

Community Forestry Adaptation Roadmaps to 2020–Asia

Policy brief

Key Messages

- There is a vast and unrecognized opportunity for Community Forestry to strengthen national resilience to climate change through diversifying rural livelihoods, increasing food security, leveraging social capital and knowledge, advancing disaster risk reduction and regulating microclimates.
- The most immediate and pressing actions needed to realize this opportunity are the following:
 - **Policy** – While some national adaptation plans mention Community Forestry, these references tend to be superficial in nature. There is a need to mainstream Community Forestry into national adaptation planning and support existing Community Forestry networks to integrate climate adaptation strategies in forest management planning.
 - **Legal** – Identify and remove legal barriers which restrict commercial and livelihood activities in Community Forests and hinder access to markets. Review and reduce Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) collection restrictions on local communities (where they exist) that impact household food security, and ensure that the implementation of REDD+ does not increase these restrictions.
 - **Project Development** – Pilot Community Forestry-based adaptation projects that leverage local knowledge and current climate science. Bridge these with existing forest mitigation, development and conservation projects.
 - **Finance** – Provide Community Forestry groups with guidelines for how they may access support from adaptation funding sources. In addition, explore how microfinance, REDD+ or other PES finance streams can support Community Forestry-based adaptation.
 - **Capacity Building** – Direct more resources and training towards local forestry officials, civil society and NGOs to better support Community Forestry groups in executing climate vulnerability assessments, adaptation planning and implementation. There is also a need for more research and knowledge sharing on best practice in Community Forestry for adaptation.

1. Why are these Roadmaps needed?

Forestry and climate change policies, laws, projects, financing and capacity building efforts implemented over the coming years will have a lasting impact on how Asia adapts to climate change during the 21st century. These must address the interests of the 2.2 billion people living in rural areas in the region, who bear the brunt of climate change impacts.

Community Forestry is a powerful tool to support local peoples' resilience and adaptive capacity in the face of climate change. However maximizing the role for Community Forestry in climate change is an area where clear guidance and recommendations are lacking. To address this gap RECOFTC has developed a set of Community Forestry Adaptation Roadmaps to the year 2020 for a selection of Asian countries.

2. Roadmap Objectives

1. To provide governments, multi-lateral and bi-lateral donors, NGOs, civil society, the private sector and academia with recommendations and options to maximize the take up of Community Forestry in climate adaptation strategies; linking these together with national adaption plans.
2. To provide a planning reference for target country governments, helping to guide the meaningful inclusion of Community Forestry in adaptation planning over the coming 5-10 years.

3. Methodology

Five countries were selected for this study based on data availability and RECOFTC's current activities and networks. They represent a large range of climate change adaptation challenges being faced by Asian countries. Those countries are:

- Cambodia
- Lao PDR
- Nepal
- Thailand
- Vietnam

Data collection for this study followed two main steps: literature review and expert interviews from those countries involved.

4. Why is Community Forestry important for climate resilience?

Community Forestry most directly affects the climate resilience of rural communities, which represent a constituency of 2.2 billion people in Asia¹, a third of the world's population. There is a vast opportunity for Community Forestry to strengthen national resilience to climate change, which can be achieved in the following ways:

A. Supporting Livelihoods & Income

Community Forestry provides an important source of livelihood and income diversification for communities, from the collection, consumption, processing and trade of timber and NTFPs, to the provision of services such as eco-tourism. A global comparative study by CIFOR concludes that forest products provide on average one fifth to one quarter of household income in rural areas globally². Generally speaking forest ecosystems are more resilient to climatic change than agricultural ecosystems and contain a greater diversity of plant and animal life. For example the Lao population uses over 700 species of forest plants, insects and fungi for food and other uses³ with each species responding differently to climatic change.

B. Increasing Food Security & Production

The diversity described under 'Livelihoods' also strengthens the food security of communities, and provides an important 'safety net' in times of agricultural crop failure. When households have access and extraction rights over a forest, they can diversify the range of species consumed, thus providing a broader intake of vital nutrients. For example wild nuts and berries may deliver critical vitamin groups not present in household staples. The Lao PDR National Biodiversity Strategy estimates that NTFPs contribute between 61-79% of non-rice food consumption by weight, and provide an average of 4% of energy intake, 40% of calcium, 25% of iron and 40% of vitamins A and C.

