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Contents

01. Introduction

'what we need most is enough people with the skill, heart, and wisdom to help us pull ourselves back from the edge of breakdown and onto a different path.'

C. Otto Scharmer, Leading from the Emerging Future: From Ego-System to Eco-System Economies

Climate change is a multi-dimensional crisis that leads to a range of environmental, social, and economic problems across the globe, and poses many challenges for the food, agriculture, and forestry sectors. In Southeast Asia, key hazards include: rising sea levels, with associated flood risks plus saltwater intrusion; more extreme and variable precipitation; rising temperatures; and ecosystems degradation, all of which have implications for food security and farmer livelihoods (AHA Centre, 2020). Climate-related disasters can ruin crops, and damage or destroy infrastructure. They also have profound impacts on the day-to-day lives of the millions of people across the region whose livelihoods depend on natural resources, and particularly on agriculture (crops, livestock and fisheries) and forestry. This has been the case for more than 60 million people in the Lower Mekong River Basin (Hijioka et al., 2014).

Addressing climate change has overwhelmingly depended on mitigating greenhouse gases. This has meant calling on national governments to limit their emissions, but also – increasingly – to adapt to observed and expected changes. Given the complex characteristics of climate change and its far-reaching but uncertain impacts, it is difficult to fully understand this complexity. As such, climate change is considered a 'wicked problem', where any proposed solution will generate unintended consequences, adding to its complexity (Phillips, 2019). Responding to this kind of problem requires new approaches to leadership. Effective and innovative leadership is essential in order to successfully integrate climate-smart land use into related policy and strategies, and coordinate across sectors. It also has the potential to facilitate the introduction of public policies, implementation strategies and public service delivery that meet the needs and aspirations of citizens (IISD, 2018). A new form of leadership is also important for enabling adaptive governance and facilitating transformation. In this context, leadership requires continuous learning that is willing to embrace failure rather than trying to avoid it, and tries to move towards more resilient outcomes rather than emphasising a single, perfect solution (Schultz & Fazey, 2009).

This brief will discuss the role of systemic leadership in addressing climate change-related land use challenges in Southeast Asia. In particular, it will reflect on the role of leadership in promoting transformational change* towards a low-carbon, resilient and food secure economy and society, both globally and regionally. It will also discuss how the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) can embed this approach in its policy framework. It builds upon insights from the ASEAN Climate Leadership Programme (ACLP), which was designed as a contribution to the work of the ASEAN Climate Resilience Network (ASEAN-CRN), supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and organised in cooperation with the Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA). The brief will outline the ACLP's underlying theory, discuss experiences of the programme and provide inspiration as to how systemic leadership for climate-smart land use can be further promoted in the context of ASEAN.

The concept of transformational change* in the context of climate change describes deep, fundamental changes that disrupt the status quo within a system, involving a range of actors at different levels. In this sense, a system refers to a set of interconnected elements that work together to fulfil various functions. In the context of climate-smart land use, the broader system might include legislative, political, and institutional structures. Transformation is necessary in order to move away from current governance and development patterns that contributed to climate risks, and instead shift towards sustainable development.

02. The ASEAN context

Countries in Southeast Asia are highly dependent on natural resources. Agriculture and forestry are significant contributors to the region's economy, but are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Between 2003 and 2016, agriculture made up 19% of the region's GDP and accounted for 38.9% of the workforce (Liu et al., 2020). According to Germanwatch's long-term climate risk index measuring the countries most affected by weather-related events in 2000 to 2019, three ASEAN Member States – Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand – are in the top 10 at risk countries (Eckstein et al., 2021). Food systems are estimated to account for 21-37% of total greenhouse gas emissions, including 9–14% from crop and livestock activities and 5–14% from land use and land-use change (Mbow et al., 2019), with countries in Asia making up the greatest share of these emissions (Crippa et al., 2021). As such, there is great impetus for countries across the region to lower greenhouse gas emissions while also building the resilience of their economies to climate change impacts.

