



# Resilient Urban Centres and Surrounds (RUCaS)

## MISSION SUMMARY REPORT – LAO PDR (31 MAY – 3 JUNE 2023)

### Background

RUCaS aims to improve the value generated by investment in urban infrastructure by better integrating conventional large ‘grey’ infrastructure (e.g., levee banks, pipelines, treatment plants, roads, railways) with nature-based solutions (e.g., wetlands, mangroves, catchment protection, green walls, multifunctional parks and transport corridors). RUCaS program outputs will include case studies demonstrating application in different urban contexts and scales, as well as training in the tools and principles applied, and strategies to upscale NbS.

RUCaS mission 4 was undertaken to Lao PDR, Viet Nam and Cambodia to advance collaboration arrangements with government, civil society and multilateral agencies. Ground truthing case study sites with local stakeholders was a core focus.

### Purpose

This Lao mission had 4 objectives:

- Consider case study areas in Vientiane and Luang Prabang, and engage key stakeholders
- Define the RUCaS activities for each case study
- Advance relationships with Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) stakeholders and overall analysis for RUCaS and each case study
- Advance arrangements with the Lao Focal Point Ministry – Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE).

### Activities

The mission included meetings with government agencies, development partners and GEDSI stakeholders. Meetings were opportunities to explore the current issues and pressure points affecting urban development in Lao cities, especially increased vulnerabilities created by extreme weather events (exacerbated by climate change) and wider catchment level developments. Site visits informed our understanding of case studies and allowed us to gather perspectives from local stakeholders.

- Meeting and site visit with GGGI – With representatives from GGGI, we toured the Nong Org marsh and catchment in Vientiane, an important green space in the growing city of Vientiane, and an area for managing flood and intense rainfall. This site exemplifies how marshlands and natural drainage functions provide valuable services for local communities and the wider city.
- Meeting with Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) and Department of Climate Change Adaptation – We discussed MONRE becoming our Focal Point Ministry for Lao PDR. The Ministry’s Department of Climate Change Adaptation will provide leadership for RUCaS with a wider Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

- Meeting with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Lao PDR Embassy – We shared updates on the program, including related partnerships and development opportunities in Lao PDR.
- Meeting with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) – We discussed their work across Lao PDR, particularly their work related to water and preservation of the heritage values in Luang Prabang.
- Meetings with Lao Disabled People’s Association (LDPA) and Gender and Development Association (GDA) – We learned about their work and discussed how we can best incorporate inclusion principles into conceptual plans for local case studies and identify opportunities to upscale them for broader application throughout Lao PDR.
- Meeting with National University of Laos (NUoL) – We discussed collaborating and coordinating work with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and MONRE on ecosystem-based adaptation and nature-based solutions program in Lao PDR.
- Site visit to Luang Prabang – Luang Prabang’s wetland ponds provide a range of services for communities. We investigated how nature-based solutions can enhance and extend the value of these traditional wetland ponds, which have been degraded by stormwater and grey and blackwater discharges from houses and businesses.



*Wetland ponds, Luang Prabang*



*Nong Org Marsh, Vientiane*



*Understanding Luang Prabang Wetlands*



*On site at Nong Org Wetland and canal*

## Next steps in Lao PDR

The mission consolidated valuable relationships with stakeholders and deepened our knowledge and understanding of case study sites. The immediate next steps are summarised below:

Action	Timing
MONRE and RUCaS to confirm approach to developing and convening a technical working group for RUCaS program delivery	End of July 2023
RUCaS team to prepare case study preliminary documents for Regional Conference	End of August 2023
Regional Conference (online)	14–15 November 2023
Training and capacity building	November 2023

