



LAOS

STRATEGIC PLAN

2021-2025, WWF-LAOS

THE INTEGRATED STRATEGIES FOR PEOPLE & NATURE

SUMMARY

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FOREWORD

As the current strategic planning period comes to its end, it is time to analyze the lessons learned from the last five years. It is time to gather the whole family and collaboratively set new goals to guide our future paths. Goals that build on what has already been done, give voice to our ambitions, and turn them into a new vision for the upcoming phase.

This is exactly what this document embodies, the efforts of a team that has learned from each other and worked together to set the course for the next five years. This process took more than what any of us would have expected or could have achieved alone. And along the road, our family has changed and grown. Some of our dear colleagues have left to join other organizations, seek new career, and resume their studies, with the hope being that they will rejoin our panda family equipped with new ideas and skills. At the same time many new faces, including mine, contributed to a new configuration of our team, bringing new ideas, sharing their energy, and contributing to the picture that represents us today as WWF-Laos, looking to the future and presenting our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.

This Strategic Plan is perfused with the team's love and passion for nature, conservation, and our collective mission to make Laos a place where people can thrive while still maintaining a balance with the plants and animals that enrich the ecosystems on which we all depend.

It builds on WWF-Laos' DNA. It carries on the three conservation priorities from the previous strategy – **Forest**, **Wildlife**, and **Freshwater** – and takes our targets to the next level of ambition. It is aligned to WWF- Asia Pacific priorities and strongly inspired by WWF's global targets.

This Strategic Plan is the result of over a year of consultations within the country team and engagement with the WWF Global Network, to ensure that the coming years will see WWF-Laos guided by a solid and sound strategy.

I acknowledge that the Strategy is far from perfect but it is our strategy and we can proudly recognize ourselves in it. I am truly satisfied with our achievement and I am confident that each of us is ready to give our best to make this plan successful.

Together, we aim to contribute to a better Laos in which people and nature live in harmony, where wildlife is not hunted to extinction, where rivers are flowing and fishes are free to migrate, where communities are able to live better by restoring and protecting nature.

I would like to thank you all for your valuable contribution to this five-year Strategic Plan, for your patience with the process, and the time you have invested to see it to completion. I am excited and I feel privileged to be leading the team in the implementation of this new strategy and beyond.



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BUILDING A FUTURE WHERE THE PEOPLE OF LAOS CAN THRIVE AND LIVE IN HARMONY WITH NATURE.

Loris Palentini

Country Director
WWF-Laos

1. INTRODUCTION

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ABOUT LAOS

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (hereafter Laos) is located in one of the 10 most globally important biodiversity ecoregions, home to some of the world's most biologically diverse but endangered species and habitats. Laos is situated in Southeast Asia and is bordered by China, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Mekong River flows through 1,900km of Lao territory, much of it mountainous terrain.

Healthy natural ecosystems that supply goods and services are essential to reducing poverty, securing livelihoods, and driving a greener economic model for Laos.

However, Laos' biodiversity is under threat from multiple pressures: climate change; illegal logging and wildlife trade; poorly planned infrastructure development; and expansion of unsustainable agriculture.

ABOUT WWF-LAOS

WWF has had a presence in the country since the late 1980s, when it contributed to some of the first biodiversity surveys that established Laos' protected area system. The office in Laos was officially established in 2001. Our main office is in Vientiane Capital, with field offices in Savannakhet, Champassak, Salavan, and Xekong provinces.

WWF-Laos works with government, civil society, and private sector partners to address the threats to biodiversity and to move towards a greener nature-based future.

Our key partners are the Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Dept. of Forestry, Dept. of Forest Inspection, Dept. of Livestock and Fisheries), the Provincial Agriculture & Forestry Offices; other conservation focused organizations; communities; Lao civil society organizations; and other stakeholders.



A photograph of a wooden boat on a calm lake. The boat's bow is in the foreground, pointing towards the center of the frame. The water is a clear, light blue-green color. In the background, there are lush green trees and a range of blue mountains under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

2. MISSION AND VISION

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OUR MISSION

WWF-Laos strives for a future where we are strongly rooted in Laos and recognised as the leading conservation organization in the country; working in partnership with the government, local communities, and other key players towards a future where the people of Laos can thrive and live in harmony with nature.

