



SUMMARY

REPORT

Second Regional Forum for People and Forests

Community Forestry: Key to Solving Current and Emerging Challenges

8-9 August 2011

Siam City Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand



RECOFTC is the only international not-for-profit organization that specializes in capacity building for community forestry and devolved forest management in Asia-Pacific. Beginning as a knowledge hub in 1987, RECOFTC has actively supported the development of community forestry institutions, policies and programs in the region.



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Published by:

RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests

P.O. Box 1111

Kasetsart Post Office

Bangkok 10903, Thailand

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SECOND REGIONAL FORUM FOR PEOPLE AND FORESTS

COMMUNITY FORESTRY: KEY TO SOLVING CURRENT AND EMERGING CHALLENGES 8-9 AUGUST 2011

Summary Report

Over 200 participants including 134 international delegates from 20 countries convened on 8–9 August 2011 in Bangkok, Thailand, for two days of deliberations on the potential of community forestry to address some of the biggest challenges we face today. Be it persistent rural poverty, climate change, governance, deforestation, or rights of indigenous and local people, there were questions raised and solutions offered in several packed sessions ending in a Vision 2020 exercise and a Call for Action at the close of the Forum.

The gathering included eminent personalities and practitioners from all sections of society including government, multilateral and bilateral development agencies, civil society, community forestry practitioners, and community representatives. The Forum was preceded by a Press Conference at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand on August 5, 2011, addressed by Dr. R. K. Pachauri, who received the Nobel Prize on behalf of UN International Panel on Climate Change in 2007. The Press Conference focused on the challenges and contributions already made by community forests, the need to put an economic value on environmental services, and progress made by the host country, Thailand, in recognizing the rights of local people living in and around forests (media release in annex).

Forum Objectives

- Take stock of community forestry in the region and learn from innovative examples across the globe
- Develop a shared vision for community forestry in the Asia-Pacific region in 2020
- Assess and explore current and emerging challenges and identify opportunities for community forestry to address them
- Develop practical recommendations to strengthen community forestry and its role in tackling current and emerging challenges at regional and country levels (in particular in ASEAN and focal countries of RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests.)
- Develop a forum-wide 'Call for Action' for different stakeholders to support specific country recommendations and regional and global mechanisms.

The Knowledge Fair and Exhibition were major attractions of the Forum. Some 24 presentations were made in two parallel sessions during the Knowledge Fair following lunch on the first day, grouped by themes like livelihood and climate change (See Agenda). While it was impossible to attend all presentations at the actual event, we have included a round-up in this report along with appropriate slides. At the Exhibition, the scene stealers were the local people weaving and selling silk scarves from Laos while vegetables and forest products from Thailand Cambodia, Philippines and Indonesia were also on display. Over 41 organizations took part in the Exhibition and many delegates walked away with free seedlings courtesy of the Nakhon Khuan Khan Green Area and Eco-Management Center, Royal Forest Department of Thailand.

ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASFN	ASEAN Social Forestry Network
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse gas
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MDG	Millenium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Government Organization
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NRM	Natural Resource Management
RECOFTC	Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific - The Center for People and Forests
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RFD	Royal Forest Department of Thailand
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TCEB	Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau
TREES	Training, Extension, Enterprises and Supply
UN	United Nations
UN-IPCC	United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change



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SECOND REGIONAL FORUM FOR PEOPLE AND FORESTS

Community Forestry: Key to Solving Current and Emerging Challenges

Siam City Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand
8-9 August 2011

FORUM AGENDA

Day 1 (8 August 2011)		
Time	Activity	Resource Person
07.30-08.30	Continued registration of participants	
08.30-08.40	Opening and welcome: Introduction to the forum	Ms. Prabha Chandran, RECOFTC
08.40-08.50	Opening remarks RFD	Mr. Prayuth Lorsuwanasiri, Deputy Director General, Royal Forest Department
08.50-08.55	Opening remarks FAO	Mr. Patrick Durst, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO
08.55-09.00	Opening remarks ASFN	Mr. Mahmud Haji Yussof, ASFN Chairperson, Acting Director, Forestry Department, Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources, Brunei Darussalam
09.00-09.05	Opening remarks JICA	Mr. Shigeki Hata, Executive Technical Advisor to the Director General of Global Environment Department, JICA
09.05-09.30	Community forestry - A personal reflection	Dr. Yam Malla, Executive Director, RECOFTC
09.30-09.50	Keynote Address	Dr. Ir. Haryadi Himawan, ASFN Secretariat Chairperson, Director, Directorate of Social Forestry Development, Indonesia
09.50-10.00	Official opening of the exhibition	RFD, JICA and RECOFTC
10.00-10.30	Morning tea/coffee (viewing the exhibition)	
10.30-12.00	Session 1: Setting the scene	Moderator: Dr. Yurdi Yasmi, RECOFTC
10.30-10.40	Overview of the expected outputs of Day One	Mr. James Bampton, RECOFTC
10.40-10.55	Social Forestry in ASEAN: Trends, challenges and opportunities for regional cooperation	Dr. Doris Capistrano, ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change
10.55-11.10	Drivers of change and their impact on communities and forests	Mr. Patrick Durst, FAO
11.10-11.30	Forest tenure, governance and enterprise status: trends, experience and opportunities for Asia in a changing context	Dr. Myrna Safitri, Epistema Institute and Dr. Ganga Ram Dahal, Rights and Resources Initiative
11.30-12.00	Q&A and discussion	Moderator: Dr. Yurdi Yasmi, RECOFTC
12.00-13.30	Lunch	
13.30-17.30	Session 2: Taking stock Knowledge fair with 24 examples of innovative, community-based initiatives from the region	Moderators: Room 1: Ms. Maria Cristina Guerrero, NTFP-EP Room 2: Ms. Marlea Pinor Munez, CODE REDD
13.30-13.40	Introduction of the sessions	Moderators
13.40-17.30	Knowledge fair presentations and discussions	Please check the detailed schedule in your folders

Day 2 (9 August 2011)		
08.30-08.40	Summary of day 1 / Introduction of day 2	Mr. David Cassells, The Nature Conservancy
08.40-10.30	Session 3: Expanding the scope	Moderator: Mr. James Bampton, RECOFTC
08.40-09.00	Bio-rights and poverty alleviation at wetlands in Indonesia: perspective from the field	Mr. Yus Rusila Noor, Wetlands International
09.00-09.20	Increasing competitiveness and expanding market opportunities for community forest enterprises in Mesoamerica: achievements through technical assistance by the Rainforest Alliance TREES Program	Mr. Francisco Chapela, Rainforest Alliance-Mexico
09.20-09.50	Contribution of community forestry to food security: sharing experiences from Laos and Myanmar	Mr. Joost Foppes, Village Focus International and Dr. Ohnmar Khaing, Food Security Working Group
09.50-10.10	Community Voices on REDD – a look at perceptions, controlling drivers, and benefit sharing	Ms. Amanda Bradley, PACT-Cambodia and Venerable Bun Salouth, Monk Federation
10.10-10.30	Q&A and discussion	Moderator: Mr. James Bampton, RECOFTC
10.30-10.45	Morning tea/coffee break	
10.45-12.30	Session 4: Setting a framework for practical action	Moderator: Dr. David Gritten, RECOFTC
10.45-11.15	The Application of a rights -based approach to community forestry and natural resource management / case study from Vietnam	Mr. Tom Blomley, Acacia Natural Resources and Mr. Vu Thai Troung, CARE-Vietnam
11.15-11.30	Challenges and opportunities for women in community forestry	Dr. Jeannette Gurung, WOCAN
11.30-11.45	National community forestry programs: mapping the process and sharing experiences from Cambodia	Mr. Pham Kamnap, Forest Administration, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Cambodia
11.45-12.00	Impacts of community forestry on livelihoods	Dr. Krishna Paudel, Food and Sustainable Agriculture Initiative
12.00-12.30	Q&A and discussion	Moderator: Dr. David Gritten, RECOFTC
12.30-13.30	Lunch	
13.30-17.30	Session 5: Vision for Community Forestry in 2020 and 'Call for Action'	
13.30-14.00	Vision: Community forestry in 2020	Moderator: Mr. Ronnakorn Triraganon, RECOFTC
14.00-14.30	Presenting the draft 'Call for Action'	Mr. Toon De Bruyn, RECOFTC
14.30-15.40	Discussion on the 'Call for Action'	Group work
15.40-16.15	Afternoon tea/coffee break	
16.15-17.30	Plenary Agreement on the 'Call for Action'	Participants
17.30-17.45	Closing remarks	Dr. Tint L. Thauung, The Nature Conservancy