ASEAN and its Member States recognise the importance of food security, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, as vital components for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the regional level, this is reflected in strategic documents such as the Vision and Strategic Plan (SP) for ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry (FAF) (2016-2025), the ASEAN Strategic Plan on Environment (ASPEN) 2016-2025, the ASEAN Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication 2016-2020, the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN Region (SPA-FS) 2021-2025, the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Framework for Climate Change: Agriculture and Forestry towards Food and Nutrition Security and Achievement of SDGs, and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (June, 2020). At the national level, all ASEAN Member States (AMS) are parties to the Paris Agreement and have communicated their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Some ASEAN Member States have also developed or are in the process of developing their national adaptation plans (NAPs).

To work on mainstreaming climate change mitigation and adaptation in FAF sectors and beyond, ASEAN Member States engage in a number of ASEAN working groups, e.g. the ASEAN Technical Working Group on Agriculture Research and Development (ATWGARD) and the ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change (AWGCC), and informal networks like the ASEAN-CRN. This is in addition to ongoing work under the ASEAN sectoral bodies and working groups that are overseen by relevant ASEAN ministerial bodies. Furthermore, ASEAN Member States are active in addressing climate change at the global level and have prepared joint statements and submissions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. These have voiced common positions and aspirations towards climate solutions, and reflect efforts within the ASEAN community to build resilience to climate change through national and regional actions. The region has also advocated for land use to be included in global climate negotiations through the ASEAN Negotiating Group on Agriculture (ANGA).

To maintain such momentum, strong multi-country, multi-actor and cross-sectoral leadership is required in order to drive action.

03. Leadership in climate-smart land use

Challenges across the food, agriculture, and forestry sectors are complex and interrelated, and require the engagement of a range of stakeholders. Solutions to address the impacts of climate change on land use sectors must be holistic and innovative, use a systems view of the problem, and work to engage broad networks and relevant stakeholders (Dreier et al., 2019). Systems thinking aims to understand the complexity of challenges as a whole rather than breaking a system into pieces and studying components separately, given that a siloed approach can overlook interdependencies and interactions between the different parts (Bosch et al., 2007). To facilitate systemic change, capable leaders are required who understand the complexities of the system. In the case of climate-smart land use, such an understanding takes into account not only how land use sectors are affected by or contribute to climate change, but also the potential costs and benefits of mitigation and adaptation measures.

In the context of a multi-faceted problem like climate change, leaders help others understand the complexity of the system and see the bigger picture. Rather than considering the roles, functions, routines and structures of a leader, a systems approach considers leadership as a practice that involves an array of individuals and tools and depends on the daily performance of leadership functions, structures and routines (Spillane, 2005). Leaders are tasked to come up with a vision that can guide opportunities for others and emphasise the process of co-creating sustainable solutions. Additionally, leaders should understand not only shared challenges, but also potential tensions, conflicts, and uncertainties, and ultimately work to address challenges in an inclusive, collaborative, and reflective way. Furthermore, systemic leaders (see Box 1) have the added challenge of trying to address complex problems in a holistic manner.

Leaders are assumed to have 'a set of personal skills that enable an individual to initiate and manage change' (GIZ & SEARCA, 2020, p. 5). In this sense, leadership focuses on personal interactions and the local context rather than relating to a specific role or function (Spillane, 2005). Climate leadership requires individuals working in policy, programming and implementation who are willing to work across sectors and levels of governance towards transformational and adaptive climate action. In reality, leadership typically involves multiple people in a system, both with and without specific leadership titles or positions. This lends itself well to the national or regional level, where political leadership in particular is able to bring together a variety of stakeholders in order to address development goals that require regional cooperation (Normann, 2013). Given the cross-cutting nature of climate-smart land use, engagement is required from a range of ministries and other relevant organisations that work across the fields of land use, development and climate change.

Theory U is an example of a change management model that guides systemic change in order to 'lead from the future as it emerges' (see presencing.org for more information), and focuses on how individuals, groups, and organisations can 'sense and actualise their highest future potential' (Scharmer, 2018, p. 24). This theory assumes that everyone has blind spots based on their collection of personal experiences and the way that they see the world, and encourages people to shift their mindset from seeing the system as something external to a perspective that includes their own self. Scharmer (2018) describes this process as 'moving people from a "silo view" to a systems view—or, as we would say, from an ego-system awareness to an eco-system awareness' (p. 24). Effective systemic change requires a more holistic understanding of widespread challenges and the implications of proposed solutions. The five movements of Theory U aim to go beyond business as usual by encouraging people to open their mind, heart, and will to change (see Box 2). Theory U envisages different levels of perception, and involves a step-by-step process of observation and reflection before action. This is designed to avoid mindless action as well as the 'action-less mind', which is described as 'discuss[ing] things to death instead of exploring the future by doing' (Scharmer, 2018, p. 33).

