SEPTEMBER 2021

ISSUE NO. 07

APFNet ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

The Official Newsletter of the APFNet Alumni Network

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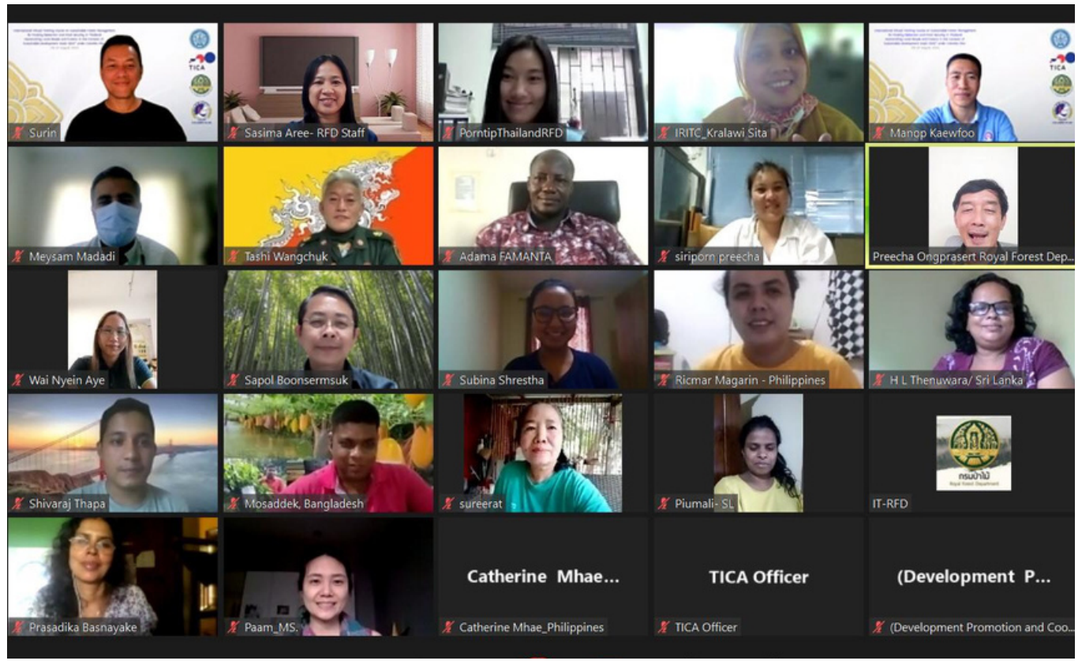
BAN MAE CHIANG RAI LUM COMMUNITY FOREST IN NORTHERN THAILAND

APFNet Alumni taking part in the discussion on sustainable forest management for poverty reduction and food security

Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) and the Royal Forest Department (RFD) organized a two-week training course on sustainable forest management for poverty reduction and food security in Thailand following the context of sustainable development goals (SDG) under Colombo Plan. The training course was held virtually from August 16 – 27, 2021 using Zoom application. Participants of the training course came from the economies of Bhutan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

A total of seven APFNet alumni attended the online training, of which four are representatives of their economies working in the forestry sector. And three alumni are working in academic institutions and non-governmental organizations involved in research and community development. They were invited by RFD as part of their network and collaboration.

Forests and its resources play a crucial role in providing livelihood, food, and essential services to an estimated 1.6 billion people worldwide. The continued forest deforestation and degradation can make poor communities worse off by cutting access to forest goods and services. Achieving No Poverty (SDG 1) and Zero Hunger (SDG 2) are directly linked to Life on Land (SDG 15). The need to share best practices from different economies on the contribution of forests to poverty alleviation is deemed important in designing policy measures to address poverty alleviation and food security.



According to the 2020 Sustainable Development Report published by the University of Cambridge, Thailand has achieved SDG1 (no Poverty) and ranked first among its neighboring economies in Southeast Asian region. Acknowledging the important role of forests, trees, agroforestry and other innovative forest-related approaches could develop sustainable food systems to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

One of the highlights during the training include the concept of sufficiency economy philosophy (SEP) which made a significance impacts in community-based forest project in Thailand and have been applied in Timor Leste and Mongolia. Topics on the market opportunities for agroforestry, bamboo and non-timber forest products were discussed during the training. Best practices on community-based tourism (CBT) and sustainable forest management in Thailand were also presented. Break-out sessions, interactive learning and discussion platforms have been employed for the participants to learn and share practices on their respective economies.

