

# LAO PDR

BUILDING RESILIENCE OF URBAN POPULATIONS WITH ECOSYSTEM-BASED SOLUTIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDING MEASURES

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## KEY MESSAGE

The Environment and Social Action plan of the project aims to enhance positive impact through increasing the provision of the ecosystem services, providing support to biodiversity and conservation values, improving management of natural resources, gender outcomes and community mobilization and empowerment.

The project is classified as “low risk” category as per the UNEP’s ESESF assessment. However, the Environment and Social Action Plan has been developed as per the eight Performance Standards of GCF and IFC for Environmental and Social Sustainability to identify, avoid, minimize and mitigate any potential environmental and social risks during project implementation.

## INTRODUCTION

Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) refer to policies, measures, standards and management procedures to identify, avoid, minimize and mitigate any potential adverse environmental and social impacts that may arise in the implementation of development projects and to maximize environmental and social benefits. This system of processes and procedures is an overarching framework for achieving improvement in environmental and social outcomes while addressing any unintended adverse impacts of all the GCF/UNEP financed activities.

In line with GCF/UNEP policies and procedures, environmental and social considerations are incorporated into its decision-making and operations and a Environmental and Social Action Plan (ESAP) has been

prepared as an annex to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) funded project “Building resilience of urban populations with ecosystem-based solutions in Lao PDR”. The project aims to shift the paradigm of urban flood management in Laos from a limited, hard infrastructure approach towards an integrated approach that enhances climate resilience, which will be achieved primarily by mainstreaming integrated flood management strategies into planning frameworks and implementing urban ecosystem-based adaptation to decrease climate-induced flooding. The project has been implemented in Vientiane Capital, Borikhamxay, Savannakhet and Champasack Provinces that are identified as the most vulnerable to climate change through climate risk modelling.



# INTRODUCTION

The project is classified under the UNEP’s Environmental, Social, and Economic Sustainability Framework (ESESF) as “low risk” with minimal to negligible potential for negative impacts and category C of GCF Environmental and Social Management System. The project activities are expected to result in positive environmental and social impacts including increased provision of ecosystem services, support to biodiversity and conservation values, improved management of natural resources and solid waste, positive gender outcomes, and community mobilization and empowerment.

In addition to GCF/UNEP requirements on ESS, all projects in Lao PDR must adhere to the Environmental Protection Law (EPL, 2012), which specifies necessary principles, rules and measures for managing, monitoring, restoring and protecting the environment in order to protect the public, natural resources and biodiversity. In addition, the Environmental Impact Assessment Decree (2010) has been enacted that identifies requirements for Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). EIAs contain both Environmental Management and Monitoring Plans (EMMPs) and Social Management and Monitoring Plans (SMMPs). Being a low-risk rated project, neither instrument is required for the activities proposed in the project.

# ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARD REQUIREMENTS

The project adheres to compliance with the following eight GCF/International Finance Corporation (IFC) Performance Standards of for Environmental and Social Sustainability, which broadly overlap with UNEP Safeguard standards and are guided by the human rights and precautionary principles. These standards will be applied as part of the ESAP to minimize the potential adverse impacts of the project throughout its implementation.

Safeguard Standards	Requirements to be fulfilled by the project
Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts of Project Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prescreening project for risk identification based on up to date information.</li> <li>• Prior community information about project and proposed interventions.</li> <li>• Development of Stakeholder Consultation Report that outlines safeguard assumptions, environment and social actions and management systems.</li> </ul>
Labour and Working Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote fair treatment, non-discrimination and equal opportunities in compliance with national labor and employment laws.</li> <li>• Provide occupational health and safety to workers that is built in terms of references for procurement.</li> <li>• Project does not employ vulnerable workers and avoids risky activities.</li> </ul>
Resources efficiency, pollution prevention and management of chemicals and wastes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training of workers on environment protection measures and construction practices to follow OHSAS 18001 guidelines for operational health and safety.</li> <li>• Adoption of resource efficiency standards.</li> </ul>
Community Health, Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid work with hazardous materials, building critical infrastructure and services that poses health and safety risks.</li> <li>• Project to operate with existing warning systems and local government during emergency situations.</li> </ul>
Land Acquisition and Involuntary Resettlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project activity does not involve resettlement and dispossession, land acquisition or economic displacement of persons and communities.</li> <li>• Community participation and incorporation of local management practices while developing project management plans.</li> </ul>





Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interventions are fully aligned with the conservation and sustainable management of urban stream and wetland ecosystems.</li> <li>• Wetland and biodiversity expertise to be available to the Project Management Unit in implementing project's activities.</li> <li>• Monitoring and reporting of biodiversity safeguards by the Safeguards Officer.</li> </ul>
Indigenous People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project activities ensure possible participation and consultation with the indigenous communities.</li> </ul>
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project activities shouldn't cause adverse impacts on cultural heritages.</li> </ul>
Gender Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive and gender positive principles in project design, procurement process and decision-making.</li> <li>• Gender Action Plan and Gender Monitoring and Evaluation Officer specific to the project.</li> </ul>
Economic Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support livelihood and employment to ecosystem dependent communities</li> <li>• Should not promote short term gains at the expense of long-term impacts.</li> </ul>

## POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND THE RECOMMENDED SAFEGUARD MEASURES

Based on the requirements of the safeguard standards listed above, the project has identified the potential environmental and social risks and recommended the necessary measures for the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of the risks as summarized in the table below.