OUR VISION

Laos' unique biodiversity, cultural diversity, and ecosystems are maintained or enhanced and contribute to the sustainable development and wellbeing of Laos, the Greater Mekong region and the planet as a whole.

3. CONSERVATION PROGRAMME



CONSERVATION IS THE 'CORE' OF WHAT WWF DOES

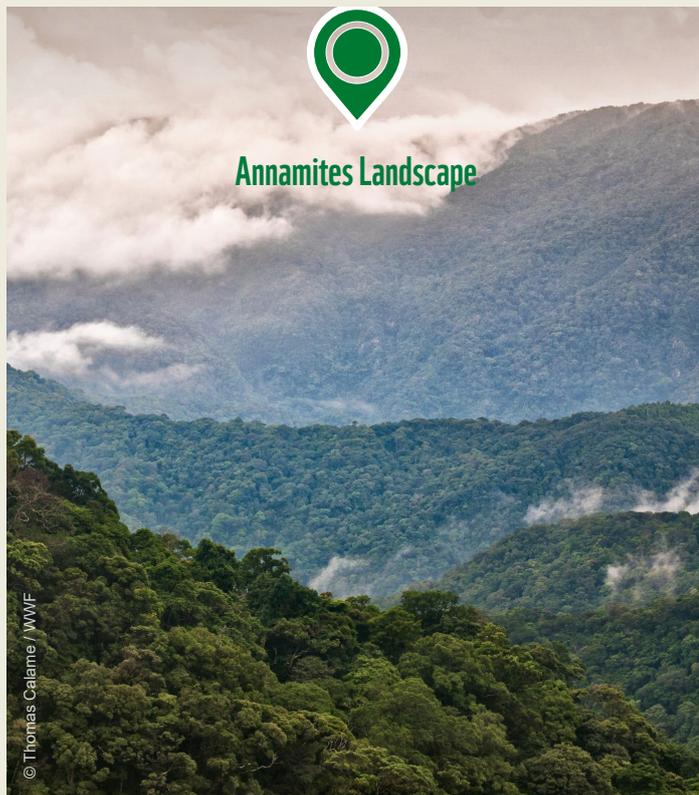
The five-year Strategic Plan is the result of input from our staff and an analysis of conservation efforts conducted by WWF-Laos and partners since the 1980s.

The conservation strategies we will implement are the result of a thorough assessment of the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, with a view to set out feasible actions to improve the overall status and health of Laos' natural systems.

We have also worked to ensure that our strategies align closely with Laos' National Socio-Economic Development Plan, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, and National Forest Strategy to 2035 and Vision to 2050, as well as global goals including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

