

PROGRAM UPDATE

Integrated Fire Management and Estimating Fire Emissions Trainings Held in Chiang Mai



Fires in Southeast Asia have negative impacts on biodiversity and climate, emitting CO₂ and other greenhouse gases, while smoke and haze have health and economic impacts. USAID LEAF helps equip people and agencies with the knowledge and skills to better manage fires and to more accurately estimate historical emissions from fires.

While commonly used in Southeast Asia for agriculture and land clearing, fires in the region have immediate negative impacts on biodiversity and the climate. Fires emit substantial quantities of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases (GHG) and particulates, which are all drivers of climate change. Smoke and haze caused by these fires also have health and economic impacts locally and regionally.

To better equip people and agencies with the knowledge and skills to manage fires, the United States Agency for International Development Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (USAID LEAF) program, in collaboration with the Thailand Department of National Parks, the United States Forest Service (USFS), the Global Environment Centre (GEC) and the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, conducted twin trainings in January 2015 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. More than 25 practitioners working on land and fire management issues convened for each of the sessions. The first training was *Fire Management Planning* for Northern ASEAN Member States and the second was *Estimating Fire Emissions*.

The first training used integrated fire management (IFM), a community-based fire management program that has yielded positive results around the globe. USAID LEAF and its collaborating partners have been building capacity on IFM over the last several years, and this training was part of an overall effort to scale and replicate IFM processes across the region. Facilitators used interactive methods to train participants, including extensive instruction on development and implementation of a fire management plan. While much of the training material developed under the USAID LEAF/USFS and GEC collaboration has been used before, the Chiang Mai training was the first time it was targeted to participants from northern ASEAN countries. The aim of this training was to enhance the skills and capacity of younger practitioners in fire management planning. The future of this training program is now in the hands of GEC who will survey public and private ASEAN land management agencies on an annual basis to determine training needs and country locations. The plan is that this training effort may be sustained through the ASEAN Regional Haze Training Network (RHTN) or the growing donor funded programs through GEF, EU and other donor partners.

While fires are a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the region, the skills and methodologies to quantify them are limited. The second USAID LEAF training focused on how to estimate historical emissions from fires and included a visit to compare field data from a burn scar with remotely sensed imagery. The workshop produced a technical guidance manual on best practices for using specific methods and tools under different circumstances, which is part of USAID LEAF's *Technical Guidance Series on Forest Monitoring*. The training on estimating emissions convened experts to share lessons on best practices for estimating fire emissions in Asia and provide practical, hands-on training to fire managers, government officials and researchers on approaches, methods and tools for estimating emissions from fires in the region.