APFNet NEWSLETTER

Key achievements in 2014

Message from the Director

Dear readers,

Welcome to this edition of the APFNet newsletter, which covers developments and activities implemented by the AFPNet in the second half of 2014.

In 2014, we were happy to see the agreement amongst Central Asian economies and Mongolia (the Greater Central Asia region) to establish regional forestry cooperation during the Workshop on Strategic Forestry Cooperation in September 2014. While forestry partnerships between these economies have taken place in the past, this will be the first region-wide forestry mechanism in Greater Central Asia and, in our view, a big step in advancing forestry cooperation moving forward. APFNet is proud to be part of this initiative.

In this edition, we are also happy to announce the inclusion of APFNet in the declaration issued by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) following the Economic Leaders' Meeting in November 2014. You will also read about the successful graduation of 8 Master students sponsored by the APFNet scholarship and new entrants enrolled this year, as well as our various demonstration and capacity building projects in the Asia-Pacific region, including those on sustainable forestry management, landscape restoration, trans-boundary ecological conservation and rehabilitation, research in the Greater Mekong Subregion, regional thematic trainings and presence at international events.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter.

Qu Guilin
Executive Director

IN THIS ISSUE

中亚地区林业战略合作高级研讨会

Regional Workshop on Strategic Forestry Cooperation in Central Asia

Organizers: Department of International Cooperation of the State Forestry Administration
Asia Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation

主办方: 国家林业局国际合作司
亚太森林恢复与可持续管理组织

中国北京   China

Greater Central Asia workshop estalishes regional mechanism for forestry cooperation

In collaboration with the Department of International Cooperation of the Chinese State Forestry Administration, APFNet organized the first Regional Workshop on Strategic Forestry Cooperation in Central Asia and Mongolia from 23 to 24 September, 2014 in Beijing, China, establishing one of the first major forestry cooperation mechanisms in the region.

Over 40 forestry management officials and experts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgysztan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Mongolia and China attended this two-day workshop. Participants exchanged experience and views on forest management, vegetation restoration, trans-boundary biodiversity issues and the use of sand-binding plants; as well as identified the main challenges and development trends of forest management and discussed potential cooperation on critical forest issues. It was agreed that a regional dialogue mechanism be established in the forestry sector amongst Central Asian economies and Mongolia (Greater Central Asia).

Given that Greater Central Asia is dominated by arid and semi-arid climates, the region faces common environmental challenges such as water scarcity, low soil water retention and productivity, severe desertification and vulnerability to climate change. Low levels of forestry investment and policy prioritization at the national level have also led to significant negative impact to rural livelihoods.

The workshop produced an ambitious strategy framework for regional forestry cooperation, which consists of a Forestry Ministerial Meeting (FMM) platform, planning of regional Workshops on Strategic Forestry Cooperation in Greater Central Asia (WSFC), and a Technical Group of Greater Central Asia (TGGCA). These activities will be coordinated with the support of APFNet, which will also develop regional projects, trainings, workshops and scholarship programs in synergy with existing programs in the organization.

Workshop participants also agreed to nominate focal points in each economy to support the mechanism, and welcomed the involvement of external economies and organizations within APFNet's network.

The Mongolia Ministry of Environment and Green Development has agreed to host the second regional workshop in 2015.

" Strengthening the regulation and enforcement of sustainable forest management policy; improving data collection, quality and analysis; streamlining the effective use of forests to mitigate desertification, prevent soil dehydration and protect wetlands – these are all critical factors to forest rehabilitation in arid regions."

Mr. Ekrem Yazici

FAO Representative and Deputy Chief of the FAO Joint Forestry and Timber Section in Geneva

" Most economies in Greater Central Asia lack specific government bodies appointed for forestry management. Rather, forestry is usually overseen by ministries of agriculture and environment that already face shortages of human and financial resources.

Deserts and grasslands make up most of Mongolia and are in critical need of desertification and forest fire management. This requires new technologies and expertise as well as an approach that considers the sustainable economic livelihood of rural people.

Badarch Mendbayar

Mongolian Representative

IN THE KNOW

APEC Economic Leaders' Declaration promotes boosting future actions through APFNet

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Declaration was published on 11 November 2014, following the close of the 22nd Economic Leaders' Meeting in Beijing, China.

