to enhance the rights of local people, improve forest governance and ensure a fairer share of benefits.
Strategic communications	Communications strategies are used to enhance awareness, attitudes and behaviours among target audiences.
Piloting and demonstrating	Improved practices adopted in CF are effectively replicated.

During this strategic plan period, RECOFTC will enhance the value of its approach by fostering a learning culture and creating a learning environment within RECOFTC and with its partners, and placing increased emphasis on addressing the cross-cutting issues of:

- Social inclusion and gender equity through a rights-based approach:** Key components are laid out to ensure that a socially inclusive approach is mainstreamed across thematic areas and functional approaches with systematic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms. These are an integration of social and gender equity perspectives in regional and country-specific programmes and projects; organizational capacity development with supportive functions, processes and policies; expansion of social inclusion and gender-focused work; and knowledge sharing for social and gender-responsive policy and practice;
- CF/VF leadership development:** This initiative consolidates RECOFTC's core business of strengthening and expanding CF in the region with a targeted approach to identifying and cultivating 'agents of change' within the field of CF. Building on RECOFTC's extensive CF networks and learning from cutting-edge leadership development approaches being pioneered elsewhere, RECOFTC will identify and cultivate long-term relationships with key individuals demonstrating the potential to bring about real and effective change in the field of CF; and
- Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E):** Active engagement with key stakeholders in assessing the progress of the programme or project and in particular the achievement of results is the focus of this cross-

cutting effort. Through their active engagement, stakeholders are enabled to share control over the content, the process and the results of the M&E activities. Consequently, the assessments and learning from changes become more inclusive and responsive to the needs of the people directly affected, building ownership and empowering beneficiaries. Eventually, accountability and transparency, including timely corrective actions for improved performance and outcomes can be pursued.

In parallel with its regional work, RECOFTC will consolidate and expand its engagement with eight focal countries: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam. RECOFTC will also continue to engage with other countries in the region and beyond, where it can add value and find opportunities for mutual learning.

The focus of the country programmes is on supporting development and building capacity for the implementation of national CF/VF programmes, comprising the following elements:

- Development of individual and organizational capacities for CF/VF development;
- CF/VF development at the field level:
 - Identification of potential forest communities;
 - Formalization of CF/VF institutions and framework;
 - Management planning of CF/VF institutions for sustainable CF/VF management; and
 - Ongoing management/implementation/institutional development.
- CF/VF networks and coordination (within and between stakeholder groups);
- CF/VF research and information management (including M&E); and
- Policy, legislation and administrative development.

Table 3. Proposed framework for national CF programme components

1 Training	2 CF Development		3 Information Management and Communication	4 Networks and learning groups	5 Policy and regulatory framework development
	CF establishment and management	Additional subcomponents			
Needs assessment	Identification - communities and forests	Institutional development	Research	CF membership networks	Review
Course & materials development	Formalization	Enterprise development	M&E	Multi-stakeholder networks and learning groups	Clarification
Training / coaching	Management planning	PES and climate change mitigation	Database and mapping	National CF working group	Revision
	Implementation	Climate change adaptation	Communication and outreach	Regional and global networking (e.g. ASEAN)	Budget allocation, sustainable financing and investment
	Alternative livelihoods				

Note: PES = payments for ecosystem services; ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

RECOFTC will support the formation or strengthening of national multistakeholder CF/VF working groups and align its portfolio of in-country initiatives with national CF/VF programmes.



2

National development context

2.1 Geography, population and economy

Lao PDR encompasses 23.08 million hectares of land and 0.6 million hectares of water. About 80 percent of the area is mountainous and half of this has slopes exceeding 30 percent. Only 24 percent of the land area has slopes of less than 5 percent, considered suitable for agriculture. The 2 million hectares of arable land with high agricultural potential are very unevenly distributed. Most being in the floodplains of the Mekong River in the Central Region and in the southern part of the country. In the north, only 6 percent of the area has slopes under 20 percent while 50 percent of the area has slopes over 30 percent (Bounthong et al., 2003). There are also marked regional differences in biophysical aspects. The north has greater variation in temperature and poorer soils for agriculture compared to the central and southern regions.

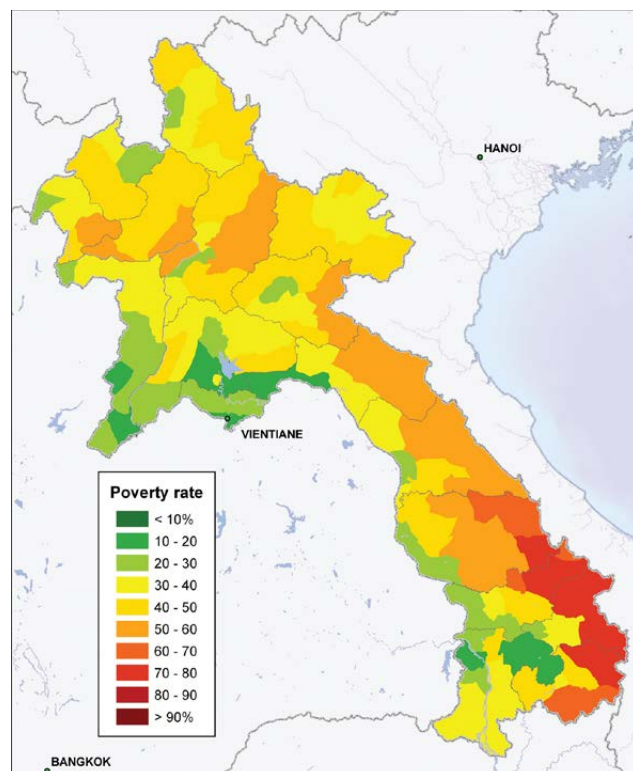
About 65 percent of the total population of 6.65 million lives in rural areas (World Bank, 2014). There is great ethnic diversity. Some 230 ethnolinguistic groups have been distinguished, simplified to 47 ethnic categories used in the national census of 1995. These are further condensed into three major ethnic categories: the lowland Lao (Lao Loum), largely living in the Mekong Valley and making up 68 percent of the population, the midland Lao (Lao Theung) comprising about 22 percent of the population and the upland Lao (Lao Soung) accounting for about 10 percent of the population (Bounthong et al., 2003).

Conditions in the lowlands and uplands differ in many other respects such as good road linkages and access to agricultural technology in the lowlands that are absent in the uplands. Other differences apply to rural savings and credit facilities, interaction of local and regional markets and the degree of monetization of the rural economy. These differences contribute to a high incidence of poverty.

In 2008, the national poverty index was estimated at 27.6 percent compared with 51 percent in 1993 (World Bank Web site, accessed in September 2015).

Half of the districts (72 out of 141) have been identified as poor (more than 55 percent of poor families) and 47 percent of these are very poor (more than 70 percent of poor families). The poorest districts are clustered in the provinces of Bokeo, Oudomxay, Luang Prabang and Houphphan and parts of Phongsaly Province in the north, Sekong, Attapeu, and Savannakhet provinces in the south and Bolikhamxay, Xiengkhuang and Khammouane provinces in the Central Region (Epprecht et al., 2008).

Figure 1. Poverty incidence map



Source: Epprecht et al. (2008).

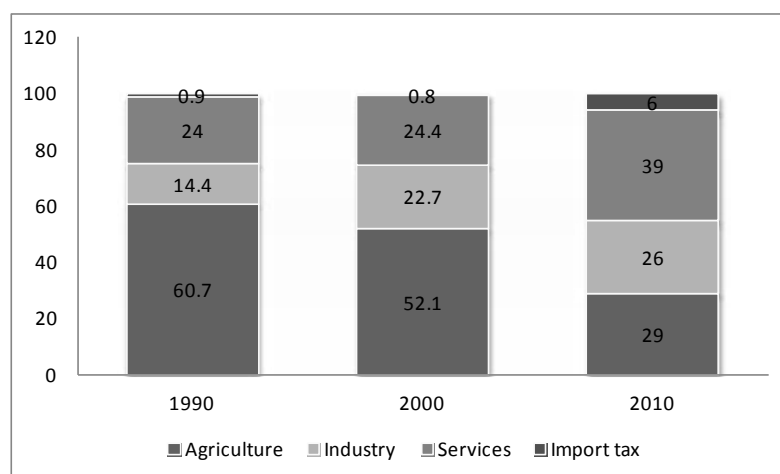
2.2 National social and economic development

Lao PDR is a single-party socialist democratic republic. The economy is centrally-planned and under the National Constitution, all land and forest resources belong to the state. Despite this, the country has for some time (since 1989) been moving towards liberalization of the economy, a move that is noticeable in its land and forest laws with the increased share of privately managed or owned land. As a least developed country (LDC), it ranked 139 out of 187 nations in the 2014 UNDP Human Development Index. Lao PDR ranked 145 out of 174 countries on Transparency International's (TI) perception of corruption index and also scores low on voice and accountability (Transparency International, 2014).

The government's two main development goals for 2020 are to graduate from LDC status and to eradicate poverty. The economy has indeed been growing rapidly, with average annual growth rates of 8 percent from 2006 to 2010. The GDP per capita has risen nearly three times from US\$643.1 in 1985 to US\$1 759.8 in 2014 (World Bank, 2014).