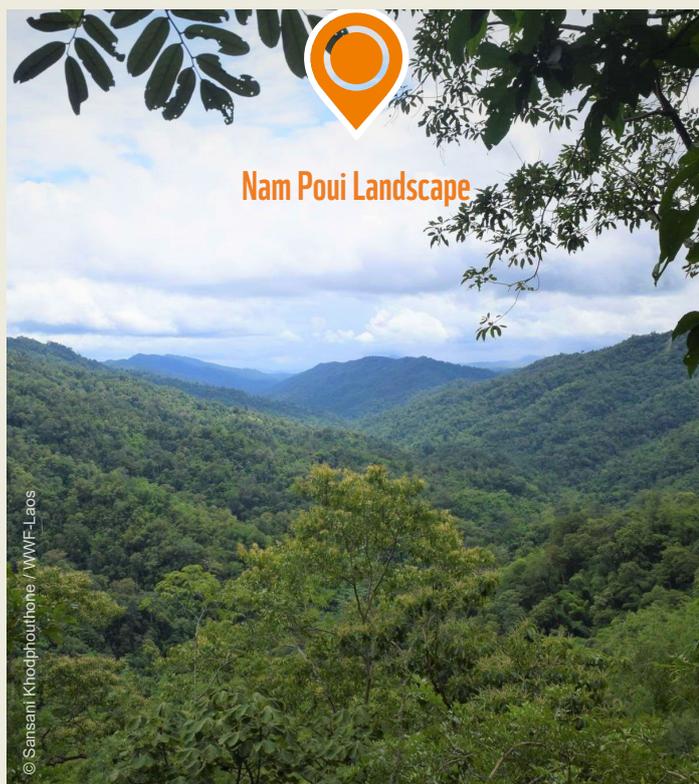
3.1. LANDSCAPES AND SITES

Geographically, our strategic plan focuses on **three priority landscapes** selected based on their conservation significance, level of pressure on biodiversity, and WWF-Laos' ability to have a meaningful impact. Within each of these broad landscapes, we further focus our efforts on **four priority sites**. These sites and landscapes represent key habitats for target conservation species or species groups of global and regional significance. Conserving these habitats, species and overall biodiversity ensures the health of ecosystems that provide necessary services to the people of Laos and beyond.



The Annamite Mountain Range, with its unique wet evergreen forests and karst habitats, are significant to global biodiversity, with many species occurring here and nowhere else on earth - including the saola, the Annamite striped rabbit, and large antlered muntjac. The forest habitat of the Annamites is some of the most extensive and largely intact forests in continental Asia. In the last century, only six large mammal species were discovered worldwide and three of them were found in the Annamite range.

Within this landscape, our priority site is the 1,335km² Xe Sap National Protected Area (NPA). The Xe Sap NPA is one of the most biodiverse NPAs in Laos and is one of the last strongholds for species that are found nowhere else on earth, including the critically endangered saola, red-shanked douc langur, and large antlered muntjac.



The 5900km² Nam Poui Landscape, situated in northeast Laos and bordering Thailand to the west, encompasses the 1900km² Nam Poui NPA, the surrounding anthropogenic landscape and stretches of the Mekong in Xayabouly Province.

Within this landscape, our priority site is the Nam Poui NPA. The Nam Poui NPA, which is one of the most significant sites in Laos for the conservation of Asian megafauna, particularly the Asian elephant, gaur, and Asiatic black bears. It is a key stronghold for Asian elephants in Laos, containing the second largest population in the country, and is the only NPA that has populations of white-handed gibbons. The prey base, connectivity to breeding populations of tigers in Thailand and protection offered by the NPA on the Thai side of the border offer potential for recovery of tigers in this landscape.

WWF-Laos is the only international conservation organization currently working in the area.



Mekong Plains Landscape



© WWF-Laos



© Adam Oswell / WWF

The 52,000km² Mekong Plains Landscape includes 850km of the Mekong River and the surrounding plains. The Mekong River is the world's most productive inland fishery, providing livelihoods to 60 million people, up to 80% of the animal protein to people in the Mekong River basin, and accounting for 15% of the global inland catch. It also hosts one of the most diverse and prolific freshwater capture fisheries in the world, second only to that of the Amazon.

Within this landscape, WWF-Laos will focus on two main riverscapes:

1. Xebanghieng riverscape
2. Siphandone riverscape

The 12,500km² Xebanghieng catchment contains the Xe Champhone Ramsar wetlands and its perennial and seasonal rivers as well as scattered lakes, ponds, freshwater marshes, and rice paddy fields. The Xebanghieng river is particularly important for fish migration as it is one of the few remaining tributaries of the Mekong within Laos that remains free-flowing and accessible to migratory fish. The river also flows through several NPAs and the Eld's Deer Sanctuary which contains potentially the most significant remaining population of Eld's deer in Southeast Asia. The area also supports threatened species such as Asiatic soft-shell turtles, Siamese crocodiles, giant Asian pond turtles, and elongated tortoise, and is home to at least 220 fish species. It also supports the livelihoods of over 42,000 people.

The Siphandone (in Lao “four thousand islands”) priority site in the far south of Laos encompasses a stretch of the Mekong River immediately adjacent to Cambodia. Here the river braids extensively into a maze of channels and islands and flows over the largest complex of waterfalls (Khone Falls) found in Asia. This variability of rich natural features, the seasonally flooded riverine habitats and surrounding gallery forest support a large range of terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity.

