SUCCESS STORY

Planning for Smart and Sustainable Development in Papua New Guinea

USAID LEAF helps create a framework for “green growth” in Madang Province

From mountain ranges to ocean reefs, with mineral wealth and wide tracts of natural forest, Madang Province in Papua New Guinea is rich in biodiversity and natural resources which hold immense commercial, cultural and recreational value. While natural resources have brought benefits to the province, a growing population, increased economic pressures, and a changing climate are causing strains that are affecting the face of the province. There are a number of factors impacting forest loss and land use change in Madang, and the province is striving to ensure that future development maximizes social benefits and conserves biological resources, all within the context of low emission growth and climate change.

Over the past two years, the United States Agency for International Development Lowering Emissions in Asia’s Forests (USAID LEAF) program worked closely with the Madang Provincial Government and local communities to analyze options and opportunities that provide a framework for a low emission land use plan. Combining technical forestry and climate change science and data analysis with a bottom-up consultative approach, USAID LEAF engaged stakeholders from the community, districts, provincial and national levels to outline and evaluate different development scenarios focused on the key drivers of environmental change, including logging, mining, infrastructure, palm oil and community land use. The analysis then examined the implications of each in terms of potential greenhouse gas emissions.

The culmination of much of USAID LEAF’s work in the province, the resulting options review provides guidance to the Madang Provincial Government on how to achieve “green growth,” and helps Madang serve as a model in the country for low carbon growth. In officially launching the final report, the Governor of Madang Province, the Honorable Jim Kas, MP, said, “An effective and sustainable land use planning process will allow our valuable natural resources to be sustainably developed for our economic prosperity with positive and long-lasting environmental outcomes for all.”

The work done by USAID LEAF and local partners on the options assessment drew from experiences in participatory land use planning conducted in nine isolated villages in the highlands of the Adelbert Range, in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Participatory land use planning is a bottom-up process where everyone with a stake in conserving natural resources and mitigating the effects of climate change has a say, where all adult villagers zone the land of their community for six specific uses: conservation, gardening, agriculture, forest use, hunting and village development. Based on data from remote sensing and ground-truthing exercises conducted by USAID LEAF, TNC and villagers, USAID LEAF has estimated a 50% decrease in the amount of carbon released during the period 2001 to 2012, proving that these planning methods are effective.

Overwhelmingly, inhabitants of the villages have also noticed benefits to the community and their own lives. Andrew Basebas, the son of a tribal chief, believes all villagers respect the land use planning process because it helps preserve the ways of their ancestors who had very high regard for the cultural, ecological and spiritual significance of the land. “There are social benefits to this planning process,” said Andrew. “It teaches young people discipline and they learn to respect and want to preserve the environment. As a community that’s lived here for eight generations, we are confident that today’s youth will continue to be good stewards of these lands.”

By approaching the planning process from both the top, at the provincial government, and the bottom, at the community level, USAID LEAF and its partners have been able to link different stakeholder perspectives to develop a guiding framework for economic growth and environmental protection in Papua New Guinea.

For More information:
USAID Asia: info-rdma@usaid.gov  USAID LEAF: leaf_info@leafasia.org