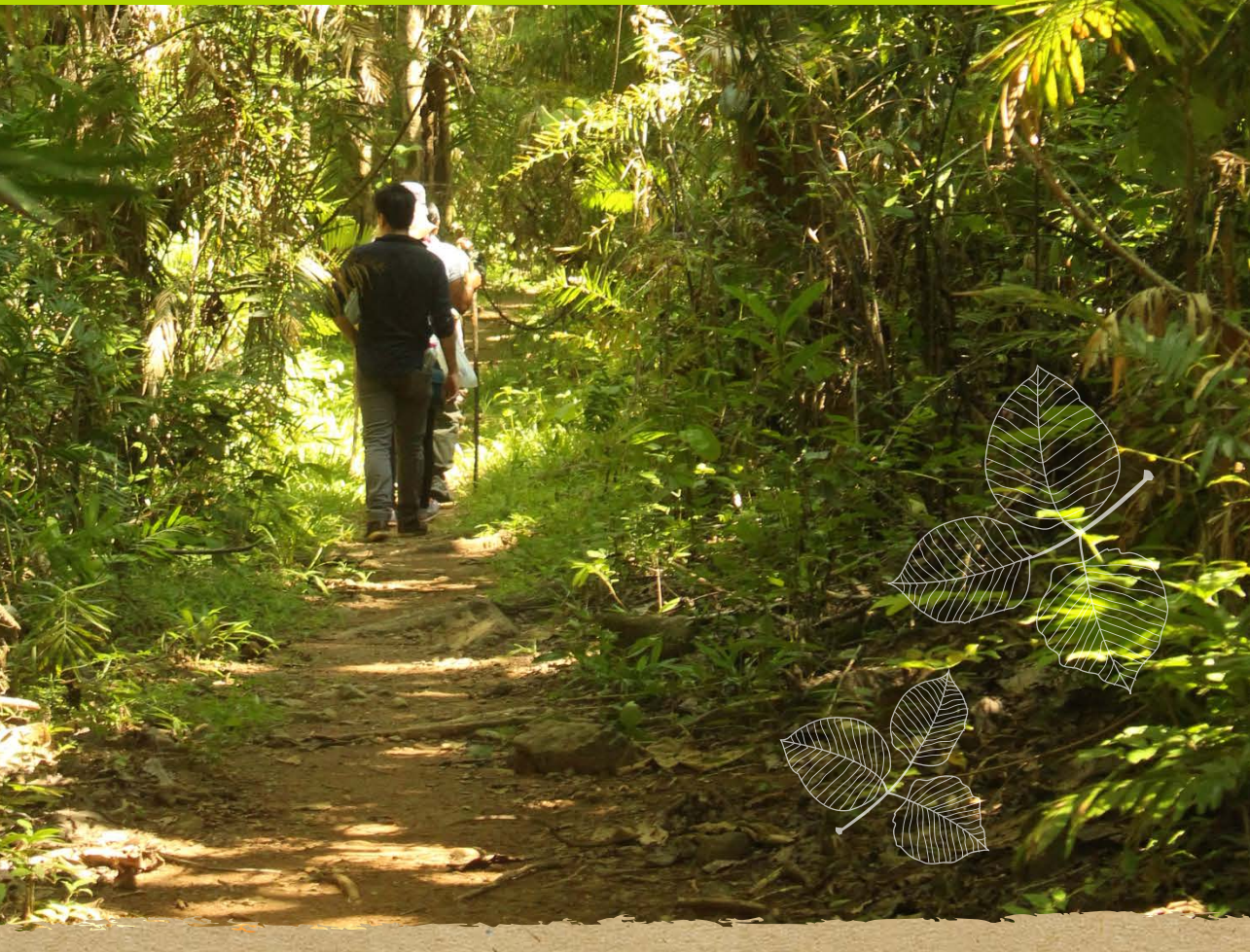


# In the hands of local communities

Achieving the sustainable development goals  
through community forestry in Asia and the Pacific

RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests  
Annual Report 2014-2015





## From the Executive Director and the Board Chairperson

In 2014-15, RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests demonstrated how community forestry in the Asia-Pacific region has great potential to be a pioneer in the drive to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The SDGs differ from former international development agendas and goals by the fact that they explicitly refer to forests and sustainable forest management (SDG 15) - unlike their forerunner, the MDGs. Thus the SDGs provide a common platform for forest policy setting. Further, forests play a key role in attaining other SDGs, including ending poverty (SDG1), food security (SDG2), gender equality (SDG5), clean water (SDG6), access to sustainable energy (SDG7), decent work and economic growth (SDG8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), sustainable agriculture (SDG12), combating climate change (SDG13) and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16).

Community forestry - which is firmly placed at the intersection between environment and local people's rights - has much to offer even beyond the conventional thinking. So in this annual report, we show how community forestry and RECOFTC's work contributes to the SDGs - both including and beyond SDG 15.

Highlights in this year's report include RECOFTC's work to enhance local livelihoods in Cambodia, and support to the development of harvesting technologies to increase local communities' share of timber- and bamboo-based value chains – contributing to SDG 1 (ending poverty) among others. SDG 5 (gender equality) is another area where RECOFTC has made much progress – in Viet Nam, RECOFTC developed capacities of women's community groups which then reached out to community members to find sustainable incomes rather than working with illegal loggers. Much of RECOFTC's work also contributed to SDG 13 (climate action), including empowering grassroots communities to voice their concerns on REDD+ and working with national climate change negotiators in the lead-up to COP21 to ensure consideration of people and forests in national climate action plans.

Overall, RECOFTC's work continues to contribute to an increase in community forests. As of September 2015, 35,000 CF groups have been formalized in the region with over 13 million hectares of forested landscape managed by local communities and indigenous people. The growth of CF in Cambodia demonstrates RECOFTC's impact—in 2007, when RECOFTC first established a presence in the country, not a single CF was formalized; now there are 291 CFs benefitting more than 70,000 local households and managing 258 thousand hectares of forest. Out of these, 41 CFs have developed sustainable business plans with the direct help of RECOFTC to bring poor and marginalized beneficiaries out of subsistence level income using forest resources.

As governments across the region consider how they will achieve the SDGs, we hope the many successes in this report highlight the importance of doing so in a participatory and inclusive manner - two of the fundamentals of community forestry.