OVERVIEW



2011 is the UN International Year of Forests and its theme, “Celebrating Forests for People,”¹ highlights the growing challenges faced by forests, indigenous, and local people² from persistent poverty, deforestation, conversion of forests to other land uses, and climate change. Many of these challenges are exacerbated by the failure to recognize local peoples’ rights over forestland and resources. Less than 12% of the tropical forest in the Asia-Pacific region is managed sustainably, according to ITTO.³ Despite successful efforts in forest rehabilitation, a huge amount of natural forest is still lost every year across the region.⁴ Recent data from Center for International Forestry Research shows that forest and environmental contributions to local livelihoods were equivalent to agriculture at 25%.

Deforestation contributes 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Forest-related mitigation measures are now recognized as amongst the most practical and cost-effective interventions to slow global warming—as well as providing a host of other environmental products and services.

¹ The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests – Celebrating Forests for People – to raise awareness on sustainable management, development and conservation of all types of forests, recognizing they can contribute significantly to sustainable development, poverty eradication and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

² The term ‘local people’ as used in this document encompasses Indigenous Peoples and other forest communities, e.g. local settlers, migrant and other people who live in and around the forests.

³ Blaser, J., Sarre, A., Poore, D. & Johnson, S. (2011) Status of Tropical Forest Management ITTO Technical Series No 38. International Tropical Timber Organization, Yokohama, Japan.

⁴ FAO (2011) State of the World’s Forests 2011. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy.



However, poverty, weak law enforcement, and escalating demand for forest products, food, and fuel in rural and urban regions continue to drive forest destruction at an alarming rate.

At the First Regional Forum for People and Forests on Carbon Financing and Community Forestry, held in Hanoi, Vietnam, from 18–20 August 2009, carbon financing was identified as a promising new strategy to improve the health of the world's forests and potentially pull 450 million local people out of poverty. The Forum stressed that benefits from carbon financing must expand, not replace, local people's existing rights and benefits and expressed the hope that schemes such as 'REDD' would succeed in improving their lives.

Community forestry has been developing in the region for many years in a variety of forms. Its successes have demonstrated that giving local communities control over forest resources can help slow and even reverse deforestation. Nevertheless, only 26% of forests in the region are recognized as community forests. Bringing community forestry into mainstream forest management is a crucial step in slowing deforestation, ensuring benefit flows, and expanding sustainable forest management.

Even where community forestry is making headway, it is frequently constrained by regulatory frameworks and contradictory policies that limit rights and impose onerous responsibilities. These obstacles must be removed so local people can sustainably manage their forests in ways that are appropriate to their situation and provide sufficient benefits to them, the forest, and the region.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE OPENING SPEECHES



"2011 has been recognized as the 'International Year of Forests' with the specific theme of 'Celebrating Forests for People.' The key message is the need for a people-centered approach to management of the world's forests. Yet, individual organizations alone may not be enough to protect our forest resources, so it is important that forestry and other economic sectors are involved in forest management strategies."

Mr. Prayuth Lorsuwansiri, Deputy Director General, Royal Forest Department of Thailand



"One of the great difficulties for community forestry is that it is expected to deliver all things to all people—from protection of natural resources to generating incomes and livelihoods and eradicating poverty, as well as producing renewable energy and ecotourism. This is not to say that community forestry cannot deliver all these things, but it is a daunting challenge faced by all people working in the sector."

Mr. Patrick Durst, Senior Forestry Officer, UN Food and Agriculture Organization



"JICA's forestry-related assistance dates back to the 1970s. We have learned firsthand how long the development of successful community forestry activities can take. For example, in Senegal, it took eight years for a project to be fully operational using farmer-to-farmer extension. In Nepal, a decade of effort was needed to develop the SABIHA model under which community groups themselves make decisions regarding their management of natural resources. This Forum provides an opportunity to take stock of our knowledge and jointly prepare for possible future challenges."

Mr. Shigeki Hata, Executive Technical Advisor to the Director General of Global Environment Department, Japan International Cooperation Agency

TAKING COMMUNITY FORESTRY TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Dr. Yam Malla, Executive Director, RECOFTC

In a retrospective overview of his work in community forestry, Dr. Malla provided some personal reflections covering 30 years in the sector.



“Two decades of work has shown conclusively that a policy and legislative framework that allows local communities to manage forest resources has not only resulted in regeneration of forests, watersheds, flora and fauna, but also that millions can be pulled out of poverty.”

There has been a significant advance in the understanding of people-forest relationships at all levels and among diverse interest groups. Community forestry has become part of the ‘word speak’ and action of sustainable forest management. The world is going through a rapid process of change that is placing increased pressure on forests. Future sustainable outcomes will require another quantum leap forward by community forestry.

It seems simplistic in hindsight, to think that massive tree planting projects could provide a technical solution to the increasing levels of deforestation as the underlying problems have become more evident. To address these problems, governments began to see farmers as part of the solution rather than just a problem. Although community forest policies came into being initially in developing countries, the practice today is much broader. Globally, more than 25% of forests are under community management.

Rather than trying to promote community forestry as the solution to all problems, it is more realistic to recognize its potential to contribute to redressing problems. For instance, climate change has attracted the interest of world leaders and while large scale clearing of forests is a major contributor to rising temperatures, REDD+ is a cost effective way of addressing global GHG emissions.

Forests for People (7)		
State Forests under Local Community Management		
Selected Asian Countries		
Country	Forest area handed over to local communities	CF groups/organizations
Cambodia	383,377 ha	420 CF Groups
China	8 provinces forest allocation	69.1% of the total h-holds
India	17.3 million ha	84,632 For Prot. Committees
Indonesia	158,000 ha	NA
Nepal	1.3 million ha	14,500 Forest User Groups
Philippines	5.97 million ha	5,503 CBFM Groups
Thailand	196,990 ha	5,300 CF Groups
Vietnam	2,348,000 ha	1,203 CF User Groups

Slide from Dr. Yam Malla's Reflections on 30 years in Community Forestry

Globally, 1.2 billion people depend on forests for their livelihoods, with more than 400 million in Asia, where many forest-based people live in abject poverty and are untouched by mainstream politics. To find sustainable solutions, community forestry must be expanded to include highly productive sites, not just relegated to degraded areas. The income from community forests must flow down to the poor who are dependent on them and have often contributed to sustainable management practices.

With food insecurity becoming an ongoing challenge and declining food production a consequence of the increased focus on the manufacturing sector, the forests also act as a vital safety net for many disadvantaged people.

