

PEOPLE AND FORESTS IN A TIME OF RAPID CHANGE

Strengthening Capacities for
Community Forestry to Respond

RECOFTC STRATEGIC PLAN

2008–2013



CONTENTS

KEY CHOICES AND CHANGES	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
1 REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF GLOBAL CONCERN	1
ENGAGING LOCAL PEOPLE IN FORESTRY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC	3
2 RECOFTC'S VALUES AND NORMS	5
3 RECOFTC'S FUTURE ROLE	6
FROM TRAINING TO LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT	6
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE—BUILDING ON LESSONS LEARNED	7
RECOFTC'S NICHE	8
4 RECOFTC'S STRATEGIC PLAN, 2008–2013	9
VISION, MISSION, AND LONG-TERM DESIRED OUTCOMES	9
PROGRAM GOAL, OBJECTIVE, RESULTS, AND INDICATORS, 2008–2013	9
LOGFRAME OF RECOFTC'S OVERALL PROGRAM	10
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	12
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	12
MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS	14
RECOFTC'S GOVERNANCE	14
5 IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY—MAKING IT HAPPEN	15
FOCUS ON PEOPLE, FORESTS, AND RAPID CHANGE	15
ARTICULATING OUR CORE FUNCTIONS	16
FACILITATING LEARNING	16
PROMOTING PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION	17
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION	17
MAKING LOCAL PERSPECTIVES WIDELY KNOWN	17
GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS	19
COUNTRIES FOR CONTINUED AND STRENGTHENED ENGAGEMENT	19
EXPANDING ENGAGEMENT IN KEY COUNTRIES	20
COUNTRIES WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND EXCHANGE	21
ENGAGEMENT IN OTHER ASIA-PACIFIC COUNTRIES AND BEYOND	21
CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND GLOBAL INITIATIVES	22
RESOURCE GENERATION AND MOBILIZATION	23
FINANCE	23
HUMAN RESOURCES	24
RECOFTC'S PARTNERS	24
ACRONYMS	26

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Community Forestry to Respond

RECOFTC STRATEGIC PLAN 2008–2013

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KEY CHOICES AND CHANGES

The previous Strategic Plan for the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) covered the period from 2004 to 2009. It was a key document that provided valuable guidance to RECOFTC program activities and expanded core functions beyond training. Most ideas laid out in the Plan have been implemented and have contributed to strengthening local people's engagement in forestry in the Asia-Pacific region.

An externally conducted program evaluation in late 2007 found that RECOFTC was well-positioned to respond to the changed and continuously changing global agenda. The evaluation emphasized the progress that RECOFTC had made during the recent planning period and that our programmatic approach based on analysis and representation, capacity strengthening, and in-country activities remains relevant and unique to the region. It stressed that *the need for the organization has never been greater in terms of efforts to reduce the adverse effects of major global and regional changes on local natural resource based livelihoods*. It pointed out that RECOFTC has the potential to lead efforts for local people's rights and issues of equity and poverty, which should be regularly and seriously addressed at local and country levels and in regional and global initiatives on forests.

The evaluation team made several recommendations, which RECOFTC has taken on board in planning for a new program cycle. Inter alia, they include a streamlined organizational structure that fosters greater synergies among RECOFTC programs, the full integration of the Thailand Country Support Project into RECOFTC, and the implementation of a fund-raising strategy to enhance financial security.

People and Forests in a Time of Rapid Change—Strengthening Capacities for Community Forestry to Respond was prepared through an extensive consultative process. The title of this document reflects that we are well aware of the rapid changes the Asia-Pacific region is experiencing and that there is a major need to strengthen capacities to assist countries and forestry stakeholders to respond in ways that benefit people and forests alike.

In the debate on the future of forests in Asia and the Pacific, forestry stakeholders tend to focus on recurring themes and major barriers to bringing about sustainable forest management and engaging people more effectively in forest governance and management. In the meantime, emerging drivers of change and realities have made the headlines; sometimes they have been barely noticed by those deliberating the removal of old barriers. These new drivers, such as the biofuel revolution and climate change mitigation, already have had, and some of them will continue to have, a significant impact on the fate of forests and the people living in and around forests. They certainly will drive the scope and direction of RECOFTC work for the next planning period and be a vital part of RECOFTC programs.

This time of rapid change also implies that our strategy needs to be viewed as a "living" document. Strengthened monitoring and evaluation and new opportunities in countries and with partners during the course of the next five years will assist in refining both the document and the assessment of major trends and new issues. Continued dialogue with partners at local, national, and international levels will further provide opportunities for adaptive management. RECOFTC will remain open to critical inputs concerning the implementation of the strategic plan.

RECOFTC stands ready to work with partners in and beyond its focal countries and invites all people and institutions involved in forestry to make use of its learning and knowledge management facilities.



David Cassells
Chair, Board of Trustees



Yam Malla
Executive Director

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

P*eople and Forests in a Time of Rapid Change—Strengthening Capacities for Community Forestry to Respond*, RECOFTC's Strategic Plan for 2008–2013, is the result of intensive interaction and extensive collaboration among people from within and outside RECOFTC. The organization's staff, its Board of Trustees, strategic partners, and representatives of current and potential funding agencies provided constructive inputs between December 2007 and March 2008, which were complemented by voices from the field on community perspectives.¹

The planning and consultation process was facilitated by David Boyer (Consultant) and John Guernier (Manager, Regional Analysis and Representation Program) under the overall coordination and guidance of Yam Malla (Executive Director) and David Cassells (Chair, Board of Trustees).

The preparation of the Plan also benefited from the results of earlier work, especially the major findings of an externally conducted RECOFTC impact assessment in Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam;² the International Conference on Poverty Reduction and Forests: Policy, Tenure and Market Reforms organized by RECOFTC and partners in September 2007;³ and the RECOFTC Program Plan Evaluation, 2004–2008.⁴

David Boyer compiled the generated information from a series of meetings and the comments and feedback received from staff, Board members and peer reviewers, with assistance from Thomas Enters (RECOFTC Associate). Final editing was conducted by Robin Leslie (Professional Editor).

Without the keen interest and willingness of individuals to provide their valuable time, it would not have been possible for RECOFTC to develop a concise yet comprehensive Strategic Plan in such a short period. RECOFTC's management and Board of Trustees would sincerely like to thank them all.

1 Hemant Ojha, Somying Soontornwong, and James Bampton assisted in collecting information on local communities' perspectives and issues related to community forestry from Nepal, Thailand, and Cambodia, respectively.

2 Boyer, D., L. Bacomo, M. Kosal, N.S. Hoai, and A. Roongwong. 2007. *Program Impact Assessment with Focus on Country Activities for Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam, 2004-2007*. Internal Report. Bangkok: RECOFTC.

3 RECOFTC, and RRI. 2007. *International Conference on Poverty Reduction and Forests: Policy, Tenure and Market Reforms*. Conference Report. Bangkok: RECOFTC.

4 Hobley, M., P. Johnston, and R.K. Singh. 2007. *Evaluation of RECOFTC: Program Plan 2004–2008*. Internal Report 2007. Bangkok: RECOFTC.

1 REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF GLOBAL CONCERN

Significant and rapid changes in the global economy and political and social systems are affecting forests, forestry, and the livelihoods of people living in and around forests. The discussion on key impediments to sustainable forest management is fuelled by a debate on emerging drivers and new concerns, as forests have taken center-stage in the international debate on poverty reduction and climate change mitigation. It is generally accepted that future challenges in the forestry sector will differ considerably from the past and that the impact of other sectors will increase. This will have far-reaching consequences for people, forests, and forest industries, and ultimately for the engagement of local people in forest governance and management.

The Asia-Pacific region is widely hailed as a developmental success story and a major driver for powering global growth over the last two decades; the two mightiest actors are the People's Republic of China and India. The vast and heterogeneous region contains some of the world's largest and richest economies, as well as some of the smallest and poorest. It is home to three fifths of the world's population, yet covers only slightly more than one fifth of the world's land area. In relative terms, rural populations decreased in most countries in the region between 1997 and 2007, although its total number still exceeds two billion, many of whom are poor. Although agriculture remains a key sector with respect to employment and income generation in the region, overall its importance has clearly declined. The **rapid transition** from predominantly rural and agricultural employment to urban-based manufacturing and service-oriented activities in developing Asian countries is predicted to continue and the trend is expected to even accelerate in some countries.

The decline in global **poverty** is mostly due to rapid economic growth in Asia. Impressive reductions in poverty have occurred in East and Southeast Asia in particular. However, the extreme poor have benefited less from economic growth than the moderately poor, and there is growing concern over widening

disparities in the region despite economic growth.

The region still has more than 600 million people living on less than US\$1 per day and about 1.8 billion people are living on less than US\$2 per day. An even greater number of people are affected by a lack of opportunities, insecurity, and powerlessness. They have little if any economic assets and political capital. With the exception of Mongolia, poverty is disproportionately concentrated in the rural areas of the region. Although nearly all forests are located in rural and remote areas, it is too simplistic to deduce that there is a clear link between the existence of forests and the persistence of poverty of the 450 million people who live in and around the forests of Asia and the Pacific. The most **vulnerable groups** in the rural areas, especially women and children, are suffering the most and if specific actions to improve their situation are not taken, many people will fall further behind.

