

ISSUE 2 · SEP, 2022

APFNET ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

The Official Newsletter of the APFNet Alumni Network

Achievements should be shared.

The APFNet alumni newsletter's first edition was published in the fall of 2019, mostly due to the alumni's survey request. This originated from the desire of the alumni to share insights obtained while learning how to do research in forestry, and their general interest in learning about each other's progress and career development.



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Graduation of Nanjing Forestry University's 2020 APFNet Scholarship Students

ONLINE DISSERTATION DEFENSE

Due to the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020-admitted international students under the APFNet scholarship program could not start their education on-campus. In order to still be able to access this unique educational opportunity they completed their courses online as organized by their respective universities in China. On the premise of adhering to epidemic prevention and control regulations within China, relying on its innovative curriculum system, Nanjing Forestry University (NFU) successfully carried out online teaching and training for the APFNet Scholarship Program (ASP) students.

During this period, students from Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and other economies overcame the difficulties of time difference, domestic internet connectivity issues, economic difficulties, and the need to work while studying, and completed their study of theoretical courses online. They maintained contact with their supervisors through email, Wechat, Tencent Meetings, and other platforms to carry out thesis proposals, scientific research, and thesis preparation.

Supervisor: Professor Jiang Jiang
College of Forestry
Thesis Oral Defense

**Assessment on the carbon sequestration potential of
Tectona grandis commercial plantations**
(Case study in Singu Township, Mandalay Division, Myanmar)

Presented by- Ms. Mi Mi Ko
Student ID- 6320207
16.06.2022

Speaking Commissioner
MEMBER
Phan Thi Giang
H
Hailan

The successful graduation of the students is of course inseparable from the helpful guidance of their supervisors. Many supervisors pay close attention to students' communication (as network conditions allowed), communicated with students late into the night, and repeatedly gave feedback on the students' written products.

In June 2022, in line with the procedures and regulations to award a degree NFU, after an evaluation of the degree committee (managed by NFU) where the students belonged, five master students majoring in forestry under ASP passed the assessment of the degree committee of NFU. However, only three of them obtained the HSK3 certificate as one of the graduation requirements and were thus awarded a master's degree in forestry.

Tips for ASP students who plan to return to China



AYE CHAN CHAN IS SITTING ON THE LEFT

WELCOME TO NORTHWEST A&F UNIVERSITY

Currently, to the pandemic, China's border is only partially open. Fortunately, the tides are shifting for international students and students' visa applications for China are once again open to apply for. However, not every student will be able to cover the travel expenses as flight costs have risen and quarantine puts an additional financial burden. Furthermore, to reduce infection risk, even though visa applications are open, universities will only permit students to return in small groups or batches. Therefore, some students have not been given permission to return, yet, as the universities pursue a gradual opening plan. If you are a current ASP student, you will be contacted eventually, but please maintain patience as the opening of the border is a gradual process. This means that in some cases senior students are being called back first and first year/part-time students may only be allowed back at a later stage. Please note that the relevant policies for return to China might change, and different host universities have their own regulations, so we suggest checking with your universities if you plan to come to China.

An International student return to Northwest Agricultural and Forestry University (NWAUFU)

Ms. Aye Chan Chan from Myanmar is a master's candidate at the Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University in China. She is majoring in Soil and Water Conservation and Desertification Control. Aye has already started her courses at NWAUFU to earn her master's degree. Aye has agreed to share her experience of getting to China.

"Firstly, I applied for a visa eight days before I came to China. After doing a nucleic acid test (according to Chinese visa regulation a PCR test must be conducted within 48 hours and 24 hours before the flight to China), I started my journey. I arrived at Guangzhou international airport on 13 September, 2022. According to the pandemic prevention and control measurements of the Chinese government, I followed the airport staff's instructions. As such I quarantined in Mehood hotel for seven days. Every day I had to do a PCR test and take care of myself to be healthy and safe. Because every province has its own green code, which is used to identify the health condition of the travelers, after finishing quarantine, I applied for the Guangzhou Green Code and then also got the Shaanxi Green Code. Once I had the codes, I went to Xianyang via a domestic flight (China Southern Airline) on 21 September, which is where my university is located.

