

Lao-EU FLEGT NEWSLETTER



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Retreat for Timber Legality Definition on Conversion Areas (TLD2)

On August 13-14, a retreat was held at Napakuang Resort in Thalad, Vientiane Province, to discuss the progress made regarding Timber Legality Definition (TLD 2) on Conversion Areas and to address remaining gaps and inconsistencies in the draft, e.g. concerning approval procedures for forestland conversion areas or state investment projects. After additional consultation meetings with the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) on August 23 and a one-day core expert meeting, the advanced draft TLD 2 was submitted to the EU at end of October for further feedback.

The retreat, the fourth of its kind, was attended by representatives from MPI (Department of Planning and Department of Investment Promotion), Center for Development and Environment (CDE), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Department of Forestry: Forest Inventory and Planning Division, and Production Forest Management Division; Department of Forest Inspection: Legislation and Forest Inspection Policy Division), Civil Society Organisations (Lao Biodiversity Association and Wildlife Conservation Association) and the ProFLEGT component of the German Development Cooperation programme Protection and Sustainable Use of Forest Ecosystems and Biodiversity (ProFEB).

The term Conversion Areas refers to the conversion of natural

forest areas to plantation or non-forest use, e.g. in the context of infrastructure development, mining, or hydropower. Underlying use rights may be granted through lease or concession agreements from the state. Land clearing during these conversions is currently one of the main sources of timber in Laos. As a consequence, TLD 2 focuses on ensuring project developers' compliance with environmental and social obligations as well as the approval of conversion and concession agreements in accordance with national laws and regulations. In addition, other stages of supply chain control such as sales and transportation are considered.



Retreat for Timber Legality Definition on Conversion Areas
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Wood Carving Workshop for Attapeu Household Carpentry Businesses

On August 20, 2018, the National Institute of Fine Arts and the Department of Industry and Handicraft (DOIH) in Vientiane launched a 5-day training course on wood carving for 20 household carpentry workshops from Attapeu. The training focused on traditional Lao handicraft and aimed at improving the quality and design of products made by household businesses in order to meet the requirements of demanding domestic and international markets.

The opening ceremony was co-chaired by Mr. Manohack Rasachack, Director General of DOIH, and Dr. Maysing Chanboudy, Director of the National Institute of Fine Arts. Mr. Manohack stressed the importance of maintaining and preserving the country's unique wood carving skills for generations to come and acknowledged the training's contribution in this respect. The training combined both theory and practice to help participants maximize their skills using hand tools and machines and applying special techniques to produce 3D art pieces such as animals, flowers and Buddha heads.



Wood Carving Workshop for Attapeu Household Carpentry Businesses
Photo: © Nguyen Thi Minh Thu

The wood carving workshop was organized as part of the co-funded project “Enhancing the wood processing sector’s capacity to comply with the new requirements for input/output monitoring and the government authority’s capacity to verify legal requirements on supply chain control at the wood processing enterprise level”. It is supported by the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme, the ProFLEGT component of the German Development Cooperation programme Protection and Sustainable Use of Forest Ecosystems and Biodiversity (ProFEB) and the EFI-EU FLEGT Facility, and implemented by DOIH, Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MOIC), together with the Attapeu Provincial Department of Industry and Commerce (POIC).

In addition, a training for household businesses in Attapeu was organized in early September on the topics of production efficiency, furniture design and development and simple input/output monitoring. A series of training courses will follow for all wood processing companies in Attapeu province on the control of input/output, and for POIC/DOIC staff on verification of input/output monitoring as part of the supply chain control. With the latter, the project aims to contribute to the development of the Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS), the most important component of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union (EU).

CSO Training Workshop on Timber Legality Definitions

On 1-2 August 2018, the Lao CSO FLEGT held a workshop on Timber Legality Definition 2 (TLD 2) on Conversion Areas, and Timber Legality Definition 3 (TLD 3) on Plantation in Vientiane. The training was attended by representatives from the network’s core committee as well as experts from ProFLEGT and RECOFTC.

