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Laos faces immediate climate change risks



The effects of climate change can have serious impacts on the livelihoods and living conditions of people in Laos. Floods and storms can destruct infrastructure by washing away streets, damaging buildings or interrupting electricity supply. Floods and droughts can cause crop failure, a lack of drinking and irrigation water or waterborne diseases and infectious diseases such as malaria or dengue.

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Climate change will affect the long-term development of Lao PDR



Climate change will affect economic growth in Laos as key industrial sectors depend on natural resources: mining, hydropower and wood processing. Farming, animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries rely on land, appropriate temperature and rainfall. Water shortage and groundwater depletion can lead to reduced agricultural production. This may cause food insecurity and an increase of poverty as the livelihood of most Lao people relies on agriculture.

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The adaptation to climate change is crucial for Laos



Adapting to climate change will enable Laos to minimize the negative effects of climate change. Adaptation incorporates the adjustments in human and natural systems in response to expected climate change impacts. Sector policies and action plans related to key sectors such as agriculture, forestry, water resources, energy or industry need to incorporate climate change adaptation measures. This will safeguard the long-term sustainability of the country's development and growth.

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The mitigation of climate change needs to be taken into account



In order to mitigate or limit climate change, global warming by human activities needs to be reduced. Laos' economy is continuously growing, mainly based on exports of natural resources. Mitigation measures need to be taken regarding growth in the mining and timber sectors and in processing industries such as garments or cement. Setting a national framework for limiting global warming and climate change today supports the development of Lao industries tomorrow.



10 FACTS

ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN LAO PDR

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Climate is not weather



Climate and weather are not the same. Weather is local and temporary. A thunderstorm, for example, is a typical weather event. Climate, however, reflects regional and long-term patterns in temperature, rainfall and wind. It is therefore measured as an average over time. For example, average rainfall in 2011 in Laos was approximately 1,800 mm.

2

Average temperatures are rising worldwide



Climate worldwide is changing faster and faster. Over the past 50 years, the average air temperature near the earth has increased between 0.15 – 0.3°C every ten years. This effect is called global warming.

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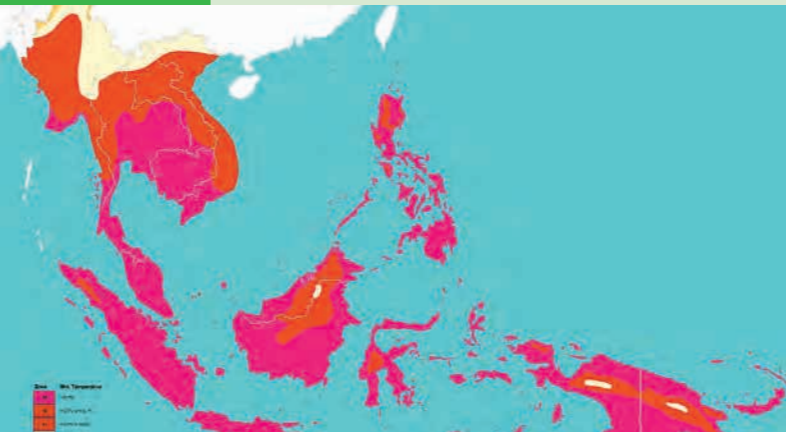
Global warming and climate change are caused by human activities, too



The increase of average temperatures on earth is called global warming. Human activities like the extraction and burning of coal or oil, rice field cultivation and livestock rearing or deforestation all add to global warming. In Laos, it is mainly agricultural activities and deforestation which contribute to global warming.

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Climate change does not stop at countries' borders



Warmer temperatures are affecting the world's climate and its marine, river, land and forest ecosystems. Climate change does not stop at the border of Lao PDR. Being a land-locked country does not protect Laos from the effects of global warming. The regional climate in South East Asia will change as a whole, and this includes Laos.

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Climate in Laos is changing



Climate change is happening globally and affects all countries. Changes in climate can be identified at the national level, too. For Laos, scientists predict that temperatures will continue to rise and that dry seasons will get longer. Rainfall, storms, droughts and floods will become more severe and frequent. Rainfall will become more erratic and weather events such as droughts or floods will become more extreme.

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Climate change affects people's lives



Vulnerability towards climate change is high when a country like Laos depends on natural resources for its development. Some of Laos' major forms of natural resource utilization such as rain-fed rice cultivation and hydro-power generation are very vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change. The northern and north-western parts of Laos are vulnerable to drought. Along the Mekong River, plains in the central and southern provinces are vulnerable to flood.