Forests and forestry have the potential to contribute to the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving extreme poverty by 2015. Although we know that they both provide for basic human needs such as food and shelter and contribute to income generation, there is little empirically-based knowledge on the benefits they provide, particularly to the extreme poor. What we know is that creating space for local people to engage in forestry for their own benefit requires strengthening **forest tenure, access, and use rights**. As an initial step, this requirement is acknowledged in most national development strategies and forest programs in Asia and the Pacific. Translating this recognition into tangible changes on the ground involves political commitment and practical solutions.

About 25% of the region's total land area is covered by different types of forest. Asia experienced an annual net forest loss of some 0.8 million hectares during the 1990s but reported a net gain of 1 million hectares per year between 2000 and 2005. This gain is mainly due to large-scale afforestation in China

and Vietnam. Natural forests continue to be degraded and cleared at alarming rates across the region. The impacts of forest degradation are of major concern to many governments, civil society, and the private sector that utilize forest resources. For poor people who depend on them, the implications are even more troubling.

Asian countries have responded to rapidly increasing energy costs (driven by political instability, energy uncertainty, and concerns over climate change) by setting ambitious **bio-energy** plantation targets, exceeding 20 million hectares over the next four years, which will in all likelihood accelerate forest conversion further.

World **wood markets** are changing at a fast rate. Demand for wood is growing worldwide, especially in China, increasing pressure on natural forests within and beyond the Asia-Pacific region. Large-scale forest industry is expected to consolidate further and shift operations to the South. There are both potential benefits and costs of this change. Small-scale enterprises and communities may benefit from the growing domestic demand in the region's developing countries. Emerging interest in forestry outgrower schemes is already injecting more money into smallholder tree growers' pockets and contributes to reducing vulnerability by creating assets that people can draw upon during critical times. At the same time, the expanding plantation sector continues to threaten the land rights of indigenous and local people, underscoring that potential opportunities are frequently accompanied by challenges that particularly affect the most vulnerable groups.

Deforestation and forest degradation contribute approximately 20% to carbon emissions, which is higher than the global transport sector. Hence, forests play an important role in mitigating the effects of **climate change**. Forest loss and degradation must be urgently addressed if the global community is to meet its objectives of stabilizing the concentration of greenhouse gases and maintaining climate change within acceptable limits. Effectively engaging local people in forest management could contribute to climate change mitigation and poverty reduction simultaneously. However,

the social dimensions and the implications of carbon financing for pro-poor forestry through such initiatives as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), are far from clear.

Populations and areas under absolute and economic **water scarcity** will increase considerably in coming years. Approximately 5.5 billion people worldwide are predicted to be affected by severe water stress by 2025. The rural poor are often expected to maintain supplies of critical ecosystem goods and services such as watershed functions. Payments for environmental service schemes as a policy instrument for rewarding people's forest conservation efforts are currently being tested, although it remains unclear how cost-effective and socially just they are. At the same time, increased water scarcity is intensifying the debate on the role of natural forests and forest plantations in the hydrological functions of watersheds.

Recent and emerging global and regional concerns about forests have triggered renewed interest in sustainable forest management at national and international levels. Responding to rapid changes in the Asia-Pacific region requires innovative solutions, political commitment, and strengthened capacities. RECOFTC, as an autonomous not-for-profit international organization and a unique learning and knowledge management center, is well-positioned to assist countries and partners in guiding the renewed interest into tangible changes on the ground. RECOFTC is well-

For People and Forests

RECOFTC holds a unique and important place in the world of forestry. It is the only international not-for-profit organization that specializes in capacity building for community forestry and devolved forest management. RECOFTC engages in strategic networks and effective partnerships with governments, nongovernment organizations, civil society, the private sector, local people, and research and educational institutes throughout the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. With over 20 years of international experience and a dynamic approach to capacity building—involving research and analysis, demonstration sites, and training products—RECOFTC delivers innovative solutions for people and forests.

Key Lessons From the Past Three Decades

- The forest area actively managed by tens of millions of people exceeds 25 million hectares.
- Given the right conditions and incentives, communities can govern and manage forests sustainably for a variety of objectives, and regenerate degraded landscapes and ecosystems.
- Engaging communities in forestry is increasingly considered in forest policies, national forest programs, and poverty reduction strategy papers.
- Forest user organizations, networks, federations, and global alliances are essential to advance community forestry.
- Forest agencies can change, but new skills are required to enhance their facilitation role.
- Community forestry generates income for households and for enhancing rural infrastructure.
- Authority and rights transferred to local forest users need further strengthening.
- Valuable lessons learned of successful approaches and practices are not sufficiently replicated and scaled up.
- Bureaucratic procedures and arbitrary changes of rules and obligations can have dire consequences for local people.
- Most local communities are highly heterogeneous and benefits are not shared equitably.

positioned to help forestry stakeholders address the social dimensions of current and future developments and trends that affect people and forests alike, in particular poor and highly vulnerable people.

ENGAGING LOCAL PEOPLE IN FORESTRY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Over the last 20 years, many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have been actively engaged in reforms to transfer responsibilities and power from the center (i.e. central government) to the periphery (e.g. state, province, district, or local level). Almost all sectors are affected by this incremental move and forestry is no exception, with forestry agencies being restructured or merged with related agencies (e.g. agriculture, environment, primary industries). The number of communities and individuals involved in forestry has expanded significantly and ever

more pioneering forms of devolving forest management are being devised.

A widely accepted view is that by engaging local people more effectively in forestry, the decisions they make will lead to more equitable benefit-sharing than those taken by central authorities. At the same time, it is also hoped that empowering people at the periphery to decide and implement “their” form of forest management can contribute to the MDGs by helping to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger and ensure environmental sustainability. Concomitantly, high expectations related to the purported equitable and efficient outcomes of any form of participatory forestry have been raised. It remains unclear to what extent and where the expectations and hopes have been fulfilled.

Countries in the region have different historical, political, and economic settings. This has created a wide variety of modalities for engaging communities, user groups, and individual households in forestry. There is no single model for engagement that is applicable across the region. However, there are substantial opportunities for learning through knowledge shared across the region, even when experiences occur in different settings.

A review of the recent history of devolution in forestry indicates undeniably that the area of land—although not necessarily forests—managed under devolved and community forestry systems has dramatically increased in many countries. Progress in engaging local

What We Mean by “Community Forestry”

Over the last 25 years, the definition of community forestry has evolved from a narrowly defined technical field to a broader concept that includes all aspects, initiatives, sciences, policies, institutions, and processes that are intended to increase the role of local people in governing and managing forest resources. It consists of informal, customary and indigenous, and formal or government-led initiatives. Community forestry covers social, economic, and conservation dimensions in a range of activities including indigenous management of sacred sites of cultural importance, small-scale forest-based enterprises, forestry outgrower schemes, company-community partnerships, and decentralized and devolved forest management.

people in forestry varies within and among countries. Although the empirical evidence is often not necessarily convincing, many reviews of lessons learned generally provide a positive picture and emphasize the significant potential of community forestry to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable forest management. In our opinion, there is much work to be done to fully meet this potential.

At present, RECOFTC—as the only international organization solely committed to strengthening

local people's engagement in forestry in the Asia-Pacific region through capacity building—is well-positioned to present local people's concerns in global discussions on forests and to drive debates, particularly on the social dimensions of emerging political, economic, and environmental issues. Forests owned and managed by communities, as well as by individual households, are anticipated to double in size by 2015. Demand for continuously updated knowledge is expected to increase accordingly.



2 RECOFTC'S VALUES AND NORMS

Our work is guided by a set of values and associated behavior, which enables the achievement of positive impacts through the strengthening of capacities to help reduce poverty and achieve environmental sustainability.

We acknowledge the importance of the five partnership commitments laid out in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. We respect country leadership and help strengthen capacities to exercise it. RECOFTC's support builds on existing policies, strategies, and action plans. We jointly review progress with partners and are committed to harmonizing activities with the efforts of development agencies and other actors to avoid duplication and to achieve greater impact. In managing for results we focus on desired outcomes. In pursuit of RECOFTC's goals and objectives, we adhere to the following values and norms:

INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY

- RECOFTC staff adhere to the highest ethical standards; the organization is transparent in its approaches and priority setting, and is honest in reporting progress and results.
- The knowledge managed by RECOFTC is made available to all key stakeholders, without supporting any political regime or ideology.
- RECOFTC's advice is based on solid information and critical analysis, and not on individual opinions. RECOFTC's primary role is to inform the debate and not advocate for a cause.

PARTNERS AND FUNDING AGENCIES

- In assisting countries to translate their policies, strategies, and plans into tangible changes on the ground, RECOFTC serves people living in and around forests in the Asia-Pacific region, especially the extreme poor and most vulnerable groups. Because

Who is Local?