As shown in Figure 2, the economic growth also entails a change in structure of the economy, with the share of the GDP from agriculture rapidly declining (from 61 percent in 1990 to 29 percent in 2010) and an increase in the contributions from industry and services

Figure 2. Change in sector contributions to GDP, 1990-2010



Source: Boutthavong (2012).

It is estimated that forestry may contribute 15-20 percent to the non-agricultural GDP. The value of exported wood products (including timber) has been increasing since the early 1990s, but its share in total exports has been declining, from 30 percent in 1994 to 14 percent in 2007 (due to the increase in export of minerals) (MONRE, 2012). In 2006, US\$60 million or about 12 percent of total government revenue was derived from the sale of timber (Barney et al., 2010).

The national socio-economic development strategy aims to achieve sustainable economic growth (with an annual economic growth of at least 8 percent) and reduce poverty, particularly in rural areas. However, the differences between poverty incidence (proportion of poor people in the total population) and poverty density (numbers of poor people per unit area) need to be considered in comparing urban and rural areas. Poverty density is usually higher in lowland and urban areas with high population density (CDE, undated). Nevertheless, out of the total of 8 514 villages, 1 966 (or 23 percent) are classified as poor (UN Human Rights Council, 2014).

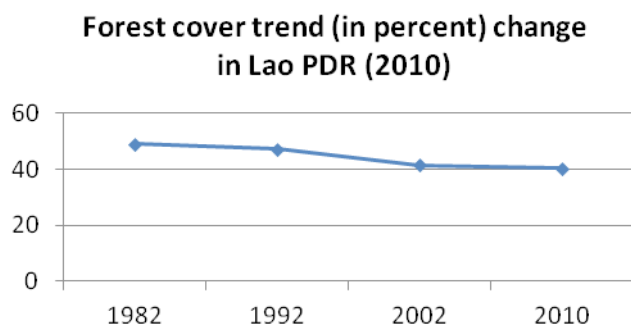
In the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES), agriculture and forestry is identified as one of the four main sectors for the eradication of poverty, with its most important objective being to improve household food security. The strategic NGPES objective to address this refers to "maintaining a healthy and productive forest cover as an integral part of the rural livelihood system, and generating a sustainable stream of forest products" (NGPES, 2004).

The role of forestry in poverty eradication is well recognized in the Forestry Strategy to the Year 2020, developed in 2005, but so is forestry's role in contributing to national economic development, protection of the environment and generation of revenue for the state: "pressure is on Lao forestry to perform in the face of many conflicting demands and a dwindling resource base. Effective and efficient, sustainable management of the resources, and of the sector at large, must, therefore, be the goal of the Government and its development partners" (MAF, 2005, p.46).

2.3 Land use and development

According to the Land Law 1997, amended in 2003, land is the main national resource, which is “where the Lao people live and work, and is an important means of production, socio-economic development, national defense and security.” Land is under the ownership of the national community, with the constitution stipulating that the state is charged with the centralized and uniform management of land throughout the country and with its allocation for use by individuals and organizations (GoL, 2003).

Figure 3. Forest cover trends in Lao PDR (2010)

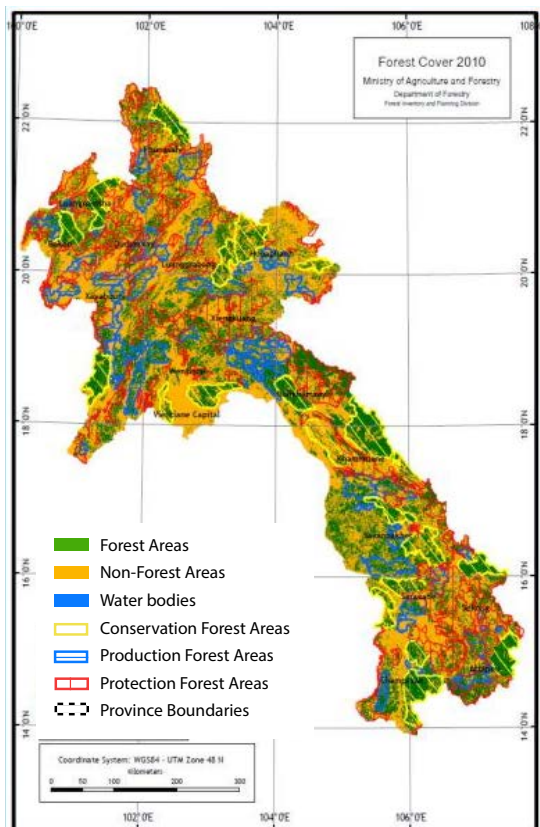


Source: Fujita (2011).

Land is classified into eight categories: agricultural land, forest land, water area land, industrial land, communication land, cultural land, land for national and security and defense, and construction land.

With regards to forest land, Lao PDR has conducted four national forest cover assessments, in 1982, 1992, 2002 and 2010 (Figure 3). Even though the government has made efforts to combat forest loss over recent decades, forest cover has continued to decline. According to estimates, the annual rate of deforestation in the country rose from 0.4 percent (46 900 hectares/year) in the period 1982-1992, to 1.2 percent

Figure 4. Forest cover map of Lao PDR (2010)



Source: Forest Investment and Planning Division (FIPD)/ Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF).

rose from 0.4 percent (46 900 hectares/year) in the period 1982-1992, to 1.2 percent (134 000 hectares/year) in 1992-2002 and dropped to 0.35 percent (35 000 hectares/year) in 2002-2010. In 2010, the Department of Forests estimated Lao PDR's forest cover at 9.5 million hectares or 40.3 percent of the total land area. According to geospatial analysis, total tree cover declined at a rate of between 80 000 and 170 000 hectares per year between 2006 and 2012 (Forest Trends, 2014). However, the average national reduction in deforestation masks regional-level trends across the country. Provincial-level estimates for 2002-2010 indicate that forest cover increased by 2.6 percent in the northern region, but declined by 0.9 and 2 percent in the central and southern regions where deforestation appears to remain an issue. Official estimates from 1992 to 2002 indicate a significant decline in forest quality with dense forests (>70 percent canopy cover) decreasing from 29.1 to 8.3 percent of total forest cover, and open forests (1 000 hectares) falling from 88 to 52 percent and smaller forest blocks (<100 hectares) rising from 4.5 to 30.2 percent (Chokkalingam and Phanvilay, 2014).

The National Forest Strategy includes a commitment to increase forest cover to around 70 percent by 2020 through sustainable forest management and restoration. However, this goal may be unattainable based on the current rate of legal and illegal forest conversion. Up to 80 percent of the Lao population depends on forests and forest products, and 73 percent of rural citizens rely on small-scale agriculture and forestry for their livelihoods. In some rural communities, more than 50 percent of a family's income is derived from NTFPs (Ketpanh et al., 2012).

Others in Lao PDR used a more ambitious definition of forest (more than 20 percent crown cover) and arrived at a figure of around 9.5 million hectares of 'forest' in 2010 (DoF, 2010 cited in Sopathilat, 2012). This well-stocked forest (crown cover

over 20 percent) is also referred to as 'current forest' while the area with crown cover under 20 percent is defined as 'potential forest' (MAF, 2005). 'Other wooded areas' refer to those with poor condition where crown cover can never be expected to reach 20 percent or more (MAF, 2005).

There is considerable regional variation in the relative importance of these major land uses, as summarized in Table 4, which shows that the proportion of well-stocked forest was maximum in the central region, and minimum in the northern region.

Table 4. Regional variation in forest land categories in Lao PDR (2010)

Region	Area (000 ha)			
	Current forest	Potential forest	Other wooded area	Total
North	3 896 (37.0)	5 273 (50.0)	1 368 (13.0)	10 537
Central	2 591 (44.2)	2 076 (35.4)	1 193 (20.4)	5 860
South	3 059 (41.9)	3 539 (48.5)	694 (9.5)	7 293
Total	9 546	10 888	3 256	23 680
% of total geographical area	40.3	46.0	13.7	100

Note: Values in parentheses refer to the percent of total land cover under each category.

Source: MAF (2005).

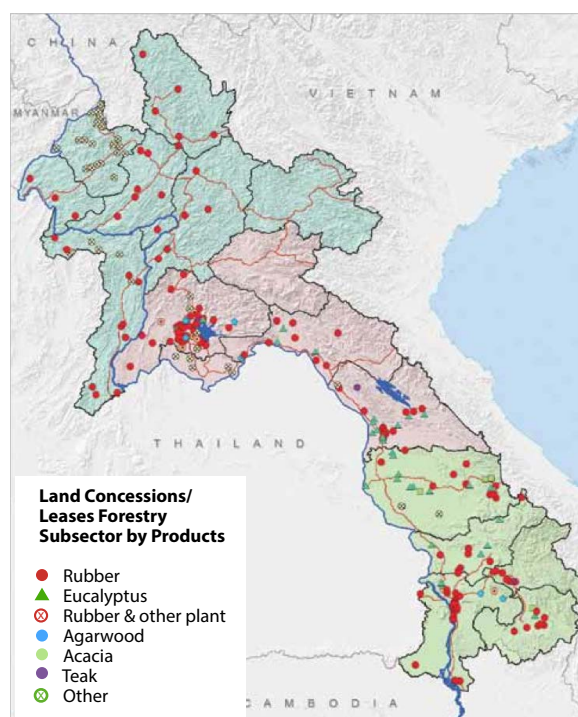
Degradation in the quality and quantity of forest cover has been accelerated due to development activities such as granting of land concessions, mining and hydropower development.