The Siphandone is home to at least 100,000 people, whose livelihoods are intricately linked to these habitats.

3.2. PRIORITY SPECIES



Global Priority
Flagship Species



Eco-region and
National Priority Species

Asian elephants, Indochinese tiger *,
Asiatic black and sun bear.

* recovery/rewilding

Saola, felid and carnivore species,
Lao and regionally endangered
primates, Mekong aquatic megafauna,
gaur and sambar deer.

By 2025:

Populations of Global Priority
Flagship Species in priority places
are stable, increasing or have
been assessed for restoration.

By 2025:

Populations of Eco-regional
and National Priority Species in
priority places are stable, increasing
or have been assessed.



3.3. PRACTICE AREA

In the above-mentioned landscapes and priority sites, WWF-Laos undertakes strategies and actions to improve the status of species, habitats, and ecosystems - our Conservation Targets. By meeting our Conservation Targets, we also support healthy livelihoods and improve the wellbeing of communities depending on the services provided by these ecosystem. We also work on cross-sectoral policy engagement with government, civil society, and the private sector to strengthen our conservation effort.

OUR PROGRAMME IS IMPLEMENTED UNDER THREE BROAD 'PRACTICE AREAS':



HEALTHY FORESTS AND
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



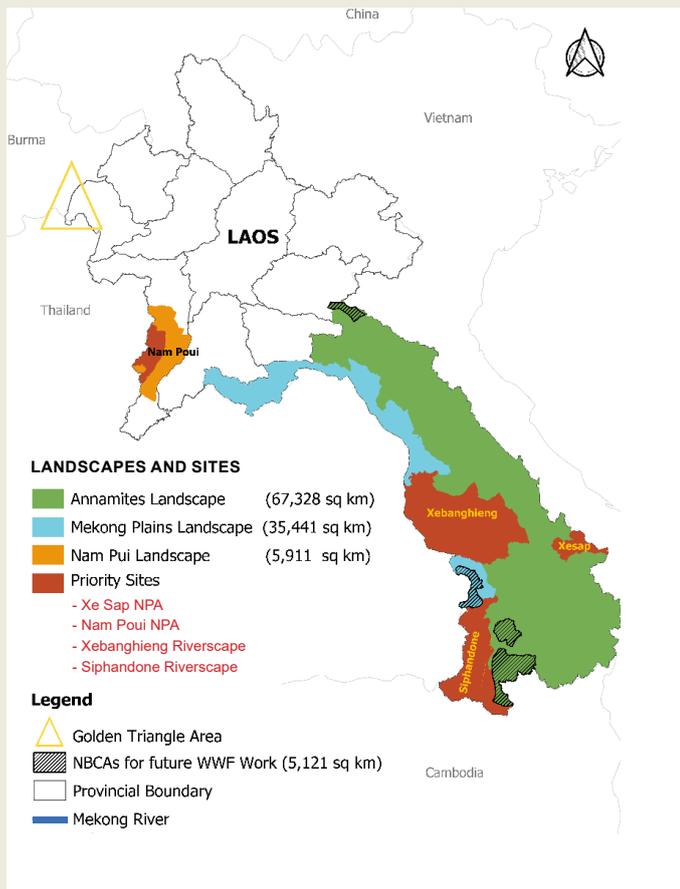
STOP THE TRADE AND
KEEP WILDLIFE ALIVE



RIVERS FOR LIFE

The Conservation Outcomes of WWF-Laos are linked to the below national and international priorities, and directly contribute to the WWF's global goals.

3.4. GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE



3.5. GLOBAL & NATIONAL ALIGNMENT

Contribution to Global Goals:
SDGs and Aichi Biodiversity
Targets.



AICHI
TARGETS

National Strategies:

Biodiversity Strategy
and Action Plan
2016-2025

Forest Strategy
to 2035 and Vision
to 2050

Socio-Economic
Development Plan
2021-2025

3.6. WWF'S GLOBAL GOALS



ZERO LOSS OF
NATURAL HABITATS



ZERO EXTINCTION
OF SPECIES



HALVE
FOOTPRINT

3.7. OUTCOMES BY 2025

By working in close cooperation with the Lao Government, other partners and communities in Laos, we aim to achieve the following outcomes:



HEALTHY FORESTS AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Strengthen protected area management and promote the sustainable use of forest resources for the benefit of local communities and wildlife.