We use the term "local people" to represent spatial connectedness between people and any given landscape. Local people usually have settled in a particular area and manage natural resources according to rules and norms collectively defined by their constituents. Local people may include indigenous groups, migrants, ethnic minorities, and other groups of people who have maintained economic, social, and cultural relationships with the landscape.

these beneficiaries often do not have a strong voice, RECOFTC endeavors to take their interests into account during program planning and implementation.

- RECOFTC's strategic partners are chosen on the basis of shared values, potential for contributions to mutual strategic objectives, professional competence or potential for competence, and their motivation to manage for results jointly agreed upon.
- RECOFTC's core functions are conducted in consultation with stakeholders in an open manner.
- RECOFTC aims to broaden its funding base to avoid dependence on a small number of funding agencies.

RESPECT

- RECOFTC acknowledges and respects diversity in terms of race, gender, culture, religion, and different needs.
- RECOFTC promotes equity, empowerment, and independence of thought and seeks participation from key stakeholders, target groups, and beneficiaries.
- RECOFTC believes that all stakeholders can play a role in addressing forestry issues; we value their traditional and scientific knowledge and perceptions.
- RECOFTC treats colleagues and partners with trust, respect, and fairness.

3 RECOFTC'S FUTURE ROLE

The first seeds for the establishment of RECOFTC were sown in 1982 during a seminar on forestry extension organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). Seminar participants identified the need for a regional institution for community forestry training and research to facilitate the exchange of information and implementation of activities.

It took another five years for RECOFTC to be born in March 1987. Support from the Asia-Pacific Regional Office of FAO and funding from the Government of Switzerland (through the Asian Development Bank) and Kasetsart University (Thailand) enabled RECOFTC to take its first steps to operate as a Thai national institute to provide training on community forestry. In 2000, RECOFTC gained formal status as an international organization with a mandate to promote community forestry in the Asia-Pacific region. Over the last 20 years the organization has evolved to better serve the needs of countries in Asia and the Pacific. RECOFTC has remained independent and continues to respect country leadership in policy formulation and implementation.

FROM TRAINING TO LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Although action research has been an integral part of activities since its inception, RECOFTC's main role is capacity building. Many other organizations had, and still have, a comparative advantage in generating empirically-based knowledge through research. In addition, newer international organizations, such as the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) have the explicit objective of increasing empirically-based knowledge on forests and forestry through research. RECOFTC has positioned itself more as a capacity-building institution with the specific objective of promoting local people's involvement in forestry through information services and training. Since 2004 and the previous strategic plan, RECOFTC has widened its scope.

Today, RECOFTC's main goal to support local people's involvement in forestry in the Asia-Pacific region through training and information services is complemented by collaborative activities at the regional level, a range of action research-oriented and demonstration field activities in selected focal countries, and participation in regional and global forums

on forests. It supports and initiates forums that enable stakeholders to share views and knowledge on innovative and effective approaches and practices. The organization's function as a learning and knowledge management center ensures that lessons learned through implementation are analyzed, repackaged, and disseminated.

RECOFTC's communication arm ensures that policymakers and practitioners are kept abreast of the latest developments and emerging issues that concern the engagement of local people in forestry. Tailored products, styles, and media are used to target the needs of different stakeholders seeking improved governance arrangements and stronger resource rights for local people.

RECOFTC's broad approach to learning and knowledge management is designed to assist countries, especially a set of focal countries, in the Asia-Pacific region to tackle existing and emerging challenges facing the forestry sector. Access to new, inexpensive, and efficient communication technologies can ensure that knowledge can be shared with more and more people over the next five years. RECOFTC's contributions in regional and global forestry forums ensure that international audiences are aware of local concerns in forestry, the need for engaging local people in forest management, the social dimensions of rapid change, and new developments. This approach assists in

complementing local action with international initiatives as well as policy-making and implementation at national and global levels. In strengthening partner countries' capacities for achieving sustainable forest management and environmental sustainability goals, RECOFTC emphasizes that the ultimate beneficiaries of community forestry are local people, especially the extreme poor and highly vulnerable groups.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE—BUILDING ON LESSONS LEARNED

RECOFTC's future work builds upon the experiences and lessons learned from the past, particularly learning from the most recent strategic and program plans.

The Strategic Plan 2004–2009 took on board an evaluation mission's recommendation to develop a programmatic approach to program planning and delivery. It addressed:

- **Regional Analysis and Representation**—identifying, synthesizing, and effectively presenting key issues facing community forestry development at national, regional, and international forums.
- **Capacity Building Services**—developing and delivering quality capacity-building products and services, relevant to stakeholders, which strengthen community engagement in forest governance and management.
- **Country Program Support**—testing and demonstrating innovative community forestry practices in selected countries in the Asia-Pacific region and encouraging and facilitating their uptake regionally.

An organizational structure was developed that linked programs directly to outputs specified in the Plan; it aimed to strengthen key organizational areas and increase RECOFTC's regional presence.

In late 2007, an overall evaluation was carried out as part of RECOFTC's program

review process and in preparation for the development of the new five-year strategic plan. The main objective of the evaluation was:

To make an overall assessment of the RECOFTC Program and its relevance to the challenges and opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region, especially management of the region's forests and related natural resources and provide recommendations for future action.

The evaluation concluded that RECOFTC's overall program direction, goal, and purpose remain relevant, and indicated accomplishments in organizational development and broadening regional activities. It noted that there are now in place:

... the major elements of a well functioning organization: robust financial systems, new human resource systems and recruitment processes, management information systems, planning and reporting frameworks, improved public and internal websites, some elements of staff training/skills development, and a professional interns system.

During the implementation of the previous plan, RECOFTC expanded its regional reach adding Indonesia and Cambodia to Thailand as focal countries. It also started to play an active role as a regional information hub and convened meetings for policymakers and practitioners to help ensure the consideration of local people's roles in national forest programs and development strategies and to advocate for more equitable sharing of benefits generated through devolved forest management.

The evaluation mission also identified a number of gaps to be addressed in the next planning cycle, including the need to: better define core functions; integrate program delivery for increased effectiveness and impact; expand geographic focus for core functions while seeking opportunities to increase regional reach; and strengthen communication and knowledge management targeted at well-defined key audiences.

RECOFTC'S NICHE

RECOFTC holds a unique and important place in the world of forestry as the only international not-for-profit organization that specializes in capacity building for community forestry and devolved forest management. RECOFTC engages in strategic networks and effective partnerships with governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, local people, and research and educational institutes throughout the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Its learning and knowledge management approach to capacity building fills the critical gap of strengthening the capacities of stakeholders involved in forestry or working on issues that affect indigenous and local people throughout the region. RECOFTC also complements the empirically-based knowledge generation of international research institutes and activities implemented independently at national levels in Asia and the Pacific.

As a regional center that implements field activities in several focal countries, RECOFTC is in a strong position to analyze and disseminate lessons learned from these locations as new knowledge for the whole region and beyond. Vice versa, new information generated through regional initiatives can be made readily available to local and national stakeholders involved in enhancing practices, processes, and policies concerned with devolved forest management.

The preparation of national diagnostic forestry reviews focusing on the involvement of local people enables RECOFTC and its partners to present local and national issues that impact the progress of community forestry and the

RECOFTC's Geographical Cover and Scope of Work

As mandated by its Charter, RECOFTC's geographical coverage encompasses all countries of the Asia-Pacific region (extending from Central Asia in the west to the International Dateline in the east, and from the People's Republic of China, Mongolia, and Japan in the north to Australia and New Zealand in the south). It is open to collaboration with organizations from other regions when the opportunity arises.

RECOFTC's work scope includes acquiring, generating, and sharing knowledge and skills; creating opportunities for learning and application of such knowledge and skills; and providing appropriate support to improve forestry policies and practices. Emerging issues and new developments determine to a considerable extent the themes that RECOFTC addresses. It covers a range of:

- ecological systems (e.g. mountain, arid, and semi-arid areas, coastal zones);
- landscapes (e.g. all types of forests—natural and planted, watershed and protected areas, village and agricultural lands); and
- tenure systems (e.g. legal and customary/ de facto management and ownership arrangements).

social dimensions of rapid change to regional and international audiences so that action can be taken to make forestry work better for people and forests.

The 2007 evaluation of RECOFTC noted that the need for a respected and trusted institution that analyzes and translates issues is of greater importance than ever in a time of rapid change and information overload. RECOFTC is well-established in the Asia-Pacific region and is well-positioned to respond to this need.

4 RECOFTC'S STRATEGIC PLAN, 2008–2013

VISION, MISSION, AND LONG-TERM DESIRED OUTCOMES

RECOFTC believes that community forestry can provide an effective and equitable means of addressing the many challenges that face sustainable forest management in Asia and the Pacific. It is not the only means, but given the right conditions and support, it can contribute to better management of forests and other natural resources. This in turn will help to inject much needed income into poor people's pockets, mitigate diverse global problems such as poverty and climate change, strengthen forest governance, and foster democratization processes. At present, the "right conditions" are not in place and forestry's potential contribution to broader development and environmental sustainability goals is not being fully realized. RECOFTC aims to help countries turn the potential into reality and strives to support all stakeholders who are working towards positive changes for people and forests in the Asia-Pacific region.