Where Community Forestry leads to the enrichment and restoration of forest there can be numerous indirect benefits to broader agricultural production. Healthy forests help to reduce soil erosion⁴; provide habitat for key pollinator and pest control species, and regulate, cool, and moisten the microclimate. Community Agroforestry can also diversify production and increase food security for smallholders particularly in times of climate stress⁵.

C. Leveraging Social Capital & Knowledge

Community Forestry often calls for the establishment of local management institutions, such as Community Forestry User Groups (CFUGs - different countries use different terms). These groups can coordinate community responses to climate change, and facilitate participatory decision making processes⁶. They also provide a platform through which communities can voice concerns to external stakeholders such as governments, NGOs, civil society and the private sector.

"Community Forestry provides a good opportunity to enhance social inclusion and democratic principles in climate change adaptation"

Community Climate Change Trainer

Some groups are already applying micro-savings and insurance schemes, which are of potential use for adaptation. CFUGs in Nepal have been improving livelihoods and building climate resilience for several decades, and CFUG micro-credit, savings and insurance schemes make communities more resilient to seasonal drops in income from crop failure⁷.

D. Reducing Disaster Risks

Community Forestry plays an important role in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), helping to prevent landslides through maintaining vegetation cover over fragile soil⁸, community monitoring of forest fires⁹ and disease outbreaks and in protecting coastline (e.g. community mangrove forests). The latter point is particularly important in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. For example 70% of Vietnam's entire population lives in lowland or delta areas along the 3,200 km coastline¹⁰ where community-based mangrove restoration is proving a powerful tool to reduce vulnerability from typhoons, coastal flooding and erosion.

E. Regulating Microclimates

Forest cover has a direct influence on local microclimates: providing shade, increasing atmospheric humidity, cooling the air, and dispersing localized wind patterns¹¹. This influence is of particular importance in reducing the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events. Forest cover may ease the effects of drought on agricultural crops and provide shelter for livestock¹². Well-managed Community Forests can provide these same microclimate benefits to crop and livestock production, especially where forest areas are interspersed throughout the agricultural landscape.

5. Regional Status of Community Forestry in Climate Adaptation

Some countries such as Nepal and Vietnam already have a strong policy and legal framework in place for Community Forestry, and the challenge is to better implement these policies and laws in support of climate adaptation. Even countries which don't have a strong legal framework are still making important progress in applying Community Forestry in adaptation. Thailand for example has no Community Forestry law in place but is home to an equal number of Community Forestry adaptation projects to Nepal. This suggests that the absence of strong laws does not preclude advancing Community Forestry-based adaptation, though over the long term strengthening the legal framework for Community Forestry is important. In these circumstances it will be important to replicate and scale up existing project and capacity building approaches and mainstream them into national adaptation plans.

Financing opportunities for Community Forestry based adaptation are also different between the countries. In the future, middle income countries such as Thailand and Vietnam will need to look to a greater contribution from domestic and private finance, whilst low income nations such as Cambodia, Lao PDR and Nepal will be eligible for a broader spectrum and greater scale of multilateral and bilateral funding support. For low income countries there are large-scale opportunities on the horizon, amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars (largely from multi-lateral funding), though sizeable efforts will be needed to program this down to the community level.

There is a range of general climate adaptation capacity building activities and knowledge sharing platforms across the study countries, targeting both civil society and government. However, only a small number of capacity building activities specifically link climate adaptation with community forestry or forestry.

The following table provides a summary comparison of the status of Community Forestry in climate change adaptation in the case study countries. This information provides the starting point for the development of the Community Forestry Adaptation Roadmaps for each country, examples of which are given in Section 6.