In Southeast Asia, climate action is happening at the local, national and regional levels. In order to capitalise on ongoing climate change efforts and ultimately contribute towards transformational change, systemic leadership is required. This must address complex problems by unlocking cultural and behavioural changes, as explained in Box 1.

In the land use sectors, for example, ASEAN Member States have shown that they are committed to promoting climate-friendly and resilient practices in agriculture and forestry through regional strategic plans and joint statements at the international level. While ASEAN provides a strong institutional framework for addressing regional challenges, like many large organisations it is siloed and compartmentalised. As a result, efforts are required to find innovative ways of working that bring together policymakers and other stakeholders from different sectors in order to address cross-cutting challenges. Building the competencies and awareness of policymakers from across ASEAN Member States in systemic leadership could better equip them to deal with the complexity of climate change adaptation and mitigation. In this context, climate governance at all levels requires structured, cross-sectoral cooperation in conjunction with the systemic engagement of dedicated leaders. This can drive change at national and regional levels, and within institutions that are open to adapting their operations in order to become more inclusive, holistic and dynamic.

Box 1: Systemic leadership explained

For organisations, institutions, and networks to adapt, evolve and ultimately succeed, leaders should foster improved capacities and capabilities for understanding complexities, adapting to threats and generating opportunities within a system. Rather than thinking of leaders as those at the top of an organisational hierarchy, leadership for systemic change requires everyone to contribute to the collective capacity of a system to sense and shape the future. This is often guided by motivated individuals in key positions.

Systemic leadership builds on the relational qualities of leadership, such as collaboration, stewardship, trust, and care, as well as influential qualities, such as driving things in a specific direction and ensuring quality and performance (Collier & Esteban, 2000). A systemic leader is able to catalyse collective leadership and utilise its broader understanding of complex inter-relationships and dynamics within a system (Phillips, 2019). Systemic leadership is dynamic. Rather than relying on the role of one particularly influential individual, it recognises that 'people have different capabilities, and roles and responsibilities will shift between different people at different times' (Collier & Esteban, 2000, p. 52). Consequently, it relies on networks of leaders to address complex problems. This approach does not necessarily follow linear plans that address certain goals, but rather moves flexibly towards intended outcomes (Phillips, 2019). There is a generative quality to this approach, meaning that it grows while fostering change. Working towards a shared mission enables a group or network to achieve consensus, assume shared responsibility, work for the common good and build their community or network.

Examples of systemic leadership frameworks include the Cynefin framework (Snowden & Boone, 2007), VUCA and Theory U. The present brief will discuss Theory U, because this is the framework adopted for ACLP. In short, though, Cynefin is a decision-making and management framework that characterises different decision-making models in order to help guide what actions can and should be taken. In this way, it is also a complexity model in which the patterns in the framework enable both categorisation and sensemaking. VUCA, an acronym for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, originated during the Cold War at the United States Army College as a way to describe the unstable political situation (Baran & Woznyj, 2020) (Murugan et al., 2020). The term was expanded to include other far-reaching economic, social, and environmental problems. Climate change, for example, has been described as a 'VUCA problem'. VUCA represents four distinct challenges: 'Volatility: changes occur in a high speed; Uncertainty: deterministic models that were appropriate for giving solutions do not work; Complexity: the access to the global world has made it easy to connect to every part of the world, yet it has become very complex; Ambiguity: there are several views to give meaning to things that happen around us' (Chawla & Lenka, 2018, p. 3).

Box 2: Theory U in five movements

Moving from making quick reactive responses to generative ones, Scharmer contends that '[...] we need to move first into intimate connection with the world and to a place of inner knowing that emerges from within, followed by bringing forth the new, which entails discovering the future by doing' (2007, p. 6). This can be done in five movements, as seen in Figure 1. The first movement, co-initiating, aims to build common intent and begins with listening. The second movement, co-sensing, calls for observation with an open heart and open mind. In the context of climate-smart land use, this means going to farms and production forests, talking to farmers and community leaders about the problems they face, and staying in touch with issues as they evolve. Third, presencing allows the individual to let go of everything that is not essential, and opens up new possibilities. The fourth movement, prototyping, is part of the sensing and discovery process involving actions that are a 'set of small living examples that explore the future by doing' (Scharmer, 2007, p. 8) and aim to avoid an 'analysis paralysis'. Finally, co-evolving focuses on which of the prototypes are working and which aren't, in order to consider what might have the greatest impact on whatever challenge is being faced. This leads to further piloting and upscaling.