The annual net rate of natural forest loss in the Annamite and Nam Poui Landscapes are maintained below 0.5%.

Forest under national protection in the Annamite and Nam Poui Landscapes has increased by 17.5%, from 3,312 sq km to 3,892 sq km.

Signs of illegal natural resource extraction will be reduced by 20% against baselines in the total protected zone of the Nam Poui and Xe Sap NPAs.



STOP THE TRADE AND KEEP WILDLIFE ALIVE

Strengthen wildlife law enforcement and reduce demand in order to stop the illegal hunting and trading of wildlife and wildlife products.

Local agency capacity to detect, investigate and prosecute wildlife crime, and interagency collaboration has improved.

International and domestic illegal wildlife trade at priority sites, market hotspots or trade routes has been disrupted.

Motivation to trade or consume key wildlife products in key target consumers declines.

Eco-regional and national priority species populations are maintained or have increased, with key knowledge gaps filled at priority sites.



RIVERS FOR LIFE

Maintain a free-flowing middle Mekong and strengthen community-led conservation and sustainable fisheries.

At least 3,300 km of Mekong mainstream and tributaries within the Mekong Plains Landscape is free-flowing.

Management of capture fisheries, conservation knowledge of Mekong fish megafauna, and community livelihoods have improved in priority sites in the Mekong Plains Landscape.

4. OPERATIONAL FUNCTIONS

These are the critical functions that support the implementation of the conservation strategy. Each function has its own vision, objective and outcomes, and all vitally contribute to accomplishing the mission and vision of WWF-Laos and WWF's global goals.

VISION

OUTCOMES BY 2025



PARTNERSHIP

Being a trusted conservation partner, WWF-Laos efficiently coordinates and maintains key strategic collaborations with governments, communities, businesses, donors, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the media to influence and collectively deliver conservation outcomes.

Partnership is core to WWF-Laos' work, collaborating with entities that have complementary competencies and roles in society. We improve how we work with and through others as part of our overall adaptive management philosophy and drive toward sustainability. The expected outcomes include:

- 1 A more internally-coordinated, strategic approach to partnership, with better communication (internal and external) and efficiency (especially around Memorandum of Understanding - MoU and Activity Plans).
- 2 Development of new partner relationships and stronger influence with existing partners.



ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WWF-Laos is a strong, stable, growing office, recognized as reliable and effective, with the leadership, organizational and individual capacity, structure and internal culture to deliver its conservation strategy goals.

A stable, resilient, and effective organization is the foundation to achieving our conservation goals, especially in a changing, uncertain world. WWF-Laos will need to strengthen almost all parts of its structure in order to become the strong and impactful office it aims to be. The expected outcomes include:

- 1 Creation of an organizational development strategy, with immediate, short-term and long-term implementation plans.
- 2 Strengthened internal result-oriented culture with more integrated teamwork, working to become a high-performing office.



PEOPLE & CULTURE

WWF-Laos stands as an employer of choice, attracting and retaining talent, and grooming them to become stronger practitioners and representatives for conservation.

People & Culture will be a crucial component in the delivery of the strategic plan by ensuring we have the right people in the right place, strengthening individual capacity, and building a stronger, more integrated WWF-Laos team. The expected outcomes include:

- 1 The right people in the right place.
- 2 A strong team with a strong panda spirit.
- 3 Fair and competitive policies and procedures.

VISION

OUTCOMES BY 2025



COMMUNICATIONS

Defining the WWF presence in the country - 'Think Conservation, Think of WWF-Laos'. The key objective of this strategy is to support the effective delivery of the conservation strategic plan.

Growing the reputation of WWF as the best known environmental organization in Laos. Accomplishing this vision requires: raising public awareness; building an online and digital presence; presenting WWF as a solutions-based, credible organization in key forums; and being viewed as a key partner and conservation solution catalyst. The expected outcomes include:

- 1 WWF-Laos is recognized as a trusted partner to communities, government, donors, and other NGOs through its communication of effective partnerships, advocacy, and engagement.
- 2 Communications (as a function) is clearly understood and strengthened internally.



MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY & LEARNING

A Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) culture exists; and adaptive management is practiced habitually in WWF-Laos' conservation work and across all operational functions.

As a critical part of the strategy, MEAL is the foundation of our well-managed projects and programmes, with Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) indicators being used to measure and evaluate stated objectives and outcomes for all staff. The expected outcomes include:

- 1 Using a simple but fully-integrated MEAL system as the basis for adaptive management of the 2021-2025 Strategy.
- 2 Critical operational functions have their own measures or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure progress toward outcomes, to manage risks, and to support the conservation vision.



BUDGET & RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

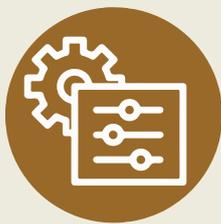
WWF-Laos has a strong funding model, sound fundraising capacity, and increasingly secure, diverse, and sustainable funding to achieve our 2021-2025 strategic goals.

Growing resources will be fundamental to the successful implementation of the WWF-Laos strategy, with full recognition that the potential global economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will present both challenges and possible opportunities. Key funding sources will continue to be from Public Sector Partnerships (PSP) and from the WWF network, with some funding coming from corporates. WWF-Laos envisions an office that is financially sustainable in the long-term, able to raise and direct funding to priority programmes, with diverse sources of funding. The expected outcomes include:

- 1 Strengthen internal capacity on resource mobilization and proposal writing.
- 2 WWF-Laos is the NGO of choice for PSP and corporates on key environmental issues in WWF's prioritized landscapes and themes.

VISION

OUTCOMES BY 2025



OFFICE MANAGEMENT

WWF-Laos has effective and efficient systems, based on clear standards and procedures, with strong support of our conservation strategy..

The primary goal for finance and administration is to be able to produce accurate and timely reports, both internal and external. In order to achieve this, efficient systems and strong collaboration is needed across all teams. WWF-Laos will adhere to strong compliance standards, increasing internal and external accountability and minimizing risks. The expected outcomes include:

- 1 Strengthen internal capacity.
- 2 Easy-to-understand, efficient systems and procedures.
- 3 Becoming a paperless office.
- 4 Reliable and powerful IT infrastructure systems.



RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

WWF-Laos operates efficiently and implements the 2021-2025 Strategy while minimizing and managing all foreseeable risks. A strong risk management culture exists among all managers.

Risk management - both the assessment of risks and preventative actions to mitigate them - is a critical function for any entity. Risk management as a topic is itself highly integrated because it relates to conservation work as well as each of the key operational functions. The expected outcomes include:

- 1 Risk assessment - including Environmental and Social Safeguarding Framework (ESSF) - is integrated and embedded into all strategic and operational actions.
- 2 Routine risk reviews are conducted quarterly by the Country Management Team (CMT).
- 3 An effective and efficient Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) is developed and made available to partners and beneficiaries to ensure that any feedback and complaint is received, addressed or mitigation actions are correctly implemented.

VISION

OUTCOMES BY 2025



WWF GOVERNANCE

WWF-Laos is an office with a clear, efficient operating structure that:
(a) effectively implements policies and procedures; (b) uses efficient systematic processes to optimally deliver the conservation strategy; (c) adaptively manages all associated risks through strong measures and evaluation across all functions, including conservation.

The governance structure of WWF-Laos is how management and oversight works, both externally with the WWF network and internally within the office. Key characteristics of good governance include: a) visionary, trustworthy, and inclusive leadership; b) clarity of roles and responsibilities across all functions; c) compliance with all policies and procedures; d) sound risk management, and e) transparency. The expected outcomes include:

- 1 Strong governance and leadership is built to maintain and strengthen the delivery of the Strategic Plan. Weaknesses, gaps or other issues are openly reviewed and fixed. An office plan is developed to improve senior management.
- 2 WWF-Laos adheres to strong compliance standards, increasing internal and external accountability and minimizing risks; regular review improves processes to mitigate risks as needed.
- 3 All staff positions, including managerial and leadership positions, and all decision-making bodies, have clearly defined roles that are well-understood by all staff, and lines of accountability and reporting are clear.
- 4 Decision-making and grievance processes are transparent.
- 5 Mechanisms are established for both processes, and they, along with the resulting outcomes, are well-communicated.

