



ProCEED

Promotion of Climate-related Environmental Education

ProCEED is a Lao-German development cooperation project implemented by the Lao Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

The project aims at improving knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding environmental and biodiversity protection as well as climate change adaptation in Laos.

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7 Forests mitigate climate change



Timber logging and forest degradation contribute to climate change. Protecting forests therefore means to protect the climate from changing. The forestry sector in Laos can support mitigation by reducing deforestation and by promoting forest conservation and protection. The use of degraded land or other land for afforestation, reforestation and natural regeneration also contributes to climate change mitigation. Incentives have to be found that reward authorities and local populations for keeping forests intact.

8 Rules & regulations for forest protection are in place



Forest management and conservation in Laos are regulated by the 2007 Forestry Law and a number of respective decrees. The Forestry Law differentiates between production, conservation and protection forest. For example, 24 forest areas are classified as National Protected Areas, where logging is restricted. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is in charge of conservation and protection forests while the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is responsible for production forests.

9 Strategy for forest resource management is in place



The 2005 Lao Forestry Strategy envisages increasing forest coverage to 70% of the total country's area by 2020 through the rehabilitation of six million hectares of deteriorated forest and the reforestation of 500,000 hectares. To this effect, the Strategy formulated ambitious aims: decrease shifting cultivation to a minimum, develop long-term management plans for production forests and National Protected Areas, and support the export of processed wood instead of raw materials. While forest restoration reduces the net loss of forests, the preservation and protection of existing forests so far cannot be taken for granted.

10 Forest protection in Laos needs commitment



Laos has ambitious aims for protecting and conserving its forests but, so far, achievements are limited. The lack of human and financial resources is a constraint. Furthermore, priorities in Laos are oriented towards economic development and land concessions, timber extraction, and large-scale mining and hydropower projects are often financed by foreign direct investment. However, for Laos to ensure its economic development in a sustained way potential environmental impacts have to be taken into account and forest and environmental laws have to be implemented more effectively.



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10 FACTS ON FOREST PROTECTION IN LAO PDR

A Lao-German cooperation project

1

Forests are a precious natural resource



Forests are dominated by trees and other woody vegetation but there are animals, plants, soils and rocks as well. All forests and forestland in Laos belongs to the national community, represented by the state. Lao Forestry Law classifies forests in three categories. Production forests are allocated for the sustainable use of forest products such as timber, food and medicines. Conservation and protection forests are meant to protect and conserve animal and plant species, natural habitats and historical, cultural, environmental landmarks. Detailed plans are needed to manage, preserve and use the different forest zones.

2

Forests are valuable ecosystems



Forests are one of Laos' greatest resources. Their biodiversity is unique. Forests offer a diverse habitat for a wide range of wild animals and plants, including rare native species. Tree roots protect the soil from erosion through wind or rain. Forests also retain water in case of heavy rains or storms, protecting human settlements against landslides and water run-off. They also store water over longer periods of time and are thus a buffer regarding water scarcity during prolonged dry periods. Forests regulate the local and global climate and are therefore an important factor in reducing climate change.

3

Forest products must be used sustainably



As 80% of the Lao population lives in rural areas, people's livelihood and income are highly dependent on forests products. Food, wood for fuel and timber and medicinal products are all taken from the forest. Mushrooms, bamboo shoots, small animals or insects etc. provide up to 50% of cash income in rural villages. Villagers can use forest resources for subsistence or income generation but their overuse must be prevented. Only if the current generation uses forest resources sustainably, future generations will be able to receive benefits as well.

4

Laos' economy depends on forest resources



Forests have high economic value. The forest sector, including wood processing industries, has been one of the fastest-growing sectors of the overall Lao economy. It is an important source of materials, jobs, and revenue for both the public and the private sectors. In 2005, about 22,000 jobs were provided by the wood processing industry alone. In 2006, the officially documented value of wood and wood product exports was 97 million USD. The tourism industry has also been developing rapidly in Laos. The natural beauty of Laos and its forests are one of the main interests of tourists visiting the country.

5

Forests in Laos are declining



Laos' forest cover has been reduced from 70% of the total land area in the 1940s to about 40% today. There are many causes for deforestation and forest degradation: unsustainable logging practices, shifting cultivation, charcoal production and the expansion of mining areas, farming, settlements and large-scale hydropower and infrastructure projects. High demand for wood and non-timber forest products from neighbouring countries leads to unsustainable commercial practices and illegal logging. In 2000, the Lao Government lost an estimated 20 million USD because of illegal logging.

6

Healthy forests help people adapt to climate change



Climate change poses a threat to forests and people. Preserving forests is a key requirement for reducing Laos' vulnerability to climate change impacts such as floods, droughts or landslides. To maintain healthy forests logging, hunting and collection of non-timber forest products need to be limited. Adequate watershed management and maintenance of forested mountaintops are meant to prevent landslides and ensure water retention. Intact forests ensure that people still have a place to rely on for food and housing when crops and buildings are destroyed by floods or storms.