Community forestry must respond to markets and consider timber as well as non-timber forest products; otherwise, private entrepreneurs will reap the major benefits from this area. Community forestry needs to be taken to a new level, to move beyond the local to the international level. The development of a successful future strategy will be essential to achieve enduring outcomes from community forestry.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: WHY ASEAN FORESTS MATTER



Dr. Ir. Haryadi Himawan, ASEAN Social Forestry Network Secretariat Chairperson

Asia is very vulnerable to climate challenges, with tsunamis and forest fires a regular threat to the region. Often, the poor pay the highest price for climate change. ASEAN forests are important; they comprise 50% of the world's forests and 60 to 70 million local people depend on them for their livelihood.

The ASEAN Social Forestry Network provides a strong framework to support the expanding role of local people in sustainable forest management through the promotion of good policy and practice, the establishment of strong information and communication systems, and the promotion of knowledge sharing among practicing communities living in and around the forests. The network's broad membership is drawn from government officials, experts, and practitioners in community forestry.

In recent years, community forestry has shown great potential to increase the resilience of communities to the potential impacts of climate change and natural disasters. For example, forests help diversify livelihoods and mangrove forests can help buffer communities from tsunamis.

The enhanced participation and empowerment of communities through a people-centered approach could be the key to solving rural poverty, food and energy security, and decentralization. However, these achievements will not be easy and a stronger commitment by all concerned stakeholders is a necessary condition for future gains to be assured.

SESSION 1: SETTING THE SCENE

Trends, challenges and opportunities for Social Forestry in ASEAN

Dr. Doris Capistrano, ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change

There are now many groups operating under different names but they are all involved in community forestry and many predate the more recent political awareness of the importance of local people in sustaining the world's forests. Climate change issues have heightened global awareness of the need to have community forests dynamically involved in solutions, however, without the help of local people, this will not happen.

Adding value through community forestry faces many challenges including getting broader recognition, as many communities have a high dependence on their immediate forest environment for their livelihood but make a low contribution to the economy. The sector provides only 1.7% of ASEAN GDP and 0.3% of employment. Value adding is also a problem because much of the land allocated to community forestry is degraded or on poorer sites. Long term investment is discouraged by the lack of secure rights despite the tendency for overregulation. Often, there is no equity in the distribution of the benefits and burdens of managing the forests.

The sector
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Drivers of change and their impact on communities and forests

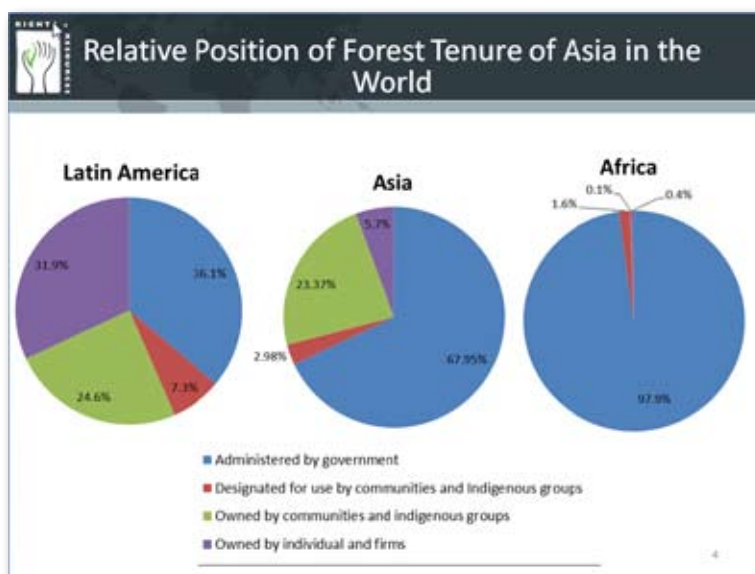
Mr. Patrick Durst, FAO

Drivers of change can act positively or negatively. For example, demographic changes resulting from increases in population will increase pressures on remaining forests, while the migration of youth and able-bodied males from rural to urban centers may reduce such pressure. Economic growth will lead to a sharp increase in the demand for forest products and services, while increasing disparities in wealth will likely result in more people migrating from forest-based livelihoods toward urban lifestyles. Globalization may open up new market opportunities, but will also introduce increased competition. Promisingly, the social drivers for change are mostly positive in Asia and the Pacific, but are leading to new roles and new responsibilities, especially for women.

Environmental drivers of change are becoming more forceful and there are signs of increasing militancy by those seeking a greater commitment to preservation. Presently, the major environmental driver of change in forestry is climate change and the associated opportunities—real or hoped-for—arising for forest communities, such as from REDD+ mechanisms. Natural disasters will likely have increasing influence over forests and forest-dependent communities—recent experiences with tsunamis, earthquakes, landslides, floods, and typhoons demonstrate how such disasters can lead to calls for new settlement patterns, relocation of people, and new forestry practices (usually more restrictive practices) in an attempt to mitigate against disasters. Technological drivers should lead to improved communications, more efficient processing of forest products and energy use, and more enhanced management of forests. Meeting the challenges of these changes will require new skills, knowledge and tools—and along with this, a new commitment to work in partnership with the people who live in and near forests.

Forest tenure: Trends, experience and opportunities for Asia

Dr. Ganga Ram Dahal, Rights and Resources Initiative



Slide from Dr. Ganga Ram Dahal's presentation on status and trends of forest tenure in Asia

Tenure can be considered as a bundle of rights which includes access, use, management, exclusion and alienation. Ownership is different and refers to a particular type of tenure that may involve exclusive and permanent rights that relate to just the trees or to the land as well.

Of all continents, Asia has by far the largest proportion of government-controlled forests at 68%, while communities and indigenous groups own 24% of forests. Studies show clarity of tenure is

a pre-condition for good investment; clear tenure enables better responses to major challenges like climate change, commodity demands and food security. However, tenure reform is not a silver bullet but a key condition in dealing with emerging community forestry challenges in Asia.

Notes from international conference on forest tenure, governance and enterprise

Dr. Mryna Safitiri, Epistema Institute

In Indonesia, problems concerning tenure rights arise because there is substantial inequality in forest tenure. Tenure rights are necessary to secure cultural identity, and to enable people to live with self-esteem. Delineating the boundaries of traditional areas of land use should involve local communities and in this respect, community mapping is a valuable tool. Communities can provide inputs for spatial planning and marginalized groups should be included in this exercise. However, a long term political commitment is essential to provide certainty for investment.

Recommended actions include acceleration of the delineation of areas, enhancement of the role of women, the development of independent mechanisms to resolve conflicts, and agreement on independent third parties to monitor government actions.

Donors need to keep providing financial support and to be flexible in funding mechanisms as capacity building is an ongoing need and funding for a new generation of projects is required. Equally, forest tenure reform needs long term political commitment. New market opportunities for forest products and services, including carbon markets, should promote community-based forest management.

SESSION 2: TAKING STOCK – THE KNOWLEDGE FAIR

Overview

The Knowledge Fair provided the opportunity for 24 invited speakers to share their experiences in tackling a wide range of challenges under the general headings of livelihoods, governance, market access, resource scarcity, climate change and conflict resolution.

The 14 presentations from seven Southeast Asian countries showcased some of the innovations, achievements and challenges involving people and forests. Another 10 presentations came from further afield—China, Nepal, Pakistan, India, Papua New Guinea and Krygyzstan.

The key threads that were woven into many of the presentations emphasized celebrating forests for people, with widespread recognition of the need for people-centered forestry. While community forestry is not a new concept, broader government sponsorship of it is a relatively new phenomenon. It has developed in many ways in many countries, but the key characteristics from the community viewpoint have moved from participation towards empowerment and expansion.