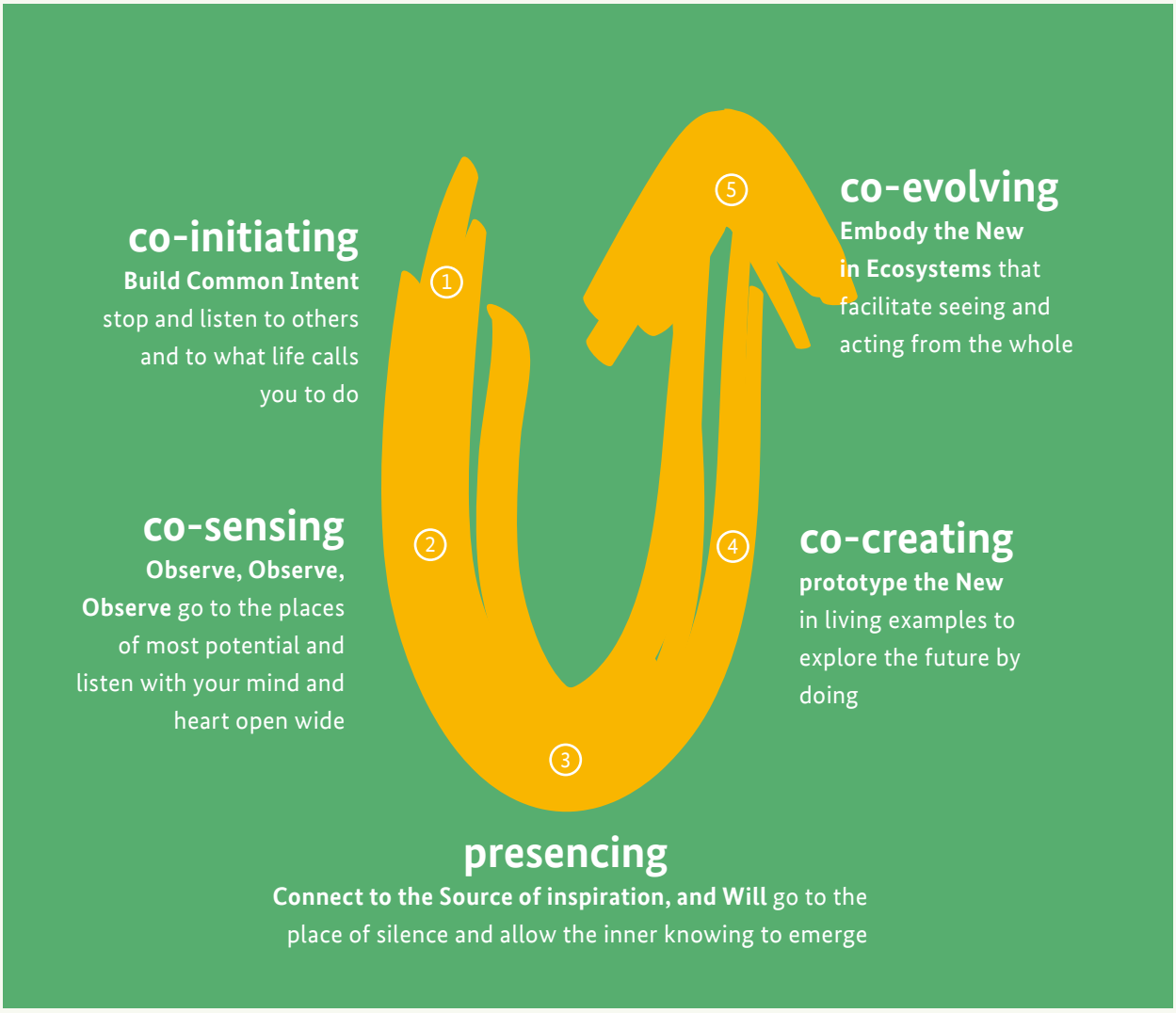

Figure 1: The Theory U process aims to bring inner knowing to discovery of a future by doing. Source: Scharmer, 2007, p. 6.