Table 1: Status of Community Forestry in Climate Adaptation in 2012 - Asia

Country	Policy	Legal	Project Development	Finance	Capacity Building
Cambodia	- The NAPA recognizes the need to involve community groups in agro-forestry and mangrove management. - The National Forestry Program (2010-29) identifies Community Forestry and climate change adaptation as strategic activities and objectives. - However Community Forestry is still not mainstreamed in national climate adaptation planning.	- Forestry Law (2002) recognizes Community Forestry and permits Forestry Administration to place areas of forest within the Permanent Forest Reserve under community management through renewable 15 year agreements. - The Law on Administration and Management of the Commune (2001) grants authority to semi-autonomous commune councils to protect the environment and natural resources. - However Forestry issues are excluded from commune council's mandate unless granted specific government authority.¹³	- At least five sub-national projects and one national adaptation project active with well integrated community forestry components. - Projects largely led by international agencies. There is scope for greater national ownership of Community Forestry Climate Adaptation Projects.	- The Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the GEF Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) is supporting climate-resilient development.¹⁴ - Strategic Programme for Climate Resilience (WB/ADB 2010-12) moves to Phase 2 with \$105 million in funding (half grant, half loan).¹⁵ - USAID \$84 million (2010-2014) for sustainable landscapes, including adaptation.¹⁶ - Communes may access US\$3-5,000 for adaptation through Social Development Funds.¹⁷ - Despite large scale funding opportunities available, little has been channeled into Community Forestry Adaptation projects.	- According to the NAPA, there is a lack of awareness of Climate Change adaptation in the government, which leads to a lack of qualified staff and resources, and unavailable planning information.¹⁸ - Some smaller scale climate adaptation capacity building projects are in place for Community Protected Areas, though this needs to be greatly expanded.
Lao PDR	- The NAPA states the need to incorporate village forestry in the adaptation process. - The Land Use Planning and Land Allocation (LUPLA) Policy advocates for People's involvement in forest management. - The National Strategy on Climate Change highlights the need for community-level initiatives but no specific mention of community forestry.	- Rural people may extract NTFPs and timber primarily leveraging customary rights within 'Village Forests', which are located on government production forestlands. However there are NTFP restrictions in part of Land and Forest Allocation (LFA) Program. - Local people need more secure rights to forestlands which may be achieved through the revision of the Land Policy, Land Law and Forest Law.¹⁹	- At least two sub-national adaptation projects and two national adaptation projects with well integrated community forestry components. - There is a relatively low number of Community Forestry Climate Adaptation Projects in place.	- The LDCF is funding projects (2010-14) to minimize climate change related food insecurity. - USAID is funding the Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies project (\$34 million). - Lao PDR was chosen as one of eight pilot countries under the Forest Investment Program (FIP). This funding program includes climate resilient development as a 'co-benefit'. - There is a pressing need to leverage this funding to support Community Forestry based adaptation.	- ADB is financing the 'Capacity Enhancement for Coping with Climate Change' (2010-13) project. - There are smaller scale capacity building initiatives in place to build civil society capacity for adaptation with networks of indigenous women leaders, including NTFP mapping. These efforts need to be built upon and expanded.

Country	Policy	Legal	Project Development	Finance	Capacity Building
Nepal	- The NAPA recognizes the role of CFUGs in its implementation and views forestry as a priority sector. - Local Adaptation Programmes of Action (LAPAs) and Community Adaptation Programmes of Action (CAPAs) allow for the NAPA to be adapted to unique local situations. - However the role of CFUGs in implementing national adaptation activities still needs to be clarified	- The 1993 Forest Act provided CFUGs with a clear legal identity and autonomy. - CFUG tenure rights ensure access of local communities to forests and the right to harvest timber and NTFPs, an important means of coping with climate impacts. - Need to ensure that these rights are maintained and built upon in the coming years.	- At least four sub-national adaptation projects and four national adaptation projects with well integrated community forestry components. - Projects largely led by international agencies. There is scope for greater national ownership of Community Forestry Climate Adaptation Projects.	- The NAPA requests USD 350 million through the GEF and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)²⁰. 80% of these funds to be spent at the local level. - Community Adaptation Funds are being established at Village Development Committee and CFUG levels. - Community Forestry institutions provide effective channels through which to distribute local funds, though this opportunity has not been realized at scale.	- There has been widespread capacity building to strengthen CFUG implementation. - However there is not yet evidence of widespread climate change adaptation capacity building at a national or local level.
Thailand	- There is no national adaptation plan in existence. - The Climate Change Master Plan (2011-2050) is currently under revision. The draft Plan promotes community forest land tenure and participatory planning for community forest management. - More direct reference is needed to the role of community forestry in climate change adaptation.	- The Decentralization Act and the Constitution have been used to move forward with the establishment of community forests. - However the Community Forest Bill of 2007 has not yet been passed. - Only NTFPs are allowed to be collected in CF areas, not timber.	- At least eight sub-national adaptation projects with well integrated community forestry components. - A relatively high number of projects in place though there is a lack of national-level projects. There is also scope for greater national ownership of Community Forestry Climate Adaptation Projects.	- Being a middle-income country new multilateral funding for adaptation or community forestry is less accessible than for low income countries. - Receives support from SCCF. - A Community Forestry adaptation fund is being considered in some pilot areas, though this is yet to come to fruition.	- The Royal Forests Department provides climate adaptation training for government officials from a range of national level Ministries and Departments. - A range of Climate Change Adaptation Knowledge Platforms are mandated to help marginalized groups participate in adaptation planning. Greater local level outreach and accessibility is needed for these platforms.
Vietnam	- National Target Plan (2008) identifies forestry as a sensitive sector. Calls for an action plan for forestry adaptation. - Natural Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 makes multiple references to use of forestry in adaptation. - However specific reference to Community Forestry is lacking.	- Community Forest Management (CFM) officially recognized in Forest Law (2004). - Harvesting regulations for communities are complex and allocated forest is often degraded, lowering profitability (a common problem across study countries). - CFM focuses on timber not NTFPs, problematic for adaptation.	- At least five sub-national adaptation projects with well integrated community forestry components, most focused on mangrove ecosystems. - A moderate number of projects in place though there is a lack of national-level projects. There is also scope for greater national ownership of Community Forestry Climate Adaptation Projects.	- A middle-income country, facing similar fund accessibility challenges to Thailand. - Government states a need for \$3-5 billion to 2015 - foreign and private sector capital comprising 60% of funds.²¹ - The USAID \$30 million 'Vietnam Forests and Deltas' program has a large adaptation component.²² - The Trust Fund for Forests supports pro-poor forest management. - Receives support from SCCF. - Need to ensure that new funding sources and programs are used to upscale the use of Community Forestry for climate adaptation.	- The Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) has a 'Capacity Building Project on Climate Change' for Civil Society.²³ - A new climate change Delta Research and Global Observation Network (DRAGON) institute has been established. - Government capacity climate building appears to be low.