The presentations highlighted the fact that there is now widespread people-centered forestry experience in the region covering a broad canvass including: transforming degraded forests and landscapes; more effectively protecting existing forests; developing innovative partnerships between the community and the private sector; and looking to expand on the roles played by more inclusive community representation in sustainable forest management.

...the key characteristics from the community viewpoint have moved from participation towards empowerment and expansion

Many of the success stories are multidimensional, covering not only aspects of sustainable forest management but also livelihoods, marketing, benefit sharing, tenure, and multi-stakeholder activities. Yet, despite the success of community forestry, state administered forests are still the dominant model with clear distinctions remaining in many countries between forestland use, ownership, and the more limited tree tenure/user rights.

Rights are necessary but they alone are not sufficient to achieve lasting forest conservation, management and development. These goals will require large amounts of ongoing capacity building and recurring funding if there is to be substantial progress in moving from claiming rights to the realization of what they mean.

Through much of the discussion there was recognition that change is the only certainty, with the global concern about climate change a pervasive issue raised everywhere. Its complexity is compounded by the fact that in many places, forest removal has provided economic gain with REDD+ providing an opportunity to rebalance this. A major challenge is to manage the increasing complexity demanded by the accounting inherent in results-based performance while avoiding over regulation and disenfranchisement of local communities.

There is a need to accelerate tenure reform and clarification of local people's rights to enable more effective community forestry and more broadly sustainable forest management. Considering equity, there is a need for efficient and effective systems for sharing the responsibilities and the benefits to include disenfranchised minorities and disadvantaged groups. There is a need to turn abstract benefits into tangible incomes for local and other stakeholders. Looking outwards, there is an equally compelling need to give effective voice to community forestry in national and international policy making. However, while introducing third party conflict management and monitoring of government forest-based program performance, the slippery slide into overregulation must be avoided.

Capacity building needs to be modernized to link communities to the powerful tools of modern science and emerging technologies. Indeed, second generation community forest projects are now moving beyond subsistence concerns to address opportunities identified for expansion and improvement through enterprises that contribute to mainstream national development.

Livelihoods, food security and social inclusion

Empowerment of local people through community forest groups was a strong theme running through the three presentations in this session. In particular, the importance of longer term action was stressed through ending unsustainable and unregulated forest utilization, protecting the forests and other natural resources, and improving sustainable livelihoods for all who are dependent on forests. This requires appropriate training, jobs, and sustainable income generation and distribution.

"Community Forestry User Groups are the vehicle for positive impact on forests and livelihoods."
-Ms. Rudriksha Rai Parajuli, SDC Nepal

Gender equity and pro-poor activities were considered to be core requirements coupled with formal recognition of community Forestry Groups in the administrative and legal processes at the local, regional, and national level. Food security requires sustainable production from forests and equitable sharing of the benefits.

Governance and Decentralization

The presentations in this session reported greater success when the traditional bureaucratic approaches to forestland management emphasizing policing and control were redirected to considering more people-focused outcomes.

Activities must start with the community – long term success is contingent upon active local participation. Not only must forest ownership reforms be developed by governments, they must also then be successfully publicized to help formulate programs, answer questions, deal with disputes about forest rights, and survey and delimit boundaries. Placing forest ownership under community control can help avoid uninformed sales for financial gain by individual smallholders. Formal boundary demarcation and community patrols can help reduce further encroachment and clearing of community forests. Regaining control of extensive tracts of illegally acquired land is a challenge, as often rich and influential individuals are the culprits. Clear ownership rights and state-supported rules can help resolve ownership conflicts.

Successful implementation of decentralization and empowerment of communities to manage their forests can lead to change on a massive scale. For example, Thailand has declared over 8,000 community forests covering nearly 500,000 ha. China's land reform has clarified land rights to communities and individuals resulting in forest certificates being issued to more than 81 million farmers covering an area of 141 million ha.

Income Generation and Market Access

The presentations all supported the proposition that when communities benefit economically from natural resources, they become more committed to protect them. The projects described how community forestry enterprises can combine conservation with local economic benefits by diversifying income streams and generating multiple social benefits. Enterprise development is not charity when everyone benefits. Often it is just as important to remove the policy restrictions as it is to provide tangible support.

However, financial success requires economies of scale, often a large initial investment, and a long-term commitment. The startup phase is especially critical to generate sufficient expertise and cash flow, so that the initiative doesn't cease when the seed funding has dried up. The potential of community forestry enterprises has not been widely tapped, including nontraditional products such as ecotourism and carbon storage. Indeed, REDD should be positively considered as another livelihood option for rural landholders.

"Forest farmer cooperatives have organized small forest holders to meet big market challenges."
-Prof. Zuo Ting College of Humanities and Development, China Agricultural University

Many rural communities have faced problems caused by dwindling incomes, labor migration and market fluctuations, by developing cooperative activities that promote community forestry and forest products. Market access may be expedited through innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships involving shared outcomes with private companies, engaging youth positively in long term land management, and establishing links between corporate business and smaller scale enterprise activity.



Sharing of tangible benefits (especially income) will foster accelerated local support for community forestry. However, there are no shortcuts if long term poverty reduction and environmental conservation are to be enduring.

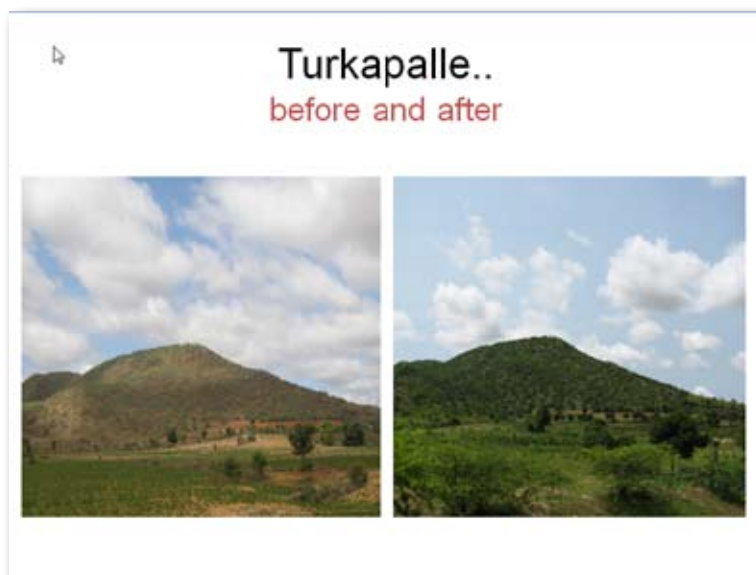
Slide from Dr. Erwin Liloy's presentation on challenges in community forestry enterprise development and marketing in the Philippines

Adapting to Climate Change, Resource Scarcity and Forest Degradation

The multiple benefits of community actions to address the impacts of forest degradation were showcased in this session. Clarification and confirmation of legal rights to manage forest areas and to participate in the distribution of forest-sourced revenue have been instrumental in transforming forest degradation activities into more sustainable, lower impact land use management with positive environmental and economic outcomes.

Substantial physical outcomes have resulted from a coordinated approach with the active involvement of the community in the planning, planting, post planting maintenance, and monitoring. The high level of involvement of local villagers in most schemes provides the necessary human resources as well as providing income, valuable experience, and training for successful and successive initiatives. For example, communities have used phyto-remediation to address water quality issues while the increased tree cover can play a role in the long term mitigation of flash flooding and erosion.

Capacity building is not only essential to achieve the outcomes of many projects but additionally, it empowers local communities to accept a greater share of the responsibilities as well as the benefits of long term mitigation activities. This in turn allows the government to move from a policing/licensing role to one of community facilitation. Sharing the lessons learned with other communities facing similar challenges reinforces the value of community projects and encourages them to consider similar action.