RECOFTC's vision is a mental picture of the final destination of community forestry in the broadest sense, its inspiration, and the framework for all its strategic planning. The mission is RECOFTC's special assignment setting out what it needs to accomplish to reach the final destination. The long-term desired outcomes are milestones to be reached en route to the final destination.

VISION:

Local communities in the Asia-Pacific region are actively involved in the equitable and ecologically sustainable management of forest landscapes.

MISSION:

To enhance capacities at all levels to assist people of the Asia-Pacific region in developing community forestry and managing forest resources for optimum social, economic, and environmental benefits.

LONG-TERM DESIRED OUTCOMES:

RECOFTC aims to contribute to three main outcomes:

1. *Improved human well-being through diversified livelihoods and stronger rights for people who live in and around forests.*
2. *Improved forest conditions to enhance local and national development, maintain domestic and global environmental services, and help mitigate climate change.*
3. *Community forestry mainstreamed in the development and implementation of national forest programs and development strategies.*

PROGRAM GOAL, OBJECTIVE, RESULTS, AND INDICATORS, 2008–2013

To translate these ideals and desired outcomes into a practical program, RECOFTC has formulated an organizational goal and objective to provide guidance during the 2008–2013 Plan period. The Plan also provides results and indicators and explicit definitions of RECOFTC staff roles and responsibilities to achieve the stated objective and results through a greater emphasis on program synergies. In this sense, the Plan is a road map.

The Plan presents a framework of intent. Its implementation depends on the level of resources mobilized, the partnerships formed, and the opportunities identified and realized. The Plan is intended as a "living document" to be revisited at each annual Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting. Adjustments to the Plan will be made as new opportunities and needs arise in the Asia-Pacific region.

LOGFRAME OF RECOFTC'S OVERALL PROGRAM

Goal:

Countries in the Asia-Pacific region increasingly integrate the well-being of local people and environmental sustainability in their national forest programs and development strategies, and support the effective engagement of local people in forest governance and management.

Indicators:

1. The number of countries in the Asia-Pacific region that integrate the well-being of local people and environmental sustainability in their national forest programs is increased by 50%.
2. By 2013, the area of forests actively managed by local people in the Asia-Pacific region is increased by 20%.
3. Forest-based income is shared more equitably and measurably increased.

Objective:

Capacities of relevant stakeholders are strengthened, policies that enhance resource rights of local people are implemented, and new knowledge is applied so that people and community forestry can respond more effectively to change.

Indicators:

1. One regional and at least six national multi-stakeholder community forestry working groups are operational and address the challenges to community engagement in forests and governance in the region; they facilitate the sharing of good practices and lessons learned and effectively advance community forestry.
2. In at least six countries, concerns and challenges related to community engagement in forestry are appropriately considered in national forest programs, poverty reduction strategies, and community forestry initiatives.
3. In response to growing demand by countries in the region, capacity-building programs, products, and service provision increase by 25% in comparison to the previous planning period.
4. New knowledge resulting from RECOFTC activities is documented, disseminated, and applied for the benefit of people and forests in the focal countries.
5. Indicators to measure the social, economic, and environmental impacts of community forestry from country experiences are developed, disseminated, and used to monitor progress and assess impacts.
6. National, regional, and global forest user networks, federations, and alliances are supported.

Assumptions:

The governments of countries in Asia and the Pacific remain committed to devolving stronger rights in forest management to local people and institutions, and strengthening the meaningful engagement of local people in forest governance and management. Local people's interest in community forestry increases and the demand for capacity strengthening continues.

Result 1: Lessons learned in improving forestry practices and major issues affecting community forestry in the Asia-Pacific region are identified, analyzed, and shared with practitioners and decision-makers at local and international levels.

Indicators:

1. RECOFTC works with partners to analyze the social dimensions of, and potential responses to, emerging issues including (i) the impacts of adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, (ii) the effects of rapidly expanding global commodity markets, (iii) the contribution of forests and forestry to poverty reduction, and (iv) the impacts of increasing interest in biofuels.
2. RECOFTC and its partners track changes in community forestry developments, the impact of these changes on the livelihoods of people living in and around forests, and forest conditions over time.
3. RECOFTC contributes to relevant regional and global forestry forums by (i) reporting on progress in engaging local people in forestry in the Asia-Pacific region; (ii) highlighting equity, gender, economic, and environmental sustainability issues; (iii) recommending actions to be taken to enable community forestry to work better for people and forests; and (iv) presenting local concerns in community forestry to international audiences.
4. National-level multi-stakeholder community forestry working groups in the first three focal countries meet at least quarterly by 2010, and those in the second three focal countries do likewise by the end of 2012, to share lessons learned and develop action plans to enhance the effective engagement of local people in forestry.
5. By 2013, national diagnostic community forestry reviews, focusing on the involvement of local people in forestry, are completed in the six focal countries; proven community forestry practices and processes are demonstrated, documented, and shared within and among countries so that they can be replicated.
6. By 2013, at least two regional community forestry policy forums are held; they engage key stakeholders, especially from the six focal countries, to analyze and articulate key issues that affect the development and implementation of community forestry in the Asia-Pacific region.
7. Each year, RECOFTC and its partners (subnational, national, and regional/international) jointly identify new themes for analysis and support to advance the development and implementation of community forestry.

Result 2: High-quality capacity-building programs, products, and services are designed and delivered with partners to key stakeholders in order to increase their capacities and skills in forest governance and management, enhancing forest-based livelihoods and maintaining forest-based environmental services.

Indicators:

1. Capacity-building needs are assessed by 2009 in the first three focal countries and by 2010 in the second three focal countries. Representatives from at least two community-based organizations, nongovernment organizations, and five district forest offices as well as key individuals representing national forestry research and educational institutes; land administration, finance, and interior ministries; and community and rural development departments are selected from each country for strengthening national capacities to enhance community forestry in their respective countries.
2. The capacity-building needs of national community forestry working groups and diagnostic review teams are assessed and their capacities are strengthened accordingly through training, mentoring, and knowledge exchange.
3. Up to 20 cutting-edge capacity-building programs, products, and services are designed by building on lessons learned and new knowledge; they are made available to a wide range of forestry stakeholders.
4. National capacity-building programs and educational institutions adopt RECOFTC's materials and training approaches.

Result 3: Effective regional communication and knowledge management support (i) the development, marketing, and dissemination of RECOFTC products; (ii) the sharing of lessons learned in improving community forestry practices; (iii) the formulation and implementation of policies; and (iv) the establishment of new, and strengthening of existing, partnerships.

Indicators:

1. RECOFTC's unique role as a learning and knowledge management center on community forestry is clearly communicated to strategic partners, clients, key stakeholders, and the general public through informative and regularly updated marketing and publicity material, the RECOFTC website, and the monthly Community Forestry E-News.
2. Relationships with existing strategic partners, funding agencies, and the private sector are enhanced and new relationships are established.
3. RECOFTC staff and partners at national and international levels produce high-quality information services on issues concerning people and forests and make them widely available (relevant services in national languages in the focal countries).
4. Lessons learned throughout the region and particularly in the focal countries are documented and disseminated through suitable communication tools, techniques, and approaches.
5. People and organizations in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond use RECOFTC as an information hub for the sharing of their knowledge.

Result 4: Efficient corporate and support systems exist to foster innovative program planning and delivery; to ensure that programs and core functions are well-coordinated; and to ensure that RECOFTC's outcomes and impacts are monitored and evaluated.

Indicators:

1. Enhanced synergies among RECOFTC programs improve the quality of outputs, strengthen responses to identified needs at country and regional levels, and help achieve greater impacts.
2. Full funding for the core program is mobilized by the end of the second year.
3. Significant additional funds are mobilized through project proposal development and the sale of products and services.
4. A well-developed and functional internal management structure is in place; it efficiently supports RECOFTC staff in program planning and delivery, and regularly reviews and monitors progress on program plan implementation.
5. In-country support services facilitate program and project implementation in the six focal countries.
6. By the middle of the first year, a system to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of RECOFTC programs and activities in six focal countries is developed and subsequently adopted.
7. By the third year, in at least five focal countries, indicators to measure the local-level social, economic, and environmental impacts of community forestry are developed, tested, shared, and their use demonstrated in assessing relevant outcomes.
8. Impact indicators are developed and RECOFTC's overall impact is assessed during the second half of the fourth year through targeted interviews and case studies.
9. By the end of the Program, RECOFTC's financial reserves are sufficient to cover at least six months of operational costs.
10. The RECOFTC Program and its performance are reviewed externally by the end of the second and fourth years.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE

As noted in the 2007 evaluation, RECOFTC's programmatic approach based on analysis and representation, capacity strengthening, and demonstrating best practice remains relevant and unique to the region. However, as expected results were linked directly to these three specific programs, synergies among the programs were not strong. Therefore, the organizational structure and internal management arrangements have been modified to better coordinate core functions and strengthen synergies among RECOFTC programs to improve the quality of outputs, to strengthen responses to identified needs at country and regional levels, and to help achieve a greater impact.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

RECOFTC's modified organizational structure is built around three programs and two support services, consisting of Regional and Country Analysis and Support (RECAS); Capacity Building Services (CABS); Communications, Marketing, and Fundraising (COMAF); Program Coordination, Monitoring, and Evaluation (PROCOME); and Corporate and Support Services (CS). The Executive Office (EO) and Board of Trustees (BOT) guide, manage, and govern the organization.