04. ASEAN and the need for systemic leadership

Systemic leadership calls for individuals to utilise a collective approach that integrates different realities from many perspectives, and encourages others to do the same (Senge et al., 2015). In a regional setting, leaders from across ASEAN Member States are encouraged to work together to share their diverse understandings of, and solutions to, regional challenges in order to move towards common objectives. This builds on national leadership capacities, where leaders from different sectors and ministries should be encouraged to work together on common problems. Three core capabilities of systemic leadership are the ability to see the larger system, foster reflection and discussion, and shift the focus from 'reactive problem solving to co-creating the future' (Senge et al., 2015, p. 29).

ASEAN, like many of the governments of its Member States, has a complex institutional architecture that typically addresses different policy areas in isolation. This approach often falls short when tackling complex challenges such as environmental degradation, climate change or green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Integrating a systemic approach in policymaking provides an opportunity to utilise the collective experience and expertise of all relevant sectors and create solutions that are acceptable to all relevant stakeholders. To do this, systemic leadership looks at how to build synergies and work across silos in a complex organisational setting. This involves focusing on leadership roles that go beyond the individual level, and looking at how leadership is spread among different actors in the organisation.

In the ASEAN context, there are some examples of promoting such cross-sectoral and more systemic approaches in the context of climate change, agriculture, forestry and food security. These include the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Framework on Climate Change: Agriculture and Forestry towards Food Security (AFCC), which was endorsed by the ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) in 2009. Its implementation is being coordinated by a steering committee that comprises representatives from different ASEAN sectoral bodies. Furthermore, the ASEAN-CRN regularly offers platforms and activities where representatives from different national ministries, research institutions or other expert organisations interact with one another, thus broadening their understanding of the challenges the region is facing while contributing to more innovative policy approaches and implementation. Such collaborative engagement is at the core of the 'ASEAN way', which relies on cooperation and consensus-driven policymaking. However, mechanisms for implementation are often unclear. Obstacles include limited institutional mandates, insufficient financial resources and a need for more concerted leadership. Leadership is important on all levels. High-level leadership is of particular importance for mainstreaming climate change priorities across all relevant policy areas more systematically and comprehensively.

Emphasising the importance of observation and reflection as part of cross-sectoral leadership at the regional level has many benefits. For example, sharing sector-specific experiences and solutions with a wider audience may lead to more innovative solutions and a better understanding of shared challenges. Additionally, a collaborative approach aims to engage and empower relevant partners and stakeholders rather than trying to control or direct them (Dreier et al., 2019), which could encourage collaboration across different disciplines. This collaboration could help to bundle and unlock new resources, expertise and access to relevant stakeholders, ultimately leading to the development and upscaling of more inclusive, innovative and effective solutions.

At the regional level, ASEAN faces numerous challenges in implementing cross-cutting climate change policy and action. For example, compared to other policy fields climate action is rarely discussed as an overarching priority on the high-level policymaking tiers, despite increasing recognition of its importance. Within ASEAN's structure, there are opportunities for a bottom-up approach. For example, individual national policymakers can utilise sectoral bodies to raise awareness of climate change challenges and solutions, and work across sectors with other policymakers in the region. Similarly, as formal and informal networks provide guidance for ASEAN Member States and ASEAN sectoral bodies, they can target multiple sectors and offer trainings that incentivise a collaborative approach.

05. Leadership development in action: The ASEAN Climate Leadership Programme

To promote systemic leadership for climate action in ASEAN, the Climate-Smart Land Use in ASEAN (CSLU) project, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and implemented by GIZ in cooperation with SEARCA, established the ASEAN Climate Leadership Programme (ACLP). ACLP was designed to consider the kinds of leadership competencies that are needed in order to advance climate-smart land use in the region. To do this, the programme set out to enhance participants' leadership skills and work across silos. The aim was to come up with a coordinated and systemic approach that would advance integrated land management solutions, in order to enhance food security and reduce climate impacts at the national and regional levels.