The objective of the FAO/PADETC funded workshop was to build Lao CSO FLEGT’s capacity regarding the FLEGT VPA process. Participants from Lao Biodiversity Association (LBA), Rural Research Development Promoting Knowledge Association (RRDPA), Maeying Huamjai Phattana (Women Participating in Development, MHP), Lao Wildlife Conservation Association (WCA) and Association for Community Training and Development (ACTD) discussed the development of TLD 2 and TLD 3 and reflected on related laws and regulations. The workshop’s results contribute directly to the process of developing and improving Laos’ Timber Legality Definitions and will be reported to the FLEGT Standing Office. The workshop provided a great opportunity to help the Lao CSO to engage more effectively in the process of improving law enforcement.



CSO Training Workshop on Timber Legality Definitions
Photo: © CSO/ Samnane Lasysamay

Lao Associations Discuss their Contribution towards Improving Forest Governance in Lao PDR

On 20-22 August 2018, the core committee of the Lao CSO FLEGT network met in Vientiane to assess the CSO's support to the Lao-EU FLEGT process.

During the workshop, representatives from Lao Biodiversity Association (LBA), Rural Research Development Promoting Knowledge Association (RRDPA), Maeying Huamjai Phattana (Women Participating in Development, MHP), Lao Wildlife Conservation Association (WCA) and Association for Community Training and Development (ACTD), the five associations taking part in the National Steering Committee, the Negotiation Support and Development Committee and the Technical Working Group of the Lao FLEGT process, reflected on their contributions to the FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) negotiations as well as past obstacles and coordinated their planning for the coming six months.

So far, the network, which includes 19 CSOs from across Laos, has organized a number of trainings on Timber Legality Definitions (TLDs) and the country's Forest Law as well as workshops and meetings with other Lao FLEGT stakeholders and international experts. Studies to provide a civil society perspective on the VPA process are ongoing. RRDPA is currently gathering information on the village use forest timber supply chain to facilitate discussions on a supply chain control system as part of the VPA negotiations. WCA is looking into compensation mechanisms in the context of conversion projects and how the situation of those affected by aforementioned projects can be improved. Both studies are expected to be finalized by the end of 2018; additional research on transparency is planned for mid-2019.

The project "Promoting Forest People's rights through the EU Lao VPA-FLEGT" is coordinated by LBA, which holds the secretariat of the FLEGT CSO network and is funded by the EU. It supports Lao CSOs in the FLEGT network to take advantage of the rights and responsibilities they have as stakeholders in the Lao-EU FLEGT process with regard to advocating for forest peoples' rights. The project was launched in February 2018 and has a term of three years.