**Dr. Tint Lwin Thuang**  
Executive Director  
RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests

**Dr. Doris Capistrano**  
Chairperson, Board of Trustees  
RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests

RECOFTC's People, Forests and Climate Change (PFCC) programme promotes community-based approaches to both mitigating global warming and responding to existing climate change threats, contributing to SDG 13 (climate action) along with SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) among others.

As the management of tropical forests is critical to emissions reduction, RECOFTC's grassroots level capacity development work is targeting key forest stewards. RECOFTC delivered capacity development events related to PFCC, training more than 1,200 participants, 35% of whom were women. In addition, awareness-raising events reached over 6,500 local-level stakeholders in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal and Viet Nam.

RECOFTC also developed an innovative approach to climate change adaptation through community forestry. The approach includes landscape-level assessments conducted by local communities, followed by adaptive responses that benefit local livelihoods and are initiated and developed by local communities. This approach was piloted in a women-led CF user group in Nepal and is based on developing local government capacities to provide a sustainable, enabling environment for adaptation. Following the pilot, the approach is being refined and plans to scale up are underway.

## Working with national climate negotiators from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam in the lead-up to the 21st Conference of the Parties



The 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the UNFCCC requested countries to submit Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), in which nations indicate the actions they intend to take under the new global climate agreement. The period provided, less than a year, was very tight for many countries with resource, data and staff limitations. In order to meet the UNFCCC deadline, countries often did not have the opportunity to ensure a transparent, participatory process. The draft INDCs were also typically not shared among stakeholders, raising concerns by organizations like RECOFTC that the forest sector and forest-dependent peoples would

not be adequately reflected in the countries' targets, with long-term implications for the forest sector in climate change mitigation planning and goals. RECOFTC believes that the omission of the forest sector from national emission reduction targets would seriously compromise the ability of the global community to meet Sustainable Development Goal 13 which urges countries to undertake urgent actions to combat climate change and its impacts.

In response, and in coordination with strategic partners, RECOFTC organized three national-level expert Pre-COP 21 consultations in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam ahead of COP 21 in order to assess the status of the forest sector within national INDCs and to ensure that forestry officials were aware, and actively engaged in discussions with agencies charged with INDC drafting. An additional objective was to identify with national stakeholders priority capacity development needs related to equity in national climate change and forest planning. The workshops were well received and in several cases initiated dialogue between agencies and officials within these agencies critical to integrated climate change planning.



The outcomes of the national consultations were part of a strategic string of linked events which included several INDC-related Opinion Editorial articles published in national newspapers and an analytical synthesis report based on the national consultations released in conjunction with COP 21.



## Equity in forest governance: Closing policy and practice gaps through developing capacities

RECOFTC's Grassroots Equity and Enhanced Networks in the Mekong (GREEN Mekong) programme developed capacities of sub-national government officials to improve engagement between officials and forest communities.

"We need to engage with forest communities to better understand and support them. When we do that, we protect the forests and the livelihoods of the people who live in them," said Ms. Ratana Lakanawarakul, Director of Forest Environment Division in the Forest Conservation and Plant Research office at the Thailand Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP).

The program trained 20 sub-national government forestry officials (who comprise the Regional Learning Group, or RLG) from Lower Mekong countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam) through a series of four workshops, providing them with tools and knowledge to improve equity when they engage local communities. But members took the initiative further on their own, and integrated equity concepts and principles into their work.

In Thailand, according to Ms. Lakanawarakul, "the equity training had a big impact on our program. We changed our entire approach." These institutional changes included initiatives such as training over 100 staff members from the DNP on equity, as well as training forest communities to empower them, to improve their internal processes towards equity, and to better prepare them to engage with the government. Since the program began, seven pilot sites have been set up across the country with workshops being held regularly. In addition, the DNP produced a 10-minute video covering the importance of equity in forest management and explaining the steps to achieve it. The video was released in both Thai and Karen languages.

Likewise, other RLG members are producing content appropriate for their local context, including an equity cartoon in Lao PDR and equity policy briefs in Viet Nam. The reason for this uptake is simple says Ms. Lakanawarakul, "We integrated the equity concept into our programming because it can be applied in reality to help the forest communities improve forest management. It's sustainable. It leads to good policy and fair laws."

The feedback from Thailand's efforts has already been positive, Ms. Lakanawarakul continued, "After the training, we saw communities improve their organization, encouraging women and youth participation. They understood the concepts, saw what they were lacking and made a change. The concepts of equity have caught on and will continue to impact the forestry institutions, improving forest management and protecting the rights and livelihoods of forest communities."

### Deepening understanding of equity in forest management in the context of climate change

Three of RECOFTC's large regional projects: GREEN Mekong, Grassroots Capacity Building for REDD+ and the ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC) have had 'equity' as a center point of capacity development, research and networking activities in 2014-15. The development of a suite of services and products for deepening understanding of equity in forest management in the context of climate change has led to RECOFTC being a recognized leader on this topic. Learning networks organized under the GREEN Mekong project, for sub-national officials from Mekong countries, and ASFCC, for community forestry officials, have placed equity at the center of learning processes and field site visits. Equity targeted products have included amongst others, a Training Manual: Improving grassroots equity in the forests and climate change context and a synthesis research report: Equity in forests and REDD+: An analysis of equity challenges as viewed by forestry decision-makers and practitioners in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam. The report was based on three national level Pre-COP 21 workshops, taking advantage of the pivotal Paris Climate Change meeting as an opportunity to assess, prioritize and build support for nationally driven capacity development needs for equity in the context of forests and climate change. The workshops were organized in Cambodia, Viet Nam and Lao PDR and explored how perceptions of equity in REDD+ differed within countries and across the Mekong region. The resulting regional-level analysis found that participation, access to information and benefit sharing are considered priority challenges by national policymakers and stakeholders. Resulting recommendations are detailed in a series of national policy briefs, to be translated into national languages. Given the significance of COP 21, a number of activities were designed to feed into this key event.