Around 2 642 land concessions and leases covering a total of 1.1 million hectares could be identified in 2012, covering about 1 900 villages. One-third of these concessions/leases was granted on lands categorized as forest lands, mostly on forests designated as protection forest (Schoenweger et al., 2012). Most of these concessions/leases are under 5 hectares, with most projects being financed by domestic investors. China, Thailand and Viet Nam are the largest foreign investors, representing 23 percent of all deals and covering 53 percent of the area under investment. A 2012 report (Schoenweger et al., 2012) found that the number of land deals has skyrocketed in recent years, increasing fifty-fold from 2000 to 2009.

Other manifestations of the modernization in the uplands are hydropower projects and mining concessions. Considerable benefits for the national economy and state revenue are expected from them. The number of villages likely to be affected by these developments appears to be about equal to the number of villages affected by land concessions, as the overview below demonstrates (taken from Sophathilat, 2012).

Based on the above-mentioned data, over 1 million villagers would be affected by hydropower, land concession and mining projects. A knock-on effect on forestry from these projects is that, in terms of timber production, over 80 percent of the harvest is estimated to come from clearing of infrastructure, mining and land concession sites (Barney and Canby, 2011).

Figure 5. Concessions and leases



Source: Schoenweger et al. (2012).

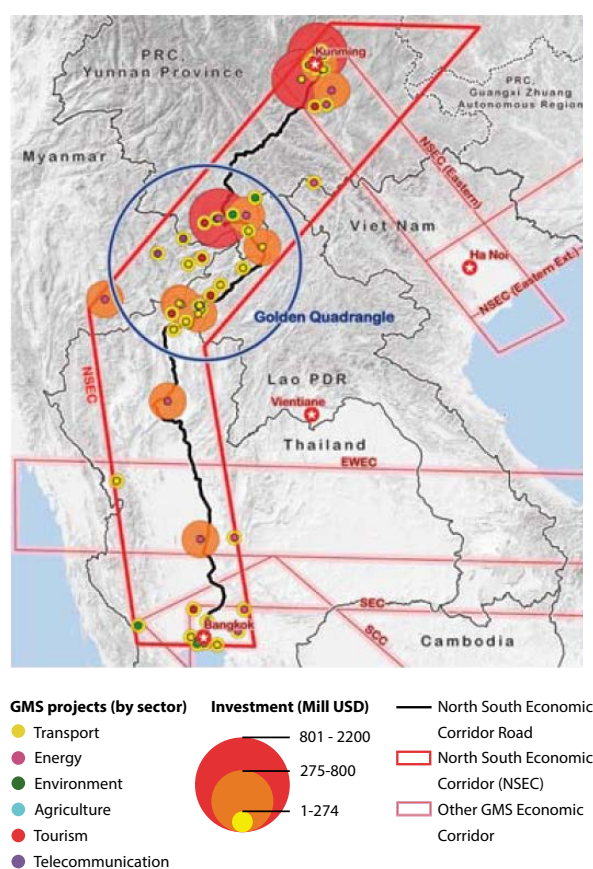
Table 5. Villages affected by hydropower and mining development

	Hydro: planned (with MOU)*	Within 1 hour's walk of current/planned hydro**	Mining: exploitation stage	Mining: exploration /general survey***
Villages	293	255	36	1,225
Population	104,962	112,256	19,082	568,370
Poverty Rate	47%	42%	37%	40%
Literacy rate	60%	69%	46%	40%

* Based on 42/81 hydro projects, "planned" include under construction, planning or feasibility study
 **Excluding population within the inundated area, based on 42/81 hydro projects
 ***Rough average of projects in exploration or general survey stage

Source: Sophathilat (2012).

Figure 6. North-south economic GMS corridor



Source: ADB (2008).

Box 1. Forest governance assessment

Forest governance in Lao PDR is still at a relatively early stage of advancement and many problems exist with overlapping and conflicting legislation and directives, unclear jurisdictions, frequent government breaches of written law and a general lack of management or procedural norms (Hodgdon, 2008 cited in FAO, 2011).

Source: FAO (2011).

Another source of change in the uplands is the development of transport corridors and spatial priorities for investment in energy, environment, agriculture, tourism and telecommunications in the economic corridors in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), promoted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2008). Figure 6 depicts the target area for the north-south economic corridor and the investments in various sectors that cover the project area of RECOFTC's ForInfo project in northern Lao PDR (RECOFTC, 2013b). One of the investments is the increase in the value of resources, including labour. The ForInfo project has found that for forestry development to be competitive with other activities, returns to labour need to be higher than US\$10/day, such as for workers in the burgeoning banana plantation sector which offers four to five times higher return (Mohns, B, personal communication, 2015).

The government recognizes the need to adjust land policy and management to the changing national and international context. During an International Knowledge Sharing and Learning Workshop on Forest and Land Tenure Reform, jointly organized by RECOFTC and the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) in 2012, some of the key issues that were highlighted with regard to land-use planning and management in Lao PDR included:

- Inconsistencies in land and forest classification;
- Inadequate data and information management;
- Lack of land-use planning and coordination among stakeholders;
- Incomplete regulations for forest classification;
- A need to link forest classification at macro and village levels; and
- Factors influencing deforestation and forest degradation.

It is also generally recognized that this will require considerable improvements in forest governance,

including the institutional arrangements for administration and management of forests at all levels. Lao PDR drafted a National Land Policy in 2013. In a meeting of the Natural Resources and Environment Sector Working Group (NRE-SWG), the Land Tenure Security informal focal group, along with several other stakeholders, raised concerns over the wording in the National Land Policy draft, which is yet to be approved by the government (Vientiane Times, 25 April 2015). The February 2014 draft of the policy specifically gives the state the right to expropriate land for private investment purposes, i.e. not only for public purposes. The Land Tenure Security focal group has raised concerns that, if approved, the draft policy will undermine tenure security and risks the following impacts:

- Lao land policy will contrast with the legislations of many other countries as well as with international standards, e.g. *The FAO voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests*, which have also been signed by the Government of Lao PDR;
- Foreign and national investors will have insufficient legal protection against arbitrary expropriation of their investments. The investment climate would deteriorate;
- Rapid land loss for communities throughout Lao PDR will be exacerbated. Urban and rural land and forests under individual and communal use will become insecure, including titled land. This undermines the tenure benefits of the national goal of registering 1 million land titles; and
- Loss of land for agriculture leads to loss of livelihoods, increases food insecurity and poverty and may cause social unrest. Such losses would hinder the efforts of the government to graduate from LDC status by 2020.

2.4 Forest administration and policy

The Forestry Law of 2007 defines forest land as land which is covered by forest or determined by the state to be forest land as prescribed in the law. The three functional categories that form the basis of forest administration for the purpose of forest preservation and development are **protection** forests (for soil, water, strategic areas for national defense, etc.), **conservation** forests (for nature and culture conservation and research, comprising national-, provincial-, district- and village-level conservation areas) and **production** forests. Two additional classes are **regeneration** forests (young or fallow areas to reach natural equilibrium as trees mature) and **degraded** forests (heavily damaged, without forest, to be allocated for tree planting or other purposes) (MAF, 2005). The established and planned forest area under each of the three major categories is presented in Table 6 below. Most of the proposed forest areas have not yet been delineated and it is unclear where their precise location is. The three forest categories and their proposed and/or declared areas have now been submitted to the National Assembly for approval. The National Assembly Notice 273 of August 2014 requires an accurate and complete resurvey and delineation of the boundaries of the three forest types, extracting areas approved for other purposes and if necessary, surveying new areas to compensate for the loss. It further specifies that village agricultural and residential land within larger forest areas should be excised from forest land and included in other land categories (Chokkalingam and Phanvilay, 2014).

Table 6. Established or planned forest areas in Lao PDR

Established/planned forest areas	No. of areas	Area (ha)
National production forest	51	3 080 000
National protection forest (8.2 million ha target)	49	7 500 000
National conservation forest	24	3 800 000
Provincial conservation forest	57	900 000
District conservation forest	144	500 000
Provincial protection forest	23	600 000
District protection forest	52	55 000
Plantation forest concessions (0.5 million ha allocated, 0.378 million ha planted)		16 935 000
Village forests (outside 1-7 above)		
Smallholder and domestic plantation on private non-forest land		

Source: Chokkalingam and Phanvilay (2014).