The declaration addresses discussions and agreements made with the objective of deepening economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. It covers the areas of enhancing economic integration, reform and growth; promoting innovative development; and strengthening comprehensive connectivity and infrastructure development. It also endorses regional environmental commitments including wildlife conservation, environmental goods and services and sustainable growth.

Furthermore, the declaration reaffirms the goal of APEC to continue efforts to "protect forest resources, combat illegal logging and associated trade, promote sustainable forest management, and work with relevant organizations, including the Asia-Pacific Network on Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet), to ensure the achievement of the aspirational goal on forests in the Sydney Declaration". (Para. 38)

The Sydney APEC Leaders' Declaration on Climate Change, Energy Security and Clean Development was adopted during the APEC Ministerial Meeting in Sydney on 8 September 2007, which established the APEC regional goal of increasing forest cover by 200,000 square kilometers by 2020.

Students sponsored by APFNet scholarship celebrate graduation in Beijing

In June 2014, 8 students from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam celebrated their graduation from 2-year graduate study programs in Beijing Forestry University (BFU).

The graduates were sponsored by the APFNet Scholarship Program, a capacity building initiative introduced in March 2010. It is open to developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region, where eligible candidates can undertake 2-year studies in APFNet partner universities in the areas of forestry and forest economics and policy.

To-date, 24 of the 46 scholarship recipients have successfully graduated from the program and proceeded to work in various sectors including government, NGOs and international organizations.

The APFNet Scholarship Program is implemented under the activity component for capacity building. For more information, visit our website at www.apfnet.cn.

"From this program, I have gained valuable knowledge on temperate forest management approaches and forest tenure systems. My supervisor has been very helpful in this learning process."

Digambar Singh Dahal, graduate from Nepal

"These two years provided a very good opportunity for us to learn about forestry as well as Chinese culture and language. Now I feel much more confident than before to take the next step in my career."

Suwannakum Siriluck, graduate from Thailand

New roster of APFNet scholarship recipients enroll in Nanjing Forestry University and Beijing Forestry University

In September 2014, the opening ceremonies of the 2014 APFNet Scholarship Program were held separately in Nanjing Forestry University (NFU) and Beijing Forestry University (BFU), to welcome the enrollment of new students sponsored by the scholarship. This sets out the first year of cooperation with NFU and the fourth with BFU.

APFNet ON THE GROUND - THE LATEST NEWS ON OUR PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

First project steering committee meeting conducted for sustainable forestry management project - northern region of Lao PDR

The first project steering committee (PSC) meeting for the "Sustainable Forest Management Project in the Northern Part of Laos" was held on 14 November 2014 in Luang Namtha, Lao PDR. Over 50 participants attended the meeting, including officials from the Lao Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry, Natural Resources and Environment and Foreign Affairs; Lao provincial representatives; officials from the Yunnan Forest Department; and experts from the Xishuangbanna Nature Reserve of China.

The meeting officially appointed 14 members to the PSC selected from the various ministries in attendance as well as agencies and research institutes in Lao PDR. It also assigned liaison officers at the provincial and district levels. During the meeting, members were presented with the overall and first annual work plans, and discussed activity design, project budget, expected outputs and communication procedures.

The PSC planned to meet annually to provide strategic oversight and feedback.

This project was developed as a result of discussions during the 9th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit in November 2012. APFNet was delegated by the State Forestry Administration of China to design and manage the project in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Lao PDR.

The objective of the project is to promote sustainable forest management in three northern provinces (Luang Namtha, Oudomxay and Borkeo) of Lao PDR, by exploring effective approaches of forest restoration and management, capacity strengthening to forestry personnel, promoting cross-border coopera-

tion with China as well as information and knowledge exchange. It is intended to contribute to Laos' national objective of increasing forest cover from 47% to 70% by 2020, support poverty alleviation in rural areas, and promote transboundary forestry cooperation between Lao PDR and China.

This project is co-financed by the APFNet under the activity component for demonstration projects.

Launch of project on landscape forest restoration in China, the Philippines and India

APFNet hosted the kick-off and first project steering committee meeting in Lin'An, China to officially launch the project: "Forest Restoration at the Landscape Level in Asia: A Unique Model Forest Approach" on 14 October 2014. It is implemented by the International Model Forest Network (IMFN) as the

supervisory agency, in partnership with the Regional Model Forest Network in Asia (RMFN-Asia), Chinese Academy of Forestry (CAF), the Lin'an Forestry Extension Station, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in the Philippines, and the Kodagu Forestry College in India.