# Empowering grassroots communities to voice their concerns and aspirations on REDD+

RECOFTC's Grassroots Capacity Building for REDD+ project has developed capacities of hundreds of trainers and local facilitators and raised awareness on climate change issues among thousands of grassroots stakeholders in Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal and Viet Nam. In its fifth and final year of implementation, the project has documented concerns and aspirations of grassroots communities using a 'cascade up' approach. A series of consultations and local-level policy dialogues were held to learn about key issues and concerns on REDD+, and these messages from the grassroots are being conveyed to policy makers and other key stakeholders from the sub-national level up to the regional and international levels. Common issues raised across the project countries are:

- Capacity development on REDD+ concepts is needed for grassroots people: REDD+ concepts remain abstract to grassroots communities. Unclear and conflicting messages on REDD+ are raising expectations or exacerbating misunderstandings. Therefore, simplification of REDD+ information and communicating them effectively is necessary.
- Unclear land tenure and rights over forest resources: Concerns abound that REDD+ will serve as a catalyst for the escalation of conflicts, especially between communities and government—including fear that the State will reconsolidate forest management over previously devolved forests. This apprehension by grassroots communities is based on the fact that for many, land-use rights of local communities are not protected by safeguards and the communities are not engaged actively in REDD+ processes.
- Respect for local knowledge on climate change and REDD+: Due to the fact that REDD+ knowledge is still limited to a few select experts, grassroots stakeholders raised concerns that adequate efforts have not been made towards recognizing and using their traditional knowledge in REDD+ design and policy processes.
- Strengthening inclusive participation of grassroots people: REDD+ projects need the active participation and consent of grassroots stakeholders in order to avoid potential conflicts over rights and benefit sharing from REDD+. Thus engaging all stakeholder groups, especially women and marginalized groups, at every stage in the planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of REDD+ will enhance its potential for success
- Transparent and clear benefit-sharing mechanisms: Another challenge raised by grassroots stakeholders is a lack of understanding on benefit sharing from REDD+, leading to a sense of a lack of transparency among grassroots stakeholders. REDD+ project planners and implementers must develop further activities aimed at ensuring transparency and equitable benefit sharing from REDD+ projects.

In the process of empowering grassroots communities and providing a platform to effectively communicate concerns and issues, the project supported grassroots members to actively participate in regional and global events. These include the 'Asia Regional Workshop on Community Forest Rights and Strengthening Forest Associations' (Philippines, June 2015), 'Investing in local communities for sustainable forests: The Asia and the Pacific pre-World Forestry Congress regional meeting on people and forests' (Thailand, July 2015), and the global event 'XIV World Forestry Congress 2015' (South Africa, September 2015). The local community members who brought their messages to the World Forestry Congress contributed to the prioritization of local communities rights in both the Congress's outcome documents: 'Building momentum for community based forestry, forest and farm producer organizations' declaration and the Durban Declaration, which states in the first clause that "Forests are more than trees and are fundamental for food security and improved livelihoods. The forests of the future will increase the resilience of communities by providing food, wood energy, shelter, fodder and fibre; generating income and employment to allow communities and societies to prosper." The discourse continued at the regional Asia-Pacific Forestry Week in 2016, with further awareness raising on grassroots messages about forests and climate change.



## Snowballing the learning process in Indonesia - from workshop to religious guide book

Each year, RECOFTC conducts several capacity development workshops across the region – but what happens next? In Indonesia, RECOFTC’s partner YAKOBI (Yayasan Komunitas Belajar Indonesia) in Berau, East Kalimantan, conducted a workshop for uleema (Islamic religious leaders) from 13 sub-districts in Berau. The topic of the workshop was ‘Perspectives from the Qur’an on climate change mitigation and adaptation.’

One concern raised by participants from the uleema group at the workshop was about the threat of deforestation and degradation in their district. In response to this, workshop participants developed a statement calling for the protection of the environment from the expansion of commercial plantations and extractive industries; and to conduct environmental education for students from elementary to high school.

Their concerns are related to the rapid rise of plantations and mining in the district. Out of the total 2.2 million ha in the district, 75% is forested area. The forest faces multiple threats from both legal and illegal logging, conversion into palm oil, timber plantation and coal mining. Thirty two palm oil plantations, eleven timber concessions and twenty seven coal mines are operating. Records show that the annual deforestation rate in Berau is 39,000 ha, which contributes emissions of 20 million tons of carbon dioxide per year.

The urgency of this threat has prompted workshop participants to conduct a series of focus group discussions related to environmental conditions, using Islamic teaching as guidance. RECOFTC and Yakobi facilitated the focus group discussions and documented the process. At the end of this learning process, a guide book for preachers was drafted.

This learning product was discussed by the Nahdlatul Ulama or NU (a nationwide uleema organization in Indonesia) during their five-yearly conference held in December 2014 in Berau. In the conference, the draft was adopted as Taushiyah or a recommendation. In August 2015, another meeting was conducted for workshop participants to share information and discuss current environmental issues. The draft guide book, Untaian Hikmah Lingkungan (‘Some messages and lessons learned on the environment’), was further discussed and a team of editors was formed to improve content and produce the publication.

RECOFTC and YAKOBI in collaboration with the Berau Chapter of NU conducted a follow-up workshop in 2015 in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan. The workshop aimed to get inputs from provincial-level uleemas to develop the final draft. The workshop also provided room for participants - uleemas at different districts - to share experiences and discuss Islamic teachings on the environment.

The final guide book consists of three parts: a compilation of Qur’an verses, Hadist and Salaf teachings on the objective of earth and the universe, with calls to protect the environment and natural resources; joint statements and recommendations from the NU Berau Chapter; and inspiring articles of actions taken by uleema, government and conservation activists – including the development of village regulations to protect water resources, conservation of mangroves, and climate change mitigation/adaptation. Through support from regional chapters of NU, the guide book has been circulated not only to chapters in Berau but also to other districts, reaching students and the general public. With its beginning in one workshop, this ‘snowball effect’ for learning continues to raise awareness on climate and environmental issues in Indonesia.

## Fostering local leadership key to combating climate change in Nepal



In Nepal, Dandi Raj Subedi, a local community member, has transformed from knowing little about climate change to becoming an informed social activist who is bringing grassroots voices to the media and engaging in discussions with high-level forestry officials, including both the Regional Director of Forests and District Forest Officers.