Each program and support service has its specific roles and is responsible for contributing to the delivery of all four results with an explicit understanding that coordination and integration of the programs is critical to achieving the program objective. For particular activities, themes, and project proposals, cross-program task teams are formed to enhance outputs.

The responsibilities of the programs and support services are:

- **Regional and Country Analysis and Support (RECAS)** is responsible for the analysis of key issues facing community forestry in the region and individual countries (especially

in the focal countries), demonstrating practices, and sharing lessons learned; it also presents main findings at various national, regional, and global forums and integrates them into the programs, products, and services delivered by CABS.

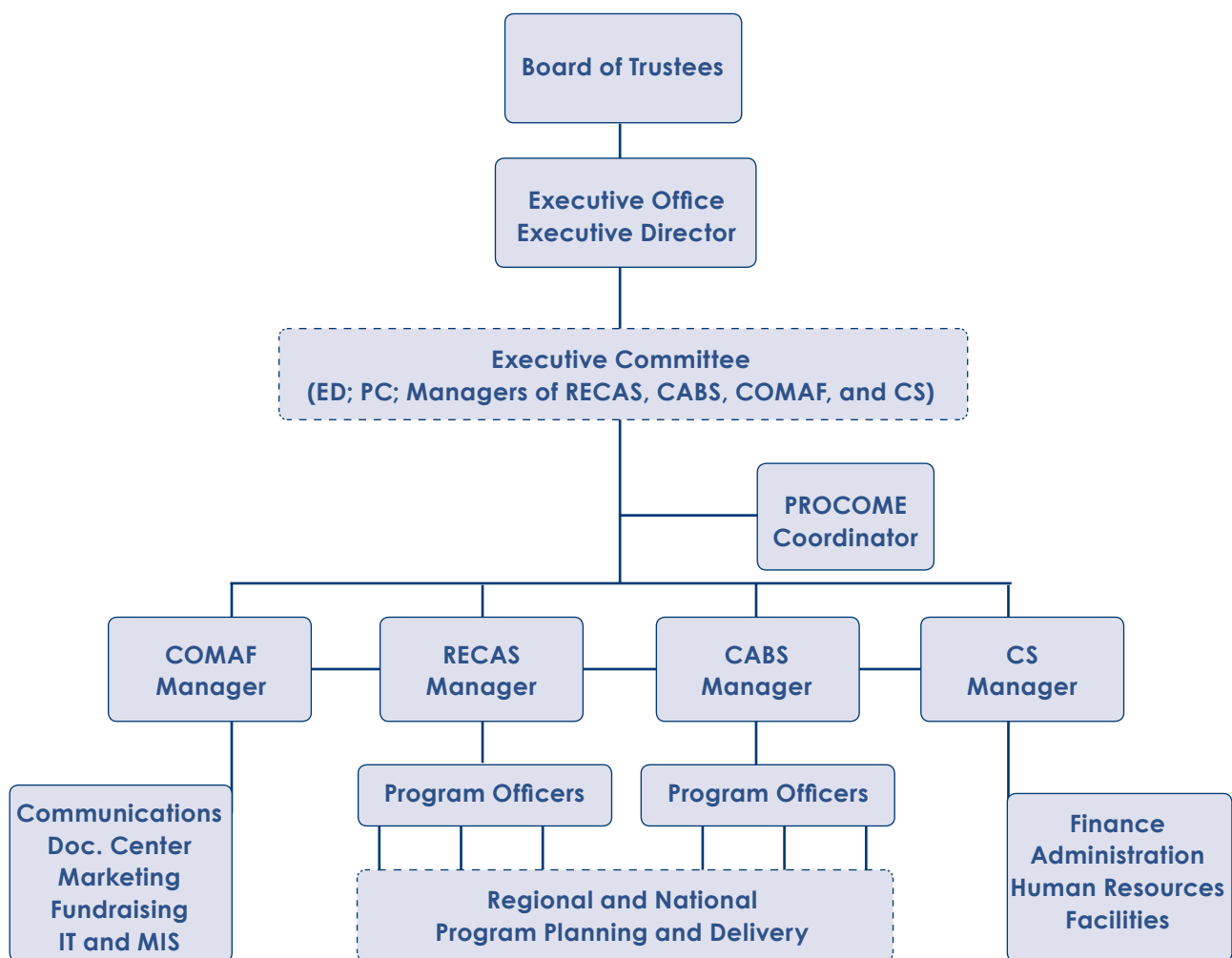
- **Capacity Building Services (CABS)** is responsible for assessing capacities at national and regional levels; designing and developing capacity-building programs, products, and services relevant to RECOFTC's clients and partners; and coordinating and facilitating their delivery with the assistance of RECAS.
- **Communications, Marketing, and Fundraising (COMAF)** is responsible for the management and communication of all information and outputs within RECOFTC and with the outside world. COMAF plays a crucial role in knowledge management and ensures that "tacit" knowledge is converted into "explicit" knowledge so that it can be widely disseminated via suitable communication tools, techniques, and approaches for achieving greater impacts at national and regional levels. In addition, it is responsible for the documentation center, marketing, fundraising, information technology, and the management information system.
- **Program Coordination, Monitoring, and Evaluation (PROCOME)** oversees the overall coordination and strengthening of synergies among the aforementioned three programs and the management of task teams. It is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the planning and execution of different program activities and for assessing RECOFTC's overall impact and progress towards its goal and objective.
- **Corporate and Support Services (CS)** is responsible for RECOFTC's finance, administration, human resources, and facilities.
- **The Executive Office (EO)** is responsible for building strategic partnerships/relationships with key national government and nongovernment organizations, regional and international institutions, the private sector,

and funding agencies; it is also charged with the overall management of RECOFTC.

- **The Board of Trustees (BOT)** is responsible for the overall program direction and governance of RECOFTC.

In addition to the specific programs, RECOFTC intends to respond to requests for implementing projects supported through additional funds, if such projects fall under its mandate.

RECOFTC Organizational Structure, 2008–2013



CABS: Capacity Building Services
COMAF: Communications, Marketing, and Fundraising
CS: Corporate and Support Services
ED: Executive Director
IT: Information Technology

MIS: Management Information System
PC: Program Coordinator
PROCOME: Program Coordination, Monitoring, and Evaluation
RECAS: Regional and Country Analysis and Support

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Overall management of RECOFTC is vested in the Executive Office and Executive Committee. The Executive Director provides guidance to the three programs and support services. Overall management of operations and coordination is undertaken by the Executive Office through the Executive Committee comprising the Program Coordinator; managers of RECAS, CABS, COMAF, and CS as members; and the Executive Director as the chairperson.

RECAS, CABS, and COMAF are responsible for the planning and delivery of specific activities. PROCOME's task is to coordinate among RECOFTC programs and activities and to ensure that progress is monitored and outcomes and impacts are evaluated. Overall program planning and delivery are reviewed and directed by the Program Committee; the Program Coordinator is the chairperson and managers of RECAS, CABS, COMAF, and CS as well as the Executive Director are members; the PROCOME Administrator serves as member-secretary (non-voting).

RECOFTC's financial situation is regularly assessed through the Finance Committee composed of the CS Manager as the Chairperson and Program Coordinator, the COMAF Manager and the Executive Director as members, and the Accountant as member-secretary (non-voting).

RECOFTC'S GOVERNANCE

RECOFTC's overall governance and strategic program direction are overseen by the BOT. The BOT consists of volunteer members who bring perspectives and experience from working in governments, the private sector, nongovernment and civil society organizations, research and educational institutes, and especially in forest, natural resource, and environmental sectors, as well as finance. The BOT also represents a diverse range of countries within Asia and the Pacific. It normally meets twice yearly. In addition to a progress review and the Executive Director's annual appraisal, one day is set aside for a workshop on topical issues to enable greater interactions between Board members and staff.



5 IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY— MAKING IT HAPPEN

In order to implement the strategic plan and ensure positive impacts on the ground effectively, it is important to clearly articulate RECOFTC's focus on people, forests, and rapid change; its core functions; geographic focus; and resource generation and mobilization. These components will be properly tailored and appropriately linked to achieve the main goal and objective, and produce results efficiently.