> "I GAINED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SEP, AGROFORESTRY, COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM AND THE PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL PEOPLE TO FOREST MANAGEMENT."

WAI NYEIN AYE
APFNet Alumna 2017 from Myanmar
Beijing Forestry University

APFNet alumni shared the sustainable forest management practices of their respective economies during the online training. Here are the highlights:

Myanmar (Wai Nyein Aye)

- Forest areas are managed by forming working circles under the the district forest management plans which are revised every ten (10) years.
- Establishment of permanent forest estate and biodiversity conservation.
- Community forestry, tree planting and rehabilitation programs.
- Implementation of Timber Certification & Legality Assurance System.
- REDD+ and international cooperation.

Nepal (Shivaraj Thapa)

- Community Forest is the part of the National Forest handed over to the community forest user group for protection, development, and utilization. About 88% of the total forest area in Nepal are managed by 19,361 community forest user groups.
- Agriculture and forestry contributed 34.9% to GDP with 80% employment.
- Forestry alone contributed 15% to the GDP of which 5% are from non-timber forest products.
- Around 10-15 thousand tons of raw non-timber forest products are traded annually with economic value around US $8.6-3.5 million.
- International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations provided capacity building, organic vegetable production, infrastructures, and strengthened the institutional capacities of community organizations.

The Philippines (Ricmar P. Magarin)

- Community-based forest management agreement is the main strategy adopted for sustainable forest management. Currently, around 1.6 million hectares are managed by 1,953 People's Organizations.
- The National Greening Program (NGP) is the banner program to address deforested and degraded forestlands including climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, poverty reduction, and food security.
- At present, NGP was able to reforest around 2.08 million hectares and generates 5.63 million green jobs employing 806 thousand upland dwellers.
- The Sustainable Forest Management Bill is on the approval process by the Congress to institute the stability of forest policies and improve forest governance.

Sri Lanka (E.M.B. Piumali Ekanayake)

- Amended the National Forest Policy based on the Forest Sector Master Plan developed in 1995. Sustainable forest manage will focus on a) conservation of remaining natural forests for biodiversity and watershed protection including other environmental services; and b) Development of forest plantations and non-forest wood resources to satisfy national requirements.
- Main government agencies such as the Department of Forest and the Department of Wildlife Conservation are main actors in forest resources management with the participation of rural communities, government organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- Emphasized the involvement of the private sector in all forestry development activities.

"LEARNING ABOUT VARIOUS PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES ON SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FROM DIFFERENT ECONOMIES HAS WIDENED MY IDEAS AS A FORESTER WORKING IN THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR."

SHIVARAJ THAPA
APFNet Alumnus 2017 from Nepal
Beijing Forestry University

Thailand (Aree Sasima, Rabieb Srigongpan, and Monthuda Suddhibongse)

- National Forest Policy sets target for 40% forest cover with 25% for conservation forest and 15% for economic forest.
- The country achieved SDG1 (no Poverty) and ranked first among ASEAN economies.
- Integrated the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in the implementation of projects in line with sustainable development goals. It is a model of development based on moderation, prudence, and social immunity.
- Diversifying income at the local communities by promoting the production of non-timber forest products and establishing micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- Community-based tourism to support and facilitate cooperation among stakeholders from grassroots to international levels, to strengthen the capacity of Thai communities to manage tourism sustainably.
- Collaboration and Networking with academic institutions, non-governmental and government organizations, non-profit international organizations and other economies for research, policy discussions, and marketing.