The designation of production forest areas is likely to be the most widely accepted of the main forest administrative categories, also illustrated by the fact that all sources report the same areas for this category (Barney and Canby, 2011; Chokkalingam and Phanvilay, 2014), while there are differences in conservation and protection forests. The reasons are likely related to classification issues recognized in the forestry sector strategy, in conjunction with those identified during the RRI-RECOFTC workshop in 2012:

- Delineation of the three forest estate categories, especially at national and provincial levels, is made on large-scale maps and contains other land-use types in addition to forest. In a strict sense, they are not forest as defined in the forestry law; and
- There are village production and protection forests within areas allocated for national conservation of biodiversity. This double-layered classification reflects reality on the ground and will be maintained for the foreseeable future. However, there are no clear criteria for delineation of agricultural areas and classification of village forest (MAF, 2005, p.12).

Furthermore, although regeneration and degraded forests have reportedly been identified through the land and forest allocation process at the village level, no data are available about this large part of the total forest area (MAF, 2005). This may also explain why the 6.65 million hectares of forest land reportedly allocated to village-use forests in the Land Use Planning and Land Allocation (LUPLA) programme implemented in 7 130 villages (MAF and NLMA, 2010) do not appear in the national forest land classification statistics.

The incidence and complexity of land conflicts has increased due to government programmes such as resettlement and village relocation, policies to increase industrial and agricultural investment in urban and rural areas, an increase in land values, issues concerning ownership of state land and increased activity in commercial development (Mahaphonh et al., 2007). A review of the arrangements for land conflict resolution identified the need for strengthening the capacity of the court system to deal more effectively with land conflicts as well as the strengthening of arrangements and capacity of village- and village cluster-level conflict mediation committees (Mahaphonh et al., 2007).

Many of the issues in land and forest administration are well recognized and the need to address them is demonstrated by the government's initiative to revise the Land Policy and Law as well as the Forestry Law (RRI, 2012). In her keynote address at a major international land and forestry conference in Vientiane, Dr Souvanpheng Boupphanouvong, President of the Committee on Economy, Planning and Finance of the National Assembly of Lao PDR, stated the government's intention to undergo a nationwide formal process of large-scale land reform. "Competition for land among various sectors is intensifying and as a nation, we must act to prevent conflicts and ensure that the increasingly scarce land resource is developed in a way that contributes to national development goals and alleviates poverty among the rural population" (Forest Trends, 2014).

Early drafts of the National Land Policy seemed to address a number of commitments regarding land security and rights to both urban and rural households, consistency in legal framework and implementing guidelines, capacity enhancement at central and local levels to administer and monitor land transactions, awareness raising on risks and opportunities under different land-use scenarios and ensuring transparency. However, the drafting committee has since revoked a number of these commitments, and the National Land Policy is still waiting to be finalized and approved by the government.

Another recently completed reform is the formation of a new Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), and particularly the formation of the Department of Forest Resource Management (DFRM) as part of that ministry. The responsibilities of this department pertain particularly to protection and conservation forests, and include the "making of sub-management plans for managing village forests" within these areas (GoL, 2012). This is complemented by an organizational reform initiative in MAF's Department of Forest (DOF) to initiate a new division for VF and NTFP management (Prixar and Thongphanh, 2013). The responsibilities of the MAF/DoF are related to the management of production and unclassified forests, including VF management in production forests.



3

VF development context

3.1 Development trends and strategies

The modernization of the uplands through 'turning land into capital' provides upland communities with opportunities in the form of improved access to services, expansion of local employment opportunities and more equitable participation in the national development process. On the other side of the coin is the reduced access to land, the outflow of young people and eroding natural and cultural capital (LIWG, 2012b). The increasing demand for environmental protection and conservation is likely to aggravate this process.

Further, the demand for land leases and concessions, and other development projects, the restrictions on forest use and management for environmental protection and conservation, and the need to reconcile these demands with the claims of millions of villagers, has triggered awareness in the National Assembly and other parts of government about the need to revise outdated legislation and re-invigorate land-use planning and land allocation approaches that address the need for tenure security of most of the population.

Stabilization of shifting cultivation has been a major concern in upland development policy in the recent past owing to its perceived contributions to deforestation and in association lack of awareness among ethnic minorities who contribute to land degradation (Lestrelin, 2009). To enable better access to services and markets, highland villages were relocated to more accessible locations and often merged into larger units (Michaud and Forsyth, 2011). LUPLA was widely used to address the problem of shifting cultivation. A total of 10.86 million hectares (4.21 million hectares of agricultural land and 6.65 million hectares of forest land) was allocated to 7 130 villages.

The past analysis of these lessons has contributed to a revision of LUPLA. A new Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) approach is tailored to the different conditions in which target villages are located, in production, protection and conservation forests, resettled villages, villages affected by agricultural land concessions and relocated or merged villages.

With this revised PLUP, the means for more sustainable and equitable upland development appear to be there. If and when the revisions of the land and forestry policy and legislation are complete, many of the necessary conditions for expansion and intensification of VF development will be in place.

3.2 VF development resources

The history of CF/VF development in Lao PDR dates back to the 1990s (Box 2). Between the early 1990s and mid-2000s, Lao PDR experimented with various forms of community-based forest management (RECOFTC & NAFRI, 2007). The process for the involvement of villagers in production forests was initiated in the 1993 Joint Forest Management Project (supported by Sida) and the 1995 FOMACOP project (supported by the World Bank and the Government of Finland). For NTFP management (NAFRI-IUCN), degraded forest (NAWACOP), forest conservation (FORCAP) and ecotourism (Nam Ha) participatory practices and processes have been developed, tested at pilot scales and documented in guidelines, manuals and training materials (see Manivong and Sophathilat, 2007, for an overview of these various VF models).

Box 2. History of CF in Lao PDR

- 1990: Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) enabled CF to be piloted;
- 1990s: Land and Forest Allocation (LFA) evolved from land and forest zoning, encouraged the identification of forests for village use;
- 1992: Community Forestry Unit (DOF);
- 1993: 'Joint forest management' in the Dong Khapo production forest, through the Lao Swedish Forestry Program (LSFP);
- 1995: The Forest Management and Conservation Project (FOMACOP) began in Savannakhet and Khammouane provinces supported by the World Bank, Finland and the Global Environmental Facility; and
- 2003: SUFORD began, with support from the World Bank.

Source: RECOFTC & NAFRI (2007).

Although CF/VF have been more or less on the policy agenda, and villagers' customary use rights in forest areas are recognized in the forestry law and elaborated in MAF Decision 54/1996 and MAF Guideline 377/1996 on Customary Use of Forest Resources, the institutional set-up to support a holistic national VF programme was not established. The VF unit envisaged in Article 104 of the Forest Law of 2008 was not actually developed until 2012 as the Village Forestry and NTFP Management (VF&NTFPM) Division. The division has a clear role to support VF through central-level coordination and development of related policy and legislation, production of technical guidelines, the training of trainers, the dissemination of outreach materials and the support of local-level bodies – the Provincial Forest Section (PFS), District Forestry Unit (DFU), Village Forestry Committee (VFC) or village authorities, which implement government policy following guidelines and appropriate techniques pertaining to VF (Phirasak, 2015). The VF&NTFPM Division is now mandated to achieve the ambitious target of formally establishing 1 500 VFs by 2020 in the poorest villages across the nation, as originally proposed in the Forest Sector Strategy (FSS) 2020. With current financing levels, only four VFs/province/year are programmed through government budgeting, amounting to only 72 VFs/year.

Production and conservation forest legislation further elaborates villagers' rights within these forest areas. MAF Regulation 535 on Village Forest Management issued in 2001 consolidated existing provisions concerning village forests, e.g. classification and timber use for village benefit and house construction. It also legally recognized the collection of NTFPs for sale based on approved management plans provided that villagers formed groups or associations. However, forest management plans have been difficult to formulate. Commercial timber harvesting is not legally permitted in village forests. Draft DoF guidelines for VF establishment and management are currently being developed and tested. The specific management concept and legal framework for village forests managed and used by villagers are being reconsidered and discussed at present (Chokkalingam and Phanvilay, 2014).

The need to explore the space for community management in all classes of forest is recognized and addressed in the revised PLUP guidelines, discussed earlier. This need is also recognized in the current phase of the SUFORD project under the World Bank's FIP. The FIP's three main objectives are strengthening and expanding participatory sustainable forest management in production forest areas, piloting forest landscape management and supporting the development of an enabling legal and regulatory environment. As the focus of the FIP is on northern Lao PDR and in view of RECOFTC-ForInfo's work⁴ in Bokeo and neighbouring provinces, there is great potential for synergy and effective collaboration in a number of project activities, such as:

- Value chain analysis and enterprise development for NTFPs;
- Supporting community engagement in participatory management and livelihood development (community awareness and resource diagnosis, participatory planning, implementation of community action plans);
- Developing methodologies and frameworks for forest landscape management;

⁴ Including the activities under the RECOFTC-EEP project (Energy and Environment Partnership) carried out in the same area.

- Establishment of forest landscape pilots; and
- Contributions to the strengthening of legal and regulatory frameworks and governance.

There are many climate change adaptation and mitigation projects and initiatives in Lao PDR with CF components (Box 3).

