

GEF-8 Southeast Asia and the Pacific Forests Integrated Programme

Conserving primary forests, supporting people, and driving transformative change

Under the GEF-8 funding cycle, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is supporting a new generation of integrated programmes to conserve and protect globally important forest landscapes for both people and planet. The Southeast Asia and the Pacific Forests Integrated Programme (SEAP Forests IP) is one of five such GEF initiatives, alongside the GEF-8 Critical Forest Biomes Integrated Programmes for the Amazon, Guinean Forests, Mesoamerica, and the Congo Basin. Together, these programmes are driving global systems change across the world's most important tropical forest landscapes.

Focusing on Southeast Asia and the Pacific, the SEAP Forests IP aims to maintain the integrity of the region's remaining primary forests, which are ecosystems of global importance for biodiversity, climate stability, and human wellbeing.

Co-led by IUCN and FAO, the SEAP Forests IP comprises a Regional Coordination and Technical Support Project (RCP) and three country projects in Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea, and Thailand. The RCP provides the enabling framework for maximising the impact of the country projects while also engaging with seven other participating countries of the biome¹ and delivering regional-level outputs that complement national efforts.

3 project countries



The Biome

Spanning **193 million hectares**, Southeast Asia and the Pacific's primary forests are home to globally iconic and endangered species - including the Tiger, Orangutan and Mekong Giant Catfish - and they provide essential wintering grounds for migratory birds. **More than 560 million people** rely on climate regulation, freshwater security and immense amounts of carbon storage these forests provide. Among them are the Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) that manage many areas. However, these forests are under sustained threat.

More than 60% of the biomes's original natural vegetation had been lost by 2020, and much of the remaining is under significant pressure from a range of drivers including agricultural expansion, mining, illegal logging, infrastructure development, and climate change.



193
million hectares of primary forests



560
million people



Over 60%
original vegetation lost by 2020

¹ Countries that are eligible for the IP but do not currently have a country project under GEF-8 are: Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Viet Nam.

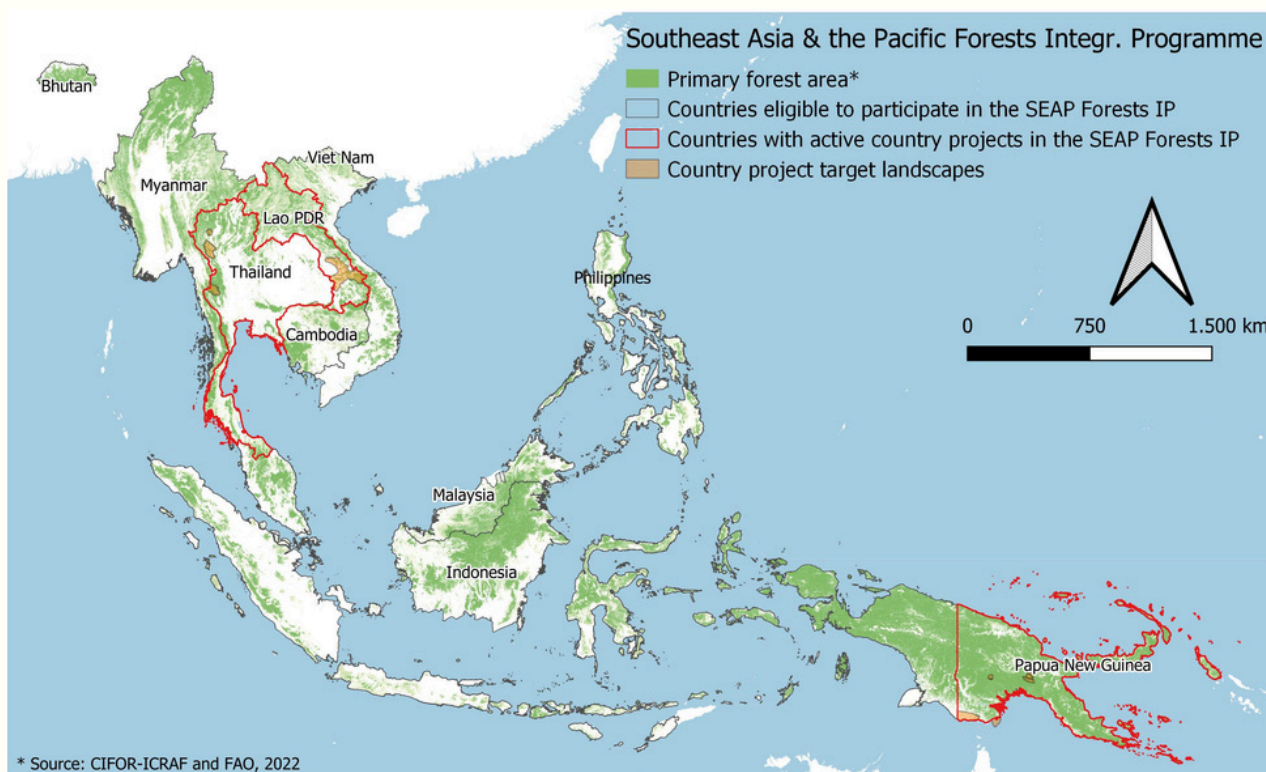
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The SEAP Forests IP brings together governments, communities, and partners across Southeast Asia and the Pacific to conserve the region's remaining primary forests and the vital ecosystem services they provide. It combines country-level action with regional collaboration, knowledge exchange, partnerships and innovative financing, to transform how primary forests are valued, managed, and conserved across Southeast Asia and the Pacific.



The map illustrates the distribution of primary forest areas across Southeast Asia and the Pacific, highlighting countries participating in the SEAP Forests IP and the target landscapes of the three active country projects in Lao PDR, Thailand, and Papua New Guinea.

A programmatic approach for transformative impact

Building on lessons from other large-scale forest programmes, including the GEF Amazon and Congo Basin, the SEAP Forests IP delivers a comprehensive set of interventions, including:

- **Expanding and strengthening protected areas and promoting Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)** and other Nature-based Solutions to safeguard biodiversity, carbon stocks, and ecological connectivity.
- **Supporting conservation-friendly livelihoods and sustainable production systems** that reduce pressure on forests, while supporting the recognition and protection of land and resource rights, including customary tenure and rights of IPLCs.
- **Strengthening regional cooperation and policy alignment** to advance a unifying vision for primary forest conservation, while fostering cross-country collaboration, creating enabling policy environments, and eliminating perverse incentives.
- **Mobilising innovative finance and investments** through public-private-philanthropic partnerships, and aligning with global frameworks, such as carbon markets, REDD+, and nature-positive trade policies, to secure long-term and sustainable investment in primary forest conservation, restoration, and deforestation-free value chains.
- **Enhancing capacity development, peer learning, and South-South exchange** through demand-driven country and regional initiatives, complemented by a regional Knowledge and Learning hub on primary forests, that connects partners, captures lessons, and shares knowledge.
- **Strengthening the global recognition of the region's primary forests** through high-level advocacy and communication efforts and contributing to global processes including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.