SASIMA AREE

Foreign Relation Officer
Forestry Foreign Affairs Office
Royal Forest Department, Thailand
APFNet Alumna, BFU Batch 2017

"I AM ALWAYS APPRECIATIVE AND PROUD WHEN ORGANIZING INTERNATIONAL TRAININGS BECAUSE I COULD LEARN MORE KNOWLEDGE AND SHARE EXPERIENCES. NETWORK AND COOPERATION ARE CRUCIAL FOR ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION".

URBAN FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT AT BANGKACHAO, THAILAND

Community forestry management boosts rural livelihood of communities at Ayeyarwaddy Delta, Myanmar

Community Forestry (CF) initiatives are among the key national programs of Myanmar to support sustainable forest management. The program has been adopted since 1995 and been implemented for more than 20 years. This kind of management regime aims to conserve forests and to reduce local poverty through sustainable use of community forest resources. As of 2017, a total of 3,840 community forest user groups have been the beneficiaries of the program which are mostly situated in Shan State, Mandalay, Magway and Ayeyarwady, where much forest degradation has been taking place.

The Ayeyarwaddy Delta is one of the major tropical deltas in the world. Mangrove forests around the delta provide a range of resources that support local communities. The communities of the densely populated delta are highly dependent on mangroves, for fuel, food, and coastal protection from extreme storm. The degradation of mangrove ecosystems in the area through over-exploitation and land conversion has increased the vulnerability of the local communities to extreme weather events, as demonstrated during the rage of Cyclone Nagris in 2008. Hence, the conservation, restoration, and improved management of mangroves is a solution to the environmental degradation faced by the people of the Ayeyarwady Delta.

AYEYARWADDY DELTA, MYANMAR

Community forestry management boosts rural livelihood of communities at Ayeyarwaddy Delta, Myanmar

Aung Wunna Tun, an APFNet scholar at Beijing Forestry University focused his master's research on the tangible benefits of mangrove in a community program as well as local people's livelihoods around Ayeyarwaddy Delta. Pointing out the contribution of community forestry to the livelihood of the rural communities could help fill-in gaps in the resource management and improvement of the CF implementation in the area to ensure the maximum benefits are reaped by the locals without sacrificing the integrity of the mangrove ecosystem.

Using the regression modeling and the sustainable livelihood approach framework, the study has found out that community forestry has positively contributed to the rural livelihood around the delta. Community forestry approach generates an income of around **USD $24,811.00** per annum which accounts for 41% of the total income of the local communities in the area. This income was derived from mangrove plantation, aquaculture, and the collection of non-timber forest products. Other sources of income in the area include home garden (22%), small scale business (18%), casual labor (14%), and agriculture (5%), respectively.

However, there are still 42% of the villagers who have no stable livelihood and are reliant on casual labors such as fishing, and catching crabs and other mollusks. Although community forestry approach has been widely accepted in natural resources, there are still management factors to improve to fully maximize the benefits of the mangrove resources. Several factors such as support from government organizations and other donors, knowledge-sharing on CF principles, long-term capacity building, and diversifying income generation are crucial for the successful implementation of community forestry and mangrove restoration in the area.

Delta ecosystem like the Ayeyarwaddy Delta have a substantial and resilient capacity compared with inland forests. Delta ecosystems such as mangroves and marshes develop quickly into rich habitats once environmental conditions are favorable. Applying ecosystem approach as advocated by the Convention on Biological Diversity is a good integrated strategy which promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way. Ensuring the integrity of the Ayeyarwaddy Delta will inevitably factor significantly into Myanmar's economic development and an emergence as major regional trade route.

AGRICULTURAL AREA AT AYEYARWADDY DELTA, MYANMAR

Carbon stock of community-managed forest in Thailand has an economic potential for REDD+ mechanism

Forests as an important complex ecosystem have been providing essential environmental, social and economic benefits to local upland communities. Annually, an estimated 2.4 billion tons of atmospheric carbon dioxide are being absorbed by forests making them the largest carbon sinks storing 45% of the planet's terrestrial carbon. Participation in international carbon market such as the Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) program could provide economic benefits to local communities. Thailand and other developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region are participating in this kind of program.

