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PROGRAM UPDATE

Forest management improvement conserves biodiversity and strengthens livelihoods in Lao communities

USAID supports forest management improvement in Attapeu Province, Laos



Tree inventory in Hat-Oudomxay village

Photo Credit: Xaysavath Keouangvichith/USAID LEAF

Over the last months, USAID LEAF has been supporting rural villages in Laos in planning to reforest areas that have been subject to extensive deforestation as a result of local development. This deforestation has negatively impacted poverty reduction efforts and potential for economic growth in communities that are heavily dependent on natural resources. In February, the second step of forest management improvement activities in Sanamxay district, Attapeu province, Laos, was completed in the three villages of Hat-Oudomxay, Sompoy and Tagao.

The work has been developed and carried out in coordination with district and provincial counterparts from the very beginning. In the recently completed second step, those involved established sampling plots and conducted an inventory of tree species in each villages' forest restoration zone. The zones were established during the first step of the program in late 2014. By establishing and surveying the sample plots, project implementers are able to determine the area to be restored through additional tree planting and natural regeneration.

The third and final step in the process will be the planting of locally adapted tree seedlings in the forest restoration zone at the beginning of the wet season. Each village will receive training in the implementation of regulations and guidelines currently being developed for the communities' management of the restored forest area following the completion of USAID LEAF. The training will ensure that this activity goes beyond just tree planting. The villagers who have the most to gain from the reforestation will become stewards of the land, increasing the likelihood that the seedlings will grow and mature, and continue to provide benefits for generations to come.

USAID LEAF's work in Attapeu will contribute to improved sustainable forest management implementation and biodiversity conservation. Equally as important, it supports enhanced well-being and livelihoods through sustainable forestry and community development. Reforestation efforts will help ensure a sustainable flow of forest products to these communities, allowing them to balance continued economic growth and improvements in their livelihoods with conservation.