

## An Inclusive Initiative

Central to the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) process' negotiations is the inclusion of all groups directly affected or influenced by it. To that end, village forest communities, private companies, civil society groups and relevant government agencies are key partners in planning and implementation.

In Laos, WWF will partner with Village Focus International, which has worked on the Laos-Vietnam border for more than 10 years to train communities with regard to their rights in governance and natural resource management. WWF will also coordinate with GIZ's 'Support to Laos-EU FLEGT Process' project, which has primarily focused on government engagement, and dissemination of key findings to SMEs, forest-dependant communities and civil society.



Rattan production in eastern Laos. Photo © Sithideth Ngeumboubpha / WWF-LAOS

2 provinces (Khammouan and Attapeu)

48 month project phase

8 target village forest communities

At least 15 SMEs involved in capacity building



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**Why we are here**  
 To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.



European Union



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LAOS

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**FLEGT**  
 Forest Law Enforcement  
 Governance & Trade

**Common Access to the Voluntary  
 Partnership Agreement (VPA)  
 Process in Laos**

*The Laos Action Plan*

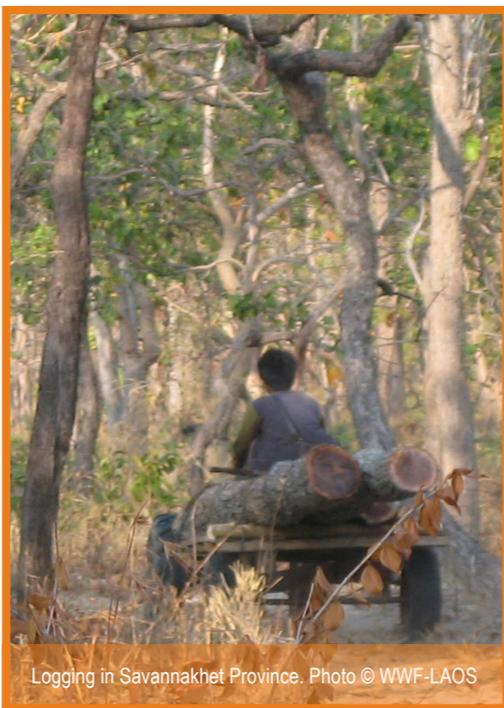


## What is FLEGT?

FLEGT stands for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade. The EU's FLEGT Action Plan was established in 2003 and it aims to reduce illegal logging by strengthening sustainable and legal forest management, promoting public procurement policies, improving governance, and promoting trade in legally produced timber. It also seeks private sector engagement to strengthen their codes of conduct.

## The Issue at Hand

Illegal logging is the greatest threat to forest preservation worldwide, with an estimated 30 million acres of natural forest destroyed globally each year to meet the growing demand for wood and agricultural products. In Laos & Vietnam, Illegal logging undermines ecosystem services that underpin national economies, deprives the world's poorest communities of critical income, and denies many forest-dependent communities access to forest resources on which they rely.



Logging in Savannakhet Province. Photo © WWF-LAOS

## The VPA Process

FLEGT works through **Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs)**, which are legally binding trade agreements between the European Union (EU) and a timber-producing country outside the EU.

**The purpose of a VPA** is to ensure that timber and timber products exported to the EU come from legal sources. The agreements also help timber-exporting countries stop illegal logging by improving regulation and governance of the forest sector.

**In Laos**, WWF has been supporting the Department of Forest Inspection (DoFI) and the Department of Import and Export (DIMEX) to prepare a FLEGT-VPA Negotiations with the E.U.

### Location, Target Groups & Beneficiaries

The project will focus on selected districts of Khammouan and Attapeu provinces, as well as village forest communities, small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs), the forestry sector at large, and civil society organisations (CSOs), to strengthen their capacity in forest management. These target groups will also be the direct beneficiaries of the project.



### Project Donor

The European Union is funding this 4-year Action, officially called 'Common access to the VPA Process in Laos and Vietnam'. The Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA) is also providing match funds to focus on strengthening capacity of CSOs in Laos and Vietnam. Village Focus International (VFI) will be the implementing partner in Laos.

## Objective of the Action

The overall aim is to ensure domestic and trans-boundary timber flows are compliant with E.U timber regulation, contributing to an economically robust, socially responsible, and environmentally sustainable forestry sector.

To ensure this happens, by 2018, the VPAs in Laos should explicitly and adequately account for the needs and interests of CSOs, village forest communities, and forest sector companies, and address trans-boundary issues in timber trade, including impacts on forest services and needs of target groups.

## Major Activities

1. Build capacity and awareness for target groups at local, provincial and national levels to participate in the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) process.
2. Support the processes of Timber Legality definition (TLD) and Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS).
3. Support SMEs to develop Chain of Custody (CoC) systems and organise capacity building activities for those participating SMEs.
4. Strengthen cross-border timber tracking systems for target SMEs.
5. Share lessons learned at national, regional & international levels to inform the VPA process.
6. Support community-based forest communities in target villages and improve law awareness while fostering public participation.