Vast amounts of carbon can be found in above-ground biomass depending on forest type, tree species composition, diversity and other factors. Understanding these factors based on accurate sequestration data could provide information on the benefits of participating in international carbon markets. In Southeast Asia, Thailand's forest resources are among the most abundant with forests covering 31.64% of the economy's area.

A recently published study of Dr. Siriluck Thammanu - an APFNet Alumna of Beijing Forestry University - investigated the structure of two deciduous forests and assess the above-ground carbon stock to promote community forest management for REDD+ opportunities in the Ban Mae Chiang Rai Lum Community Forest in Northern Thailand.

The study found out that the community forest has yielded an estimated carbon stock of **28,928 tons of carbon from 2007-2018**. This carbon stock has the potential to generate an estimated benefits of **US $339,730.43** to the local community. Projections indicated that the community forest will continue its carbon growth which could increase carbon sequestration and the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions.

Ban Mae Chiang Rai Lum Community Forest, Northern Thailand

The local community of Ban Mae Chiang Rai Lum has been involved in community forest project since 2008. Through the project, the forest biodiversity has enhanced the provides non-timber forest products (NTFPs) which provide food and income to the local community. The main source of income among the community is mushroom production which covers 73% of the total income they gain from NTFPs. Various species of mushrooms are often harvested by rural people including Amanita spp., Termitomyces spp., Astraeus spp., and Russula spp. are also harvested by the households for consumption.

Most recently, the Royal Forest Department has issued a regulation on sharing of carbon credits from forest planting, maintaining, conserving, and restoring in forest areas. Furthermore, the Thai government approved Community Forest Act B.E. 2562 that authorized local forest management decision-making. This would give a good opportunity to local community to participate in community forest management and able to earn economic benefits from protect and conserve their forest resources.

Currently there are over 17,400 villages in Thailand. Ban Mae Chiang Rai Lum Community Forest is an example of a collaborative success in managing forest by the government and the local people which have positive and significant environmental and economic benefits. National and widespread efforts have been done to involve community forests in terms of policy and REDD+ strategies which is a remarkable progress towards sustainable forest management. The rapidly increasing participation of the locals towards community forest projects in Thailand will have a positive effect towards sustainable forest management in the country.

Thailand is firm to its commitment to the Paris Agreement with the economy's intention to adopt to low carbon economy and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% in 2030. Community forests like the Ban Mae Chiang Rai Lum has proven its contribution towards resource conservation and climate mitigation and adaptation.

Dr. Thammanu with the villagers

Non-timber forest products: wild fruit (left) and mushroom (right)

APFNet Batch 2019 students hurdled the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic to earn master's degree certificates

The on-going COVID-19 did not stop the APFNet 2019 students from earning their respective academic degrees. The shift from the usual face-to-face learning set-up to distance learning brought challenges to students such as weak internet connectivity, varying time zones, and limited access to laboratories and sites due to physical and travel restrictions. But the pandemic did not hinder the desire of the students to achieve their academic goals.

A total of ten students from three host universities have successfully obtained their respective master's degrees. The graduates came from the economies of Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Nepal. These students were majored in Forestry, Forestry Economics and Management, Soil and Water Conservation and Forestry Protection. After getting their degrees they went back to their respective work assignments in government agencies, international organizations, research institutes, academes, and non-governmental organizations. In the meanwhile, some continued their doctorate degrees in China.

These graduates are great addition to the increasing number of forestry professionals supported by the APFNet Scholarship Program and are expected to make significant contributions in achieving sustainable forest management in the Asia-Pacific region.

"I am very happy and honored to receive a master's degree from BFU. I express my gratitude to APFNet, BFU, and my family for giving me the opportunity to do research and gain the skills throughout the study period. "

Jannatul Ferdousi (Bangladesh)
Forestry Economics and Management
Beijing Forestry University

Aung Wunna Tun (Myanmar)
Forestry Economics and Management
Beijing Forestry University

Vannak Chroek (Cambodia)
Forestry Economics and Management
Beijing Forestry University

Nay Yu (Myanmar)
Forestry
Nanjing Forestry University

Milon Barmon (Bangladesh)
Soil & Water Conservation
Northwest A&F University

Sourav Chakma (Bangladesh)
Forestry Economics and Management
Beijing Forestry University

