



# SUPPLY CHAIN CERTIFICATION FOR RATTAN IN LAOS: **SOON A REALITY BUT AT WHAT COST?**



## Rattan in Laos

Rattan cane is a valuable Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) in Laos. The villages of Ban Sopphouan, Ban Phonthong, Ban Phouangpatao, and Ban Donsat rely heavily on this resource to support their livelihoods but, due to illegal logging and agricultural conversion, their rattan-rich forests are disappearing fast.



## FSC Rattan System Development

Since 2007, WWF has collaborated with these villages and Lao forestry authorities to set up a sustainable rattan management system. This process was driven by international buyers who are eager to sell FSC certified rattan furniture. Because there were no existing standards for FSC certification of rattan, the SmartWood Generic NTFP Certification Addendum and Lao Sustainable Forest Management Standards were used as a starting point, and adapted to fit the context.



## FSC Implementation: Forest Management

After initial stakeholder buy-in, land use delineations and participatory forest inventories, organizational structures were created and villagers were trained to set up a management plan and harvest sustainably. In October 2010, the Lao Department of Forestry (DoF) assessed the forest management plans and accepted the four village forests into the FSC DoF group certificate, pending an FSC audit.

## FSC Implementation: Chain of Custody (CoC)

The project engaged with Lao rattan handicraft producers to make the supply chain more transparent and sustainable. One company was eager to source FSC certified rattan and attempt FSC CoC certification. WWF worked with them on capacity building, production planning, and to develop FSC CoC rattan standards that have since been incorporated into the FSC-STD 40-004 draft text. The company became FSC CoC certified in May 2011, marking the first FSC CoC certification for rattan.

## Challenges

- Lack of prior sustainable rattan management system;
- Low village capacity: high poverty rates and low levels of education make certification impossible without capacity building support;
- High costs: FSC audit costs make small village certification impossible without long-term financial support;
- Lack of understanding: certification is new in the region, and participants struggled to understand how it would help their business;
- Low processor capacity: most handicraft groups are small, inexperienced, and do not have the English skills necessary to communicate with overseas buyers;
- Lengthy documentation processes: FSC documents had to be translated and simplified to meet low capacity, slowing down the process and causing frustration.

**WWF is proud to introduce the first FSC-certifiable system of best practices for sustainable rattan management. Now we must work together to improve it and make it sustainable.**



## WWF Greater Mekong Programme

Tel. +856 21 216 080; Fax.+856 21 215 883  
Thibault Ledecq, Rattan Programme Manager  
thibault.ledecq@wwfgreatermekong.org

[www.panda.org/rattan](http://www.panda.org/rattan)