

# Climate change adaptation project launched in Laos to sustain wetlands

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Lao People's Democratic Republic



Xe Champhone Wetlands

A project valued at \$4.7 million was launched on the 14th September in Vientiane, aiming to help communities in and around the **Xe Champhone** and **Beung Khat Ngong** Ramsar Sites to address the impacts of climate change.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's Department of Environmental Quality Promotion and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations will jointly implement the project, with funding from the **Global Environment Facility** (GEF) from this year until 2020. The department's Acting Director General, Lonkham Ardsanavong, announced the launch of the project, which he said had received funding authorisation from GEF.

**Laos** ratified the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) in September 2010 with the Xe Champhon wetlands in Savannakhet Province's Champhon District and the Beung Khat Ngong wetlands in Champassak Province's Pathoumphon District recognised as Ramsar sites.

Following the ratification, the National Leading Committee on Ramsar Wetland Management held a meeting in 2011 during which it approved the slogan 'Rich Wetland, Good Ecology Service and Good Life' to develop the two unique and precious sites into models of wetland management.



The Xe Champhon Ramsar site currently covers 12,400 hectares and covers some 14 villages, with a total population of about 7,000 people. It is proposed to be expanded to cover the entire 45,000 hectares of the targeted area containing about 40 villages and 20,000 people.

The boundaries of the Beung Khat Ngong target area coincide with those of the Ramsar site, covering 2,360 hectares, with 13 villages and 11,500 people.

Some 20 'first tier' villages, with around 21,000 inhabitants, are largely dependent on the wetlands and are more directly involved in their management, and a further 40 'second tier' villages, with 42,000 inhabitants, are less directly involved in the management but also depend on the goods and services that they provide.

The people who live in the two wetland areas are highly exposed and vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, associated with expected increase in temperature, evapotranspiration, and the incidence and intensity of storms.

The new project will use an *ecosystem-based adaptation approach*, whereby the ability of the wetlands to buffer the local people's livelihood against climate change impacts will be safeguarded through a combination of improved planning and governance conditions as well as direct investments in climate change adaptation measures.

The project will also boost the people's livelihood and support sustainable efforts resilient to climate change, with a strong focus on creating lasting capacities among national stakeholders at all levels to sustain and replicate these benefits.

Speaking at the inception workshop on the project, FAO Representative Stephen Rudgard said the project was modest while also significant, saying it addressed a critical aspect of natural resources and environmental issues in Laos.

*Source Vientiane Times (Laos)*

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