6. Case countries: Community Forestry Adaptation Roadmap to 2020 for Nepal and Thailand

The Community Forestry Adaptation Roadmaps to 2020 for Nepal and Thailand are included as an example of the content and format applied across all five case countries. Each Roadmap provides time bound recommendations for policy, legal frameworks, project development, financing and capacity building in the immediate present, 2015 and 2020.

The comparison of Nepal and Thailand also serves to demonstrate contrasts and similarities in the pathway forward for Community Forestry in climate adaptation in widely different enabling environments.

The full Roadmap Reports for all countries, will be available to download at www.recoftc.org during early 2013.



Figure 1: Comparative Community Forestry in Adaptation Roadmaps to 2020 – Nepal and Thailand



Policy Development

Legal Reform			
	Immediately	2015	2020
Nepal	- Start development of a new legal framework that: - Ensures full social inclusion in CFUG formation and decision-making, and equitable benefit sharing. - Reduces unnecessary restrictions on NTFP collection in light of the need for adaptation. - Provides guidance on allocation of CFUG community development funds for adaptation.	By 2015, based on community forest-based adaptation relevant provisions of new Nepalese constitution, a revised legal framework is developed (especially if community land ownership has been addressed).	Next steps in 2020 dependent on outcomes of revised legal framework in 2015.
Thailand	- Continue to use the Decentralization Act and Constitution to move forward with establishing Community Forests under the Royal Forest Department. - Scale up participatory and integrated land-use mapping to clarify boundaries between community forests and protected areas.	- Renewed efforts are made to pass a Community Forestry Bill with attention paid to integrated land use, ensuring it won't hinder community climate change adaptation objectives and allowing provisions for agricultural production amongst forest communities. - The status of communities existing within national park boundaries and options for land use are clarified.	Next steps in 2020 dependent on status of Community Forestry legislation in 2015.





Capacity Building			
	Immediately	2015	2020
Nepal	- Scale up The Federation of Community Forest Users in Nepal (FECOFUN)'s role in providing training and knowledge dissemination at the community level, especially for marginalized populations. - Begin building capacity of academic and research institutions to develop long-term studies on climate change impacts and enhance data collection. - Develop strategy for ensuring all REDD+ training includes an adaptation component. - Mandate the DFO (working with FECOFUN) to lead the coordination of NGOs and local partners in providing broad expertise (beyond forestry) in the development of CFUG adaptation plans.	By 2015, a Master's program in Nepal specifically on climate change adaptation with a Community Forestry component is created.	By 2020, there a fully trained local adaptation planning government resource persons for every CFUG in Nepal.
Thailand	- Foster enhanced research and knowledge of local climate impacts and vulnerabilities, building on the ongoing climate risk and hotspot assessment by MONRE. - Identify and incorporate local knowledge on climate change adaptation into capacity building programs and training curricula.	- In line with the Climate Change Master Plan, international assistance is accessed and scaled up training of local government staff for community-based adaptation vulnerability assessments. - This assistance includes how to integrate community forestry in adaptation plans.	By 2020, there are fully trained local adaptation planning resource persons accessible for every Community Forestry group in Thailand.