Slide from Dr. Suvarna Chandrappagari and Venkatraj Dyda's presentation on forest regeneration through collaboration among government, NGOs and communities

Climate Change Mitigation

The presentations in this session addressed the issue of thinking globally by acting locally; reducing deforestation and forest degradation at the community and village cluster levels through participatory land and forest use planning followed up by on-the-ground action.

The diverse range of stakeholders and their varying and often conflicting interests makes meaningful community participation difficult as the scope expands from the community to the regional and then the national level. Recognizing gender rights and engaging minority groups, providing lasting conflict resolution, and disseminating understandable, timely and accurate information can play important roles in moving forward with sustainable and achievable strategies.

"My hope for the future is that things will turn back like it used to be – a lot of forest products and wood and clean water with a lot of fish." -Villager at Long Pay, Segah, Indonesia

Achieving REDD+ outcomes will involve a skilful balance between maintaining incomes, reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and enhancing carbon stocks. Community empowerment to contribute towards climate change mitigation will be reflected through applying skills enhanced by training and capacity building to improve management of areas for biodiversity conservation, to certify forests and forest products, and to develop sustainable enterprises with bonuses for achieving predetermined targets. Adjustments to current sub-optimal land uses may involve land swaps.

Conflicts and Collaboration

Human energy spent in conflict is wasted in terms of addressing the challenges of achieving positive sustainable outcomes for people and forests. Such waste is even more pointless when widespread poverty is one of the driving forces of the conflict over forest use. Addressing the sources of conflict and providing acceptable alternatives that encourage and reward people for participation were strong themes of the presentations in this session. The empowerment of women and marginalized groups has, in many cases, provided the energy necessary to overcome existing obstacles to collaboration.

Participatory mapping, boundary demarcation, training facilitators, and facilitating dialogues, loans and partnerships were some of the steps involved. The removal of barriers to collaboration at the community level, such as the duplication of contradictory or competing administrative procedures, was achieved through improving and sometimes even limiting the coordination among government agencies and NGOs. In some cases the local 'forest mafia' have been controlled by sanctions and inter village disputes resolved by procedures set up at the village level.

"Conservation without local participation cannot succeed." -Mr. Muoi Cha, 76, villager near Tram Chin National Park, Vietnam

Where extreme poverty is a driving force of conflict, facilitating partnerships, where all participants can share in the benefits, provides fertile ground for projects that can address the needs of people and forests.

SESSION 3: EXPANDING THE SCOPE

This session featured presentations on key issues to stimulate contributions to the Call for Action developed later in the day.

Bio-rights and poverty alleviation in wetlands

Mr. Yus Rusila Noor, Programme Manager, Wetlands International - Indonesia

Wetlands provide many goods, benefits and services if managed properly but it is not an easy task! Many issues are not peculiar to wetlands including unclear land rights, illegal logging, and drainage, resulting in forest or peatland fires. Local communities are often involved in deforestation so there is a need to provide alternative livelihoods.



The common goal is to improve the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable communities in conjunction with increased local community involvement in the wise use of the wetlands while conserving biodiversity. An important additional objective is to raise the awareness of key stakeholders on the need to enhance community involvement in peatland management and to provide inputs into the policy making processes.

Slide from Yus Rusila Noor's presentation on bio-rights and poverty alleviation in Indonesian wetlands

To enhance income generation and break out of the 'poverty web', there must

be increased involvement by locals—they should not simply be a passive component of the project. Important drivers of success are the enhancement and diversification of income generating options supported by appropriate training and seed funding. 'Bio-rights' are associated with the successful implementation of livelihood options that have a clear link to improved wetlands outcomes, have a pro-poor approach and are easy to implement. The funded activities do not require loan repayments with money, but rather through a proportional contribution to the wetlands in other ways, such as tree planting and fire patrols. Bio-rights are complementary to other project activities and aim to generate successful conservation, increased livelihoods and a broader acceptance and understanding of conservation.

Lessons learned include avoiding high capital products, maintaining supervision, and finding an individual motivator in each group to maintain progress and interest through innovative financing and considering a broader ecosystem than just forests.

Improving Opportunities for Community Forestry Enterprises in Mesoamerica

Mr. Francisco Chapela, Manager Rainforest Alliance TREES Program-Mexico

Mesoamerica (the seven countries that form the bridge between the continents of North and South America) is one of the cradles of agriculture and has a long record of communal use of forest, land, and water.

The TREES (training, extension, enterprises and sourcing) program places heavy emphasis on field work involving the 'rest', not just the 'best' forest areas or communities. The primary aim is to assist forest-based communities to build competitive enterprises that sustain local livelihoods and forests.

Land clearing for cattle ranches and palm plantations and unsustainable timber harvesting have been the main drivers of deforestation. The TREES program promotes forest products to large-scale buyers that are certified as socially equitable, environmentally sound, and economically viable. The program also works with sustainable supply networks so that smaller suppliers can link into the supply end of markets.

Challenges to address include: devolution of forest management rights to local communities; development of markets that demand eco-certified products with an equitable distribution of benefits; providing suitable infrastructure and training; and innovative approaches to financial support.

The program has shown that in Mesoamerica, rural communities can use market mechanisms to develop sustainable forest management systems that increase their income, promote sustainable development, and provide vital environmental services, including watershed management and carbon sequestration. Indeed, experience shows that benefits derived from community forestry, including preservation of biodiversity, are far greater than in nearby protected National Parks.

The TREES program promotes forest products to large-scale buyers that are certified as socially equitable, environmentally sound, and economically viable

Community Forestry and Food Security in Laos and Myanmar

Mr. Joost Foppes, Village Focus International

A survey of women in Laos equated food security with availability (produce or gather), accessibility (buy or borrow), use and utilization (balanced and healthy), and stability of supply (available all times). The respondents equated food vulnerability with not having access to enough land to produce or collect food and with poor families not having sufficient rice for three to six months each year. Many villagers exchange labor for food. In many cases, the lack of food security forces people to migrate, making them more vulnerable.

The forests are recognized as an important source of food with a village survey identifying 136 products collected from the forest

The forests are recognized as an important source of food with a village survey identifying 136 products collected from the forest. However, forest area is decreasing at the same time that access to forest becomes a key factor in food security. Loss of communal land to rubber plantations and decreased access to grazing land due to government regulations has left local people with few options beyond the forest for meeting their daily needs. However, the replacement of wild resources will be costly and technically challenging. In Laos alone, wild food is estimated to make up 32% of GDP or USD 1.1 billion annually.

Future action to secure the universal right of food security should focus on increasing awareness that community forests play a central role as a source of food, in conjunction with providing more education and information on nutrition, more support for income generation (rice banks), and the formal recognition of tenure arrangements along with decreased government focus on timber as the major forest resource.

The Contribution of Community Forestry to Food Security in Myanmar

Dr. Ohnmar Khaing, Food Security Working Group

Food security demands that everyone has access to sufficient nutrition at all times. The statistics show that food security is a real issue in Southeast Asia with one in 10 people (five million) in Myanmar going hungry every day.

In Myanmar, there is insufficient land for agriculture so that wild food from the forest is essential, especially in times of food shortage; 50–60% of vegetables come from forests as do important medicines for people and livestock.

Empowering forest communities to address food security problems requires a resource inventory to determine what is available and how it is being used, including medicinal uses. The concept of farmer field schools as a means of providing practical field-based instruction to improve sustainable agriculture has been underway for over 10 years and perhaps could be expanded to forest-user field schools. Training, research, education programs, and extension using NGOs, the private sector, and central government agencies can all work toward showing that forestry and farming need not compete but can work together.