FOCUS ON PEOPLE, FORESTS, AND RAPID CHANGE

In a time of rapid change, the focus of the RECOFTC Strategic Plan 2008–2013 is clearly on helping the forestry stakeholders, beneficiaries, and target groups of our efforts in Asia and the Pacific to respond effectively to challenges and opportunities alike. The top priority is to improve the well-being of the most vulnerable groups living in and around forests through policies, processes, mechanisms, and practices that fit the current climate of rural transformation, agrarian change, and employment and income generation diversification. This focus sets the background for the five main priority areas or themes:

- 1. Good governance lies at the heart of sound forest management.** It relies on enabling trusted representatives of local communities to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes and to effectively present their concerns and perspectives; it empowers them to make their own choices and helps to strengthen forest policy processes, national forest programs, and regulatory frameworks and their enforcement.
- 2. Clear and strong rights are essential for poor people to benefit from forest management.** RECOFTC works on strategic, effective, and efficient approaches to strengthen human and citizenship rights and use/access rights to forest resources and tenure through policy and market reforms.
- 3. Forestry must contribute more significantly and equitably to poverty reduction.** The focus is on improving human well-being

through increased income generation from forest-based activities and small- and medium-sized forest-based enterprises, building partnerships between producers of local forest products and the private sector, and the equitable and pro-poor distribution of benefits.

- 4. Without proper incentives sustainable forest management will remain an elusive goal.** The thrust is to strengthen the engagement of local people in multiple-use forest management that maintains and enhances significant domestic and global environmental benefits (e.g. climate change mitigation, regulation of water supply from upland areas, biodiversity conservation) through the provision of direct incentives (e.g. payments for environmental services).
- 5. Forest policy implementation remains weak throughout Asia and the Pacific.** To mainstream community engagement in forestry, the focus is on strengthening (in particular forest policy analysis and formulation) the consideration of effective policy instruments, and monitoring and evaluation.

The five main themes are accompanied by specific themes, which are reviewed and adjusted if necessary during annual planning. Proposed specific themes include:

- The social dimensions of carbon financing and mitigation measures that protect the rights of local communities and support their livelihoods through income generation.
- Social movements in forestry and their roles in and the need for strengthening forest governance and management.
- The effects of rural transformation and agrarian change on livelihood strategies, community forestry, and forests.

- Reorientation and reform of national forestry agencies and systems to enable them to respond more effectively to local people's needs.
- Helping communities and small- and medium-sized forest-based enterprises to respond to market demand (including increased interest by global consumers in certified and legally verified forest products).

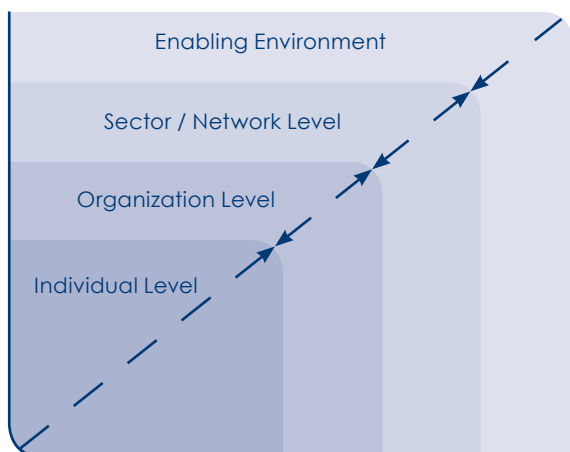
The ultimate beneficiaries of all RECOFTC programs and activities are the people and communities living in and around forests, with emphasis on the most needy and vulnerable, including the poor, women, and children. Immediate target groups include:

- Representatives of community groups, networks, and federations.
- Nongovernment and civil society organizations directly working with forest-dependent communities.
- Representatives of relevant government agencies and institutions.
- International nongovernment and multi-lateral organizations concerned with people and forests.
- Funding agencies.

ARTICULATING OUR CORE FUNCTIONS

RECOFTC's primary role is to strengthen the capacities and knowledge of stakeholders to foster the engagement of local people in forest governance and management

Levels of Capacity Building



in the Asia-Pacific region. To achieve this, RECOFTC's capacity building approach focuses on understanding and responding to stakeholder needs and context, and requires a long-term learning process of adaptation and innovation. RECOFTC's capacity-building activities and interactions are designed to change attitudes, increase understanding, upgrade skills, and improve knowledge at different hierarchical levels to enhance the impacts of community forestry.

RECOFTC identifies and influences capacity linkages at the individual level with organizational and network levels and the broader enabling environment through:

- Facilitation of learning.
- Promoting, testing, and demonstrating practical application of knowledge and information.
- Knowledge management and communication.
- Presentation of community perspectives at national, regional, and international forums.

FACILITATING LEARNING

RECOFTC facilitates learning through convening and organizing meetings, workshops, forums, seminars, conferences, training courses, and study tours; also via analysis, synthesis and sharing, field testing, demonstrations, documentation, mentoring, and coaching. Elements of learning include:

- **Analysis, synthesis, and sharing** of lessons learned and the impacts of emerging issues of regional and national concern so that new knowledge can enhance the implementation of initiatives nationally and regionally.
- **Delivering capacity-building programs, products, and services** that are innovative, appropriate, and relevant to the needs of policymakers and community forestry practitioners.
- **Regional networking and dialogues to raise awareness** on appropriate policies, policy instruments, and practices among policymakers; and on social movements in forestry.

- **Technical services** to government agencies, forestry organizations, field projects, nongovernment organizations, civil society organizations, and research and academic institutions from focal countries and beyond.

PROMOTING PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

RECOFTC encourages and enables the testing and demonstration of improved forestry practices, tools, techniques, and processes among “communities of practice” in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. RECOFTC informs and builds the capacities of forestry practitioners, civil society groups, government agencies, and international organizations working in the region. It promotes the implementation of appropriate policies and the development of effective policy instruments; and enables the application of proven practices that can contribute to poverty alleviation, increase equity, strengthen resilience, reduce vulnerabilities, and increase food security for the benefit of the region's poor rural people and natural ecosystems.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

RECOFTC understands knowledge management as a system or framework for managing the organizational processes that create, store, and distribute knowledge as defined by its collective data, information, and body of experience, as well as the documented experiences of partners at local, national, and regional levels. Through communication, knowledge is transmitted to those who need it most.

RECOFTC has been referred to as a “custodian” for community forestry knowledge and information. In the implementation of activities, processes and experiences are documented, and lessons learned to improve community forestry are synthesized and disseminated through suitable communication tools,

languages, techniques, and processes. Recognizing RECOFTC's concomitant function as an information hub, people in other organizations in and beyond the region are also encouraged to use the hub for communicating their knowledge. RECOFTC will remain innovative and ensure that stakeholders' information needs are met.

Community of Practice

The concept of a “community of practice” refers to the process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in some subject or problem collaborate over an extended period to share ideas, find solutions, and build innovations.

MAKING LOCAL PERSPECTIVES WIDELY KNOWN

RECOFTC is acutely aware that many decisions at national, regional, and international policy levels are made without proper consideration of local people's perspectives and the potential socio-economic impacts on poor people living in and around forests. To fill this gap, RECOFTC generates relevant information through action research, analysis, and dialogue around common key and emerging issues and presents it at local, subregional, national, regional, and international forums, both formally and informally.

RECOFTC strengthens the capacities of and supports social movements in forestry, such as the Global Alliance of Community Forestry (GACF), so that issues of concern can be brought to the attention of decision-makers and the general public more effectively.

Raising awareness on local people's perspectives also helps to build long-term relationships with national, regional, and global partners. This will contribute to the leverage of influence, the formation of learning networks, and assurance that up-to-date and relevant information reaches key stakeholders who can influence positive change in forestry.

Linking RECOFTC's Key Components to Desired Outcomes



GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

In developing the Strategic Plan 2008–2013, RECOFTC reviewed its direct country engagement and formulated a targeted engagement strategy. The main objective of focusing on particular countries is to make a difference on the ground for people and forests through the demonstration of proven practices and processes. Lessons learned from these focal countries will be documented and made widely available through knowledge management.

Initially, Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam have been selected, as timing in these countries is opportune to strengthen nascent community forestry initiatives and similar approaches to engage communities and households in forest governance and management. Five of these countries are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which facilitates exchanges between countries and provides a window of opportunity for engagement at the regional level and influencing regional initiatives.

RECOFTC has developed a two-tier strategy for continued and new engagement in the six focal countries based on:

- Past investments and experiences.
- Ongoing project activities and progress achieved.
- Progress made towards incorporating community forestry in national forest programs and development strategies.
- The potential for influencing key audiences and the interest of funding agencies.

RECOFTC's approach is to work through National Community Forestry Working Groups or National Community Forestry Forums.

