



PROJECT AT A GLANCE

Title

Enhancing Systematic Land
Registration (ESLR)

Budget

(07/2021-06/2026)
SDC: CHF 7'125'000.
World Bank: CHF 26'315'000

Partners

World Bank
Department of Land (DoL),
Ministry of Natural Resources
and Environment (MoNRE)

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Phiangdee village's first residential land boundary certificate issued by the survey team - Kham District, Xiengkhoang Province. © SDC/Toula HOOK

Switzerland supports Lao PDR's initiative to accelerate systematic land registration through the World Bank's Trust Fund to enhance the land tenure security of the country's population, particularly vulnerable groups such as women and ethnic minorities.

PROJECT LOCATIONS

Nationwide



BACKGROUND

Most people in Lao PDR live in rural areas and rely on natural resources, especially land and forests, for their livelihoods. Through generations, they inherit and utilize land for residential, agriculture, and forest purposes. However, in 2010, the "Turning Land into Capital" policy led to the country's economic growth mainly driven by natural resource exploitation, but also resulted in land allocation to large-scale concessions and development projects such as mining, hydropower, rubber tree, and banana plantations.

These projects were seen as the primary means to achieve rapid economic growth, but they have adversely affected the rural poor who are particularly vulnerable to losing access to land. To address this problem, the Government of Lao PDR (GoL) has recently adopted a strategy to improve land tenure security, promote transparent and accountable system of governance in rural areas, protect the country's natural capital, and provide greater socio-economic opportunities for its citizens.

In 2020, the GoL passed new Land and Forestry Laws that acknowledge and protect customary land use rights, pending the issuance of official land titles. Systematic land registration and titling has emerged as key mechanisms to verify, formalise individual land claims.

It's a national priority to issue 1.6 million new titles by 2025, as reflected in "Vision 2030" and the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) 2021-25.

OVERALL GOAL

The ESLR aims to support the Government of Lao PDR in improving tenure security and land administration services in selected areas. This will be achieved by supporting and enhancing the government's systematic land registration process, advancing the issuance of property titles to beneficiary landholders and supporting the modernization of the land administration system and related services for citizens.

OBJECTIVES

ESLR focuses on three primary outcomes:

Outcome 1: Landholders, particularly women, have improved recognition and protection of their rights to land.

Outcome 2: The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's Land department offices function efficiently with the first land registration completed, the number of subsequent land transactions increases and public satisfaction with the services is good.

Outcome 3: Relevant Government authorities improve land administration and management policies and practices.

STRATEGY

The ESLR project aligns with Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-2024 and the Swiss Cooperation Programme in the Mekong Region 2022-2025, which aims at enhancing people's resilience to climate change and disaster and providing them with more secure access to and control over natural resources. It contributes directly to Sustainable Development Goal 1, "End Poverty", and Target 1.4.2 to enhance legally recognised land tenure rights.

The project focuses on:

1) **Systematic registration of land use rights** Support the GoL, represented by the Department of Land (DoL) of MONRE, in enhancing and scaling-up systematic land registration to issue 1,000,000 land titles/certificates outside state forestlands in all 18 provinces of Lao PDR. This will be done through (i) scaling-up systematic land registration; and (ii) training and capacity building.

2) **Modernisation of land administration and service delivery** Support the GoL in improving the delivery of land administration services (surveying, registration, transactions, etc.). This will be done through (i) enhanced service delivery; (ii) scanning, digitising, and archiving of existing land records; and (iii) Lao LandReg development and rollout.

3) **Implementation, Policy and Legal Framework Development** Support further development of inclusive and comprehensive land policies, regulatory framework, and implementation procedures.

The "Public Information and Awareness Services for Vulnerable Communities" (PIASVC) project, implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, complements the ESLR project by providing awareness raising and legal counselling on natural resources, including land use rights to the most vulnerable communities.

APPROACH

The ESLR project builds on the work of two previous World Bank-funded land titling projects from 1996 to 2009. It invests in modernizing land administration with digitized procedures to record and maintain land information, enhancing land rights for women and ethnic minorities with targeted awareness campaigns and processes, and systematically collecting and recording gender-disaggregated data on land rights.

EXPECTATIONS

At the end of the project, 1 million land titles will be issued, benefiting about two million landholders, with 42.50% in the conjugal titles or the name of women. Residents with registered land rights will benefit from the improved land administration services. About 780 officials (permanent and temporary) nationwide will be competent in operating the systematic land registration process. The Ministry of Finance and MONRE will gain increased revenues from land taxes and fees. The enhanced land data information will improve the GoL's ability to provide services.

KEY RESULTS FROM PREVIOUS PHASES

The previous WB-funded projects provided land titles to 395,279 landholders, with 67% of the titles issued jointly or in the name of women. Formal land transactions doubled, and the number of mortgage-backed business loans increased. 250 students (93 women) received higher diplomas in land surveying and management. Land-related taxes and fees increased by 86%.



The Survey Team measuring and mapping boundary lines using Real-Time Kinematic satellites. © SDC/Toula HOOK