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PROGRAM UPDATE

USAID LEAF's Community Forest Management Training Supports Restoration Efforts



Villagers in Laos learn community forest management principles to develop an implementation and monitoring plan

The United States Agency for International Development Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (USAID LEAF) program has been working in Laos for the past five years to restore forests that have experienced extensive deforestation. This work recently culminated in September 2015 with the completion of community forest management training for villages in the Sanamxay district in Attapeu province.

A total of 15 villagers, five each from the village forest committees of Hat-Oudomsay, Sompoy and Tagao, in addition to a number of district and provincial-level government officials from various agencies, participated in the training aimed at building local communities' capacity to manage the restored forest area over the long term.

On the first day of training, participants completed classroom and field-based activities to build their understanding of community forest management principles, which provided them with the necessary knowledge and skills for the practical management of their village's forest restoration zone previously demarcated under the guidance of USAID LEAF.

Participants spent the second day of training divided into their respective forestry committees to develop a plan for the implementation and monitoring of community forest management in their villages. This included identification of villagers to be involved, assignment of tasks and development of an

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*Mr. Khamcheng
Head of Hat-Oudomxay village*

implementation and monitoring schedule. Mr. Sithad, head of the Tagao village forestry committee, said that following the establishment of the area under restoration and because of the provision and planting of suitable tree seedlings, he feels that USAID LEAF has contributed to a sustainable future in their village. He explained, "Our team will regularly monitor the forest restoration zone and prevent any encroachment activities that could negatively impact the restoration process."

The villagers also provided their suggestions and recommendations for a village community forest management manual, which is currently being developed to guide their efforts in the future. This training and guideline development will ensure the sustainability of USAID LEAF's work by equipping the target communities to effectively manage more than 1,000 hectares of deforested land replanted with trees, with an additional area set aside for natural regeneration.

USAID LEAF's forest management improvement activities aim to conserve biodiversity and strengthen livelihoods in Attapeu. According to Mr Simeuang, head of Sompoy village, as a result of USAID LEAF's support, the degraded forest land and other forest areas that were encroached upon are now seeing the benefits of restoration efforts. He said, "This will result in the rehabilitation of forest cover, leading to the improved provision of ecosystem services, which allows our community to benefit from the sustainable use of timber and non-timber forest products over the long term."

Mr. Khamcheng, head of Hat-Oudomxay village in Attapeu, was effusive in his praise for the training, saying, "The forest restoration activity from USAID LEAF, especially through the provision of tree seedlings, has greatly contributed to the objective of the village authorities and local community to preserve the surrounding forest area."

The United States Agency for International Development Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests program (USAID LEAF) is a five-year (2011-2016) regional project focused on achieving meaningful and sustainable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from the forest-land use sector across six target countries: Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea.

For More information:

USAID Asia: <https://www.usaid.gov/asia-regional> USAID LEAF: <http://www.leafasia.org>