Prabal Birjung Rana (Nepal)
Forestry
Nanjing Forestry University

Samnang San (Cambodia)
Forestry Protection
Northwest A&F University

Suwash Kunmar (Nepal)
Forestry
Nanjing Forestry University

Satyal Dinesh (Nepal)
Forestry
Nanjing Forestry University

Enriching scientific knowledge and experience for environmental sustainability

Yang Kaiyan graduated from Beijing Forestry University with a bachelor's degree in Agricultural and Forestry Economics and Management in 2019. Her interest in sustainable development has amplified her desire to pursue a master's degree at Chulalongkorn University supported by the APFNet Scholarship Program.

The Environment Development and Sustainability (EDS) program at Chulalongkorn University provides an integrated approach to topics like sustainable development and environment. Also, it covers areas such as business and trade strategies for environmental management, energy planning, poverty reduction, natural resource management, green building and urban development. Looking at the global, regional, and local scales of of development, lecturers from universities and institutions from around the world share their experiences from working with large groups such as the United Nations as well as on the community level. The objective of EDS program is to broaden the horizons of students to integrate their studies across various sub-disciplines in both the natural and social sciences so that their results lead to sound public policy and good governance.

"ALWAYS BELIEVE IN YOURSELF. THE HARDSHIPS YOU ENCOUNTERED TODAY WILL BRING YOU TO A PROMISING TOMORROW"

YANG KAIYAN
APFNet Alumna 2019 from China
Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

Ms. Yang spent almost two years in Thailand where she experienced new culture and environment way more different from China. In terms of climate, Thailand is a tropical economy with two distinct hot and humid weather conditions. The weather of the country makes it favorable for growing crops and trees. Culturally, Thai people are mostly known by their warm hospitality and enthusiasm which she felt right away the moment she landed in the economy. This makes her study memorable and fascinating.

The diverse cultural backgrounds of students studying in the program did not hinder in making friends and establishing network. Study trips to the outskirt of Bangkok and Hua Hin had given her the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion on the EDS issue of Thai local communities. **"It was an impressive learning experience that broadened my understanding on how to address environmental development and sustainability issues starting at the community level,"** shared Ms. Yang.

While enrolled in the EDS program, she learned that it has a double degree program with the Graduate School of Energy of Kyoto University, Japan. In 2020, she was successfully enrolled in the Economics under the Socio-Environment Energy Department of Graduate of Energy Science. Also, during her stay in Thailand she had an internship at ACT Alliance from September to December 2019 that nurtured her knowledge on the impacts of climate change to local communities in developing economies. Within the internship period, she was involved in organizing the Beijing+25 of United Nations event on the empowerment of women and girls in Bangkok, Thailand, where she gained useful insights on the role of women in achieving sustainable development at their local communities.

Her paper was related to the plastic pollution in China and has already been accepted by several international conferences. Currently, she is working on another research for Kyoto University and preparing herself to be more competitive in her future work.

Advancing knowledge and skills in response to the increasing competency in the field of forestry

It has been ten years since APFNet alumna, Narmandakh Ganbaatar from Mongolia completed her bachelor's degree in Forestry at the National University of Mongolia. Within the span of her studies she was exposed to research activities as laboratory assistant for the Tree Ring Laboratory. After she left the university, she worked at the Multi-Purpose National Forest Inventory of Mongolia which eventually helped her earned a master's degree in the same university. Her experience at forest inventory office worked on her favor where she gained skills on carbon stock estimation and analysis.

In 2019, Ganbaatar received her second master's degree in Forestry from Northwest A&F University (NWAFU) supported by APFNet Scholarship Program. During the study period, she was part of the Simulation Optimization Laboratory where she has done research evaluating site quality for uneven-aged forests based on the data from the National Forest Inventory of Mongolia.

"I am grateful to APFNet for creating a platform to hone my research skills," said Ganbaatar. She expressed that learning and improving research skills in tree modeling and analysis require focus and consistency, plus the support of her supervisor Prof. Tianjian Cao who helped her to learn and thrive in the research environment. That is why she appreciates the support from APFNet, her supervisor, and colleagues at NWAFU in expanding her professional growth in China.

