

*Forest landscape restoration (FLR) is an approach to protect existing forests and improve economic and social benefits to stakeholders through enhancing the functionality of landscapes.*

## Why FLR

The natural forest resources of Laos are essential for socio-economic development. Although rural populations depend on income from forest resources, forest cover has reduced dramatically in the last few decades from approximately 70% of the country's total area in 1940 to 40% in 2010.

To mitigate forest loss, Laos committed to increase forest cover to 70% by 2020, which is aligned with its National Green Growth Strategy.

The objectives of FLR in Laos are:

- enhance natural forest cover and quality;
- incorporate social and ecological factors to ensure long-term benefits to society; and
- maintain the integrity of forest ecological functions.

The sub-national, multi-stakeholder driven restoration assessment of the Sangthong District Vientiane Province was conducted by the Faculty of Forestry of the National University of Laos, with the financial and technical support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN.

## How to restore the landscape

Specific restoration intervention strategies in Sangthong depend mostly on forest condition, topography, importance of ecosystem functions and social value of the landscape.

## QUICK FACTS

- **80% of the population of Laos is dependent on natural forest resources and their associated ecosystem services.**
- **Sangthong has 52,985 ha of total potential area for restoration.**
- **25,603 ha are classified as priority areas to be restored in Sangthong.**
- **US\$ 19.7 million is the total direct cost for FLR in Sangthong.**
- **Implementation of FLR interventions such as agroforestry in Sangthong can generate economic benefits of US\$ 339 million over 20 years.**

A pilot project was carried out in Nahoipang and Hainua villages to demonstrate how FLR can promote human well-being by improving forest cover and its ecosystem services.

Five sites were identified for different interventions:

**Erosion control:** Degraded area with a steep slope that is prone to erosion. *Intervention:* plant local, viable tree species.

**Natural regeneration:** Fallow areas or secondary forest around agricultural land. *Intervention:* reduce weed competition to accelerate the growth of existing seedlings and sapling of native trees to develop into rich forests with a wide variety of species.

### Woodlot on village and private land:

Fallow areas and pasture lands. *Intervention:* establish woodlots of commercially-valuable species provide shade for livestock and supply timber and/or fruits.

**Agroforestry:** Pasture, paddy edges, and communal land. *Intervention:* planting trees that can provide fruits, fuel wood and/or other useful products with intercropping of annual crops.

**Tree planting in residential areas and public spaces:** Areas that villagers want to beautify or improve with wind breaks, shade, and environmental protection. *Intervention:* tree planting, following village structure restrictions.

## Benefits & opportunities

Results from the economic analysis show that most interventions have a high likelihood of generating profit as the estimated revenue exceeds the direct input costs. Only tree planting in residential and public spaces showed unprofitable estimates; nevertheless, this was identified as the villagers' top priority, demonstrating that trees provide a range of social values that are not always considered in economic analyses.

Aligned with government policy for green and sustainable development, scaling up FLR at the national level would contribute to implementation of government forest policies. FLR can also strengthen efforts to increase forest cover and reduce the rate of poverty in the country.

The involvement and experience of Laos in REDD+, when applied and linked to FLR, can be mutually beneficial. FLR can also contribute to increasing carbon stocks outside of purely forested landscapes.

Laos' system of protected areas can act as nuclei from which to expand FLR activities.

## Next steps

To scale up FLR as a countrywide approach, the following next steps are recommended:

- Encourage the government of Laos to adopt and scale up FLR as a nature-based solution to achieving the country's environmental and socio-economic priorities and objectives.
- Urge the government to ensure that private sector companies investing in forest lands and natural resources comply with laws directed towards sustainable management of natural resources and adopt nature-based solutions such as FLR.
- Encourage the government to direct existing sustainable financing opportunities into FLR (e.g. hydropower environmental royalties).
- Engage civil society organisations to facilitate the expansion of stakeholder involvement in FLR initiatives.
- Mainstream FLR into existing institutions and implementation strategies, including in committees at village, district and provincial levels, and economic investment plans.
- Promote the dissemination and understanding of FLR across different audiences and in the local language.
- Implement natural regeneration where possible, as it is the lowest cost restoration intervention.
- Invest in the establishment and development of nurseries at district or larger scales to improve seedling availability and reduce costs.

**For further information:** [Application of Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology in Asia](#)

**Resources:**  
[InfoFLR.org](http://InfoFLR.org)  
[iucn.org/forests](http://iucn.org/forests)



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