During the meeting, each partner signed the project agreement to establish official cooperation for the project. Partners also discussed the importance of the project to support the continuous and future cooperation on forest rehabilitation and management between the three countries.

RMFN-Asia defines Model Forests as forest management frameworks that combine the

Project design and funding in 2014

The APFNet call for project concept notes for the 2015 project roster launched in February 2014 and closed in April 2014. Twenty-five concept notes were received from 8 Asia-Pacific economies and 4 international research institutes and universities. Topics covered forest rehabilitation, sustainable forestry management and multi-function forestry development. Six of the twenty-five concept notes were shortlisted by the Project Appraisal Panel to move on to the proposal stage, and are currently under development.

social, environmental and economic needs of local communities with the long-term sustainability of large landscapes, in which forests are an important feature. The Lin'an Model Forest in China, Ulot Model Forest in the Philippines, and Kodagu Model Forest in India were developed between 1999 and 2003. Activities carried out in these Model Forests include: data collection and baseline assessments, development of local stakeholder networks, capacity building and policy analysis.

Based on the Model Forest approach, this project will advance Model Forest development by establishing a total of 400ha in demonstration sites to test assisted regeneration approaches at the landscape level.

In the Lin'an Model Forest, restoration activities will be carried out in both natural open canopy forests and private land with a focus on strengthening rural livelihoods. In the Ulot Model Forest, nursery demonstration sites will be used to produce rattan and almaciga seedlings, as well as establish agroforestry plantations. Activities in the Kodagu Model Forest will focus on restoring monoculture plantations, degraded natural forests and bamboo brakes, weed-invaded degraded forests, as well as degraded agricultural land using agroforestry.

Other project activities will aim to build forest rehabilitation knowledge and capacity of local stakeholders, as well as strengthen networking and information sharing amongst the three economies and international networks, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

This project is co-financed by the APFNet under the activity component for demonstration projects.

Midterm evaluation completed on the rehabilitation and trans-boundary ecological conservation project in the Montane Mainland Southeast Asia area

The Montane Mainland Southeast Asia (MMSEA) area encompasses northern Thailand, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, Yunnan province in China, the Kachin and Shan States of Myanmar and northeastern India. It is an important watershed covering several major rivers in the region and is vital to the livelihood of local communities. However, it currently faces severe deforestation, ineffective land use change and unsustainable rehabilitation efforts.

While past initiatives have focused mainly on creating single-species plantations with limited consideration to ecosystem services, this project aims to develop knowledge and alternative options for sustainable forest rehabilitation and management with attention to cross-border issues.

From 19 to 26 September 2014, an independent mid-term evaluation of the project: "Sustainable Forest Management Rehabilitation and Management for the Conservation of Trans-boundary Ecological Security in Montane Mainland Southeast Asia" (SFR-MMSEA) was conducted on project sites in China, Lao PDR and Myanmar.

The evaluation covered the implementation period of January 2013 to July 2014 and was carried out by an external expert evaluation team. Dr. Hu Huabin, a senior researcher from the Xishuangbanna Botanical Garden in China, led the team to visit 3 project sites and meet with over 30 forestry officials, members of local communities and households. It was concluded that overall, the SFR-MMSEA project is on track and delivering outputs as planned.

Furthermore, the evaluation anticipates that the project's locally adapted activity design will be valuable in building MMSEA-specific knowledge on community-based rehabilitation, one of the main objectives of the project.

To ensure lasting project impact, the evaluators recommended using established information exchange platforms between the 3 economies to upscale project outputs. In this context, the project team (led by the United Nations University in partnership with the Yunnan Academy of Forestry, Department of Agricultural Land Management in Lao PDR and the Forest Research Institute in Myanmar) is coordinating study tours amongst the three project sites to exchange experience and expertise. Further, it was suggested that long-term evaluation would be necessary to assess forest rehabilitation impacts following the project.

In the third year of the project, activities will focus on documenting case studies, analyzing policy and developing a community-based strategy for replication at a larger scale.

This project is co-financed by the APFNet under the activity component for demonstration projects.