When I arrived at Xianyang airport, after finishing another PCR test, NWAUFU's teachers picked me up. The university arranged an additional seven days of quarantine at Dunhuang school hotel. I was very comfortable during quarantine due to the care of the teachers from the international college and the support of hotel staff. Finally, I moved to a university dormitory. I finished another 7 days of quarantine on the isolation floor of the dormitory. With that, I finally finished the 21-day isolation period according to China's pandemic prevention and control guidelines. Then, I was able to start international student life in 2022 on October 6. Due to the Chinese government prevention and control instructions and the close management of my university, I arrived in China safely and in good health.

Now I am studying forestry courses related to my field and research, as well as Chinese language and culture. I will finish my master after two years in China. Finally, I would like to say that I am very thankful to the teachers and the senior international students from my university because they helped me figure out the process of coming to China.

APFNet Scholarship Students graduated with new HSK requirements

Despite the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic during the 2021–2022 academic year, APFNet students' thirst for knowledge was unabated. Overall, 3 students from NFU and 1 from BFU, coming from Viet Nam and Myanmar, successfully completed their studies and obtained master's degrees. This event represents a significant professional achievement for each graduate, who will be in a position to make greater contributions to sustainable forest management in their respective home economies when they return to the workforce with the knowledge they obtained during their studies.



A new rule, which requires students to submit an HSK3 (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi, a Chinese language proficiency test) certificate as one of the graduation requirements, was being implemented for the first time during the academic year 2021/2022 in NFU. Ms. Pham Thi Trang from Viet Nam said: "Since the entire APFNet program is conducted in English, the requirement for passing HSK3 may create difficulties for students. However, this is also a great opportunity for us to learn a fascinating new language. In addition to working on finishing the thesis, we need to focus more on learning Chinese to reach the HSK3 level, which equates to the ability to conduct basic communication in daily life, study, and work. Chinese is a widely spoken language that is gaining popularity outside China as well, so learning it not only helps us to complete our graduation requirements but also enables us to get foreign jobs and, in particular, continue our education in China. We had the opportunity to travel within beautiful China and see its thriving culture and modern development thanks to our study of Chinese."

All graduates would like to express their deepest gratitude to APFNet and their host universities for providing them with the amazing opportunity to enhance their professional knowledge and skills through the APFNet Scholarship Program. ASP is a fantastic and beneficial opportunity that helps develop skilled human resources for long-term sustainable forest management and forest restoration in APFNet member economies.

KHAMROZ TOSHMAMADOV, ALUMNUS
2018, NWAUFU

Alumni Spotlight



Khamroz Toshmamadov is standing and helping the intern for the field work.

Khamroz Toshmamadov is an outstanding APFNet scholarship earner in NWAUFU, who should have graduated in 2020 or 2021 but his study was suspended by COVID-19. He is now back to his home economy and will return to China once he is able to obtain a student visa.

Khamroz is from Tajikistan, Central Asia. He grew up in a mountainous region, where half of the year there is a high risk of natural disasters and natural hazards. The surroundings he lived in made him an environmentalist. He completed his undergraduate degree from Tajik Agrarian University in 2018 and majored in geodesy and land management.

Forestry issues in Tajikistan are very critical and thus urgently require more research and monitoring. Deforestation is a major problem in Tajikistan. His study identified the leading causes of deforestation in Tajikistan: illegal cutting, conversion of forests to agricultural land, fuelwood harvesting, and overgrazing. His research approach followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Statements procedure, organized in five steps: (1) data examination; (2) data sorting; (3) data processing and data cleaning; (4) quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results; and (5) discussion. His research illustrates the socio-economic difficulties that force people to survive through the destructive use of forests. The case study research in Baljuvon district in Tajikistan revealed links between local energy-related resource use and land degradation. The study focused on a paradoxical situation in semi-arid mountainous areas, characterized by harsh temperature regimes with low precipitation, which severely constrain vegetation growth: “the scarcer the local energy resource base, the higher the overall energy consumption at household-level appears to be”. Recourses confirmed that the clearance rate of Tajikistan forests far exceeds the forests' self-restoration ability.