COUNTRIES FOR CONTINUED AND STRENGTHENED ENGAGEMENT

Cambodia: RECOFTC has been engaged in Cambodia through capacity-building activities intermittently over the years. It is now implementing a large-scale project and there is the possibility for a second project. The Forestry

Existing Memoranda of Understanding in the Six Focal Countries

1. Cambodia—agreements with the Forestry Administration and Ministry of Environment
2. People's Republic of China—agreement with the State Forest Administration's International Forest Cooperation Centre
3. Indonesia—agreement with the Ministry of Forestry
4. Lao PDR—agreement with the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute
5. Thailand—host country, and agreement with the Royal Thai Government
6. Vietnam—agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and membership in the Forest Sector Support Program and Partnership

Administration increasingly recognizes the importance of community forestry. In late 2003, the community forestry subdecree was passed; it provided the legal framework for community forestry. The Cambodia Forestry Action Plan (2007–2010) of the Technical Working Group on Forestry and Environment stresses opportunities to improve rural people's socio-economic conditions through improved governance and partnerships in the management of natural resources and emphasizes the scaling up of community forestry to more communities as a major development priority. This requires urgent capacity strengthening at local, provincial, and national levels, which RECOFTC facilitates through collaboration with partners and its enhancement through the strong interest of funding agencies.

Indonesia: Following completion of a successful first phase of capacity building for a Ford Foundation-funded project, RECOFTC is about to implement the second phase and has commenced the implementation of the Green Kecamatan Development Program (Green KDP) with partners. There is an ongoing need in Indonesia for capacity building, generating and communicating knowledge, bringing community forestry perspectives into policy debates, and integrating the devolution of forest management in Indonesia's national forest program. Deeper engagement in Indonesia is crucial because of national needs—Indonesia's extensive and intact forest ecosystems are rich in biodiversity but threatened by numerous factors—and the

considerable learning opportunities as the country has initiated decentralization processes in recent years and is currently in transition to a Forest Management Unit system. Indonesia has created innovative multi-stakeholder platforms such as the National Forestry Council and overall, opportunities are rich for strengthening the application of community forestry through capacity-building activities. Nongovernment and civil society organizations are encouraged to actively participate in the national forest program. They are also very active at local, district, and provincial levels in engaging communities in forest management. Interest by funding agencies in forestry has also reemerged with funding agencies stressing the important role of forestry in poverty reduction.

Thailand: RECOFTC can look back at a 20-year history in Thailand. Its activities span from community engagement through the Thailand Collaborative Country Support Program (ThCCSP) to influencing policy. RECOFTC played an important role in the formulation process of the Community Forestry Bill that was recently adopted. Funding has become a greater challenge in Thailand; however, there are opportunities for cross-regional lessons to be synthesized, and for expanding the country network to a regional network.

EXPANDING ENGAGEMENT IN KEY COUNTRIES

People's Republic of China: The main challenges facing community forestry in China are achieving national policy reform, building local capacities and knowledge among communities, forest ownership diversity, and the diversity of government agencies with overlapping or unclear responsibilities involving the governance and management of forests at local, provincial, and national levels. The process of downsizing and restructuring China's forestry administration is facilitating village-level forest management and offering opportunities for farm forestry and the greater involvement of individual households in forest management. RECOFTC intends to engage in specific capacity-building activities in selected provinces as opportunities arise and resources become available—particularly

in provinces where forest tenure reform is emerging and collective forest management activities are practiced. RECOFTC is also interested in exploring the challenges and impacts of China's rapid economic growth and the rising demands for forest products on forest communities in China and neighboring countries, as well as in strengthening communities' capacities to respond to this development effectively.

Lao PDR: A Memorandum of Understanding with the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) facilitates the expansion of ongoing activities and program engagement. With funding agency support, Lao PDR has experimented with numerous community-based forest management models. The scaling up of lessons learned has yet to be clearly streamlined into government projects and programs. Institutional arrangements for fostering the engagement of communities in forestry are in their infancy and the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders remain unclear. Lao PDR's new export strategy includes wood and wood products, medicinal plants and other non-wood products, and the promotion of biofuel production. Increasing knowledge and capacities in sustainable forest management will be essential to ensure equitable benefits for local people and strengthen the ability of the forestry sector to contribute to poverty reduction, which is emphasized in the national Forestry Strategy 2020.

Vietnam: RECOFTC's influence on Vietnam's community forestry policies is acknowledged by government officials and there are ongoing RECOFTC analytical and capacity-building activities in the country. Moreover, with the recent introduction of the community forestry law, the country will need to strengthen capacities to effect change. With Vietnam's continued economic growth and the effect of this on forest communities and resources as well as the country's role as a regional and global trading partner, there is an ongoing need for communities to have the capacities, processes, and knowledge to gain advantages while ensuring environmental sustainability.

The expansion from three to six focal countries significantly increases RECOFTC's presence in the Asia-Pacific region, enhances knowledge

management at the regional level, and allows RECOFTC to seek greater impact with its limited funds for core functions. Strategically, this approach enhances synergies among RECOFTC programs and strengthens in-country activities through increased networking and knowledge sharing among these subregional actors.

COUNTRIES WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND EXCHANGE

Countries with opportunities for learning and exchange include those with established community forestry programs and institutions, such as India, Nepal, and the Philippines. These three countries can reflect on a long history of experimenting with, and implementing, innovative approaches and tenure arrangements to devolve forest management. Their programs and initiatives have reached tens of millions of poor people and cover more than 25 million hectares of forestland. Other countries in the Asia-Pacific region can significantly benefit from the lessons learned and the sharing of knowledge on proven practices, supportive policies, effective policy instruments, and good governance. RECOFTC seeks opportunities to collaborate with partners in these countries to synthesize lessons learned and to inform policy and practice in other parts of the Asia-Pacific region.

ENGAGEMENT IN OTHER ASIA-PACIFIC COUNTRIES AND BEYOND

While seeking to leverage impact by focusing on focal countries in the Mekong River Basin and Indonesia, RECOFTC is acutely aware that its mandate covers all countries of the Asia-Pacific region. However, its outreach to additional countries needs to be strategic in nature if only funds for core activities are available.

Where valuable contributions outside focal countries can be made and mutual learning can occur with beneficial results for local people, RECOFTC will seek project funding and will charge a fee for the delivery of services. In determining engagement in additional countries, RECOFTC will apply a set of criteria,

Criteria for Country Engagement

1. *Need for assistance*—the need for capacity building to enable better forestry policy and practice is demonstrated.
2. *Opportunities or enabling legislation*—policies and legislation enable community control of forest resources, or there is a clear desire to formulate such support measures.
3. *Learning opportunities*—activities in the country will produce new learning of value to other countries in the region.
4. *Resource Availability*—funds are available for activities or there is a reasonable chance of raising necessary funds.
5. *Past investment/activities*—RECOFTC has worked in the country before, or has had a number of participants from this country engaged in capacity building, knowledge generation, or networking.
6. *Opportunities to achieve impact*—activities have a high probability of contributing to meaningful change, or increasing capacities or knowledge, which have positive impacts on community governance and engagement in forest practice and/or policy implementation.
7. *Potential for partnership*—organization(s) or institution(s) which can partner with RECOFTC for program delivery and influencing change.
8. *Level of risk*—such as conflict, reputation, and political stability.
9. *Impact on existing programs*—whether these activities overextend staff, affect the delivery of, or affect funding for current programs.

which are understood as a guide rather than as a strict rule. Such criteria have been formulated and will be used to ensure that RECOFTC analyzes its investments in new activities carefully so that existing commitments can continue to be met effectively.

RECOFTC continues to organize and convene international conferences, workshops, dialogues, and meetings for key audiences. Events will usually be open to people from across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond, in order to share the richness of experience from the region widely. RECOFTC remains open to engaging in technical services and the sharing of experiences with people and organizations outside the focal countries, should opportunities arise and resources are available.

RECOFTC's Geographic Focus

Category	Country	Rationale
Countries for continued and strengthened engagement	Cambodia, Indonesia, and Thailand	<i>Expand RECOFTC's in-country analytical and capacity-building activities through the strengthening of field project offices and staff.</i>
Countries for expansion of engagement	People's Republic of China, Lao PDR, and Vietnam	<i>Expand RECOFTC's in-country analytical and capacity-building activities—aim for field project offices and staff by the end of 2010.</i>
Countries with opportunities for learning and exchange	India, Nepal, and the Philippines	<i>Work through national partner organizations, document lessons learned (especially second generation challenges and opportunities) and share widely in the region.</i>
Other countries for engagement	Bhutan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, etc.	<i>RECOFTC's response will be based on the key screening criteria, such as need for assistance, opportunities for enabling policies and legislation, learning opportunities, past investment/activities, likelihood of achieving outcomes, potential for partnerships, and resource availability.</i>
Open for participation in and contribution to RECOFTC program activities	Remaining Asia-Pacific countries and beyond	<i>RECOFTC will encourage individuals and organizations to participate in international events (training courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences) and exchange experiences and lessons learned.</i>

CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND GLOBAL INITIATIVES

Broadly defined multi-stakeholder initiatives have contributed and shaped the debate on forestry in the Asia-Pacific region for more than a decade. RECOFTC invests considerable time and effort to be an active participant in national, regional, and global multi-stakeholder processes, forums, and networks, which provide important opportunities for promoting community forestry, raising awareness of the social dimensions of emerging issues and trends, and bringing community perspectives into global and regional policy processes and national forest programs. RECOFTC will continue to play an active role in decision-making processes to ensure that the voices of people

most affected and concerned are heard and considered. RECOFTC's participation in multi-stakeholder processes, forums, and networks is facilitated by the following collaborations and activities:

- At national levels, RECOFTC's approach is to work through **National Community Forestry Working Groups or National Community Forestry Forums**.
- **The Asia Forest Partnership (AFP)** promotes sustainable forest management in Asia by addressing such issues as control of illegal logging, control of forest fires, rehabilitation and reforestation of degraded lands, good governance and forest law enforcement, and capacity development for effective forest management. RECOFTC is a partner of AFP.