Composting training for communities in Myanmar

Demonstration site in Yunnan, China for intercropping Indian Rosewood and other high-value species

Teak forest management in Lao PDR - before and after

APFNet research project recommends areas of future forestry cooperation in the Greater Mekong Subregion

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) is a natural economic area covering 6 states (Myanmar, Lao PDR, Thailand, Cambodia, Viet Nam and the Guangxi Autonomous Region and Yunnan province in China) connected by the Mekong River. It is considered as one of the most significant biodiversity hotspots in the world.

Given the ecological and economic potential of this region, APFNet sponsored a project to conduct "Research on the Current Situation, Future Cooperation and Development Strategy of Forestry in the GMS". This one-year project was launched in 2013 and completed in 2014 by the Yunnan Academy of Forestry. Reports of

five economies were produced to assess the current ecological, social, economic and political context of GMS economies, review previous and ongoing donor initiatives in the region and identify lessons learned and challenges, as well as recommend potential areas of future collaboration between APFNet and GMS economies.

The biggest challenges faced by the region are identified as follows: high forest degradation and resource demand as a result of rapid population growth and urbanization, biodiversity loss, the need to build institutional and political capacity as well as weakness in trade competitiveness

despite an abundance of forest resources.

While the region has strengthened forestry cooperation efforts in recent years, the report recommended further areas of cooperation between APFNet and GMS economies. Priority areas include ecosystem restoration and biodiversity protection, sustainable forestry development, social awareness building and information sharing. The reports are being thoroughly reviewed for the planning of future projects in the region.

This project is co-financed by the APFNet under the activity component for demonstration projects.

APFNet THEMATIC TRAINING PROGRAM 2014

What is the APFNet Thematic Training Program?

Since 2009, the APFNet has held workshops under the Thematic Training Program for developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region and internationally. The objectives of the program are to build expertise amongst the region on select sustainable forest management topics and foster knowledge exchange.

The two-week training workshops occur twice a year and are open to policy makers, researchers and planners in the forestry sector. Speakers are invited from various universities, research institutes, NGOs and organizations from the Asia-Pacific region and internationally. The workshops are sponsored by APFNet in partnership with the Southwest Forestry University, and carried out by the APFNet-Kunming Training Center in Yunnan province, China.

Workshops are designed based on two general themes: i) forestry and rural development and ii) forest resource management. Each workshop consists of a combination of lectures, working group discussions, participant presentations and field visits. To date, 200 participants from 20 economies have participated in the program. For more information, visit www.apfnet.cn.

Workshop on rehabilitating degraded forests and sustainable forest management

In the face of ongoing forest degradation around the world and increasing challenges brought on by climate change, there is an urgent need to improve the quality of forest rehabilitation practices on the ground and find effective methods to incorporate broader environmental, social and economic needs and interests.

In this context, the thematic training workshop on the "Rehabilitation of Degraded Forests and Sustainable Forest Management" was carried out from 1 to 12 July 2014. Fifteen policy makers, researchers and planners from 12 Asia-Pacific economies attended the workshop.

The workshop was designed to build knowledge and discuss current rehabilitation efforts, common misconceptions related to rehabilitation, drivers of forest degradation, methods of quantifying restoration outcomes, economics of forest restoration and how to devise policies and institutional frameworks to rebuild forests as a natural capital, taking into account the ecosystem approach.

While it was generally agreed that there is no universal approach for forest rehabilitation in all economies, speakers and participants discussed two broad areas of change that will affect all economies in forest restoration: first, large-scale societal and demographic changes influencing the demand on forest resources and second, the risks and uncertainties associated with climate change.

During the workshop, participants were also required to present on the context, challenges and future outlook of forest resource management and rehabilitation in their own economies. The workshop concluded with field trips at various demonstration sites in Pu'er city.

Overview of lectures

- Rehabilitation of degraded forests – an introduction
- Drivers of forest degradation and future scenarios
- Policy and institutional issues in the restoration of degraded forests
- Financing forest restoration – opportunities and challenges
- Ecosystem approach to forest restoration
- Comparative analysis of the policies and practices of degraded forest rehabilitation
- The science and technology of degraded forest rehabilitation
- Forest restoration in the context of traditional landscape management systems in the humid tropics
- Forest restoration and livelihoods in Asia
- Summary of key messages and conclusions

"I was particularly impressed with the upland conservation program in Pu'er and the results to-date from agroforestry approaches, eco-tourism development and management of local communities. I am confident that the lessons learned from this experience will enhance my potential to move forward in my future work."

