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## SUCCESS STORY

# Universities in Asia-Pacific Implement Innovative Climate Change Curriculum

**USAID LEAF engages professors to develop next generation climate change courses**



Dr. Pimonrat Tiansawat explains how Chiang Mai University is using USAID LEAF's climate change curriculum modules

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*Dr. Somvang Phimmavong  
National University of Laos*

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At the National University of Laos, professors who worked with USAID LEAF and the USFS have designed a new master's degree program, MSc Forest Resource Management for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation. Explaining that they have also used the climate change curriculum for online classes, Dr. Somvang Phimmavong, Deputy Head of the Department of Forest Economics & Wood Technology, says, "I used the climate change curriculum to develop content for an e-learning module for my Forest Resource Economics class." He says that his students enjoy the materials and are more engaged than previously. "Not only are my students more engaged, but developing this material with professors and instructors from so many different universities has enriched climate change education in Laos," he adds.

Vietnam Forestry University (VFU) has integrated the materials into existing courses, including undergraduate courses on "Global Climate Change Impacts and Mitigation" and "Climate Change and Forestry," both of which use the USAID LEAF *Basic Climate Change* module. In addition to using the curriculum for students, VFU has adapted the climate change modules for a training program for provincial government officers, "Green Growth and Climate Change Mitigation" and for training courses in Malaysia and Laos entitled, "Improving Forest Governance in Southeast Asia". Dr. Bui The Doi of VFU said, "We have modified the materials from USAID LEAF, integrated it into our existing courses, and are developing new courses for undergraduate and graduate students. We are following the idea of use, teach, customize and are very proud of the work that we've done. Being in this network has enabled us to move climate change education forward at VFU."

At Chiang Mai University (CMU) in Thailand, students from the social science, business administration and communications disciplines are registering for climate change courses. According to CMU's Dr. Pimonrat Tiansawat, "You would be surprised at how engaged social science students are. If you show scientific evidence for climate change, students really get it. They get excited when I talk about ice cores and tree rings. They see the evidence and are more engaged."

From a core group of 12 professors, the USAID LEAF climate change curriculum has grown to encompass a network of hundreds of instructors, with thousands of students across Asia and the Pacific receiving instruction with the climate change modules. The core curriculum has been adapted to local and national contexts and is actively being used to train the next generation of leaders in the fight against climate change.

In 2012, the United States Agency for International Development Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (USAID LEAF) program and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) convened a group of 12 leading professors from eight universities in Southeast Asia to identify climate change topics that would benefit from improved university-level teaching materials. Collaboratively the network of educators developed a series of four modules: *Basic Climate Change*; *Social and Environmental Soundness*; *Low Emission Land Use Planning*; and *Carbon Measurement and Monitoring*, each comprised of presentations, associated lecturer notes, and complementary case studies, role plays and extensive online resources.

Today, the network has grown to 700 professors from 63 universities across the region, who are adapting and implementing the new curriculum, including new mandatory courses for students. At Da Lat University, a leading research and technology institution in central Vietnam, 8,000 students are now required to take an introductory climate change course based on the USAID LEAF curriculum. At Kasetsart University in Thailand, new undergraduate students take a general education course on climate change that integrates all four curriculum modules.

Other universities are following suit. At the University of Papua New Guinea, Freddie Alei took materials from the *Social and Environmental Soundness* module and adapted it for the local context. The university now offers a course in the School of Natural & Physical Sciences called "Social and Environmental Soundness in the Pacific."