



Innovative Climate Change Curriculum Impacts Students and Professors Alike

USAID LEAF builds capacity of region's future climate change professionals



Freddie Alei of the University of Papua New Guinea says the response to the climate change curriculum by his students has been fantastic.

"It's easier for me to prepare lessons because the material is ready to use. There are examples, case studies and guides for the instructor about...how to use the material, including role plays, Q&A and quizzes."

*Mrs. Somvilay Chanthalounnavong
Lecturer, National University of Laos*

A feeling of nervousness would overcome Somvilay Chanthalounnavong when she stood in front of her land use planning class at the National University of Laos. She was not comfortable in front of a crowd of students and felt the material she was presenting was ineffective. A sense of frustration filled Freddie Alei, a lecturer in the School of Natural and Physical Sciences at the University of Papua New Guinea. Not unlike Somvilay, he thought the material for his Resource Management and Environmental Sustainability course, in use for over a decade, was outdated and boring for his students. He struggled to keep them engaged.

Fast forward to today. Somvilay and Freddie have noticed big changes in both themselves and their students thanks to their engagement in a network of professors who designed new climate change curriculum materials now being implemented in more than 14 universities in Southeast Asia.

Over the past three years, the United States Agency for International Development Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (USAID LEAF) program, the U.S. Forest Service, and nearly 120 professors from six countries across Asia-Pacific have been engaged in a collaborative process of developing a new climate change curriculum. Through multiple regional workshops and with input from professors from three U.S. universities, the network of professors developed four curriculum modules: *Basic Climate Change*;

Social and Environmental Soundness; *Low Emission Land Use Planning*; and *Carbon Measurement and Monitoring*. Each module is comprised of presentations with associated lecturer notes, all complemented by case studies, role plays and teaching guides.

Vibol San, a lecturer at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, introduced the climate change curriculum to his classes using role play exercises to get his students more involved with the material. He feels they learned more because they were engaged and able to follow up his instruction with additional material. "There's a lot of supporting material and online resources where my students can download what they need and find useful," Vibol said.

Back at the National University of Laos, Somvilay says she is now much more confident standing in front of her students, using the USAID LEAF curriculum that she helped to develop. "I use all the chapters," she explained. "It's easier for me to prepare lessons because the material is ready to use. There are examples, case studies and guides for the instructor about how to explain the concepts and how to use the material, including role plays, Q&A and quizzes."

Freddie says his class at the University of Papua New Guinea used to have just over 100 students, but the number has grown since he implemented the USAID LEAF climate change curriculum. "Over the past few years, I've seen the number of students increase and now I'm currently teaching about 260 students in my class," he said. Because the materials and references are up to date and reflect actual issues in PNG, Freddie's students are more engaged. He said, "When I introduced this new material, the response was fantastic and the students like it. They really enjoy the course and are much more involved in the class."

Somvilay, Freddie and Vibol say they are more confident since they began working with the USAID LEAF climate change curriculum. They feel they are better instructors and their students are getting a better education. With the help of USAID LEAF and its partners, more than 30,000 students a year are receiving instruction using the climate change curriculum, and are poised to become a new cadre of professionals able to address the challenges of climate change throughout Asia and the Pacific.