After his close work with relevant stakeholders and forest institutions, Mr. Toshmamadov understood that changes in tree species composition and structural parameters, vegetation patterns, and soil conditions due to various human activities, such as grazing, cutting trees, and haymaking, are urgently in need of management by the government. An accurate and concise scientific report with focus on practical actions was subsequently drafted and sent to the forest agency and central government.



Professor continued to support ASP students through virtual supervision and regular online discussions



Professor Jiang Jiang, from the College of Forestry, NFU, supervised two ASP master students admitted in 2020 majoring in forestry, both of whom graduated successfully this year.

Mi Mi Ko (Standing in the middle) in her field research work

During the first year of theoretical coursework, Professor Jiang often communicated with the two students regarding their learning situations and urged them to conduct literature reviews and research. Because of the epidemic, the students were not able to come to China. Therefore, at the stage of topic selection, Professor Jiang suggested to the two students to as much as possible carry out research locally.

After several rounds of discussions with Prof. Jiang online and subsequent revisions, Mi Mi Ko from Myanmar finally chose the teak forests in Singu Town, Mandalay Province, Myanmar, as a case study to carry out her research on the carbon sequestration potential of teak commercial forests, while Pham Thi Trang from Vietnam chose to study the relationship between forest structure and timber volume in Bat Xat Natural Reserve, Vietnam.

After determining the topics, Professor Jiang provided several relevant papers for these two students to read and study intensively. Professor Jiang continued to support them through regular online discussions and Q&As and helped them design a detailed field sampling plan. However, due to the impact of the epidemic, they were also limited in doing the local experiments. They could only prepare in advance and learn data analysis methods while waiting for pandemic restrictions to drop. Fortunately, with the help of their local forestry departments, they all completed the field research work in time.

ASP Students Share their Academic Experience

Zin Win Tun, alumnus 2020, NFU

My name is Zin Win Tun from Myanmar. I attended the University of Forestry and Environmental Science (Ye-Zin) in Myanmar from 2008–2012 to get my bachelor's degree. I am currently working in the Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division of the Myanmar Forest Department as a Staff Officer. I received the APFNet scholarship from 2020 to 2022 to pursue a masters at Nanjing Forestry University, where I eventually received my Master of Forestry degree.



I decided to apply for the APFNet scholarship because it provides the best opportunities for students from developing economies like Myanmar and the Asia-Pacific region who want to study abroad. Additionally, I have heard many positive comments from ASP alumni who have had the chance to pursue their education with the assistance of the APFNet scholarship.

The topic of my thesis was “Tree species diversity and stand structure in the inner and the outer zone of the North Zamari Wildlife Sanctuary, Myanmar”. The research results provide a scientific basis for formulating suitable protection policies and making positive contributions to promoting the sustainable development of protected areas in Myanmar. My study details the distribution of tree species and the general biodiversity of tree species, which results in a valuable database for park managers to manage and conserve Myanmar’s protected areas more effectively and efficiently.

It took 11 months from the moment I began drafting the proposal to the time I successfully submitted the thesis. Due to the limits posed by COVID-19, I had to study online, which presented several challenges. The first difficulty was that when I needed to read books or papers for reference, some of them were behind a paywall, and I don't have free library access as I would if I were at a university. The second issue was that communicating with the professor takes longer because I only communicate through the internet. Because there is no access to a lab, I could only choose research activities that employ field data when compiling the paper. Whatever the challenges, I was able to overcome them and excel thanks to my professor, my friends, and my seniors.

