



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



LOWERING EMISSIONS
IN ASIA'S FORESTS

PROGRAM UPDATE

Gender Champions Develop Gender-Inclusive Climate Solutions in Laos



Lao gender champions develop strategies for integrating gender into their forestry and climate change programs

"Gender equality is a progressive change that takes time but I am hopeful that this is the way we sustain our future and climate."

*Ms. Sisompeth Souvanthalisith
Commission for Advancement of Women
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry*

For the past two years, the United States Agency for International Development Lower Emissions in Asia's Forests (USAID LEAF) program's Asia-Pacific Leadership Initiative on Gender and Climate Change has supported 24 gender champions in six countries to develop their leadership skills and technical expertise in integrating gender into forestry and climate change programs through a series of regional workshops. These regional workshops are now being complemented by country-specific events where these champions can apply the skills they have learned through the leadership initiative, and to demonstrate the benefits of effective gender planning in their respective organizations.

In August and September 2015, four Lao gender champions facilitated two workshops covering topics in gender mainstreaming strategies and gender integration in forestry and climate change programs. The champions adapted the materials and approach of the regional initiative to the Lao context and trained more than 60 key decision makers, managers and staff from the Department of Forestry (DOF), the Department of Forest and Resource Management (DFRM), the Commission for Advancement of Women (CAW), and the Lao Women's Union (LWU) and developed a results-based planning framework to systematically address gender issues in their organizations.

One specific output of the workshops was a gender action plan for the Department of Forestry in Laos, which when implemented,

should lead to improved program outcomes. Mr. Baoly Phaameang, Deputy Director General at the Lao Department of Forestry, said, "The department is taking proactive steps and this workshop will support us by providing an action plan that guides us to systematically implement gender integration within the DOF's programming."

An additional benefit of the workshops was the creation of a common ground for the gender champions to come together and work on gender issues in Laos. As Dr. Kinnalone Phommasack, Deputy Director, REDD+ Division in the DOF, explained, "The leadership initiative helped to increase gender expertise of forestry staff within the Department of Forestry. These staff now not only have a better understanding about the role of men and women in forest management and climate change, but are also well equipped with skills to improve the capacity of other staff on this topic. I can see that we now have an expanding team within DOF who can come together on gender work."

In the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), Ms. Sisompeth Souvanthalisith heads the Commission for Advancement of Women committee which provides technical support for gender-integration to the DOF. She seconds Kinnalone's view. "We now have a new gender champions' team within DOF which is becoming useful. They're working to ensure organizational change by developing a gender action plan and training their staff to expand the gender team. Gender equality is a progressive change that takes time, but I am hopeful that this is the way we sustain our future and climate," she says.

The gender champions in Laos demonstrate how they are using their negotiation skills and the ability to see the big picture to advance gender issues inside their organizations to maximize impact, thereby further ensuring the sustainability of climate change solutions.

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>