Box 3. National and subnational projects and initiatives in Lao PDR

There are numerous completed, ongoing and planned national-, subnational- and project-level REDD+ activities in Lao PDR. Larger programmes involved in a range of REDD-readiness activities include the FIP, the Climate Protection through Avoided Deforestation (CliPAD) Program, REDD components of SUFORD, the Participatory Land and Forest Management Project (PAREDD), the FIP, the Forestry Sector Capacity Development Project (FSCAP), the FCPF R-PP implementation, the FAO programme 'Linking Communities in South-East Asia to Forestry-related Voluntary Carbon Markets', the Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (LEAF) programme, GREEN Mekong and the ASEAN Social Forestry Network for Climate Change (ASFCC). The Agro-Biodiversity Initiative (TABI) (2011-2015) supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) focuses on improving the resilience of the agriculture sector to climate change impacts in three northern provinces of Lao PDR – Luang Prabang, Houaphan and Xieng Khouang (<http://www.tabi.la/index.php/en>).

At the subnational level, there are RECOFTC's 'Grassroots Capacity Development Program', 'Promoting Rights-Based, Equitable Pro-Poor REDD Strategies' by GAPE, one afforestation and reforestation project in the CDM pipeline and numerous REDD+ feasibility studies and pilots being initiated by various donor programmes (CliPAD, PAREDD, SUFORD, LEAF and FIP), NGOs (WCS and WWF) and the private sector (New Chip Xeng Co., Vangveun Trading Co., Prime Invest Co., Stora Enso, *Oji Lao* Plantation Forest Co. and others). Some of the REDD+ projects plan to register under available voluntary carbon standards. SNV, CliPAD and SUFORD plan to support provincial-level emissions reductions as well. Research activities into various aspects of REDD are ongoing under the I-REDD+ project, other projects at NAFRI and NUOL and through miscellaneous consultant and student projects.

Source: <http://www.thereddesk.org/countries/laos/activities>

The government has recently committed to the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement (FLEGT VPA) process in timber trade with the European Union (EU), providing an opportunity to strengthen forest governance and create space for civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage in policy debate at all levels. The government has also signed the protocol on FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forest in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT). RECOFTC has developed training materials to support the implementation of these guidelines in collaboration with FAO, and is interested in supporting the Government of Lao PDR in implementing the guidelines to secure VF. Support to both of these commitments will be designed and implemented as part of the ongoing RECOFTC-RRI collaboration in Lao PDR.

3.3 Stakeholders

The main stakeholders in VF development are:

- **National government authorities** at MAF and MoNRE and associated departments with the challenge to develop and coordinate a national CF/VF programme and to identify opportunities, constraints, capacity needs and strategies for enhancing their support to CF/VF development processes with training, organizational development and policy research activities;
- **Local government authorities (provincial and district level)** from Provincial and District Departments of Agriculture and Forestry (PAFO/DAFO), the Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment

(PONRE) and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (district level, DONRE) facilitating PLUP and providing follow-up VF extension services. The main challenge for them is to acquire the capacity to perform their expected responsibilities. The challenge for their supervisors is to find ways to provide them with adequate resources and incentives;

- **National assembly members** involved in the development and monitoring of legislation that strengthens villagers' rights in natural resource management, governance and policy;
- **Members of the judiciary** to support development of more responsive arrangements to address infringements of villagers' rights;
- **Villagers** who are long-term residents in the area or more recently resettled, with widely varying cultural and organizational practices, belonging to one of the many different ethnic groups, in remote or more accessible places, old and young, male and female. They are also citizens of the Lao PDR, and 'stakeholders' in various development activities, projects, programmes and policies driven by government and/or non-government organizations. The challenge for them, and even more for the VF developers is to find ways and means to enable these stakeholders to become actors, or 'agents' of development, commensurate with their agency in daily resource use, management and governance. To make this happen, two things are needed: first, the developers need to enhance their understanding of the agency of the villagers (and particularly their agency in relation to resource use and management). The second requisite is that the villagers know their rights and have the means to assert them;
- **Educational institutions** such as the National University of Laos (NUOL) and Souphanouvong University, and Technical and Vocational Education Centers (such as in Bokeo) to provide technical support, action research and training development support to the national VF programme and provide feedback and policy advice;
- **Private sector companies** in mining, hydropower and commercial agriculture and forestry to provide their perspectives and involvement in voluntary agreements with communities and those in the processing and marketing of forest products to contribute to transparency in more equitable marketing arrangements; and
- **CSOs** (donors and international development organizations) actively involved in VF development support.

The challenge is to devise ways and means to enhance capacities as well as improve coordination and strengthen collaboration between stakeholders at local, regional and national levels. The formation of a national CF/VF working group should be explored and initiated as soon as feasible.

3.4 Country VF development priorities

The country priorities for VF-related development (as identified by the representatives from the National Assembly) are the strengthening of communities' forest and land rights, through the revision of the land and forest policies and laws, as discussed earlier.

A framework for implementing VF is developing in Lao PDR. The DoF formally recognizes VFs once they have developed and implemented an approved VF management plan (VFMP). Guidelines on procedures to develop and approve VFMPs have been drafted by the DoF. To date ten VFMPs have been approved. Within classified forest areas an approved VFMP for a duration of at least 15 years would ensure villagers rights to manage and utilize forest resources within what is expected to remain permanent forest estate. The VF&NTFPM Division is now mandated to achieve the ambitious target of formally establishing 1 500 VFs by 2020 in the poorest villages across the nation, as originally proposed in the Forest Sector Strategy (FSS) 2020. With current financing levels only four VFs/province/year are programmed through government budgeting, amounting to only 72 VFs/year. With the 30 VFs programmed to be established through SUFORD-SU this would lead to only 390 VFs by 2020 (26 percent of the government's target, and 13 percent of the World Bank's target).

On 7 March 2014 RECOFTC held a national Forum for People and Forests, at which it was noted that one of the most important issues to focus on is raising the awareness of stakeholders on how to manage village forests while promoting the participation of local people, as well as addressing the challenges of budget constraints, lack of

local capacity, lack of clearly divided responsibilities and the sheer size of forest estate to be managed. Some of the strategies suggested to do this included: seeking out models of forest management and then testing them in the local context; establishing community-based management in all categories of state-managed forests and unclassified forest areas; disseminating lessons learned throughout the country; providing training; and scaling up successful models of community participation (RECOFTC, 2014).

Capacities required for policy and programme development and implementation to address these priorities were identified in the capacity development needs assessment (CDNA) carried out in 2012 (Prixar and Thongphanh, 2013). For the key government agencies in the MAF (particularly the DoF) and MoNRE, the need for development and implementation of a national CF/VF forestry programme was emphasized, the roles of both ministries in supporting different elements of this programme were identified, as well as the needs for capacity development (Box 4).

Box 4. Capacity development needs of key government organizations	
MoNRE	MAF/DoF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of past and current programmes related to village forests;* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a national CF/VF forestry programme, with synthesis of CF models;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village-based forest management, livelihood development and enhancement; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of guidelines for sustainable and effective community-based natural resource management (CBNRM);
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support preparation of guidelines for effective CBNRM including PLUP;** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training needs assessment and training programme for DoF/PAFOs/DAFOs;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulation of village land and forest management plans with villagers; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human resource development plan for staff of DoF/PAFOs/DAFOs;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training, extension and information dissemination systems; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for national CBFM research and workshops; and
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity development in planning, administration and micro finance; and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for development of networks of CF developers in the local language.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training needs assessment and training plans. * 	

Notes: *For these two activities, the need is to be assessed based on work already done for the revision of the PLUP guidelines and evaluation of SUFORD/village forest.
 **Revised PLUP guidelines exist and appear adequate; the need is for training programme and material development to develop capacity for implementation and other organizational support (incentives, resources).

Source: Prixar and Thongphanh (2013).

3.5 Risks

The first and immediate risk for VF development is that the outcomes of the ongoing revisions of land and forest policy and legislation turn out to be less positive for communities' rights than presently anticipated. This risk is, in view of the commitment and statements made by the National Assembly representatives involved in the revisions, considered moderate at present.

A more serious risk may result from the division of administrative responsibilities for forest governance and management, which could lead to coordination challenges, duplication of efforts, delayed decisions and high transaction costs.

The other risk is that restrictions on the operations of CSOs continue to constrain the space for debating and addressing issues and strategies related to villagers' rights over land and forest. RECOFTC is contributing to maintaining and expanding space for debate and action through the formation and support of the national VF working group in which both the government and NGOs are actively participating; linkages with existing working groups such as the Land Issues Working Group (LIWG) are maintained and mobilized to ensure that critical land and resource issues remain on the agenda of the VF working group.



4

RECOFTC's priorities, strategies and partners

4.1 Problem statement

The potential of forests to contribute to national development and poverty reduction is underexploited because of insecure and ambiguous tenure arrangements, insufficient incentives for villagers to invest time and effort in forest management and lack of capacity to address conflicts arising from policy and economic changes. This results in degradation of forest resources and reduced quality of ecosystem services.