The ACLP design was inspired by the Theory U. The programme included an opportunity for participants to go through the Theory U process in order to come up with a 'change project' to 'explore the challenges in the system and contribute to solutions relevant to climate-smart land use' (GIZ & SEARCA, 2021, p. 7). Throughout the process, participants were encouraged to resist reacting immediately to perceived challenges, and instead engage in 'generative listening' and open up their 'capacity to connect to the highest future possibility that can emerge' (Scharmer, 2007, p. 2). To do this, they were invited to utilise the five-movement U process (see Box 2), and were provided with tools and support from their peers as well as coaching and mentoring.

The ACLP uses a systemic view of land management in the context of climate change to promote collaborative action at the individual, national, and regional levels, and to improve the processes that connect these policy levels. For change at the individual level, participants are empowered to promote climate-smart land use in their professional context. They become more aware of different perspectives and relevant sources of information from different levels and stakeholders, and gain a better understanding of how to facilitate cooperation, knowledge sharing and policymaking. This contributes to change at the national level, where leaders can advocate for the more systematic integration of a cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach into domestic policy processes. Leaders can also advocate for the use of information and guidance coming from different levels, including the ASEAN level. At the regional level, these leaders can facilitate the design of better informed, more targeted, inclusive and application-oriented regional policies. Overall, the empowered leaders can promote process-level change, by helping to connect the different spheres of policymaking – the international and regional with the national and local levels, and across different sectors or policy fields.

The programme underlined the importance of a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder approach that takes a landscape perspective. While agriculture, forestry, mining, and other forms of land use typically compete with environmental and biodiversity conservation goals, this approach looks at the entire system, in order to enhance synergies and minimise potential trade-offs. When considering land use challenges, for example, the bigger picture includes the landscape level and the potential consequences of climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Working across sectors might mean identifying the co-benefits of different practices, like how rice cultivation methods might mitigate greenhouse gases, or how for instance agroforestry might integrate different types of land use. At the policy level, this requires an understanding of local challenges, customs and experiences. It also means working with all relevant stakeholders to promote and support constructive solutions. Effective leadership is essential for mediating the numerous, and sometimes conflicting, goals, interests, skills and expertise of the different stakeholders involved, in order to achieve common goals.

The organisers of the ACLP recognised that a critical mass of capable leaders working in different fields is needed in order to mainstream climate-resilient and climate-friendly practices and policymaking in the agriculture, forestry, and food sectors. Therefore, they invited a diverse group of participants from across the ASEAN Member States to join ACLP. Recruiting participants through different ASEAN sectoral bodies and ASEAN-CRN allowed for a broad outreach, and laid the foundation for cross-sectoral dialogue. The programme participants recruited by the ACLP included

policymakers, researchers and practitioners from the region in the fields of agriculture, forestry, land use planning, rural development, and climate policy and action. Furthermore, representatives of ASEAN-CRN, the ASEAN Negotiating Group on Agriculture (ANGA) and the ASEAN Secretariat contributed to the programme as expert speakers.

In its first run in 2020, twenty-seven participants from nine of the ten ASEAN Member States were chosen based on their fields of expertise, their direct or indirect involvement with national and regional policy processes, and their willingness to actively participate in the full programme with the support of their organisations and direct supervisors. A majority of the participants came from government institutions, with a few representing the academic community and civil society organisations. The ACLP was designed to build on the technical knowledge of the participants, their motivations, and the skills they possessed to engage and collaborate beyond their immediate work area. Thus, the participants were able to simultaneously enhance their leadership skills and increase their understanding of complex issues facing the region in the context of climate change. The ACLP further aimed to start building a network of leaders who would collaborate across sectors to address the impacts of climate change on land use sectors.

The ACLP emphasised the importance of the learning process, and of leadership theory paired with practice. The programme took place over three months and included four modules. Throughout their leadership journey, participants were provided with technical inputs, leadership theory, and in-depth insights from fellow policymakers, experts and local communities. This was designed to encourage dialogues that would address regional, national and local policy processes for promoting climate-smart land use. Participants also had numerous opportunities to put the new concepts into practice through the so-called change project and personal leadership development plans.