ASP Students Share their Academic Experience (continue)

ZIN WIN TUN, ALUMNUS 2020, NFU

I've been studying Chinese diligently ever since I started my M.Sc. In the beginning, I faced difficulties in writing because Burmese script is based on circles while the Chinese script is more like a painting. I, therefore, followed my Chinese teacher's instructions and practiced writing Chinese letters every day. Because of my diligent work and my Chinese teacher's methodical instruction, my ability to write Chinese characters has gotten better over time. Due to my familiarity with Chinese voices from viewing numerous Chinese movies in the past, speaking and hearing Chinese was not as challenging for me as writing it. Practicing speaking Chinese with my classmates in Myanmar also improved my speaking skills. I also watch and study free online Chinese language instruction videos on YouTube and other websites. As a result of my hard work, I scored 280 (out of 300) points when I took the HSK 3 exam and passed successfully. I would like to advise future students that learning Chinese does not have to be tough if they are willing to make a daily effort. Learning Chinese is enjoyable and it will improve your ability to communicate and interact with people not just in China but also around the world.



汉语水平考试
Chinese Proficiency Test

HSK (三级) 成绩报告
HSK (Level 3) Test Score Report

姓名: ZIN WIN TUN
Name: _____

性别: 男 国籍: 缅甸
Gender: _____ Nationality: _____

考试时间: 2022 年 06 月 25 日
Test Date: _____ Year _____ Month _____ Day _____

编号: HTW32206006
No. _____

准考证号: _____
Admission Ticket Number: _____

	满分 Full Score	你的分数 Your Score
听力 Listening	100	95
阅读 Reading	100	93
书写 Writing	100	92
总分 Total Score	300	280

总分180分为合格 (Passing Score: 180)

	满分 Full Score	你的分数 Your Score
口语等级 Speaking Level		
初级 Proficiency	100	71

总分40分为合格 (Passing Score: 40)

听力 Listening	阅读 Reading	书写 Writing	总分 Total Score	百分等级 Percentile Rank
100	100	100	299	99%
98	98	96	287	98%
95	97	91	277	96%
92	93	87	267	94%
88	89	83	256	90%
85	82	78	243	86%
80	73	73	227	80%
75	64	68	209	70%
69	53	60	187	60%
59	40	51	159	50%

主任: 马新红
Director: _____

教育部中外语言交流合作中心
Center for Language Education and Cooperation

中国·北京
Beijing·China

*成绩有效期两年 (Test scores are valid for two years)

With the experiences I got from my master's study, I became a skilled officer after completing my degree and the department's and the economy's development efforts will benefit greatly from me employing these skills. We are not required to use Chinese at work, but I am intrigued by the language and will continue to study it.

Alumni Research's Achievement

Bounpasakxay Khamphoumi,
alumnus 2014, NFU



In recent years, plantations have become increasingly important and have high requirements in Laos for development, conversion, and production. Meanwhile, the loss of natural forests results from population growth, local development, and a rise in the need for wood, among other factors. Seeds from threatened tree species are in high demand both commercially and socially, both domestically and abroad. To evaluate this, Bounpasakxay Khamphoumi, a 2014 ASP alumnus of NFU, who serves as a technical officer at the Forest Research Center of the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute in Lao PDR, has conducted research to assess Laos's tree seed sources since 2002 to support quality tree seeds for short- and long-term plantations.

From 2016 to now, there are 76 locations of seed sources which consist of 29 tree species to provide seeds for nurseries in Laos' 18 provinces. Villagers can collect seeds from these 76 places for producing the good seedlings. However, before 2016, there were 102 seed source locations in Laos. Four main reasons for the changes were found: (1) infrastructure development (29%); (2) forest fires or other natural catastrophes (6%); (3) public and private initiatives (6%); and (4) illegal logging (59%). Infrastructure development and illegal logging for commercial reasons were the two main sources of negative impacts since valuable trees can be sold for their timber and bark.

Research on seeds production and protection showed that 95% of people lack funding for field research and monitoring; 80% of local people support the protection of the remaining tree seed sources, and 72% need more reliable seed suppliers in Laos. Based on the study, it was recommended to the local government to establish tree seed network marketing and focus on using remaining mother's trees for producing seedlings every year that will then be planted in cooperation with multiple organizers and government offices. Native tree species were encouraged to be used for plantations. Recently, the Department of Forestry, the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute, and the Forest Research Center, are all looking to recover old seed sources and regulate their use and maintenance, as well as boost seed supply networks and seed marketing. Also, these tree seed sources may be used for tourism marketing the rare mother trees seed as an attraction.