Since participating in a RECOFTC and The Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN) REDD+ and climate change Training of Trainers workshop in 2009 and taking part in a series of refresher trainings and reflection workshops in the past five years, Subedi has become a community forestry champion. He has conducted numerous trainings and workshops

on REDD+ and climate change at the district and grassroots levels, actively reaching out to more than 255 community forestry user groups (CFUGs) in the Kailaali district of Nepal.

His work has sensitized local people about their rights, roles and responsibilities in community forestry, and resulted in revised operational plans of CFUGs to incorporate REDD+ and climate change. "I really like the Grassroots project's approach for building capacity: it is not only one event but a series of refreshers along with back-up support so I can apply the learning with confidence. This is really helpful for me to engage on the ground and update local communities on the global development of REDD+ and climate change issues," said Subedi. "I have sharpened my facilitation skills, and am confident not only in conducting local-level trainings but in giving media interviews and in discussions with high-level forest officials."

"His leadership and training of CFUGs has been able to revitalize all the CFs in the district as well as our own district Chapter," said the Chair of FECOFUN in the Kailali district, Ms. Tulsya Devkota.

"Through Subedi's leadership, FECOFUN's Kailaali district chapter has been strengthened as an institution," adds Birkha Bahadur Shahi, Secretary and focal person for REDD+ and Climate Change in FECOFUN headquarters.

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## Finding win-win solutions for local people and national parks in Thailand

In Thailand, RECOFTC is working closely with the Protected Area Regional Office under the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plants Conservation, Chiang Mai to involve local communities in the management planning of the Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme that aims to promote solutions that reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. Through various activities, including consultation meetings, trainings and awareness-raising activities in local schools, RECOFTC has brought together government departments and local people who depend on the reserve for their livelihoods.

Through these activities, RECOFTC is enhancing local understanding and knowledge of global warming, the importance of biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource utilization. RECOFTC has also facilitated government agencies to integrate Payment for Ecological Services (PES), resulting in an agreement between AURA, a drinking water company, and Pong Khrai community to cooperate in conserving the ecosystem in Mae-Sa Kok Ma.

# Mainstreaming a rights-based approach in sustainable forest management

RECOFTC understands that rights are the fundamental starting point for local communities managing forests in a sustainable manner. With this as a starting point, RECOFTC focuses on both the policy and local levels. In Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao PDR, RECOFTC conducted trainings with local partners on procedures for formally establishing CFs. This contributed to the establishment of 19 new CFs in Cambodia (covering 2,457 member-households and covering 20,980 ha). To date, Cambodia's CF programme now covers a total of 291 CFs benefitting more than 70,000 local households and managing 258,000 ha of forest. RECOFTC is responsible for more than half of these, through our work to enhance capacities of national and local level government, NGOs and community groups to catalyze the land tenure policies. These communities have gained formal forest rights through Community Forestry Agreements.

RECOFTC and its partners are extremely active in providing inputs to policy processes through dialogues and working groups, and has conducted international cross-visits and facilitated multi-stakeholder platforms in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar, contributing to more informed CF policies. A similar approach used in Nepal has influenced Nepal's new Forest Policy and amended CF guidelines, which RECOFTC helped review. The new policy aims for 60 per cent of total forest area under CF by 2015 and includes gender guidelines that provide for women's mandatory representation in executive positions. In Indonesia, the Decentralization Act was passed, which allows a more locally controlled system to establish social forestry. In Cambodia, Thailand, Nepal and Viet Nam, RECOFTC developed/strengthened CF networks for rights holders. RECOFTC's work in this area is making a strong contribution to SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

## Community forestry gains ground in Myanmar

Since RECOFTC's MoU with the Myanmar Forest Department under MOECA, Myanmar is further expediting the progress of CF in the country. In 2015, H.E. U Aye Myint Maung, Deputy Minister, MOECA, emphasized that "to scale up and strengthen the development of community forestry (CF), CF units are being formed not only in the forest department headquarters, but also in every region to support the CF National Working Group (CFNWG)."

RECOFTC is supporting the new government-led CFNWG by helping to review Myanmar's forest policy and regulatory framework, and offering programmatic support to vastly scale up community forestry across the country. The CFNWG has been active in the ongoing land use policy (now in its sixth draft) formulation processes as well as in the revision of the CF Instruction.

On the ground, a new RECOFTC project, 'Scaling Up Community Forestry in Myanmar' (SUComFor), is working to double the area of forest under community forestry to approximately 85,000 ha. "The project is demonstrating how community forestry can empower local communities, providing livelihood options, fostering fair benefit sharing, acting as a safety net for the impact of climate change and promoting democratic principles at the grassroots level. Putting local people as the main partners and actors in decision-making will pave the way to sustainable forest management," said Dr. Tint Lwin Thuang, RECOFTC Executive Director.

Out of 31 million ha of designated forest area in Myanmar, 2.8 per cent is officially allocated for community forest. To date, 12 per cent of the targeted CF area has been established, constituting a rise of 7.4 per cent since 2014. RECOFTC has laid the groundwork for CF through awareness-raising activities and trainings in seven demonstration sites (in Ayeyarwaddy, Bago, Chin, Rhakhine, Tanintharyi, Shan and Magway) – targeting an area of approximately 40,000 ha. In the demonstration sites, communities are now in the process of submitting applications to establish community forests for the first time, revitalize existing CFs and integrating both old and new into a landscape approach to CF.



# Promoting an even playing field for entrepreneurial and sustainable forest livelihoods



RECOFTC is working to strengthen forest-based institutions to enhance local livelihoods through sustainable community forestry practices, contributing to SDG 1 (no poverty), along with 2 (zero hunger), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) and 12 (responsible consumption and production). Capacity development activities mainly centered around RECOFTC and FAO's 'Market Analysis and Development' (MA&D) toolkit, which offers trainers a step-by-step approach to support communities in more entrepreneurial, and sustainable, approaches to their forest livelihood activities. Sixteen organizations from Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, Viet Nam, Nepal and Indonesia were trained, and in turn, these organizations trained local organizations and collected data for planning community enterprise interventions. Further, capacity development events targeting government officials (52 participants) were conducted.

New research was launched highlighting best practices on community-based enterprises and emphasizing that local communities can be reliable allies in sustainable forest management and development of enterprise models. The research seeks to stimulate support from governments and overcome barriers with the private sector. These barriers are detailed in the open access journal "Forests" discussing the uneven playing field that communities have to confront in order to make a living from legal and sustainably produced timber.