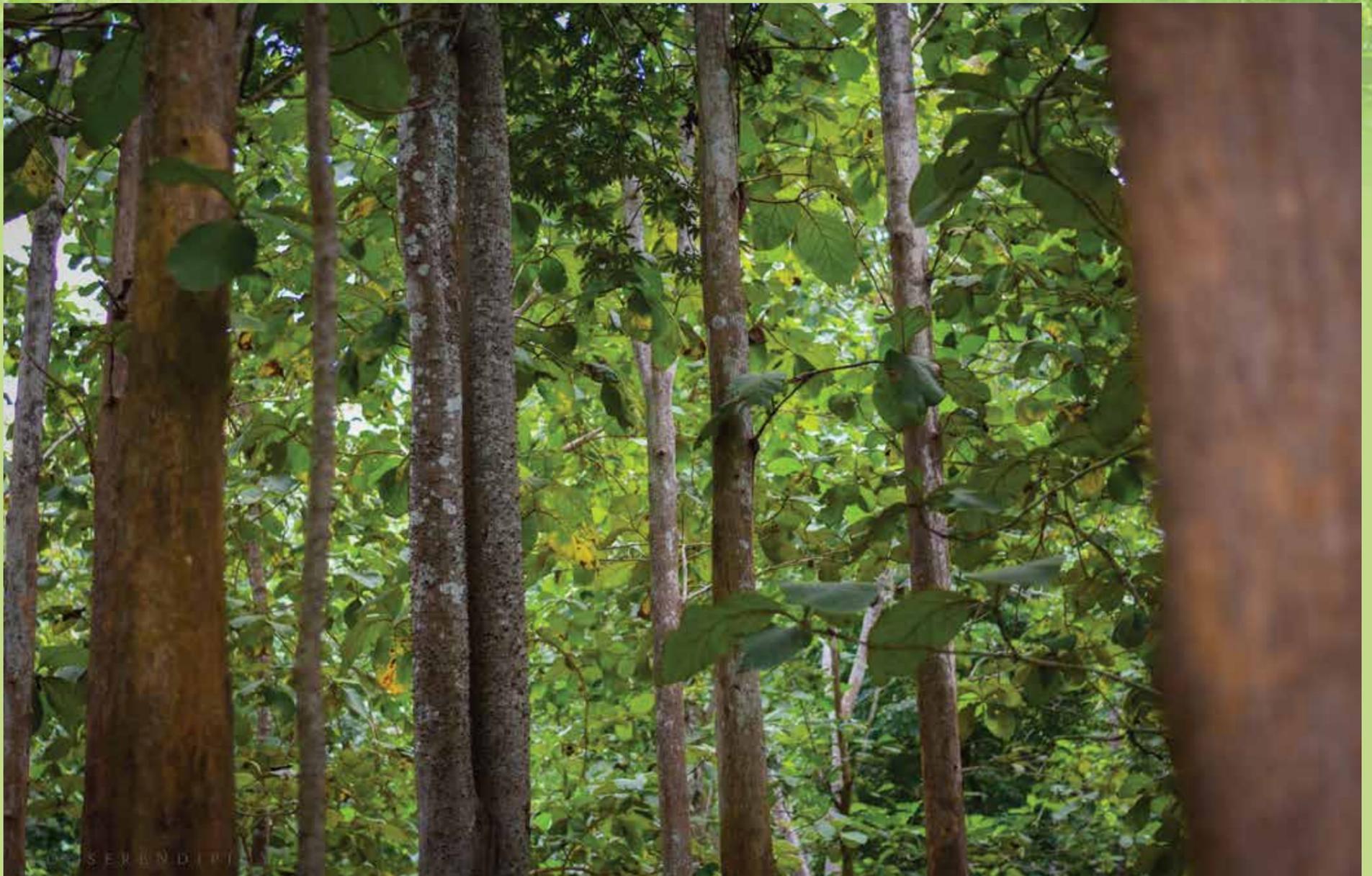
Lao Associations Discuss their Contribution towards Improving Forest Governance
Photo: © CSO/ Samnane Lasysamay

EU and Thailand hold Second Negotiation on Legal Timber Trade Agreement

Thailand and the European Union (EU) have concluded their second round of negotiations on a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) to improve forest governance and promote trade in verified legal timber products. The FLEGT process in Thailand is associated with a number of legal reforms, including the promotion of community forestry and timber-harvesting by farmers on private lands.

The second Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) VPA negotiations took place in Bangkok on 19 July 2018. Both parties focused on the legal text of the agreement, the scope of products it will cover, and ongoing development of the Thai definition of the principles, criteria and verifiers to determine the compliance with legal requirements for timber. Negotiators discussed Thailand's timber supply chain controls and a system for ensuring that timber imported to Thailand has been harvested legally in the country of harvest. Thailand and the EU also agreed on a roadmap of joint activities and technical meetings in preparation for the third round of negotiations, currently planned for June-July 2019.

The Thai-EU VPA process was formally launched in September 2013. Since then, negotiators from both sides have conducted four videoconferences, two face-to-face negotiations and four joint expert meetings to discuss technical issues.



*Teak plantation in Luang Prabang.
Photo: © GIZ/ Phetsaphone Thanasack*

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