Participant from Thailand

"This experience has changed my perspective of forest rehabilitation and increased my understanding of how to integrate climate change considerations and carbon trading in sustainable forestry management."

Participant from Bangladesh

Workshop on biodiversity conservation and rural livelihood improvement in forests

Despite the significant progress in sustainable forest management and reduction in forest cover loss, deforestation and forest degradation remain as key challenges in tropical economies. A major consequence of this is the direct and indirect impact of biodiversity loss on sustainable livelihoods.

In this context, the thematic training workshop on "Forest Biodiversity Conservation and Improvement of Rural Livelihoods" was carried out from 1 to 14 November 2014. Fourteen policy makers, researchers and planners from 13 economies attended the workshop.

The purpose of this workshop was to build capacity and synergies on biodiversity conservation and rural community improvement amongst developing economies. Speakers and participants exchanged views on the global context of conservation efforts, existing policies and sustainable approaches in a series of lectures and working group discussions. Each participant presented the current situation, challenges and outlook on forest biodiversity and rural livelihoods in their respective economies. The workshop concluded with field trips at various demonstration sites in Pu'er city.

Participant presentation highlights

Sri Lanka Sri Lanka is ranked in the world's top biodiversity hotspots with a significant number of endemic species, where 28% of flowering plants and 16% of mammals on the island are endemic. Its unique biodiversity is threatened due to deforestation, increasing population density, habitat fragmentation and loss, overexploitation of natural resources, pollution and the spread of invasive species.

Sri Lanka has lost 50% of its forest cover over the past 50 years. Given the strong relationship between human population change and forest cover decline, and between degradation/deforestation and poverty, the government of Sri Lanka is currently focusing on participatory programs that gather local communities and stakeholders, as well as target opportunities to create income and foster collaborative management. The South West Rain Forest Conservation Project introduced alternative livelihood sources to local communities through microfinance, microenterprise, skill training and ecotourism development.

Mexico Mexico faces forest degradation and deforestation mainly as a result of changes in land use, lack of sustainable forest management and low level of appreciation for environmental services. The federal government responded to these issues in 2003 through the launch of the Hydrological Environmental Services program, which was designed to provide payment to landowners for the maintenance of forests to provide hydrological ecosystem services. Despite the fact that programs have reduced the probability of deforestation, Mexico wishes to enhance conservation by promoting the valuation of environmental services, as well as establish and consolidate local markets for payment for ecosystem services (PES) programs in forests.

Nepal Despite being a landlocked country, Nepal has a rich biodiversity due to a large variation in bioregions, ranging from low altitude tropical to high altitude alpine climates. The economy is heavily dependent on the agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors, which comprise approximately 34% of the national GDP. For this reason, the government of Nepal has launched policies and programs on land use management, ecotourism, fire management, biodiversity and wetlands; in order to manage natural habitat loss, poaching and illegal logging. Nepal has also launched the Forest Decade program which is designed on the concept of: "One house one tree, one village one forest, and one town many gardens".

APFNet around the globe

In 2014, APFNet attended various international conferences including the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) World Congress in Salt Lake City, USA; the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia; and the 20th United Nations Conference of Parties (UN COP) in Lima, Peru. Exhibitions were set up to share the findings of our capacity building and demonstration projects as well as distribute various publications completed over the year.

Furthermore, an exhibition stand was assembled during the APEC Senior Officials' Meeting to present an overview of our work over the past 5 years. Before and after the meeting, two exhibitions were arranged in the China State Forestry Administration building.

About APFNet

The APFNet was proposed by the Chinese Government and co-sponsored by the Australian and United States Governments at the 15th APEC Economic Leaders Meeting in Sydney, Australia, in September 2007. Its mission is to promote and improve sustainable forest management and rehabilitation in the Asia-Pacific region through four activity components: policy dialogues, capacity building, demonstration projects and information sharing. The APFNet Secretariat is located in Beijing, China.

Contact us

Asia-Pacific Network for
Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation

6th Floor, Baoneng Center, 12 Futong Dongdajie, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100102, P.R. China

Tel: +86 10 8415 9140
Fax: +86 10 8421 6958
Email: apfnet@apfnet.cn
Website: www.apfnet.cn