Community voices on REDD — perceptions, controlling drivers and benefit sharing

Ms. Amanda Bradley, Pact-Cambodia and the Venerable Bun Salouth, Monk Federation

The presentation used short video clips to convey some of the thoughts of Community Forestry leaders involved in the Oddar Meanchey Community Forestry REDD+ project. While many locals understand the basics of REDD, it is difficult for them to comprehend the complexities or to share their knowledge widely among all villagers. Nevertheless, there are high expectations for REDD and confidence in the communities' ability to protect the forest if REDD can provide sufficient resources. Communities hope for and anticipate the cooperation of the international community in purchasing carbon from the project. The need to build a closer link between the international REDD policy discussions and the realities at the community level was emphasized.

...involvement of monks has resulted in a 90% success rate at forest protection and this can provide a model for other parts of the region

The Venerable Bun Saluth, Community Forestry Chief in one of the participating communities, explained how monks have become involved in helping protect community forest. Monks have been able to guide the local communities to change their behavior and support forest conservation. According to the Venerable, involvement of monks has resulted in a 90% success rate at forest protection and this can provide a model for other parts of the region.



Screen shot of Ms. Amanda Bradley's presentation on perceptions of a Cambodian community on REDD+

SESSION 4: SETTING A FRAMEWORK FOR PRACTICAL ACTION

A rights-based approach to community forestry and natural resource management

Mr. Tom Blomley, Acacia Natural Resources

A rights-based approach maintains that rather than the 'need' for a clean and healthy environment, people have a right to it which they can claim and demand. Rights in general involve measurable standards against which progress can be measured, unlike vague goals such as 'poverty reduction.' Rights are defined as minimum conditions of wellbeing and provide a framework for holding states accountable.

Thus, vulnerability is seen as a structural issue and an underlying cause of poverty. While a needs-based program focuses on poverty reduction or alleviation, a rights-based approach addresses poverty eradication. The gender focus tends to be in challenging discrimination rather than simply encouraging attendance and not necessarily meaningful participation.

While a needs-based program focuses on poverty reduction or alleviation, a rights-based approach addresses poverty eradication

The three key pillars of a rights-based approach in community-based natural resource management are: supporting rights holders to make effective claims; recognizing diversity and explicitly targeting marginalized groups; and supporting duty bearers (especially in government) to more effectively fulfill their responsibilities.

Managing change with a rights-based approach does not have to involve conflict, as there needs to be support offered to both those seeking rights and those responsible for discharging them, especially at the government level. However, there are challenges caused by the large distances to remote areas and supporting illiterate people who may lack adequate representation and have become cynical about the 'help' procedures that have been ineffectual in the past. Part of the solution is to avoid stigmatizing people as 'poor' but rather to determine their interests and position in the debate.

Community empowerment and forest management in Bac Kan, Vietnam

Mr. Vu Thai Trong, Care, Vietnam

A case study was presented on the use of a rights-based approach to empower poor and forest-dependent communities in two communes to sustainably manage allocated forests and equitably share the costs and benefits.

The project aimed to re-engage villagers who had been left out of previous programs because of their lack of information on the administrative procedures required. Training on rights and responsibilities to maintain access to and use of the forest was coupled with recognizing diversity and explicitly targeting marginalized groups, including women and smaller ethnic groups.

Support for duty bearers to more effectively fulfill their roles involved effective communication and providing feedback on villagers' problems, such as speeding up the six-month delay in permits to collect forest products.

Positive results have been reported in improved social equality with active participation by previously excluded or underrepresented groups, improved trust between government officials, village leaders and household members, improved living conditions through better access to natural resources, and integration of indigenous knowledge and traditional cultivation skills into agroforestry models.

Challenges and opportunities for women in community forestry

Dr. Jeannette Gurung, Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and NRM

Women are primary protectors and users of forests through the collection of non-timber forest products. These products are vital for the survival of most families providing household energy needs, livestock feed, medicine, food, and income. However, women in many countries typically have only low levels of meaningful participation in forest management decision making. While this has improved recently in some countries, it continues in others.

Many extension activities do not engage with women as they target the head of the household, with the assumption that men will pass the information to their wives. Institutional biases also preclude women from contributing to forest management and there are far too few women in senior roles to challenge these norms.

There is little evidence to show that gender issues have been considered in REDD projects. This should be remedied quickly because the exclusion of women and failure to address their livelihood needs may force them to illegally harvest non-timber forest products to feed their families, affecting protection of forest resources. Addressing firewood demands would free women from much drudgery and allow more time for other activities to benefit their families, the community, and the environment. These issues need to be addressed to avoid REDD+ placing a higher value on conservation than on livelihood needs.

Many extension activities do not engage with women as they target the head of the household, with the assumption that men will pass the information to their wives

Sharing community forestry experiences from Cambodia

Mr. Pham Kamnap, Forestry Administration, Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, Cambodia

Community forestry is a priority in Cambodia, with the aim of covering two million hectares by 2029. The process involves (a) formal consideration of potential areas (b) preparation of a community forest management plan together with the community (c) development of community management structures (d) demarcation of boundaries, and (e) development of an enterprise agreement, followed by (f) ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

The statistics to date are impressive, with 430 community forest areas covering 381,000 ha involving 216,246 families.

The lessons learned are helping improve the development of the process. For instance, it is important that tenure security, conservation, and livelihood are parallel goals, that up-to-date and reliable information facilities are developed, documentation is adequate but not excessively bureaucratic, and that capacity building for available government staff and members of community forest management committees is adequate.

Working together on capacity building, information gathering, and dissemination, and jointly reviewing and making recommendations for ongoing work, are essential for an inclusive approach and lasting benefits. National and Cantonment level planning to combine resources – both human and financial – for community forestry can be strengthened by member networks which feed into policy development.

Impacts of community forestry on livelihoods

Dr. Krishna Paudel, Food and Sustainable Agriculture Initiative

In Nepal, community forestry originally had a protection focus with a gradual recognition of the importance of sustainable livelihoods. A review of 30 years of community forestry aimed to study its evolution, recognizing that its complexity has increased as it has become more inclusive.

The review considered sustainable livelihoods, gender, and social inclusion using a rights-based approach. The perception was that there was improved biodiversity, with more trees on private land and an increased supply of forest products. The review also reported increased representation of women and the development of strong networks, improved understanding, and cooperation. The impact of the improved state of the forests was emphasized by 61% of households responding that community forests contributed to their livelihood.