7. Overall Recommendations

This section provides an overview of common findings that emerged from the country-by-country analyses. Our recommendations are broken down into five key areas: Policy, Legal, Project Development, Finance and Capacity Building.

Policy

- **Mainstream Community Forestry into national adaptation planning** and likewise, mainstream adaptation into forest policy, particularly in Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) policies.
- **Support the decentralization of the adaptation planning process** so that communities are given appropriate autonomy to develop adaptation plans tailored to local circumstances.
- **The relevant national forest agency should work with Community Forestry groups to undertake vulnerability assessments** and to create forest management plans that include climate change adaptation strategies.

"Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA) are an innovative component of Nepal's NAPA which encourages integrated approaches between sectors."

Natural Resource Management Adviser

Legal

- **Identify and remove legal barriers** that restrict commercial activity in Community Forests and deny Community Forest Groups and small producers access to markets.
- **Simplify and provide clearer guidance** on forest harvesting regulations for communities.
- **Develop a clear legal framework** that ensures equitable access to forest resources, and resolves boundary disputes. Particular attention should be paid to marginalized groups such as women and ethnic minorities.
- **Review and reduce NTFP-collection restrictions on Community Forestry Groups (where they exist)** that impact household energy and food security in the context of climate change impacts, vulnerabilities and adaptation solutions.
- **Accelerate the allocation of forestland.** In some countries, a significant percentage of forestlands remains unallocated (e.g. 20% of the national forest estate in Vietnam), though most of this is earmarked for communities. The distribution of this land should become a higher priority.

"Where there isn't a clear national legal framework for Community Forestry, local government should be permitted to build up their own laws for community management of forest resources via the Ministry of the Interior."

Regional NGO Program Officer

Project Development

- **Build forest-based adaptation into related activities**, such as REDD+, rural development and biodiversity conservation.
- **Replicate Community Forest-based adaptation pilot approaches at a national scale.** These should highlight the best approaches that incorporate both local indigenous knowledge and current climate science.
- **Enhance the focus on gender and marginalized groups** in vulnerability assessments, stakeholder participation and project implementation.

"It will become increasingly necessary to have skilled people embedded within communities to facilitate forest-based adaptation strategies."

Bilateral-Funded Forest Program Advisor

Public funding and private financing

- **Establish joint mitigation and adaptation donor programs.** This may reduce divisions currently placed between these subject areas and harness potential for mutual support.
- **Provide guidelines on how Community Forestry groups may access finance** from domestic and international adaptation funds.
- **Provide financial aid or concessional loans towards afforestation,** to help communities transform allocated land into productive and financially viable Community Forests. Funding should be combined with far greater levels of technical guidance and training support than what is currently provided.
- **Partner with institutions to provide microfinance or micro-insurance** for Community Forestry adaptation activities.
- **Bring together adaptation with REDD+ and other project types.** Explore the possibility of directing revenue from REDD+ or other PES schemes towards Community Forest-based adaptation.

"As countries in the region transition to Lower or Upper Middle Income status, donor funds will decrease. We should look towards domestic funding and the tax funded 'forest fund' models used in Latin America to help fund forest-based adaptation."

Regional NGO Program Officer

Capacity Building

- **Expand training opportunities for NGOs and civil society organizations** working in the natural resource sector to develop and execute community vulnerability assessments.
- **Provide communities with access to simple adaptation planning tools and technical support** e.g. participatory GIS and vulnerability mapping.
- **Raise community awareness and share knowledge** on how to maximize livelihood benefits from harvesting timber and NTFPs without contravening forest regulations
- **Direct more resources and adaptation training towards government forestry officials** so that they can better support Community Forestry groups in forest management planning and implementation. This may include regional sharing and study tours that highlight best practices on Community Forestry and adaptation planning. Revise incentive structures for these forestry officials to motivate them to support Community Forestry groups.
- **Organize awareness-raising activities and knowledge-sharing on the UNFCCC process** for Community Forestry groups and networks, to inform them of the international agreements and initiatives which provide access to technology, financing and other resources for adaptation.
- **Include climate adaptation with REDD+ training.**

"Training and capacity building is needed for local government authorities on climate change adaptation planning."

University Director

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