The relevant courses of the study program such as forest protection, soil science, soil and water conservation, agriculture and water resource management had provided her with a strong footing in the field of environmental conservation. After obtaining her master's degree from NWAFU, she joined The Nature Conservancy where she is working on sustainable development management of Mongolian protected areas. Currently, she is involved in a project named Biodiversity and Adaptation of Climate Change, that is being implemented under the Government of Mongolia and the Federal Republic of Germany through financial cooperation. In the future, Ganbaatar will remain open to opportunities and collaboration related to nature conservation.

"EARNING A MASTER'S DEGREE WILL BE A LAUNCHPAD IN GAINING SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE IN YOUR CHOSEN FIELD. THE WORKFORCE IS EVOLVING AND HAS BECOMING COMPETITIVE. HENCE, SKILLS ADVANCEMENT IS CRUCIAL "

NARMANDAKH GANBAATAR
APFNet Alumna 2017 from Mongolia
Northwest A&F University, China

APFNet students' experiences in distance learning

CHEN LIJUN (China)

Master student in Environmental, Development & Sustainability
Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

I am currently doing my master's degree at Chulalongkorn University using online platforms like Zoom. Therefore, entering Zoom classes has been a daily operation for me now. Communication channels are important in distance learning to connect and discuss with classmates and professors. Based on my experience, communication by email in some instances is not reliable. For example, one of my assignments was not seen by my teacher because it was classified as a spam email. As a result, establishing more integrated learning platforms to ensure the submission of requirements is received by professors.

My classmates and I get to know each other through Line App which is equivalent to WeChat in China. Groups for each subjects were also created using Line App for communication and announcements from the school. Some students are from different economies with different time zones. In our previous group work, the time difference among students made it difficult for us to arrange a suitable time for group discussion.

Talking about study, most professors are very patient in teaching. We can ask questions at any time in the class, and professors will patiently answer them. However, there are a few professors whose teaching habits are different from Chinese professors. Some teachers don't use any PowerPoint, and they simply give lectures during class. It is difficult to grasp the key points of the lecture, and I can only adapt to this slowly.

Although we don't have face-to-face classes, online classes are also very interesting. When communicating with professors and classmates, some of them will say interesting remarks. The pressure of study is moderate but efforts must be made to fully take advantage of the learning opportunity.

AUNG WUNNA TUN (Myanmar)

Forestry Economics & Management
Beijing Forestry University, China

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 is a serious issue in Myanmar. Due to travel restrictions, I couldn't go back to Myanmar to collect data for my thesis study. I need to overcome this challenge to finish my thesis on time. Luckily, the study site is under COVID-19 low-risk area. So my data collection was carried out following health protocols with the help of field assistants and local villagers.

This pandemic is really disappointing for international students. Most of my friends went back to their economies while I remained at school. At the height of the pandemic, the school implement online learning for students. I miss the interaction with my classmates, especially laughing and sharing with them. Even though online classes are inappropriate for forestry subjects that require on-site experience, I adapted to this set-up with by helping one another in studying during this tough situation.

I am always craving for new experiences and challenges. Overcoming challenges will bring joy and energy for future tests. This pandemic made me realized how capable I am and it built my confidence. I am going to continue my journey in China as I will pursue my doctorate degree in BFU under Chinese government scholarship. I hope to explore more places, and experience new culture and cuisine.

I am really glad to be one of the APFNet scholarship students and treasure my friends with whom I shared great moments during my study in China.

The APFNet Alumni Network was officially launched during the 1st Asia-Pacific Forestry Forum held on December 8-12, 2019 at Beijing Forestry University, China which was attended by APFNet Alumni and students.

The network aims to further enhance knowledge and experience sharing, and also strengthen contacts and coordination between APFNet alumni across the Asia-Pacific region to promote regional forestry development and collaboration.

More details about the APFNet Alumni Network please refer to:

https://www.alumniapfnet.com/home.dz