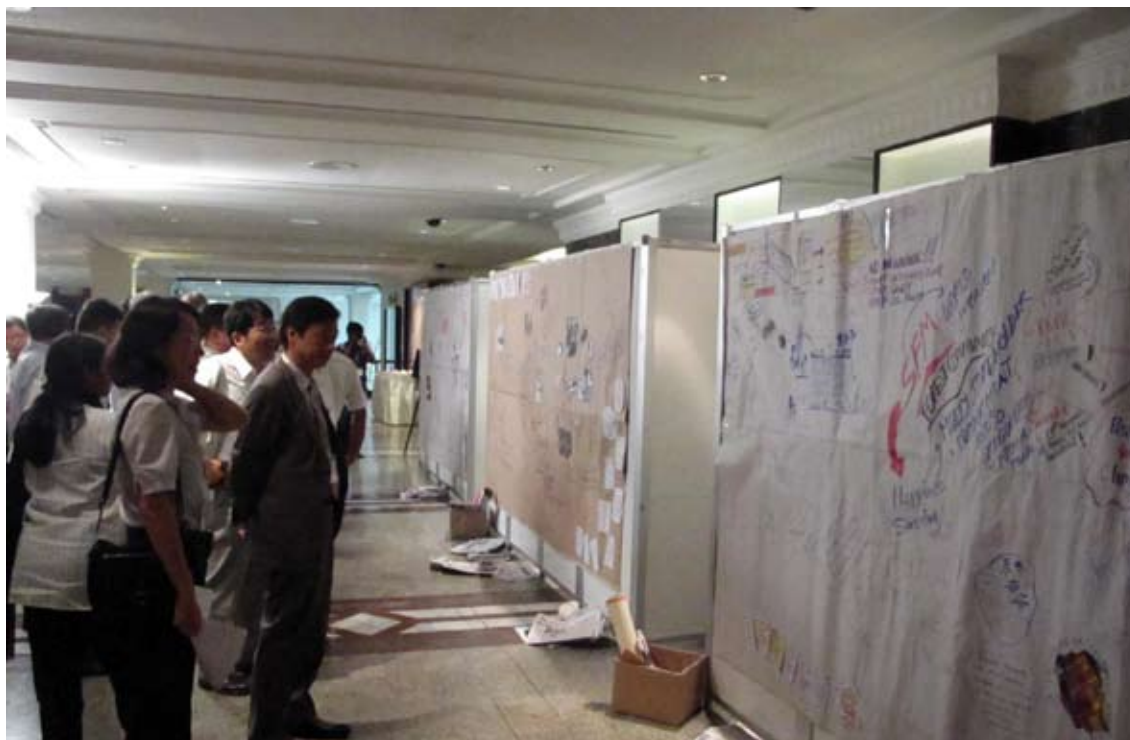
The impact of the improved state of the forests was emphasized by 61% of households responding that community forests contributed to their livelihood

However, it was difficult to determine the causes and extent of the changes. Poorer groups seemed to have not benefitted proportionately. While the perception that “the big trees go to big people and the minor forest products go to the poor,” may linger, the situation has improved remarkably over recent years as awareness of this issue has spread and is being addressed. Future challenges for an expanding role of community forestry include an increased contribution to climate change amelioration and taking food security beyond the subsistence level for the poor.

SESSION 5 – VISION FOR COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN 2020

The Vision 2020 exercise was an invitation to all participants to write, sketch, add newspaper clippings and other multimedia to convey their vision for community forestry going forward. Some illustrated themes were related to benefits and rights, specifically the right to choose or not choose REDD, and declaring unequivocally that while the benefits of the forests can be sustainably used and even sold, the forests as an entity and the land they occupy are not for sale.

Governance drawings remarked on transparency and the involvement of all stakeholders including politicians. The time for action was considered to be now—talking needs to be supported by action (see pictures). This exercise was intended to help crystallize thoughts for the Call for Action session the next day.



CALL FOR ACTION

Second Regional Forum for People and Forests
Community Forestry: Key to Solving Current and Emerging Challenges
Siam City Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand
8-9 August 2011

2011 is the UN International Year of Forests and its theme, “Celebrating Forests for People,”⁵ highlights the growing challenges faced by forests, indigenous, and local people⁶ from persistent poverty, deforestation, conversion of forests to other land uses, and climate change. Many of these challenges are exacerbated by the failure to recognize local peoples’ rights over forestland and resources. Less than 12% of the tropical forest in the Asia-Pacific region is managed sustainably, according to ITTO⁷. Despite successful efforts in forest rehabilitation, a huge amount of natural forest is still lost every year across the region⁸. Recent data from Center for International Forestry Research shows that forest and environmental contributions to local livelihoods were equivalent to agriculture at 25%.

Deforestation contributes 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Forest-related mitigation measures are now recognized as amongst the most practical and cost-effective interventions to slow global warming—as well as providing a host of other environmental products and services.

However, poverty, weak law enforcement, and escalating demand for forest products, food, and fuel in rural and urban regions continue to drive forest destruction at an alarming rate.

At the First Regional Forum for People and Forests on Carbon Financing and Community Forestry, held in Hanoi, Vietnam, from 18–20 August 2009, carbon financing was identified as a promising new strategy to improve the health of the world’s forests and potentially pull 450 million local people out of poverty. The Forum stressed that benefits from carbon financing must expand, not replace, local people’s existing rights and benefits and expressed the hope that schemes such as ‘REDD’ would succeed in improving their lives.

Community forestry has been developing in the region for many years in a variety of forms. Its successes have demonstrated that giving local communities control over forest resources can help slow and even reverse deforestation. Nevertheless, only 26% of forests in the region are recognized as community forests. Bringing community forestry into mainstream forest management is a crucial step in slowing deforestation, ensuring benefit flows, and expanding sustainable forest management.

5 The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests – Celebrating Forests for People – to raise awareness on sustainable management, development and conservation of all types of forests, recognizing they can contribute significantly to sustainable development, poverty eradication and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

6 The term ‘local people’ as used in this document encompasses Indigenous Peoples and other forest communities, e.g. local settlers, migrant and other people who live in and around the forests.

7 Blaser, J., Sarre, A., Poore, D. & Johnson, S. (2011) Status of Tropical Forest Management ITTO Technical Series No 38. International Tropical Timber Organization, Yokohama, Japan.

8 FAO (2011) State of the World’s Forests 2011. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy.

Even where community forestry is making headway, it is frequently constrained by regulatory frameworks and contradictory policies that limit rights and impose onerous responsibilities. These obstacles must be removed so local people can sustainably manage their forests in ways that are appropriate to their situation and provide sufficient benefits to them, the forest, and the region.

Key Forum Conclusions

The need for healthy and sustainable forest ecosystems cannot be understated. Forests in the Asia-Pacific region produce a significant amount of resources, including timber, demanded by modern society. Simultaneously, forests absorb large amounts of carbon dioxide, conserve biodiversity, and provide ecosystem services such as watershed conservation. Forests must therefore be managed for multiple benefits.

Local people have a direct stake in forest resources and will affect the outcome of any forest management strategy. With secure rights and adequate incentives, local people have demonstrated time after time that they are capable stewards of their forests, generating win-win-win situations for forests, the local people themselves and society at large.

An international conference on Forest Tenure, Governance and Enterprise Experiences and Opportunities held in Lombok, Indonesia on 11-15 July 2011, concluded that “the time has come to move community forestry to a new level to make a significant and sustainable contribution to community and national development.”

There is a need for community forestry to move beyond forest regeneration and protection to sustainable utilization of forest resources, supply of forest products not just for subsistence but for domestic and international markets, and move beyond recognizing local people’s forest use/access rights to the actual realization of these rights and benefits by local communities.

National governments are increasingly realizing the multiple contributions that forests and local people can make to a variety of sectors and this must be reflected in the national development plans of the nations gathered here. Indeed, governments must emphasize the importance of community forestry in pan-Asian regimes that deal not only with climate change but also with natural disasters, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), world trade, devolved governance, and recognition of minority rights, indigenous peoples, and women’s rights.

With this in mind, Forum participants developed a ‘Vision for 2020’ through a framework of ‘rights,’ ‘governance,’ and ‘benefits.’ The challenges facing forests and people in the Asia-Pacific region must be addressed by clarifying and securing rights, ensuring good governance, and guaranteeing fair and transparent benefit sharing. Strong grassroots institutions, meaningful local participation, shared decision-making, and high levels of transparency and accountability are essential prerequisites.