## Improving private sector engagement with local communities in Lao PDR

RECOFTC and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) have helped the Lao PDR office of Stora Enso, a global private sector paper company, better engage with local communities. Stora Enso in Lao PDR is investing in agro-forestry models – a land-use management system that combines agricultural and forestry technologies to create more diverse, productive, profitable and sustainable land-use systems – in partnership with local communities in Savannakhet, Lao PDR. To ensure that the company engages effectively with the local people, RECOFTC, in partnership with PEFC, has delivered capacity development activities for the company's staff and the local stakeholders.

In 2015, RECOFTC led a class room training and study tour for Stora Enso staff in Savannakhet, Lao PDR and Srakaew, Thailand. The aim of the training and study tour was to improve the capacities of staff in terms of participatory communication, Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), transforming forest conflict, value chain development and forest certification.

"The training and study tour program helped me see that participatory approaches foster mutual learning and different viewpoints, thus allowing communities to be better supported," said Thienthong Tansoukhang of Forestry Management Information Systems of Burapha, a sister company of Stora Enso in Lao PDR.

Investing in the development of agro-forestry models in partnership with communities plays an important role in improving the livelihoods of local people. RECOFTC, a member of PEFC, a certification body that promotes local ownership in the development of standards for sustainable forest management and trade, aims to influence the standards being developed to ensure that local communities benefit from such standards.

"Stora Enso now understands a key approach in implementing agro-forestry, ensuring appropriate consultations with local people," said Martin Greijmans, RECOFTC. "The company aims to benefit both the company and local communities."

Over the course of the 10-day program, the overwhelming conclusion participants reached was that without including local people in the development process and without communicating with them effectively, a successful agro-forestry model cannot be developed. As Xaybouasone Phakhanthong, Regional Assistant and Translator for Stora Enso in Lao PDR put it, "Everything begins with effective communication."



# Eco-tourism creates opportunity for income generation while protecting forests in Cambodia



The eco-tourism site Teuk Thlak Chrak La Eang Waterfall, covering 157 hectares, attracts year-round visitors that give opportunities for local communities to earn additional incomes and motivation to participate in conserving the forests. The waterfall is a part of Teuk Thlak Chrak La Eang community protected area (CPA) which was established in 2009.

RECOFTC in collaboration with the local NGO Mlup Baitong (MB) worked with the Ministry of Environment and local authorities to assist Teuk Thlak Chrak La Eang CPA to expand its potential area from 150 hectares to 660 hectares in 2014. The expansion aims to protect the forests, to provide villagers with non-timber forest

product (NTFP) use and to sustain the ecotourism site. 377 families (1783 people) from three villages in the community have benefited from the initiative.

Mr. Yim Chanthy, chief of Teuk Thlak Chrak La Eang CPA, said that the community earns revenues from entrance fees (USD0.25 for local visitors, USD1 for international visitors), parking tickets and taxes from traders. On average, the site receives 60 visitors a day and 100 a day on weekends. The number jumps to 12,000 visitors on national holidays, including international visitors. The number of visitors determines the incomes for individuals and the community as a whole and has increased from year to year.

Ms. Pheng Sophy, a 31-year-old woman from a local community, is a member of the CPA. Sophy sells beverages and fruit to tourists on the weekends and earns up to USD5 a day. The amount she earns is very useful for her impoverished family and her elderly parents.

“We have tried hard to protect our forests and now we are receiving benefits from our efforts. Without forests, there would be no waterfall,” said Ms. Sophy whose husband joins in community forest patrolling. However, she wants to see the community improving its infrastructure to attract more visitors. “We want the visitors to stay overnight in the community so that they spend more and we can earn more. I want to run my business every day, not only on weekends.”

Currently, less than a dozen families earn direct incomes from visitors, and the ones who do make money from selling food. However, income-generation activities deriving from tourism is expanding. Local community members are being trained on home-stay development, and 30 young people were trained as local guides.

“The income from tourism activities supports community members to patrol three times per month and replant trees,” said Mr. Chanthy. “We are also allocating money to develop our community, including building a toilet, and helping to build a local school and road.”

RECOFTC has provided a series of trainings to management committees, community members and implementing partners, and has assisted the community in development of a sustainable forest management and business plan, which are significant for the community’s long-term sustainable management of the forest.



## Appropriate harvesting technologies: making community forestry livelihoods sustainable and profitable

Forest harvesting in the context of community and smallholder forestry has been a grossly neglected field, particularly in Asia and the Pacific. Today, timber is still considered the most profitable forest resource available to local communities. However, the lack of appropriate and sustainable harvesting and transport technologies available to local communities prevents the realization of their greater share in the primary stages of timber- and bamboo-based value chains.

Over the past four years, RECOFTC's 'Livelihood Improvement through Generation and Ownership of Forest Information by Local People in Products and Services Markets' (ForInfo) project has tested several sustainable small-scale timber and bamboo harvesting and transporting technologies with encouraging results. The project found that local communities have much to gain from improved bamboo harvesting and transporting technologies.

In terms of harvesting, traditional methods using machetes and handsaws took 15-20 minutes to harvest one-two 15 foot bamboo poles; using small chainsaws together with either a self-powered winch or rubber-tracked crawler took 10 minutes to harvest 10-30 bamboo poles.

In terms of transportation to the nearest roadside, manual methods take 15-20 minutes for a single 15 foot bamboo pole, whereas a locally fabricated sulky or a rubber-tracked crawler from a converted rice thresher takes 10 minutes per 10-30 bamboo poles.

Thus efficiency in bamboo harvesting and transporting can be as much as 16x better than the traditional methods. This increase indicates higher potential income.

ForInfo conducted the same studies for teak with similar results. However, restrictive state policies in timber-cutting have prevented ForInfo's trials to go beyond subsistence level.

The project also conducted trials for bamboo chipper and finger-jointing post-harvest equipment. Initial results show that local communities can earn more income with more appropriate technology. Both equipment will also help local communities to achieve zero waste and full resource utilization within the bamboo and timber value chains.