To showcase the impact of the leadership journey on participants, the organisers published video interviews of two ACLP alumni who talk about their **"Story of Change"**:
ACLP Story of Change – **Ms Rafeah Rabiatun binti Othman**
ACLP Story Of Change – **Mr Carlo Carlos**

Based on the very positive feedback on the first ACLP, the CSLU project and SEARCA set out to organise a second run of the programme in 2021 allowing more representatives from ASEAN Member States to strengthen der leadership skills and build a network among each other. More information on the ACLP can be found at **https://aseanclimateleadership.org/.**

Photo 1. The ACLP 2020 participants during the ACLP virtual closing and certificate award ceremony in mid of December 2020. Photo by SEARCA.

06. Promoting climate leadership across ASEAN

Given that the complex challenges related to climate change do not stop at national borders, regional efforts are required in order to address its adverse effects and mitigate future impacts. ASEAN will continue to play an important role in promoting holistic policy responses and cross-country and cross-sectoral action to address the challenges associated with climate change. The experience of the ACLP highlights the potential of bringing together motivated individuals from different institutions and countries.

Leadership is about more than being at the top of an organisational hierarchy. Leaders must also build strong connections locally, nationally, regionally and internationally, share knowledge, and develop the social and cultural intelligence to initiate change. Enabling transformational shifts in thinking and action demands a systemic understanding of the challenge. When considering the impact of climate change specific to the land use sectors, taking a landscape approach is vital to addressing different perspectives and interests, and responding to unintended consequences. Through its policy frameworks, policy dialogues and knowledge exchange platforms, ASEAN can be a catalyst for building a network of leaders who have the technical knowledge and the skills to advance low-carbon and climate-resilient development in Southeast Asia.

A systemic approach to climate leadership in ASEAN has the potential to mainstream climate action across its three community pillars and many sectoral bodies. Given the cross-cutting nature of climate change, significant actions need to be taken at all levels to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the existing and future adverse effects of climate change in every sector. Climate change needs to be taken up as a key policy priority even more systematically by ASEAN at the institutional level, and addressed in all guiding strategies and frameworks. Good examples to build upon do exist. The integration of climate action into the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, for example, showcases the potential of integrated solutions in addressing complex problems. Another example is the ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response to address disaster risk management in the region. A primary source of inspiration for a systemic approach within ASEAN is its motto: 'One Vision, One Identity, One Community'. This calls into action a whole-of-ASEAN approach, which is being driven by actions from all ASEAN Community pillars: the political-security pillar, to address the ramifications of climate change for regional peace and security; the socio-cultural pillar, where environmental policy is located, to strengthen climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience programming; and the economic pillar, for mainstreaming climate change responses across key economic sectors. Strong systemic leadership is needed for these things to happen.

Strong leadership within ASEAN will not only benefit the region. It will also set an international example, underlining the importance of a cooperative approach to climate action. Regional groups, such as ANGA, are already making headway in this regard. By encouraging a cross-sectoral approach to climate leadership at all levels, ASEAN will be able to more comprehensively address regional challenges.

ASEAN's often siloed and compartmentalised approach gives policymakers the added challenge of needing to find ways to fill the gaps that arise between working groups and in work towards shared objectives and joint actions. This creates a need to enhance cross-sectoral leadership capacities. To do this, ASEAN policymakers would benefit from dedicated platforms, exchange formats and trainings that would enable them to better understand what climate action looks like in different sectors and different countries. This would help to craft more effective, holistic and well-aligned strategies and to build a community of practice among systemic leaders and practitioners. The proposals of the Brunei chairmanship in 2021 for the establishment of an ASEAN Centre for Climate Change or a Youth Climate Programme are opportunities that could be maximised to facilitate systemic leadership in the region.

ACLP offers an important example of how cross-sectoral capacity building initiatives can help to build leadership capabilities across the region, with a focus on the ability to see the larger system, foster reflection and discussion,

and co-create the future. The ACLP created a space for dialogues with and among different ASEAN sectoral bodies, the ASEAN Secretariat, and representatives from ASEAN Member States, in order to improve understanding of the region's complex problems. It is important to keep driving this momentum and continue to strengthen and involve leaders at all levels through initiatives such as the ACLP, platforms like the ASEAN-CRN, or ultimately within the ASEAN institutional structures themselves.

For example, identifying focal points that can act as climate action champions in ASEAN's many sectoral bodies, and giving them a platform to connect and build knowledge, could help to increase continuity and coherence throughout their rotating short-term leadership roles and changing representation. Such efforts would also help further mainstream climate change throughout the whole institution of ASEAN, with the ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change assuming a key role for coordinating the overarching process.