With this in mind and a shared commitment to the Vision for 2020, Forum participants called for:

National and Sub-national Governments to:

- Clarify and mainstream community forestry policies within national forest programs and development strategies.
- Develop and strengthen community forestry programs involving all stakeholders.
- Accelerate the recognition and protection of local communities' rights to forest lands, and give access to sizeable, productive and good quality forest.
- Set up an independent agency and mechanism to resolve conflicts between stakeholders.
- Make the regulatory and incentive framework more enabling and transparent to promote the development of community-based timber and non-timber forest collectives and cooperative enterprises.
- Protect biodiversity and natural reserves while allowing local people access to food and medicine.
- Strengthen the capacity of forest and other agencies to become service providers to local forest managers.
- Increase funding and capacity building support to community forestry at all levels.
- Recognize, support and engage with community forestry networks.
- Fulfill international commitments (including Millennium Development Goals) and obligations with respect to indigenous peoples and women.

Local People to:

- Develop and join community forestry networks that strengthen collective voice and action to secure rights and promote sustainable forest management.
- Work actively with civil society and national and sub-national governments to develop and implement national community forestry and development programs.
- Respect, identify, implement, and adapt indigenous and local approaches to community forestry and share the experiences.
- Ensure that marginalized groups within communities, particularly women, can participate effectively in and benefit from community forestry processes.

Donors and International Organizations to:

- Encourage increased funding and explore alternative funding mechanisms that are transparent and flexible for the development of community forestry sustainably at all levels.
- Support research, analysis, knowledge generation, and capacity building.
- Strengthen international, including South-South, cooperation so community forestry can contribute towards fulfillment of MDG's and emerging challenges.
- Simplify the procedures to ensure that local communities can participate in and benefit from REDD+.

- Fulfill international commitments (including MDG's) and obligations with respect to indigenous peoples and women, and adhere to social and environmental safeguards that protect local communities' rights.

Civil Society to:

- Support local and central governments to develop and implement national community forestry programs.
- Raise public awareness and provide legal advice to communities on their rights and responsibilities, and the establishment of forest-based enterprises.
- Share good practices and lessons learned with national governments to inform policy and legislative changes.
- Support information sharing and understanding on community forestry and its role in addressing emerging issues and needs.

Private Sector to:

- Develop and strengthen business models that are responsible and equitably engage local communities in commercialization of timber and non-timber forest products and services.
- Invest in sustainable local businesses as an important element of rural economies.
- Maximize transparency and build trust with local stakeholders.
- Abide by national and international laws and regulations and adopt clearly defined social and environmental responsibility policies and safeguards, including free prior and informed consent.

Research and Educational Institutes to:

- Mainstream community forestry and relevant issues in academic curricula and other professional institutions.
- Develop research on current and emerging issues, including sustainable use and enterprise development, and provide recommendations for policy makers and other stakeholders.
- Conduct more practical and applied research to improve local community forestry practices. Engage and reward communities in designing and conducting community forestry research.

We urge Forum participants and all other interested parties to commit to these action points to ensure the best possible outcomes for the people and forests of the Asia-Pacific region.

Note: The published version of this Call for Action document is available for download at <http://www.recoftc.org/site/resources/Call-for-Action-Second-Regional-Forum-for-People-and-Forests.php>. More Forum downloads are available at <http://www.recoftc.org/site/resources/Second-Regional-Forum-for-People-and-Forests.php>.

ANNEX

Media Conference

A media conference for the Forum was organized on 5 August 2011 at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand attended by 21 participants from the media, civil society, donor agencies, international organizations, and government. The highlight of the conference was a panel session by Dr. R.K. Pachauri, UN IPCC Nobel Laureate (via video link) and representatives of the Forum Partners.



The discussion panel (above) for the conference included Dr. Yam Malla, Executive Director of RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests, Mr. Pralong Dumrongthai, Director of the Bureau of Community Forest Management, Royal Forest Department of Thailand and Thailand National Focal Point for ASEAN Social Forestry Network, and Mr. Togo Uchida, Representative, Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Press Release

Managing Forest Resources Equitably Key to Poverty Reduction, Climate Change Response in Asia-Pacific

Bangkok, August 5, 2011: “Celebrating Forests for People” – the theme for the International Year of Forests is particularly apt in Asia-Pacific where some 450 million people live in and around forests, many of them endemically poor in a region that has posted the highest growth rates in the world for a decade.

With habitats under threat from intense population and development pressures, forest communities—250 million of them indigenous people—have found themselves propelled into the limelight with conflicts over land use and new climate change regimes that are conferring a significant economic value on standing forests and the carbon stocks they contain.

Indeed, as governments realize that a people-centered approach to forest management is the key to solving persistent rural poverty, climate change threats, natural disaster prevention, food and energy security and decentralization, the area of forest under community management has increased steadily in the region.

Area under community forestry in Asia-Pacific

Country	Hectares of Forestland	% forests under Community Forestry
Cambodia	10,094,000	4%
India	78,370,000	22%
Indonesia	94,432,000	1%
Lao PDR	15,751,000	<1%
Myanmar	31,773,000	<1%
Nepal	1,200,000	25%
Philippines	7,665,000	39%
Singapore	2,300	N/A
Thailand	18,972,000	1%
Vietnam	13,797,000	24%

In collaboration with Thailand's Royal Forest Department (RFD), RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests, the ASEAN Social Forestry Network (ASFN), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) are holding the Second Regional Forum for People and Forests on 8–9 August, 2011, at the Siam City Hotel, Bangkok. The Forum will explore the role of ‘Forest Communities as Key to Solving Current and Emerging Challenges’ and will build a regional consensus and Call for Action to be included in international climate change negotiations and the concluding events for International Year of Forests.

“Two decades of work has shown conclusively that a policy and legislative framework that allows local communities to manage forest resources has not only resulted in regeneration of forests, watersheds, flora and fauna but also that millions can be pulled out of poverty,” said Dr. Yam Malla, Executive Director at the Center.

Some 200 delegates from the Asia-Pacific region will be coming together for two days in Bangkok to explore a range of social, economic and environmental challenges that have dramatically changed the value of forestland.

“Thailand is honored to host this Forum which brings together leading forestry practitioners as well as representatives of local communities,” said Mr. Pralong Dumrongthai, Director of the Bureau of Community Forest Management for RFD and Thailand focal point for ASFN. “The Thai Government has been working closely with forest communities to find consensual approaches to forest management; our goal is to increase forest coverage from 25% to 33% of the total land area by the end of the 10th National Economic and Social Plan.”

Overall, with the exception of a few countries, notably the Philippines, Vietnam and China, annual deforestation rates remain a serious challenge in Asia-Pacific with nearly four million hectares of natural forest—an area the size of Switzerland—lost every year.

The forum is also supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB).

Media Contact:

Ms. Prabha Chandran
Strategic Communications Manager
prabha.chandran@recoftc.org
Tel: +66 (0) 84 7019221

Mr. Jephraim Oro
Communications Officer
jephraim.oro@recoftc.org
Tel: +66 (0) 29405700 ext 1310

Note: The published version of this Press Release article is available at <http://www.recoftc.org/site/uploads/wysiwyg/docs/Forum/Forum%20Press%20Release.pdf>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Second Regional Forum for People and Forests was organized by RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests in collaboration with the Royal Forest Department of Thailand, the ASEAN Social Forestry Network (ASFN), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The Forum would not have been possible without the support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Thailand Exhibition and Convention Bureau (TECB), SCG Paper for providing eco-fiber notepads and paper, and seedlings courtesy of the Nakhon Khuan Khan Green Area and Eco-Management Center, Royal Forest Department of Thailand.



For more information contact:

RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests
P.O. Box 1111
Kasetsart Post Office
Bangkok 10903, Thailand
Tel: +66-(0)2 940 5700
Fax: +66-(0)2 561 4880
Email: info@recoftc.org
www.recoftc.org



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