What the ForInfo experiences tell us is that given the right tools and skills, local people can profitably and sustainably practice community forestry. These results will also lay the groundwork for rethinking existing restrictive state policies on CF in the region in favor of profitable, sustainable and technology-aided CF livelihoods.

RECOFTC's work toward transforming forest conflict (TFC) aims to tackle the root causes of conflict and reduce the incidence and the negative impacts of natural resource conflict in the region. Because conflict can undermine all efforts to achieve the SDGs, the transformative nature of our approach to conflict supports not only SDG16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) but the SDGs overall. RECOFTC works in two main areas: strengthening the capacity of key stakeholders—including policymakers, practitioners, private sector actors, and local people—to transform conflict; and conducting and communicating research to gain a better understanding of the causes and impacts of forest conflict.

RECOFTC's capacity development on natural resource conflict transformation is developing the capacities of key actors and institutions to understand and transform conflict more effectively to reach conflict transformation. During 2014-15, 57% of RECOFTC training participants have used the knowledge and skills that they learned from TFC training and capacity development services.

## Laying the groundwork to transform conflict through village forestry in Lao PDR

To inform more effective interventions in forest conflict transformation in Lao PDR, RECOFTC with Village Focus International, undertook ground-breaking research that looked at the institutional landscape and context where forest conflicts occur and the processes used to address them. The research reviewed the policies, regulatory frameworks, institutions and processes that influence how forest and other resource conflicts arise and how these conflicts are dealt with, along with how stakeholders involved in these conflicts fit into wider conflict processes in the country.

The research (forthcoming) found that in Lao PDR:

- Forest-related conflicts vary (forestland conversion, shifting cultivation agro-forestry systems, timber, non-timber forest products, conservation).
- There is no single formal or informal channel through which forest conflicts are addressed, rather these depend on a stakeholder's history, familiarity with formal institutions, gender, ethnicity and socio-political networks.
- Forest-dependent communities are not involved in the implementation of policies that may negatively impact their livelihoods, nor are they fairly consulted when projects impact their land. This can result in conflict.
- There is no organization independent of government that mediates and investigates conflicts, resulting in often unjust conflict resolution processes.
- Forest and land conflicts have risen dramatically, related to an increasing trend in private sector land and forest investments, and long-term government policy-induced conflicts that do not enter conflict mediation channels.

The research revealed insights into the dynamics of conflicts, institutional arrangements related to conflicts, forest-dependent communities and conflicts, and conflict capacities of stakeholders. The report findings were validated at a participatory multi-stakeholder workshop in Lao PDR and feedback and recommendations from participants have been incorporated into the report. Plans are now underway by RECOFTC and its partners to use the findings to inform development interventions and to further share the analysis.

Also in Lao PDR, the Department of Forestry, ASFCC and RECOFTC finalized the terms of reference for the Village Forestry Working Group, which includes representatives from the Department of Forestry, Department of Forest Resource Management and other stakeholder groups including development agencies, civil society organizations and academic institutions. The working group has agreed how it will be positioned, its objectives, structure, roles and responsibilities as well as their work plan. The group also shared strategies for future village forestry development and methods for improving coordination mechanisms. The multi-stakeholder working group is envisioned to pave the way for strengthening Village Forestry policy and strategy in Lao PDR.

RECOFTC is making an ongoing contribution to SDG 5 through its work to ensure women's effective participation in forest decision-making through mainstreaming gender into all of its projects and programs as well as its women's leadership trainings for both RECOFTC and partners' staff in most focal country programs. A key achievement was the finalization of an innovative training manual and curriculum to develop women's leadership capacities in community forestry user groups (CFUGs) in Nepal, developed in partnership with HIMAWANTI. Almost 150 women leaders have so far undertaken the training program. RECOFTC is aiming to scale this up via a training of trainers (ToT) approach, and adaptation for other countries (Cambodia and Myanmar).

RECOFTC and FAO also published a regional analysis of gender mainstreaming in national forest policies for Asia and the Pacific (with policy briefs for country case studies: Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam). Study results are being turned into a training curriculum.

## Mainstreaming social inclusion and gender equity into the Ing Watershed Management project in Thailand

The Ing Watershed project was designed and developed with a goal to improve active participation of local networks in fostering and advocating for the sustainability of the Ing Watershed – one of the most fragile conservation corridors within the Indo-Burma Hotspot housing a nursery for spawn of bio-diverse aquatic species that migrate annually from the Mekong River. However, in its current design, the specific needs, interests and participation of key socially excluded groups such as indigenous, women and youth groups were not addressed. Critical discussion and training workshops with simulated field data collection for socially inclusive gender analysis at the identified project target community was conducted with the Phayao Women's Network. The result of this workshop was incorporated into the project's vision and objective with specifically proposed activities.

The project now aims to ensure that women and marginalized groups are better represented and involved in the Ing Watershed People's Assembly. Other activities being developed include producing information on gender roles and the status of marginalized groups, as well as developing capacities through cross-community field visits for women's groups. A long-term goal of establishing the Ing Watershed Women's Network is also under discussion.

Overall the participants reported increased knowledge and awareness on social inclusion and gender equity (SIGE) issues in their routine work and project planning. They recognize the importance of gender mainstreaming and social inclusion and are able to apply the basic gender analytical framework in their own projects and baseline data collection.

### **Developing leadership capacities of women in community forestry leads to larger leadership roles in society**

RECOFTC's work in developing leadership capacities of women involves supporting potential women leaders and women's groups to build their confidence, knowledge and skills in fulfilling leadership roles. Some notable examples include our work with partners to provide training and backstopping for women-led CF User Groups in Nepal; working with women's groups to support forest management practices such as forest patrols and monitoring of illegal logging in Indonesia, Viet Nam and Cambodia; and enhancing capacities of women to generate community-based information and learning in Thailand.

Through increasing leadership capacities in CF, women from local communities have been exposed to other public platforms where they voice their opinions and call for action on other policy issues, including land rights, village savings fund initiatives, industrialization of rural areas, ASEAN regional economic integration, and alternative livelihood development.

## Women’s group impacts illegal logging in Viet Nam



A women’s group in Hang Hai village are making a difference by encouraging community members not to participate in destructive forest activities. Hang Hai village (in Gung Re commune, Di Linh District, Lam Dong province) is the site of frequent illegal logging. Every day, local people witness loggers cutting and transporting timber. Every night, wood trucks drive past the village – including one truck that killed two villagers and badly injured eight people. Both villagers and Communal Forestry Officers tried stop them but failed, and the powerful loggers and wood transporters continued.