Summary of the potential risks	Avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures
Invasive alien plant species that have detrimental effects on ecosystem services and biodiversity may be introduced through plantings during wetland/stream restoration activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project will use indigenous plant species only for the restoration of urban wetlands and streams.</li> <li>• Locally available indigenous plant species will be surveyed and identified as part of the wetland assessment and during the planning of urban stream restoration in consultation with Laotian botanists.</li> </ul>
Potential negative impacts on habitats of threatened species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important habitat areas for the threatened species in the wetland will be identified and mapped during the wetland assessment. These areas will be demarcated and avoided during restoration activities.</li> <li>• Where indigenous planting or removal of invasive alien plant is required, it will be done using methods that cause the lowest possible impacts and disturbance, outside of the breeding seasons of the threatened species.</li> <li>• Contractors and workers employed in restoration and invasive plant clearing will be trained to identify the threatened species and their typical habitats.</li> <li>• Invasive vegetation such as <i>Mimosa pigra</i> will also be removed gradually during dry season when water levels are low and fish are not breeding or migrating over time.</li> <li>• Activities will be carried out in small blocks in order to avoid sudden changes to habitat.</li> </ul>
Erosion and sedimentation as a result of invasive alien plant clearing, planting of indigenous plant species or removal of small human-made barriers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erosion and sedimentation risks will be avoided and minimised by using low impact clearing methods.</li> <li>• Activities will be carried out in small blocks at a time in order to avoid soil erosion and sedimentation.</li> <li>• Clearing will be done during the dry season and no tractors or machinery will be used. Clearing will be followed by planting of indigenous plants to limit erosion.</li> <li>• Local hydrological impacts will be carefully assessed and considered while removing small manmade water flow barriers to ensure the desired positive outcome of restoring natural water flow.</li> </ul>

<p>Herbicide contamination of wetlands or streams during invasive alien plant clearing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No herbicides will be used during the clearing of invasive alien vegetation.</li> <li>• Both Mimosa pigra and water hyacinth are commonly controlled manually in Laos without the use of herbicides.</li> <li>• Local and international best practices for clearing these species will be followed.</li> </ul>
<p>Potential conflicts arise on land use and management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory method will be applied for the development of management plans for the Nong Peung wetland and the target urban streams by fully engaging and consulting with community management groups and stakeholders.</li> <li>• A robust complaint register and grievance redress mechanism will be established at all levels.</li> </ul>
<p>Potential to limit traditional livelihoods of subsistence or smallholder farmers, including women, that encroach on the Nong Peung wetland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community members have acknowledged that encroachment of rice paddies into the wetland is a threat and they would like to manage it better.</li> <li>• The development of farming, both the installation of wetland regulators for irrigation and expansion of farmland, poses a threat to traditional fishing.</li> <li>• The area is considered as one of the most successful for fish and rice production in the province and is not characterized by subsistence rice production of the most vulnerable people.</li> <li>• The management plan will consider the competing values and will propose balanced approach through a participatory and community-led way.</li> </ul>
<p>Potential not to equitably include women in decision making and consultation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community engagement plan has been drafted to accommodate women and men in decision making process.</li> <li>• The Gender Action Plan has specific activities and targets on including women in decision making groups.</li> </ul>
<p>Safety issues during construction and restoration work, particularly during heavy rainfall events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works during heavy rainfall and other disaster events will be avoided.</li> <li>• Safety procedures will be built into terms of references of contractors.</li> <li>• The Environmental and Social Safeguard Officer will conduct spot checks to monitor compliance.</li> </ul>
<p>Community members are not aware of residual risks from flooding, after urban EbA measures are implemented and are not aware of the complementary roles of urban EbA and structural measures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community awareness campaigns and stakeholder consultations in the development of management plan will be used as opportunities to promote awareness on the benefits and limitations of urban EbA vis-à-vis flood risks, structural measures, and residual risks.</li> </ul>

## ESAP MONITORING PLAN

The compliance of interventions with the ESAP will be continually monitored throughout the project lifespan. A Physical Interventions Environmental and Social Management and Monitoring Plan will be developed which will cover all the physical interventions in the project including parameters identified in the ESAP. The monitoring plan will include the measurable indicators and parameters, which will help the project management to monitor and assess the effectiveness of environmental and social safeguards risk management activities. The project will strengthen community engagement and ownership and will establish sub-committees for participatory monitoring such as Community Wetland Management Committee, Community Stream and Drainage Management Committee, etc. These community members will be trained on regular monitoring including how to read and report river gauges, reporting incidents and damages, etc.

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