4.2 Priorities

The priorities for RECOFTC's country engagement strategy in Lao PDR have been developed in line with the four thematic areas referred to earlier from RECOFTC's overall Strategic Plan 2013-2018. It is envisaged that the Lao PDR Country Program will develop gradually although with the expectation of a fully-fledged country team to manage a broad portfolio of projects by the end of the strategic phase. The project portfolio will be diversified across thematic areas; it will include externally funded projects that are Lao-specific or regional or multicountry projects with components for Lao PDR, services for other partners and projects, and RECOFTC's direct investments of core funds for activities in Lao PDR through its regular annual planning process. Additionally, Lao participants will be invited to participate in various other regional activities conducted by RECOFTC and/or other partners.

This is reflected in the set of priorities identified below. A new and expanded set of priorities will be identified after greater clarity is obtained about the nature of the new land and forestry policies and legislation that are presently under revision.

Immediate priorities include:

- **Securing CBFM:** The priority for RECOFTC is to explore and pilot the processes and arrangements for securing CBFM in Lao PDR. According to RECOFTC's definition, CBFM in Lao PDR includes communally managed forest areas identified as 'village forests', co-management arrangements between local people and state forest management agencies in state-managed forest areas classified as 'production forests', 'protection forests' and 'conservation forests', and smallholder forest plantations. Securing clear tenure rights for local people under each of these arrangements is RECOFTC's objective in Lao PDR. For village forests, securing communal tenure, based on customary tenure arrangements over forest resources where local people determine the management objectives and undertake management for their own direct benefit will be a priority. In order to develop VF at a scale that will make a significant contribution to rural livelihoods across Lao PDR, RECOFTC aims to support the development of a national VF programme through formal government institutions. Such a national VF programme would entail coordinated projects developing and supporting village forests across the nation along with national-level supporting programmes such as training, research, monitoring and evaluation, information management and outreach, policy and legislation development, and national and provincial coordination mechanisms. RECOFTC – as a capacity development organization – will focus its efforts on supporting the development of appropriate capacity of all stakeholders in order to take VF to scale. In addition, collaboration with

other projects and organizations in developing other modalities for securing CF will be sought, such as with SUFORD-SU and the KfW-supported Integrated Conservation of Biodiversity and Forests (ICBF). Also, lessons and experiences from securing titles to private lands (such as through certification of smallholder teak plantations) will be drawn and applied for replication;

- **Enhancing livelihoods and markets:** Focus will continue on efficient harvesting, transport and exploring local and export markets for bamboo biomass and teak, complemented with more general training on value chain analysis and enterprise development for other NTFPs. In the longer term, as village forests become secured, RECOFTC will develop capacity for their sustainable management in order to contribute to livelihoods through both direct consumption and through commercialization for income generation. RECOFTC will also continue to explore arrangements for developing mechanisms for PES. Additionally the work initiated by the ForInfo project on enhancing access to credit through certification of smallholder teak plantations will be further explored and replicated;
- **People, forests and climate change:** Collaboration will continue with regional and national initiatives in climate change impact mitigation and adaptation to strengthen support to CBFM as a policy instrument in the emerging national strategy to address climate change. In this respect, RECOFTC will continue to focus on capacity development of stakeholders to enhance their informed and active engagement in both mitigation and adaptation projects as well as policy processes. At this stage, RECOFTC does not envisage developing REDD+ projects itself. However, the Lao PDR Country Program will explore opportunities for piloting and demonstrating community-based approaches to climate change adaptation through forest-related initiatives;
- **Transforming forest conflicts:** Building on the assessment of arrangements for conflict resolution related to land (Mahaphonh et al., 2007), RECOFTC would like to contribute to strengthening village- and village cluster-level arrangements for conflict mediation related to forestry through training and learning groups. This entails partnerships with organizations already engaging with broader non-sector-specific mediation institutions and processes and developing their understanding of forestry issues;
- Across all thematic areas and functional approaches, social inclusion and gender equity (SIGE) is integrated. This is done in two ways: 1) gender-specific activities such as capacity development, research, strategic communication and piloting approaches specifically related to gender dimensions, women's leadership and rights; and 2) gender mainstreaming into different activities by allocating a session in various training events, gender-disaggregated data collection, integrating SIGE analysis in the communications products and in piloting programmatic interventions. RECOFTC is supporting both SIGE approaches through a number of ongoing regional projects in Lao PDR. In addition, RECOFTC plans to collect case studies on best practices of gender and women's participation in VF management through partnership with the Women's Advancement Unit under the DoF and other local partners.

RECOFTC expects to capitalize on knowledge, experience and relationships in the northwest of the country where existing projects will continue into the near future. The rationale for this is multiple: to enable the continuity of and sustainability of initiatives; to develop synergies between projects and thematic areas; for logistic and cost reduction reasons; and because important potential partners are operating in the region. Nevertheless, this does not rule out RECOFTC activities elsewhere in the country. Indeed RECOFTC will actively seek activities in other parts of the country to support specific strategic objectives such as developing the capacities of stakeholders engaging in climate change mitigation projects, to compare and adapt approaches in different socio-economic, cultural or ecological settings and to take advantage of funding, partnership or learning opportunities as they arise.

The formal elements of the communication approaches (production and sharing of communication materials, Web site, national forums, etc.) are presented in RECOFTC's Strategic Plan (2013-2018). The development of the National Communication Strategy will be pursued after the complete formation of the country team. Experience has shown that informal discussions, participation in meetings and workshops organized by others, and maintaining regular (e-mail as well as personal) contacts with key members of the growing community of VF practitioners in Lao PDR is of crucial importance, particularly for the interactions with senior members of the government (both executive and legislative). Improved management of these informal communications will be explored through a better division of responsibilities amongst members of the growing Lao PDR Country Program and through regular reporting of the results of these communications.

4.3 Partners

The principal partner in the implementation of RECOFTC's strategy is the new Division of Village Forest and NTFP Management, housed within the DoF under MAF, and its local offices at provincial and district levels. Collaborative relationships with other central agencies will be developed, including various relevant departments of MoNRE, such as the departments in charge of land management, land-use planning and natural resource information, and their local offices at provincial and district levels. Other relevant agencies under MAF include the Department of Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives (DAEC), and the National Agricultural and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI). RECOFTC will also work to further partnerships with higher education institutes such as NUOL for collaboration in extension and research in relation to all four thematic areas. There are numerous international NGOs and national non-profit associations active in participatory natural resource management, many of which are interested in contributing, collaborating and participating in an array of activities. Relevant internationally supported projects for exploring or strengthening collaboration include SUFORD-SU, Integrated Conservation of Biodiversity and Forests (ICFB), the Forestry Sector Capacity Development Project, the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management (APFNet)-supported reforestation project, the Biodiversity Conservation Corridors initiative and various other REDD+ and biodiversity conservation projects implemented by various actors. There are also likely to be opportunities for collaboration with the Mekong Partnership for the Environment (MPE) and Regional Land Governance Program as both include forest issues under their broader land governance scope.

4.4 Donors

RECOFTC is grateful for the support from various donors for the existing projects under implementation: the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation's 'Grassroots Capacity Building for REDD+', the United States Agency for International Development's 'GREEN Mekong', the Government of Finland's ForInfo and EEP projects and the Swiss Development Cooperation's ASFCC programme. RECOFTC expects to deliver high quality outputs with positive outcomes that will engender continued interest to support RECOFTC activities in Lao PDR. RECOFTC is exploring interest from donors with their own existing or soon-to-be-implemented projects for collaboration for the implementation of this country strategy: the World Bank (related to SUFORD-SU), KfW (related to ICFB) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (related to both the Forestry Sector Capacity Development and SFM-REDD+ projects). RECOFTC recognizes that the European Union (EU) has various funding mechanisms that RECOFTC could approach to develop proposals for the implementation of different components of the strategy and is exploring the possibility of Japan Social Development Fund support for activities that would complement the SUFORD-SU project. RECOFTC will also continue discussions with other donors active in supporting CBFM development in Lao PDR and the Mekong region.

4.5 Thematic milestones

As discussed earlier, the roadmap for the RECOFTC Lao PDR Country Program is a provisional one, to be gradually adjusted and hopefully expanded over the course of the strategic programme period, based on the outcomes from the revisions of land and forest policy and laws and interest to support RECOFTC action. The summary of the programme roadmap for 2013-2018 in Table 7 provides an overview of the programme outputs for the country strategic and intermediate outcomes.