In 2012, RECOFTC and the Lam Dong Center for Agriculture Extension conducted a training for local people in Gung Re commune. The training raised awareness of villagers so that they could better understand the role of forests in climate change, and what is REDD+, along with the important roles communities can play in forest management and development.

As a result of the training, local women’s awareness changed as they realized that sustainably managing the forest would not only benefit themselves, but also the whole community. They also realized that by joining together and taking action, they could protect their forest. Thus, they started to think about what they could do to stop deforestation.

In March 2013 the ‘Women take care, manage, and protect forest’ group was officially established in Hang Hai village by the Gung Re Communal Women’s Union. After its establishment, 37 members of the group developed operational regulations based on the spirit of volunteering for the benefit of the community. Group members learned about forest protection, and members have gained confidence from talking to each other openly, and sharing knowledge, information and experiences among themselves and with others.



The group decided to both disseminate information about forest protection in village meetings and, as group members living in or near the forest, to report logging activity to forestry officers, the Commune Forestry Board, or the communal police.

According to Ms. Tran Thi Soi, Chairwoman of Hang Hai Women’s Union, there were eight households who were often hired for transporting wood or coal, or cutting the forest for cultivation. These households were not members of the women’s group or the Women’s Union. In addition, there were outsiders trespassing in Hang Hai forest.



Having identified the target households who needed support and advocacy, the group successfully persuaded four households to stop cutting/ transporting wood and burning the forest for charcoal, and to find ways to earn income from other activities.

Since 2014, conflicts with forestry officers have stopped, and loggers no longer openly destroy the forest as they know they will be reported to the police.

While all acknowledge that involving villagers in forest protection and addressing deforestation is complicated and time consuming, especially when no supporting funds are available, the women in Hang Hai village are

doing their best to protect the forest, motivated by ensuring a better environment for all villagers and for future generations.

## Ensuring women's voices are included in forest management in Cambodia



Khuon Doeurn, a 56-year-old Kuoy indigenous woman from a remote community in Kratie province of Cambodia, is the chief of Kampong Damrey community forest. She plays a critical role in protecting and managing community forests on a daily basis, ensuring that women's voices and concerns are taken into account in forest activity planning.

"As a woman, I always take into account women's needs in community forest planning," said Ms. Doeurn. Women make up nearly 50 percent of the total population of 384 people in 74 households in Kampong Damrey, where there are several households whose livelihoods depend partially on forest products. In the community, it is mainly women who go to the forest to collect non-timber forest products including bamboo shoots,

leaves and vines, mushrooms, wild vegetables, herbal grass, rattan and bamboo. Women are thus more aware of forest activities and are also motivated to protect forests as they derive income from forest products.

As a result of her hard work and progress in the community forest, Ms. Doeurn, who is illiterate, was elected several times as chief. "The inclusion of women in the community forestry development process gives women a feeling of ownership of their forest and pushes the programme forward, particularly in forest-related decision-making at the community level," she pointed out.

Ms. Doeurn recalls a time when she was afraid she could not fulfill her role as chief of the community forest and would disappoint her supporters. Moreover, she worried that men in the community would not listen to her. "By participating in the project's meetings and events, I've learned a lot and become more confident. I'm now better able to ensure women's voices and needs are taken into account in forest decision-making."



Ms. Doeurn is just one of the women who regularly participate in project activities supported by RECOFTC's project. She and other women are involved in boundary demarcation, patrol planning and awareness-raising.

"Women are more motivated to take care of our forests. If we don't, we will not have food and other forest products both for our own use and for the next generation," Ms. Doeurn explains. While male candidates still vie for her position, Khuon Doeurn is confident in her role as chief: "People believe in me so they will keep voting for me."

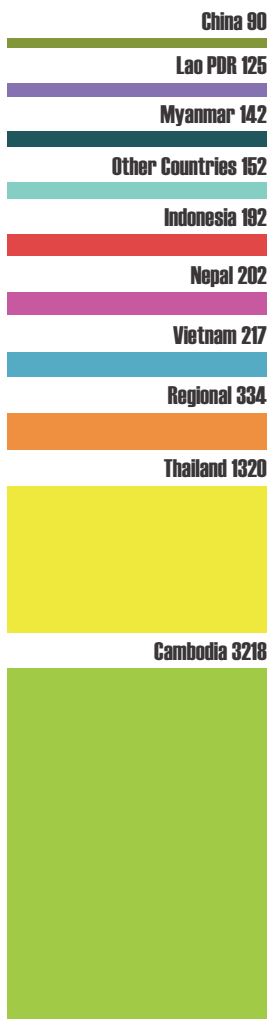
# Participatory monitoring and evaluation for learning

During 2014-2015, RECOFTC facilitated 281 capacity development activities with almost 6,000 participants. RECOFTC commissioned independent follow up with 10% of participants from four of its seven focal countries (Viet Nam, Nepal, Laos, and Myanmar) to understand if and to what extent RECOFTC training participants were applying their new knowledge and skills. The follow up found that nine out of ten training participants were using the knowledge and skills gained from RECOFTC capacity development events. Participants noted that they have applied their new knowledge and skills towards a wide variety of forest-related work including REDD+; policy review and formulation; delivering further trainings; publication development; gender equity-related work; and the application of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

In addition, RECOFTC updated its community forestry data, including information about CF area, number of CFs, and beneficiaries in focal countries. The update has revealed that RECOFTC has contributed to an increase and preservation of existing coverage of CFs, and as of September 2015 around 35,000 CF groups have been formalized in the region with over 13 million hectares of forested landscape managed by local communities and indigenous people. The growth of CF in Cambodia demonstrates RECOFTC's impact—in 2007, when RECOFTC first established a presence in the country, not a single CF was formalized; now there are 291 CFs benefitting more than 70,000 local households and managing 258 thousand hectares of forest. Out of them, 41 CFs have developed business plans with the direct help of RECOFTC to bring poor and marginalized beneficiaries out of subsistence level income using forest resources.