BY WORKING TOGETHER, WE CAN ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS FOR THE BENEFIT OF PEOPLE AND NATURE.



PARTNERSHIP



**ORGANIZATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**



**PEOPLE &
CULTURE**



COMMUNICATIONS



**MONITORING,
EVALUATION,
ACCOUNTABILITY
& LEARNING**



**BUDGET &
RESOURCE
MOBILIZATION**



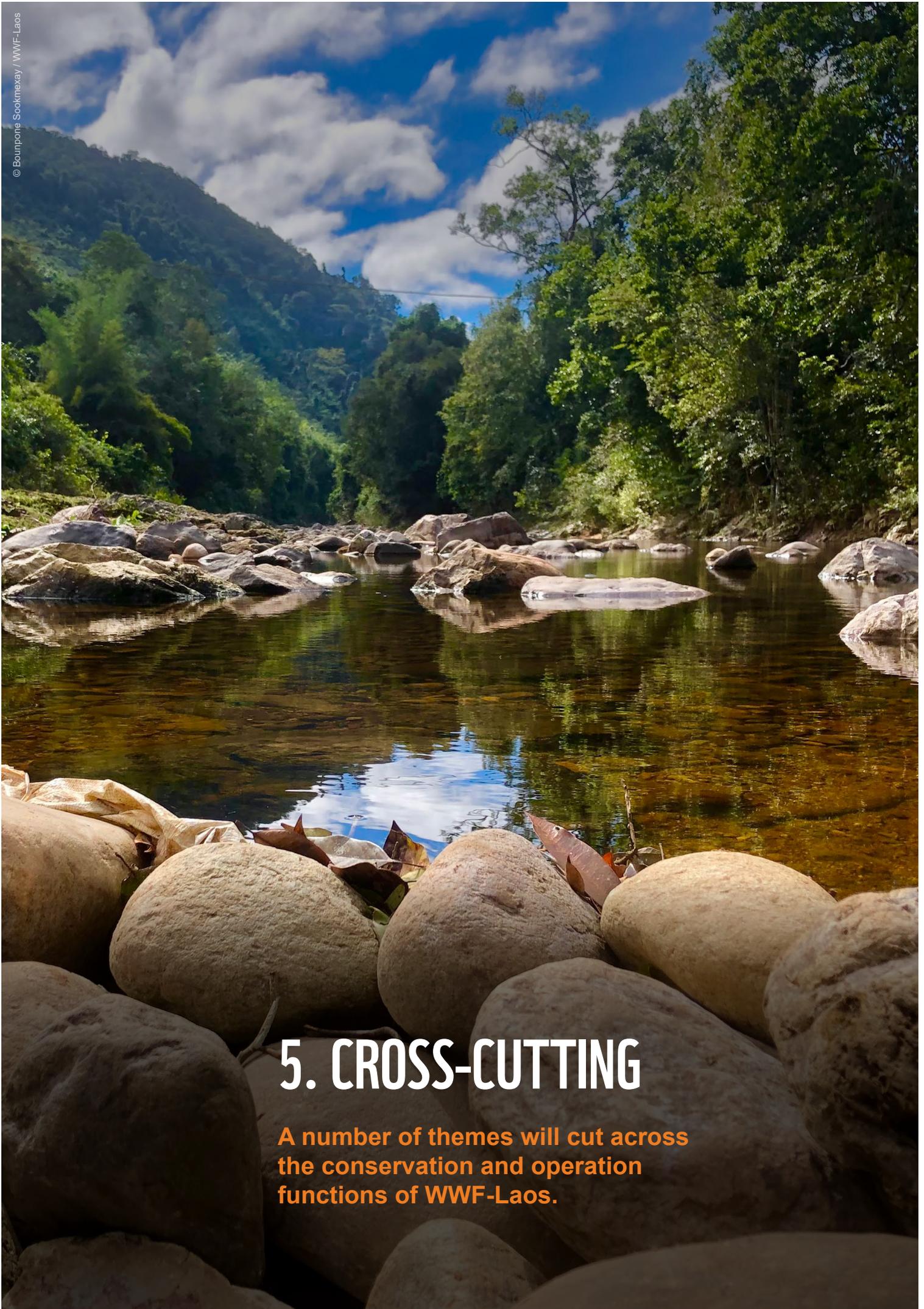
**OFFICE
MANAGEMENT**



**RISK ASSESSMENT
AND MANAGEMENT**



**WWF
GOVERNANCE**



5. CROSS-CUTTING

A number of themes will cut across the conservation and operation functions of WWF-Laos.



5.1. CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

VISION

OUTCOMES BY 2025



CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

WWF-Laos' strategies are all "climate-informed" and the WWF-Laos programme offices optimize climate mitigation in their operations, and over time, in the operations of partners.

WWF-Laos believes that long-term conservation cannot be achieved without considering climate change. Climate change is already exacerbating existing threats – forest degradation, poaching, fish stock depletion, and habitat loss, to name a few - and will continue to do so, in large part because of human responses to the impacts climate change has on the environment. It is crucial that WWF's conservation work takes into consideration climate risks and impacts.

We aim to make our conservation strategies climate-informed, embedding climate vulnerability assessment into our risk assessment strategy. The expected outcomes include:

- 1 In advance of the next Strategic Planning effort (2025 and beyond), the programme fully assesses future climate effects in Laos and has future strategies designed with this in mind.
- 2 The conservation team meets bi-annually to review (i) potential climate effects on ongoing work and (ii) adjustments to current strategies as a result. Climate change assessment is integrated into risk assessment.

5.2. INNOVATIONS

WWF-Laos believes that innovation in conservation (and integrated operations) comes from a culture shift that emphasizes adaptive management as a regular practice and uses MEAL as an engine to persistently determine creative solutions to the challenges faced in achieving our conservation vision.