Table 7. Thematic areas, outcomes and outputs of RECOFTC Strategic Plan (2013-2018)

Thematic areas		Securing community forestry (SCF)		
RECOFTC's strategic outcomes		Institutions and resources for securing CF are more effective.		
Functional approaches	Training and learning networks	Research, analysis and synthesis	Strategic communication	Piloting and demonstrating
Country intermediate outcomes/targets	<p>1) Relevant stakeholders are equipped with capacities to enhance VF and develop effective networks</p> <p>2) VF is embedded in land-use planning and land allocation by trained staff</p>	<p>VF policies are advocated to enhance local people's engagement in community-based forest interventions</p>	<p>Information on VF and titling is applied among relevant parties in efforts to secure and enhance VF</p>	<p>Smallholder titles and VF titling practice are piloted and replicated</p>
Consolidated programme outputs/activities (2013-2018)	<p>1) A training curriculum on an overview of VF</p> <p>2) A tenure guideline under RRI for multistakeholder groups</p> <p>3) National training on strengthening forest tenure systems and governance</p> <p>4) A study tour to Cambodia on land titling for application of lessons learned for the VF pilot programme under RRI collaboration</p> <p>5) ASFCC-support for formation of the VF network</p>	<p>1) A national forum to launch discussion on VF policies and practices</p> <p>2) A subnational (provincial) learning group for government officials formed under the Green Mekong project</p> <p>3) Gender and women's participation in VF management case studies</p> <p>4) 3 policy briefs (sustainable forest management, effective use and transformation in shifting cultivation landscape, other topics)</p> <p>5) ASFCC policy advocacy workshop on VF, land allocation and forest policy; and policy dialogues by the VF working group</p> <p>6) Support to the LIWG</p>	<p>1) An awareness-raising event on sustainable forest management at the village level under JICA-PAREDD</p> <p>2) 2 people and forest forums on SCF</p>	<p>1) A demonstration site on VF registration and titling processes in Luang Namtha and a replicated site for the VF registration mechanism</p>

Thematic areas		Enhancing livelihoods and markets (ELM)		
RECOFTC's strategic outcomes		Institutions are actively enhancing local livelihoods through sustainable CF practices.		
Functional approaches	Training and learning networks	Research, analysis and synthesis	Strategic communication	Piloting and demonstrating
Country intermediate outcomes/targets	1) PAFO/DAFO staff in at least 3 provinces apply knowledge on tree valuation and harvesting for enhancing local communities' livelihoods and markets 2) An active marketing network on forest products is operational	1) Forest livelihoods and commercial benefits are better reflected in VF policy 2) Barriers for biomass export are removed	1) Communication products on trees as collateral are applied for enhancing local livelihoods and access to capital 2) Communication products with VF content attract increased investments in forest products	1) Communities adopt appropriate, financially viable and innovative harvesting methods for teak and bamboo for local use and export 2) A model of trees as collateral for loans is adopted
Consolidated programme outputs/activities (2013-2018)	1) 4 training material items (sustainable forest management, tree/NTFP harvesting, tree valuation, smallholder enterprise development) 2) Training on forest product marketing for VF extension units; PES assessment/conservation functions; enterprise development for teak and bamboo associations 3) A CDNA and strategy for teak and bamboo associations in Bokeo 4) Exchange visits with small-scale bamboo producer groups in Ngao Model Forest in Thailand	1) Research on viable VF models with Forest Connect Asia 2) A feasibility assessment of bamboo biomass export 3) A report on watershed management and PES under SDC 4) Comparative biomass inventories (methods and carbon storage assessment of bamboo) 5) 2 policy briefs on VF in energy policy and viable VF models 6) 2 policy workshops on VF and poverty alleviation; and on VF and energy	1) Provincial database for certified teak plantations by ForInfo/PAFO in Bokeo 2) A story of change on teak plantation and livelihood improvement 3) 2 national forums on CF roles in enhancing livelihoods and markets	1) Development of a teak collateral micro finance model and a harvesting and transportation model 2) A study on harvesting and transportation efficiency 3) 5 demonstration sites (financial access through trees; bamboo and teak models) 4) A documentation of effective ELM practices

Thematic areas		People, forests and climate change (PFCC)		
RECOFTC's strategic outcomes	Enabling conditions for local people's engagement in forested landscapes in the context of climate change are strengthened.			
Functional approaches	Training and learning networks	Research, analysis and synthesis	Strategic communication	Piloting and demonstrating
Country intermediate outcomes/targets	Local community members and professionals' capacities and knowledge on climate change mitigation and adaptation are enhanced	Climate change-mainstreamed VF policies are advocated to enhance local people's engagement in climate change interventions	Different communication tools are used to increase local people's awareness on climate change intervention and its relevance to their lives	1) Fuel-load reduction through bamboo biomass management is piloted as a strategy for climate change mitigation and adaptation 2) Hill irrigation for climate change adaptation is piloted
Consolidated programme outputs/activities (2013-2018)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A refresher ToT programme on REDD+ and social and environmental safeguards at community and district levels (under the Grassroots project) 2) A national-level training programme on gender and REDD+ for Lao Women's Union members (at least 20-25 participants) 3) Grassroots awareness on REDD+ under the Grassroots project (5-8 events for at least 150-200 participants) 4) REDD+ and gender awareness (5 events – at least 100 women participants) 5) Grassroots-level consultation (1-2 events) on REDD+ 6) 3 capacity development workshops on equity in forest management in various provinces (20-30 participants from PAFO, PONRE, Lao Women's Union, Committee for Advancement of Women, local communities; approximately 100 participants in total) 7) Challenge fund for Lao CSO representatives with a viable activity plan to improve equity in REDD+ at community levels 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 2 community-level awareness programmes on climate change under JICA/PAREDD in Houayha and Houyaking 2) Lao-translated version of the regional analysis on grassroots equity 3) 2 publications on REDD+ key policy issues and concerns from the grassroots level 4) A research study on local knowledge in climate change adaptation 5) A policy seminar on climate change and VF 6) A monitoring system on climate change integration in VF policies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A booklet on gender in REDD+ and free, prior, informed consent (FPIC) in Lao PDR 2) Discussion paper on REDD+ safeguards in Lao PDR 3) A glossary handbook of terminology used on REDD+ and climate change in Lao and English 4) A handbook on climate change and REDD+ (under JICA/PAREDD) 5) A FPIC guidebook in Lao 6) 2 case studies on grassroots equity and best practices 7) 2 success case stories on REDD+ 8) Quarterly E-newsletter on grassroots REDD+ and the 2nd GREEN Mekong newsletter translated into Lao 9) Preparation workshop for Lao CSOs to participate at the national forum 10) A national forum on VF and climate change 11) GREEN Mekong Web portal translated into Lao 12) A production video on grassroots equity in forest management and forest-based climate change mitigation 13) Equity and REDD+ Q&A booklet 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 5 demonstration sites for climate change mitigation and adaptation in VF 2) A documentation of effective climate change mitigation and adaptation in VF practices

Thematic areas		Transforming forest conflicts (TFC)		
RECOFTC's strategic outcomes		Institutions to transform conflict are in place and increasingly effective.		
Functional approaches	Training and learning networks	Research, analysis and synthesis	Strategic communication	Piloting and demonstrating
Country intermediate outcomes/targets	Officials at the district level apply conflict transformation knowledge in their local jurisdictions	The conflict transformation mechanism at the local level recognized in VF policy	Different communication products, including the case studies and conflict transformation manual, are used for conflict resolution at the local level	Improved practices of participatory mediation techniques for forest conflict transformation are identified and tested in the northern region
Consolidated programme outputs/activities (2013-2018)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) An institutional mapping of stakeholders and their capacities 2) A translated training curriculum on conflict transformation 3) A ToT for 20 officials and partners 4) 3 training events on conflict transformation and mediation skills (in total 75 participants) 5) A reflection and networking event for alumni 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Policy analyses and research on the status of conflict transformation mainstreamed in VF policy; conflict mediation practices; conflicts in REDD 2) 2 academic articles (conflict mediation analysis; conflicts in REDD) 3) A policy brief on policies and practices for TFC in Lao PDR 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 4 case studies of conflict transformation 2) A grassroots conflict management guideline at the village cluster level 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 4 pilot sites with innovative/ improved conflict transformation practices 2) Documentation of improved forest conflict transformation practices



5

Resources

5.1 Human resources

Since the start of the current strategic programme phase, RECOFTC has expanded staffing to comprise a Country Program Coordinator, a Country Program Officer and an Accounts and Administration Officer. At the national level there is a Project Officer implementing the Grassroots for Capacity Building on REDD+ project, and in Bokeo Province there is a Project Officer working with both the ForInfo and EEP projects along with various short-term interns and consultants.

Additional programme and project staff will be recruited, full-time and part-time, depending on progress in approval of project proposals.

5.2 Fundraising

Funding has been secured from regional projects (ForInfo, EEP, GREEN Mekong, Grassroots Capacity Building, ASFCC) and RECOFTC core funds for most of the activities planned in the first two years of programme implementation, with some extending slightly beyond, or with anticipation of a second phase. Exploring interest from donors to support activities and outputs foreseen for years 3 to 5 for which funding has not been secured yet, will be done through concept notes, discussion and preparation of project proposals in consultation with RECOFTC programme management, implementing partners and interested donors.



6.1 Impact and outcomes

The desired impact of all RECOFTC's CF development activities is that "empowered local people are effectively and equitably engaged in the sustainable management of forested landscapes."

The synthesis from research results and VF project experiences in Lao PDR presented in the preceding chapters suggests that more effective engagement of local people requires:

- More secure rights to use and manage forest resources;
- Greater benefits from forest management;
- Improved forest governance and enhanced resilience and engagement of communities in climate change initiatives; and
- Better arrangements for forest conflict transformation.