This more bottom-up engagement could help raise the profile of climate change as a key priority for all policy fields and, by doing so, also increase ownership of this topic at the highest levels of leadership within ASEAN. Ultimately, this combination of bottom-up and top-down leadership will be a powerful driver for systematically mainstreaming climate change mitigation and adaptation as a priority across all three ASEAN community pillars, and promoting the transition towards a sustainable future for the region.

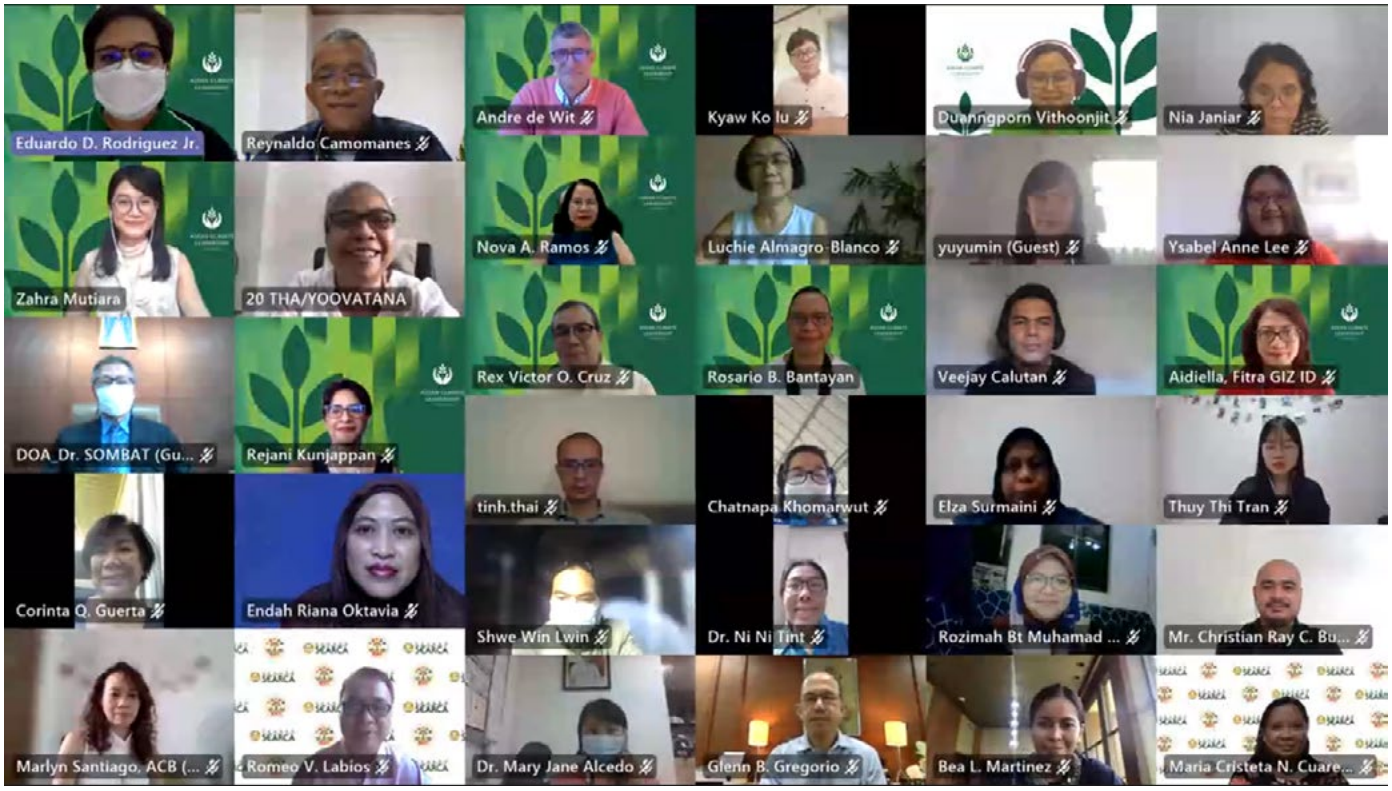

Photo 2. ACLP 2021 participants during the opening programme in August 2021. Photo: SEARCA

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