Innovation and trying new things is a culture and practice; innovation results from having to adaptively manage our approaches in a challenging and constantly changing environment.

We innovate to overcome roadblocks or a perceived lack of progress toward carefully designed objectives.

WWF-Laos aims to encode adaptive management through an enhanced MEAL system emphasizing not just sensitivity and practical indicators, but regular self-evaluation and review of progress.

Most importantly, through the example of office leadership, we aim to build a culture of openness to failure, of willingness to acknowledge what isn't working and why, and of learning from these situations.

IN THIS WAY, WWF-LAOS WILL ENCOURAGE A CULTURE OF INNOVATION.





5.3. SUSTAINABILITY ANALYSIS

WWF-Laos works “with and through” a wide range of conservation stakeholders, from government to NGOs, from local communities to CSOs. WWF-Laos has had to be strategic and efficient, regularly asking “how do we get the most out of our conservation dollars over the long-term?” and

acknowledging that WWF’s impact alone is limited in scope and scale. The 2021-2025 Strategy is focused on enhancing our impacts and making them sustainable over the long-term, even if and when WWF cannot be present. This is part of an adaptive management approach - stepping back from “taking action” to make regular assessments.

THIS INCLUDES BUILDING THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION THROUGH:

Policy change and other systemic work;

Bolstering strategically selected CSOs as implementing partners;

Capacity building with partners, including knowledge transfer, training and education;

Community-level behavior change efforts that spread organically among families and individuals;

Mobilizing additional investment by government, industry, and the international development sector;

And many others...



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**FOR A FUTURE WHERE THE PEOPLE OF LAOS
CAN THRIVE AND LIVE IN HARMONY WITH NATURE.**

**WWF'S MISSION IS TO STOP THE
DEGRADATION OF THE PLANET'S
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND
TO BUILD A FUTURE IN WHICH
HUMANS LIVE IN HARMONY
WITH NATURE.**



Working to sustain the natural
world for the benefit of people
and wildlife.

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