RECOFTC recognizes that none of these changes can be made by RECOFTC on its own. Hence the emphasis on strategic partnerships, strengthening of arrangements for coordination, collaborative planning and implementation, and support for the development and implementation of a national VF development programme is accommodated in a shared framework for coordination, planning and implementation of RECOFTC's programme.

Impact and outcomes are therefore the result of activities by many actors and influenced by events that are not under RECOFTC's control. However, there is also a need to assess the effectiveness of the activities and outputs that are controlled by RECOFTC.

This requires the design and implementation of an M&E approach that enables both RECOFTC and its partners to assess the quality and relevance of RECOFTC's activities and outputs and how these have contributed to changes in institutional capacity and performance as well as how these changes have impacted the effectiveness of local people's engagement in sustainable forest management.

6.2 Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E)

For RECOFTC's overall programme, a PM&E system with indicators and means of verification has been developed, which forms the basis for adaptation and development of the M&E system for the Lao PDR Country Program. PM&E aims to engage key project stakeholders more actively in assessing the progress of the programme or project and in particular the achievement of results. Stakeholders participate at various levels of monitoring and evaluating a particular project or programme, not only as sources of information. Through their active engagement they are enabled to share control over the content, the process and the results of the M&E activities.

RECOFTC will have three tiers of M&E – activity monitoring, some targeted impact evaluations every year and overall country programme evaluation at the end of the strategic phase. However, the M&E will be conducted with relevant stakeholders, not only as a tool to collect data, but also as a tool to generate learning together.

Activity monitoring: The country programme will conduct monitoring of activities and outputs regularly. A PM&E system will be developed with partners and community groups to assist them in monitoring their activities and outputs effectively.

Targeted impact evaluations: In order to monitor the progress to achieve strategic and intermediate outcomes, at least one impact evaluation will be planned and conducted every year. The impact evaluations will help RECOFTC to find the trends towards the outcome as well as to address deviation in a timely manner. These evaluations include impacts of RECOFTC work on national and subnational regulatory frameworks, VF as institutions and different groups of local community members – men and women, youth, the landless poor and ethnic minorities. In addition, case studies, success stories and stories of change will be documented and used to improve programme planning and decision-making and leveraging cross-learning at subnational, national and regional levels.

Country programme evaluations: The Country Engagement Strategy sets the basis for overall evaluation of the country programme at the end of the current strategic phase. The evaluation results will be the foundation for the design and development of following strategic phases for the country programmes. Table 8 presents the indicators, means of verification and targets for the goal and strategic outcomes.

Table 8. Indicators for programme goal and strategic outcomes (2013-2018)

Goal: Empowered local people are effectively and equitably engaged in the sustainable management of forested landscapes				
Indicators	Remarks	Means of verification (MoV)	Baseline	Target
Number of VFs in Lao PDR	Define CFs (title, agreement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government statistics Project documents 	Landmark publication ASFCC	10% increase
Area of VFs in Lao PDR	Total area of increased VF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government statistics Project documents 		10% increase
Number of people participating in VF in Lao PDR	Specify ethnicity, gender and poverty, where MoV allow for this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government statistics Project documents 		10% increase
Documented cases that show achievements for Lao PDR	Scales of 'effectively' and 'equitably' are difficult to quantify, best practices and examples will be presented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stories of change (qualitative) Case studies (quantitative) 		1 for each focal country
Strategic outcome 1 – Securing community forestry Institutions and resources for securing CF are more effective				
% of VF members reporting improved support from government and other institutions	Improved support from government and non-government institutions can include both financial resources and advisory services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder/ community survey Country policy analysis Stories of change (qualitative) Case studies (qualitative) 		60%

Strategic outcome 2 – Enhancing livelihoods and markets
Institutions are actively enhancing local livelihoods through sustainable CF practices

Number of communities where RECOFTC has a presence that have an increased share/income from VF activities/value chain	40% of participating community members have an increased assets portfolio of 30% from their involvement in VF activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies • Stakeholder survey • Value chain studies 	40% have increased assets of 30%
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Strategic outcome 3 – People, forests and climate change
Enabling conditions for local people's engagement in forested landscapes in the context of climate change are strengthened

Percentage of communities that include VF-related climate change mitigation and/or adaptation plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both formal and informal management plans • 50% of new and revised plans in RECOFTC targeted communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local forest management plans or VF management plans/ rules/regulations documents 	50% of new and revised plans
Documented cases where people are engaged and benefiting from mitigation and adaptation activities	Through current projects such as GAP-CC, Norad Grassroots, GREEN Mekong etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey reports, case studies • Monitoring and verification reports 	4 cases per year in 4 countries

Strategic outcome 4 – Transforming forest conflicts
Institutions to transform conflict are in place and increasingly effective

Documented conflict cases successfully mediated following the practices developed by the mediators, resulting in a win-win solution for all actors involved in x countries	At least 1 conflict case in 5 countries each is documented per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country analysis • Stakeholder/ community surveys • Stories of change (qualitative) • Case studies (qualitative) 	1 in 5 countries each per year (5 cases per year)
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During year 1, the indicators will be adjusted. The baselines and targets will be identified and defined where necessary. The monitoring of the intermediate outcomes (Table 9) is expected to assist in the necessary adjustments and identification of baselines and targets of the strategic outcomes.

Table 9. Indicators for monitoring of intermediate outcomes (2013-2018)

Intermediate outcome 1 – Enhanced capacities are used by key stakeholders to provide quality support and professional advice to local communities				
<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Comments, rationale</i>	<i>Means of verification (MoV)</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Targets</i>
Extent to which training participants have applied the acquired knowledge and skills	Self-perceived evidence of trainees (disaggregated by male/female; topic; geographical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kirkpatrick level 3 • Knowledge and skills are applied by 80% of participants in RECOFTC-organized capacity development events • Documented case studies/ stories of change 		80%

Level of organizational adoption and adaptation of knowledge and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opinions of managers of attending organizations Opinions of clients/beneficiaries of organizations Applies only to training events where the goal of organizational adoption and adaptation is relevant (see factsheet for specifications) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kirkpatrick level 4 	40%
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Number of active learning networks that RECOFTC engages with by Thematic Areas each year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disaggregated by type of network (definition of 'network' in factsheet) 'Active' includes meetings, policy recommendation development, knowledge product development etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Networking documentation PAT, IAR 	SCF- 5 PFCC- 5 ELM - 1 TFC - 1
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Intermediate outcome 2 – Enabling policies and regulatory instruments are adopted to enhance local peoples' rights, improve forest governance and ensure a fairer share of benefits

Percentage of changed policies, laws and regulations at the subnational and national level that are assessed as enabling improvements for: i) securing the rights for local people to benefit from forest management ii) good forest governance iii) equitable sharing of benefits	80% of changed policies, laws and regulations are assessed overall positively for local people. The factsheet explains the difference between key vs. supplementary policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy/regulatory framework analysis (including involvement of local people and processes in policy-making) Reviewing documents on working group composition or representation; by-laws of CFUGs; assessment of benefit-sharing mechanisms Interviews, questionnaires 	80%
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Intermediate outcome 3 – Communication strategies are used to enhance awareness, attitude and behaviour of target audiences

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of references made to RECOFTC knowledge products No. of times RECOFTC is quoted 	A high number of references to RECOFTC publications indicates that the provided information is highly appreciated by relevant target audiences and further disseminated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal tracking methods like e-mails or online tracking Peer-reviewed (internal and external) information based on research translations Citation analysis 	- 10% increase on first year - 10% increase on first year
Changes in awareness/knowledge of target audiences as a result of RECOFTC communication tools/activities	Percentage of target audience that reports an increase in awareness/ knowledge as a result of RECOFTC communication tools/activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder survey: Interviewees should include representatives of policy-makers at ministries, academics, NGO managers, research institutes 	80% report increased awareness and knowledge

Documented cases of action taken caused by RECOFTC's strategic communications strategies	This may include all RECOFTC communication activities, not only publications	Case studies, stories of change	- 4/TA - 1 country-specific
Intermediate outcome 4 – Improved practices adopted in CF are effectively replicated			
No. of innovative improved practices introduced by RECOFTC that are replicated beyond RECOFTC projects in each focal country	At least two innovative improved practices RECOFTC has introduced are replicated in at least five focal countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Case studies • Stories of change • Direct observation 	2/5 countries
% of CF practices through RECOFTC support that are still active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still active by the end of the programme • 'Established' is defined in the factsheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country programme reports 	95%

The results of the monitoring of the strategic and intermediate outcomes are shared with the other RECOFTC country and regional programme staff in half yearly programme review and planning meetings. Where monitoring results indicate the need, proposals for adjustment of the country programme are presented, discussed and adopted when justified.

6.3. Learning and leveraging at regional and country levels

The RECOFTC programme framework and particularly its linkages with the framework for national CF programmes, enables sharing experiences and drawing lessons amongst other country programmes and with regional programmes, e.g. the CF Champions Network, Global Alliance for Community Forestry, biennial forums for people and forests, regional training courses, regional and multicountry projects and so forth.

This is expected to contribute to more effective leveraging of change for CF/VF forestry development in Lao PDR and to more effective application in other countries of the lessons learned from Lao PDR.



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