

Executive Summary, Houaphanh Province



“The Land of Freedom is most beautiful during sunset. Splendid mountains and forests please our eyes. There are flowers everywhere. Their sweet aromas fill the air. All ethnicities enjoy dignity and equal rights...,” beloved Lao poet and songwriter Sisana Sisane began his popular song *The Land of Freedom* about Houaphanh Province this way.

Located in the north east of Laos, Houaphanh covers an area of 16,500 km² (about 6,400 sq. mi). With a total population of approximately 350,000 people, it consists of 10 administrative districts and 716 villages. The province shares its eastern boundary with Vietnam, and borders Xieng Khouang and Luang Prabang provinces to the west and south-west. There are 10 border checkpoints with Vietnam, among which the most notable is Nam Soi International Checkpoint on Route 6 connecting Houaphanh to Thanh Hoa.



Houaphanh is known as a heroic province of Laos. It houses hundreds of caves where, for decades, Lao revolutionaries hid while fighting against foreign forces and their Lao minions. Nowadays, these historically important sites are open to tourists. Combined with Nam Et-Phou Louey National Protected Area, Nam Xam National Protected Area, and many more eco-tourist sites showcasing rugged, mountainous terrain and rare wildlife sanctuaries, Houaphanh draws in thousands of tourists (mostly domestic) annually.

Current residents continue the patriotic spirit, enabling the province to be politically stable. The people's hard-working traditions contribute to the development of the local economy. Houaphanh's textiles and handicrafts have won numerous awards in prestigious international contests. However, its main exports are minerals, corn, wood products, non-timber forest products, and livestock; while major imports include construction material, fuel, production materials, vehicles and consumption goods.

The province is bestowed with various natural resources. Situated in a tropical climate zone, with plentiful rainfall, Houaphanh has large fertile land areas suitable for agriculture. It has thick green forests and abundant water resource. Many of its mineral resource deposits have not been explored.

From January 2006 to June 2015, Houaphanh Province drew in 521 domestic and foreign private investments, with a total capital of approximately US\$610,000,000. Large investments are in mining (by China and Vietnam), industry and the handicraft, agricultural and service sectors.

To optimize investment capital and keep expert knowledge flowing into the province, Houaphanh investment promotion authority recently prioritized 5 investment sectors viewed as the most suitable for the province:

1. Plant cultivation;
2. Livestock;
3. Tourism;
4. Handicraft; and
5. Hydropower.

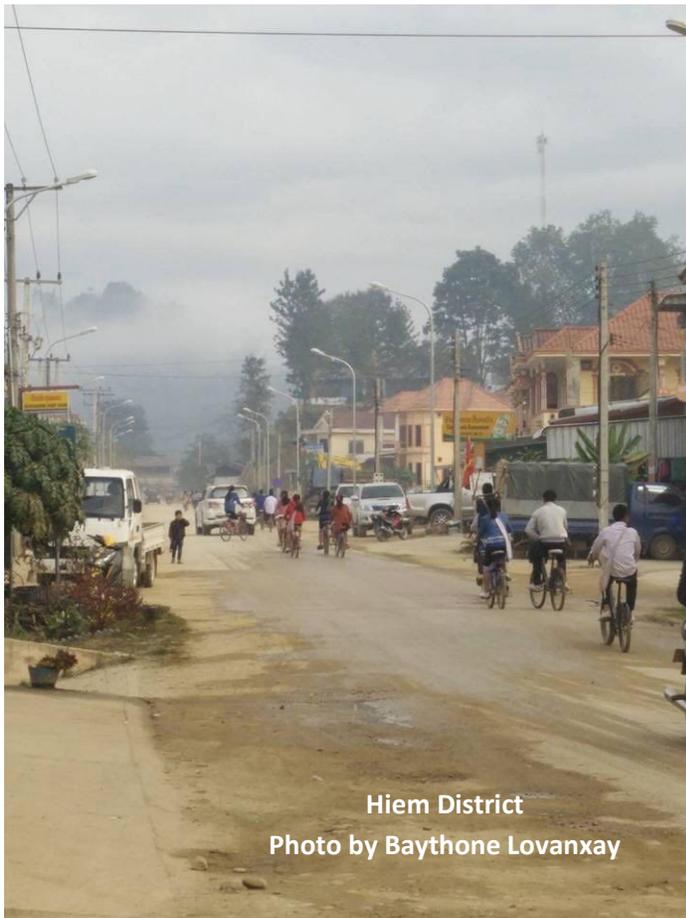
The Lao government is committed to environmentally and socially sustainable development. Therefore, investor(s) will be required to complete either an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), for smaller projects with minimal impacts, or an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA), for larger projects that involve the public and seeks to mitigate negative impacts while maximizing benefits



A hot springs resort in Hiem District
Photo by Baythone Lovanxay

Contact:

Investment Promotion Sector,
Department of Planning and Investment,
Houaphanh Province
Tel & Fax: : +856-064 312065, 856-064 312443



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