- **The South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)** promotes and supports the protection, management, and enhancement of the environment in South Asia. RECOFTC and SACEP cooperate in areas of common interest under a jointly developed work plan.
- **The Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)** is a global coalition to advance forest tenure, policy, and market reforms. RECOFTC is a founding coalition partner and acts as the lead institution for Asia.
- **The Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC)** is an intergovernmental forum for advising and taking action on key forestry issues in the Asia-Pacific region. RECOFTC is aspiring to take the lead in coordinating APFC's community forestry work.
- **RECOFTC's Regional Community Forestry Forum** commenced in 2005 and will continue to engage key stakeholders in identifying, articulating, and presenting key issues facing community forestry in the region.
- **ASEAN's Social Forestry Network (ASEAN-SFN)** is supporting cooperation among ASEAN member countries to promote social forestry in the region. RECOFTC provides a multi-stakeholder perspective to this government-led initiative.
- **The International Tropical Timber Organization's Civil Society Advisory Group (ITTO-CSAG)** is bringing local communities' perspectives into the discussion on timber trade agreements. RECOFTC is a member of CSAG.
- **Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG)** is dealing with illegal logging and lack of appropriate forest governance as a major obstacle to developing countries' efforts to alleviate poverty, develop their natural resources, and protect global and local environmental services and values. RECOFTC intends to be involved in FLEG in the future.
- **The Forest Governance Learning Group (FGLG)** is an alliance of independent agencies established to exchange learning and develop ideas on forest governance, and to help make them work. RECOFTC is a lead partner for Asia.
- **United Nations Forums on Forests (UNFF)** is an intergovernmental policy forum on forests and forestry that promotes the management, conservation, and sustainable development of all types of forests, strengthening long-term political commitment to this end. RECOFTC was invited to contribute to UNFF's Regional Led Initiative, and hopes to be able to contribute to the future development of activities for Asia.
- **The Global Alliance of Community Forestry (GACF)** was created in November 2004. Its objective is to build political and local level processes that present a concerted position on community management of natural resources to international, national, and regional organizations and institutions related to environmental and social issues. RECOFTC is supporting GACF.

RESOURCE GENERATION AND MOBILIZATION

The effective implementation of the RECOFTC Strategic Plan 2008–2013 depends to a significant extent on RECOFTC's ability to mobilize sufficient financial resources, to attract and retain highly qualified staff, and to form partnerships that add value to how RECOFTC does its work and achieves its objectives.

FINANCE

RECOFTC plans to diversify funding sources with increased investment in fundraising and by employing a professional fundraising officer. While retaining relationships with the existing core and project funding agencies, RECOFTC will continue to seek and negotiate with potential funding agencies, especially those

operating in the focus countries and with a strong interest in community forestry.

The effective implementation of the Strategic Plan requires funds in the order of €13 million. To garner sufficient funding support for fulfilling its core functions, RECOFTC will widen the funding base and leverage additional funds through co-financing arrangements. It will also take a more focused and strategic approach to raising funds through the private sector.

RECOFTC will develop a mechanism for tracking calls for project proposals from different funding agencies and formulate proposals to raise additional funds over the five-year plan implementation period.

RECOFTC will continue to respond positively to requests for technical services from organizations and field projects and seek appropriate subcontracting opportunities on a fee-for-service basis. RECOFTC also aims to upgrade its facilities in Bangkok and increase the occupancy rate of its dormitory from the current 50% to 75%.

HUMAN RESOURCES

To manage RECOFTC as a small, but strategically positioned organization and to implement the Plan successfully, high-quality and dedicated staff are a fundamental requirement. Senior management and program staff will be assisted by equally qualified and committed affiliates who may have different contractual arrangements to accommodate more flexibility and emphasize output-oriented expectations.

The staffing level can be adjusted over the planning period to match requirements and fund availability. RECOFTC will seek to expand staff with qualified people from the Asia-Pacific region and uniquely qualified international staff from outside the region.

As part of its approach to capacity building, RECOFTC intends to develop a Regional Fellowship Program as a blend of learning and knowledge management, training, networking, and cultural exchange. For the period of the fellowship, fellows will be fully integrated into

RECOFTC Staff Categories

- Internationally and nationally recruited managers and program staff.
- Nationally recruited general support staff.
- Officers seconded from other organizations for short- to medium-term assignments.
- Project staff linked to specific project funding.
- RECOFTC senior and young professional fellows.
- "Champions" (leading practitioners and key stakeholders) selected to guide analytical processes.
- Consultants and other service providers on casual contracts.
- Interns and associate professional officers.
- RECOFTC associates and alumni.

program activities with an emphasis on mutual exchange and on-the-job learning.

RECOFTC will also seek to improve its capacity to understand local people's needs around emerging themes and topic areas by (i) developing (or enlisting) associates who can contribute as needed based on expertise, (ii) increasing strategic and program inputs from key thinkers and practitioners from the region through fellowship arrangements, (iii) facilitating networking among RECOFTC alumni, and (iv) developing relationships with key champions to support the RECOFTC mission. Finally, it will continue negotiating with international volunteer organizations and intern programs as well as universities to attract young professionals to come and work with RECOFTC.

RECOFTC'S PARTNERS

With few exceptions, RECOFTC works closely with a range of partners operating in the region to expand RECOFTC's reach and impact. Most partners are very active stakeholders in forest processes and programs. The underlying objective of these partnerships is to add value to and leverage funds for joint capacity-building initiatives; to support and strengthen community organizations, networks, and federations; and to build more effective coalitions at subnational, national, regional, and global levels. In addition, partnerships

enable RECOFTC to informally strengthen capacities during activity implementation. Close collaboration with national partners is intended to ensure the long-term sustainability of efforts.

RECOFTC distinguishes between the following partnership categories:

- **Institutional partners:** Organizations that support or contribute resources to RECOFTC as a corporate body (e.g. research institutes to share and use research findings, or with others to contribute to a RECOFTC corporate fund from which the interest could be used to cover agreed program costs).
- **Strategic or program partners:** Organizations that contribute resources to identify, design, implement, monitor, and evaluate RECOFTC programs (e.g. funding agencies).

- **Project partners:** Organizations that contribute resources to identify, design, implement, monitor, and evaluate agreed-upon activities, for a specified period of time, in a specific area, and/or on specific subject matter.

- **Network partners:** Organizations and individuals that periodically (formally or informally) exchange information, knowledge, and advice.

- **Collaborating partners:** Organizations or individuals that contribute to specific activities without any cost implications for RECOFTC.

The type of partnership can change according to circumstances and agreements; currently underway is the development of mechanisms to review and evaluate partnerships and collaborations.



ACRONYMS

AFP	Asia Forest Partnership
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN-SFN	ASEAN Social Forestry Network
APFC	Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission
BOT	Board of Trustees
CABS	Capacity Building Services
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
COMAF	Communications, Marketing, and Fundraising
CS	Corporate and Support Services
CSAG	Civil Society Advisory Group
ED	Executive Director
EO	Executive Office
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGLG	Forest Governance Learning Group
FLEG	Forest Law Enforcement and Governance
GACF	Global Alliance of Community Forestry
IT	Information Technology
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MIS	Management Information System
NAFRI	National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute
PC	Program Coordinator
PROCOME	Program Coordination, Monitoring, and Evaluation
RECAS	Regional and Country Analysis and Support
RECOFTC	Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RRI	Rights and Resources Initiative
SACEP	South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
ThCCSP	Thailand Collaborative Country Support Program
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests



VISION:

Local communities in the Asia-Pacific region are actively involved in the equitable and ecologically sustainable management of forest landscapes.

MISSION:

To enhance capacities at all levels to assist people of the Asia-Pacific region in developing community forestry and managing forest resources for optimum social, economic, and environmental benefits.

RECOFTC holds a unique and important place in the world of forestry. It is the only international not-for-profit organization that specializes in capacity building for community forestry and devolved forest management. RECOFTC engages in strategic networks and effective partnerships with governments, nongovernment organizations, civil society, the private sector, local people, and research and educational institutes throughout the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. With over 20 years of international experience and a dynamic approach to capacity building—involving research and analysis, demonstration sites, and training products—RECOFTC delivers innovative solutions *for people and forests*.



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