

Strengthening ASEAN Cooperation on Trade in Forest Products (ACTFor)

Context

The ASEAN region holds global significance for the conservation of forests with high biodiversity. However, it also serves as an international transshipment hub for illegal wildlife products from ASEAN Member State (AMS) and Africa. Illegal logging contributes to forest degradation and destruction, while illegal wildlife trade threatens the populations of protected species. Recognizing the urgency of improving the control of trade in forestry products, ASEAN has developed corresponding guidelines and action plans. However, these measures are inadequately implemented and sometimes fail to align with new international market standards. Efforts by individual AMSs to enhance forest governance and legality in forest trade seldom consider cross-border strategies. Additionally, the potential use of digital tools for data exchange and trade control remains underutilized. The authorities responsible for border controls lack operational and digital capacities necessary to enhance transparency and effectively combat the illegal trade of forest productions. This project aims to strengthen cooperation among AMS for transparent forest trade, facilitate knowledge sharing of AMS initiatives, and enhance the operational and digital capacities



Project Title	Strengthening ASEAN Cooperation on Trade in Forest Products (ACTFor)
Commissioned by	ASEAN
Project regions	Khammouan and Savannakhet Province, Lao PDR
Leading executing agency	Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
Duration	September 2024–August 2027

of border control institutions. By doing so, it will contribute to biodiversity conservation, forest preservation, and the digitalization of trade control for improved transparency in cross-border forestry production trade.

Objective

Cooperation between member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for transparent trade of forest products in Southeast Asia is strengthened.

Approach

In collaboration with the involved stakeholders in the ASEAN region, the project aims to:

- Strengthen cooperation among ASEAN Member States (AMS) to promote transparent trade of forest products and ensure compliance with international Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards.
- Enhance the exchange of knowledge among AMS regarding lessons learned from initiatives aimed at improving transparency, law enforcement, and inclusive trade in forest products within ASEAN.
- Improve the operational digital capacities of the authorities responsible for border control in Laos, enabling them to work more effectively with Thailand and Vietnam in monitoring and regulating the trade of forest products.



Landscape of Hin Nam No National Protected Area

Impact

This project aims to strengthen cooperation among ASEAN Member States (AMS) on transparent forest trade, facilitate knowledge sharing of AMS initiatives, and enhance the operational and digital capacities of border control institutions.

In the pilot region, in Laos, the project will implement measures to improve border controls in the provinces of Khammouane and Savannakhet. In these areas, Lao authorities are responsible for the control of transnationally traded forest products will collaborate with corresponding authorities at the ASEAN level. Where possible, digital solutions will be promoted to improve the quality of and access to key data on traded forest products, facilitating the detection of illegal goods. At the individual level, the capacities of decision-makers, experts and other knowledge holders from the AWG and AMS on transparent and inclusive trade in forest products will be strengthened.

To this end, a peer-to-peer learning network will be created and partners will be supported in the systematization and dissemination of relevant knowledge. This includes both virtual formats and face-to-face meetings.



Landscape of Hin Nam No National Protected Area

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Gender Mainstreaming

The project places a strong emphasis on gender equality, ensuring it is institutionalized through the involvement of gender and inclusive trade in the ASEAN Working Groups (AWGs)

It aims to strengthen the participation of women in exchanging and decision-making processes, while also focusing on the targeted development of competencies for female employees to promote their active participation.



Women, in particular, are often dependent on the availability of forest resource (e.g., firewood, drinking and washing water, plant fiber, food and medicinal plants) to provide for their families.

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Published by **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH**

Registered offices Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

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As of **March 2025**
Designed by **PR Unit, GIZ Office, Vientiane Capital**

In cooperation with



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