

GEF-8 Indo-Malaya Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program

Supporting effective on-the-ground conservation and human wellbeing

The GEF-8 (2022-2026) cycle of programming presents an **opportunity to conserve and protect the Indo-Malayan region’s last remaining and globally important intact forest landscapes for both people and planet**. IUCN and FAO will serve as co-lead GEF agencies for the **Indo-Malaya Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program (IP)**. This brief presents an overview of the IP.

Background

This critical forest biome region includes 32.3 million hectares of intact forest landscapes from what were once much larger, continuous expanses of tropical forest. Spectacular endemic wildlife include the Tiger, Orangutan, Saola, Cat Ba langur, Giant ibis, Mekong giant catfish, Spoonbilled sandpiper. These forests also provide essential wintering grounds for numerous migratory birds. They store enormous amount of carbon with positive effects on climate stability that go beyond their carbon sequestration potential, providing water and other essential services to more than 50 million people. Many of these areas are managed by indigenous and local communities.



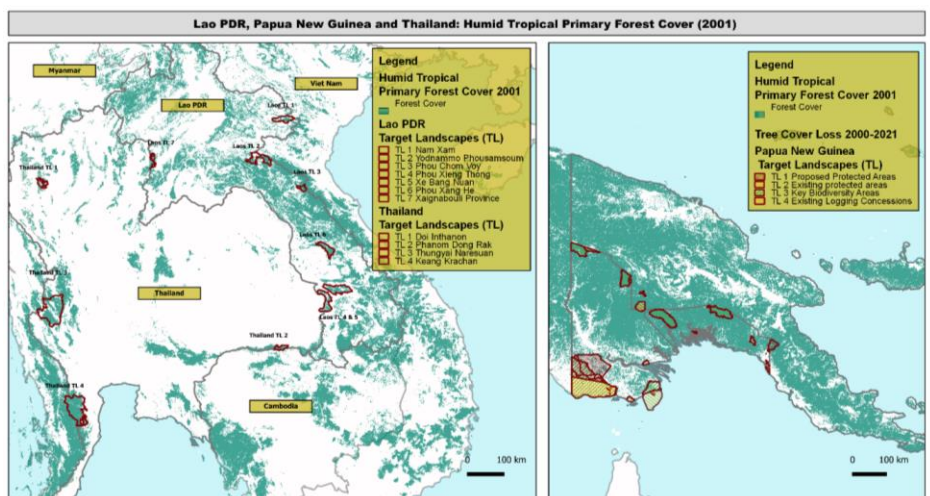
Indo-Malayan forests are also among the world’s most threatened – more than 17 million ha of primary forest have been lost in the past 20 years alone, largely due to agricultural expansion, mining, illegal logging, and infrastructure projects.

To help conserve and protect these remaining forests for present and future generations, the GEF-8 cycle of funding includes a dedicated **Indo-Malaya Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program** that provides incentives and resources for Indo-Malaya countries¹ to program a portion of their GEF STAR allocation towards conservation of these forests. The Integrated Program consists of three country child projects in Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea, and Thailand (with eight target landscapes), as shown in the map below.

Indo-Malaya Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program

Drawing upon a wealth of experience including the GEF-7 Amazon Sustainable Landscapes program, Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes program, and other aligned platforms and initiatives, the IP will build upon lessons learned and provide a powerful package of support to bring about transformative change. Key interventions may include:

- ◆ **Expand coverage of protected areas** to safeguard biodiversity, carbon stocks, and connectivity
- ◆ **Strengthen management of existing protected areas** and systems (national and sub-national)



Description: This map has been developed for the Program Framework Document of the IUCN/FAO GEF-8 Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program.
 Projection: EPSG:4326 - WGS 84 - Geographic
 Author: Carmen Morales, Land Monitoring and Climate Specialist, FAO.
 Sources: Country Boundaries: GAUL, 2015; Primary Forest: Turubanova, S., Potapov, P.V., Tyukavina, A. and Hansen, M.C., 2018; Tree Cover Loss: Hansen, UMD, Google, USGS, NASA, 2013. Protected Areas: WDPA -IUCN, Key Biodiversity Areas: WDKBA.

¹ Eligible countries include Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Viet Nam

- ◆ **Promote Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures** and various Nature-based Solutions for conservation outside of protected areas
- ◆ **Develop integrated land-use planning and strengthen governance and law enforcement**
- ◆ **Support conservation-friendly livelihoods at local levels** and improve sustainability of the productive sectors to ensure conservation of primary forests
- ◆ **Develop financial and other incentives for forest conservation** while eliminating perverse incentives, and improve resource mobilization including REDD+
- ◆ Strengthen **multi-scale and multi-stakeholder governance** and **law enforcement** for increased policy coherence on incentives and mechanisms to conserve forests and eliminate perverse subsidies
- ◆ Improve **land tenure rights** and **policies** especially legal recognition of customary rights and tenure security of IPLCs
- ◆ Promote **regional cooperation**: South-South learning, technical exchanges, intergovernmental cooperation, knowledge management, and communication strategies, notably at the scale of river basins or shared ecosystems
- ◆ Improve resource mobilization and **contribute to the implementation of the international development agenda related to financial incentives to protect and restore primary forests**, including the REDD+ Framework, carbon markets, nature-positive trade policies, and long-term financing of protected areas

A programmatic approach for greater impact

Through the GEF programmatic approach, opportunities to address drivers of environmental degradation in a holistic manner, mobilize finance, and achieve greater impact are more easily attained. Key design elements that will be part of and/or pursued in the development of this program include:

- ◆ **Clear vision for integrated forest landscape conservation in the Indo-Malaya CFB** – to establish IFL conservation as a mainstream agenda in the Indo-Malaya CFB based on a clear vision that is followed up on through systems transformation across sectors and actors
- ◆ **Programmatic finance and resource mobilization** – partnerships with the private finance and philanthropic sectors together with other providers of public finance will be established at the programmatic level to leverage GEF funding and deliver greater impact.
- ◆ **Regional policy coherence and partnerships** to strengthen protection and cooperation, eliminate perverse incentives, and create an enabling policy supporting conservation and sustainable use of Indo-Malaya forests
- ◆ **Partnerships with private sector producers** – deforestation-free production commitments and action from commodity producers both large and small will be integral to this IP
- ◆ **High-level events and communications** to raise the profile of this regional biome to a level commensurate with the Amazon and Congo basin forests, and increase demand, support, and action for conservation of these globally important and irreplaceable forest landscapes
- ◆ **Regional web platform and annual knowledge sharing conferences** to support knowledge capture and dissemination, South-South learning, a dedicated community of practice, and capacity building on a range of high-priority needs and topics
- ◆ **A regional knowledge sharing, coordination and support project** – this regional coordination project will provide key support to all child projects to ensure a coherent, well-coordinated and adaptively managed program with strong links to relevant external platforms and initiatives including the ASEAN Regional Network on Forest and Climate Change, Global Peatlands Initiative, sustainable commodity initiatives, and more.



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About IUCN

IUCN is the world's oldest global environmental organization and has developed into the largest and most diverse environmental network with over 1400 state and non-state members from 160 countries. An accredited GEF Agency, IUCN strengths and expertise include forests, ecosystem management and restoration, protection of threatened species and ecosystems, and innovative public-private partnerships to achieve nature-positive economies.

About FAO

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations was founded in 1945 and leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve nutrition and food security. FAO has the mandate and role in driving the global and regional agenda on forests