## Capacity development participants by country

2014-15



## A snapshot of 2014-15

50,000

Families from over 325 community forest/ smallholder groups covering 225,000 ha supported under CF development projects

5992

Capacity development events

281

Awareness-raising events

42

Advocacy events

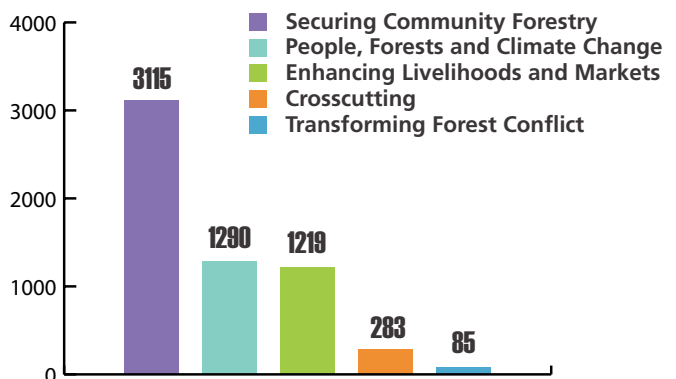
166

Knowledge products produced

7

National legal instruments influenced by RECOFTC enacted

## Training participants by thematic area





# Using strategic communication to help achieve forest goals

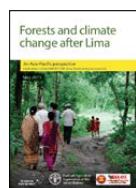
RECOFTC hosted the Pre-World Forestry Congress (WFC) Regional Meeting in Bangkok during July 2015. The main participants of the meeting were more than 20 smallholders, indigenous peoples and community forestry members from Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Viet Nam, Lao PDR, Thailand and Nepal. These local community members discussed forest issues that are priorities for them, recognizing that their management of their forests is of benefit on local, national and global levels, and elected four local people to represent them at the global level at the XIVth WFC in South Africa in September 2015. Representatives of civil society, NGOs, the UN, government and media also participated in the meeting to find ways to support the visions of these local communities.

Following the pre-WFC event, RECOFTC facilitated the participation of six local people at the XIVth WFC, which had as its theme "Forests and People: Investing in a Sustainable Future". The highlight of the WFC for RECOFTC was the "I am the Forest" side event, led by RECOFTC with support from partners. RECOFTC also presented at over 20 different WFC plenary sessions, side events and discussions. These events, as well as the key messages RECOFTC promoted, garnered international and national press coverage (print and television) in RECOFTC focal countries, and featured in official WFC outcome documents.

RECOFTC's communications reach also gained ground on the national level, with the launch of new Khmer, Thai, and Vietnamese-language websites, new publications in regional languages, and many national awareness-raising events. RECOFTC's social media channels also continued to widen its reach, with active Facebook and Twitter pages in 5 regional languages plus English.

RECOFTC also initiated new approaches to reach a wider range of stakeholders by delivering training events focusing on communications and hosting an annual regional media workshop for national journalists. In addition, RECOFTC is playing a key role facilitating development of the Asia-Pacific Forest Communicators Network (APFCN) with FAO.

## New publications



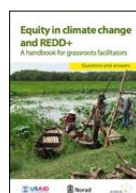
### Forests and Climate Change after Lima



### Women and land management infographic



### Community forestry: a national approach to safeguard information system (SIS): Policy brief

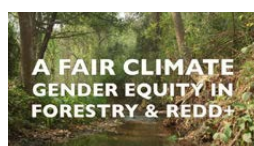


### Equity in climate change and REDD+ : a handbook for grassroots facilitators (Q&A)



### Mainstreaming gender into forest policies in Asia and the Pacific

## New videos



- A fair climate: Gender equity in forestry and REDD+
- The regional learning group: Promoting equity-based approaches among local forestry officials in the Mekong region
- Without indigenous women: What happens to our forests and forest communities?
- The equity effect: What is social equity?



- Voices of the forest: Thailand
- Voices of the forest: Myanmar
- Voices of the forest: Cambodia



- Teak harvesting technologies: Steep slope extraction solution
- Appropriate harvesting technologies: Small scale solutions for bamboo and teak
- How money can grow on trees: Documenting plantation ownership and trees as collateral
- Bamboo: Efficient harvesting for better livelihoods

# Financial report 2014-2015

Revenue	Budget (USD)	Actual (USD)
<b>Grant</b>	<b>2,963,895</b>	<b>2,748,787</b>
Core & RECOFTC Funds	2,917,895	2,711,613
Royal Thai Government	46,000	37,173
<b>Internal Income</b>	<b>2,000,000</b>	<b>1,426,039</b>
Contribution from projects		383,963
Consultancies, etc		723,897
Dorm and facilities		172,512
Other income (interest and misc)		145,666
<b>Total 2015 Revenue</b>	<b>4,963,895</b>	<b>4,174,825</b>
<b>Carry over from 2014</b>	<b>450,000</b>	<b>815,797</b>
<b>Grant - Project</b>		<b>4,758,021</b>
<b>Total Fund Available</b>	<b>5,413,895</b>	<b>9,748,643</b>

Expenditure	Budget (USD)	Actual (USD)
<b>Program</b>		
Capacity Development and Technical Services	1,200,274	955,399
Strategic Communication	555,654	490,464
Program Coordination and Operations	1,578,101	1,198,561
<b>Governance</b>		
Executive Office & Monitoring & Evaluation	685,477	487,609
<b>Support</b>		
Corporate Services	1,165,906	785,346
Central Operating Expenses	115,000	84,484
Capital Expenses	107,000	41,042
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>5,407,412</b>	<b>4,042,904</b>
Project Expenditure		4,679,008
Capital Expense - Project		79,013
<b>Depreciation</b>		<b>207,648</b>
<b>Grand Total Expenditure</b>		<b>9,008,573</b>
<b>Carry-forward to 2015-2016</b>		<b>740,070</b>



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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)  
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Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet)  
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RECOFTC's mission is to enhance capacities for stronger rights, improved governance and fairer benefits for local people in sustainable forested landscapes in the Asia and the Pacific region.

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 development for community forestry. RECOFTC engages in strategic networks and effective partnerships with governments, nongovernmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, local people and research and educational institutes throughout the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. With over 25 years of international experience and a dynamic approach to capacity development – involving research and analysis, demonstration sites and training products – RECOFTC delivers innovative solutions for people and forests.

**RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests**

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