



# Protection and Sustainable Use of Forest Ecosystems and Biodiversity (ProFEB)

## Protecting forests and biodiversity

### Context

Laos is one of the most biodiverse countries in Southeast Asia with on-going discoveries of new and large species. In the past, the country has lost a significant part of its biodiversity due to deforestation. Until today, forests and its biodiversity are continuously threatened by agricultural activities, plantations, and infrastructure developments such as dams and power plants as well as by illegal wildlife trade.

80% of the population, especially women, directly depend on biodiverse forest ecosystems as well as their services and therefore are directly exposed to the impacts of climate change.

The Lao Government has realised the importance of the forests, thus committed to increase the forest cover to 70% and decided to nominate the protected area Hin Nam No as World Natural Heritage site. Furthermore, the Lao Government negotiates on a Voluntary Partnership Agreement with the European Union to allow legal timber trade and to foster good forest governance.

### Objective

State authorities, civil-society organisations, academic institutions and the private sector are working together to improve the regulatory and institutional framework for the conservation and sustainable use of forest and biodiversity in Laos.



Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) is the solution to reduce illegal logging and for forest monitoring.  
Photo: © GIZ/Bart Verweij

<b>Project name</b>	Protection and Sustainable Use of Forest Ecosystems and Biodiversity (ProFEB)
<b>Commissioned by</b>	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
<b>Project region</b>	Khammouane, Attapeu Province, and Vientiane Capital
<b>Lead executing agency</b>	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)
<b>Duration</b>	May 2021 - June 2024

### Approach

The project promotes inclusive multi-stakeholder processes for the sustainable use of forest resources and the protection of biodiversity in:

- Setting up the legal-institutional framework for the implementation of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance, and Trade-Voluntary Partnership Agreement (FLEGT-VPA) between Laos and the EU.
- Strengthening the institutional and technical capacities for the transboundary World Heritage nomination of Hin Nam No National Park of Laos in partnership with the Vietnamese authorities.
- Supporting the establishment of the Environmental Education and Awareness Laos (EEAL) Alliance and developing the requisite organisational and professional capacities for carrying out effective environmental education and awareness measures of its members.
- Improving the cooperation between the Lao Government, ODA partners and local people for combatting effectively illegal wildlife trade.

## Impact

The Voluntary Partnership Agreement negotiations between the EU and the Lao Government are well advanced. Cooperation structures have been established between the ministries involved, which are used for participatory steering of the processes. Active involvement of the private sector and civil society is facilitated by the Lao authorities. Great progress has been made with respect to the development of the legal prerequisite such as the timber legality definitions.

The protected area Hin Nam No was recently designated as national park. The Nomination of the park as part of a transboundary natural World Heritage site together with Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park in Vietnam is well underway. All required baseline studies have been completed and the technical chapters of the nomination dossier are finalised. The development of a transboundary management framework for the site is in progress and the dialogue between Laos and Vietnam is ongoing.

To bring the management of the Lao side of the future World Heritage site up to an international standard, Laos has initiated the Green Listing-process of Hin Nam No, leveraging on the collaborative management model which has successfully been piloted in Hin Nam No since 2014.

Through the introduction of environmental communication structures and processes at national and local levels, in coordination with cooperation partners, ProFEB has improved media coverage on environmental issues along with the



*Karst cliffs, several hundred meters high, are part of the outstanding universal value of Hin Nam No National Park  
Photo: © Ryan Deboodt*

implementation of the National Strategy on Environmental and Climate Change Education and Awareness (NSECEA).

In an exemplary cooperation arrangement, local civil society, academic and government agencies are jointly implementing environmental education measures.

## Gender and natural resources

The project reaches out to and includes women in all project activities, and collects gender-differentiated data and information where possible.

The collaborative management system of Hin Nam No National Park actively fosters women engagement at all levels and in all aspects of life. This includes women in general but as well women of ethnic minorities in particular, gender-balanced institutions, and creating and safeguarding women's rights to income opportunities and to natural resources.

While the Lao-EU FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) process, especially at decision-making level, is still male-dominated, ProFEB aims to continuously promote gender awareness and responsiveness, and integrates gender dimensions into stakeholder meetings.

Gender-sensitive materials such as posters, games or comic books, that are produced and supported by ProFEB, foster environmental awareness and resonate with the needs of villagers in the target provinces and districts of the project, including particularly vulnerable groups such as illiterate ethnic women.

### About GIZ Laos

GIZ, as part of German Development Cooperation, has been active in Laos since 1993 and is currently supporting numerous projects in 2 priority areas: a) sustainable economic development and b) rural development in poor regions. Moreover, GIZ Laos engages in good governance and participates in regional programmes, e.g., with the Mekong River Commission and ASEAN.

Please visit [www.giz.de/laos](http://www.giz.de/laos) for further information on GIZ's work in Laos and worldwide.

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GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

On behalf of Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)