



RECOFTC

Annual report 2022-2023



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Foreword



Dr Nur Masripatin
Chair of the Board of Trustees,
RECOFTC

The health and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region and its people are tied to our forests. Forest ecosystems are crucial for maintaining biodiversity, regulating climate and supporting the livelihoods of millions of people.

Our region's forests are some of the world's most biodiverse and ecologically significant. Across RECOFTC's seven focal countries – Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam, our initiatives have been able to engage communities and governments, enhancing local capacities and promoting innovative solutions.

RECOFTC's long-term, forest landscape-based approach to supporting local communities in the Asia-Pacific has never been more crucial. This annual report highlights the progress and challenges faced over the past year. Through collaborative efforts – among governments, non-governmental and civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and the private sector, RECOFTC has been able to make significant strides.

I am happy to note that we are making progress in expanding our impact. Multiple successes have emerged from our projects – stories of communities thriving, biodiversity flourishing and sustainable practices taking root. These achievements would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our partners and donors, whose contributions have been instrumental in driving our mission forward. As Chair of the RECOFTC Board of Trustees, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you.

The ongoing climate crisis, economic pressures and socio-political dynamics underscore the urgency and importance of our work. While the path to sustainable forest management is long, our dedicated team, supported by our donors and partners, is focused on our strategic priorities – deepening community

engagement, enhancing capacity-building and leveraging technology for greater impact. Our commitment to sustainable forest management and community empowerment remains as strong as ever. We are inspired by the resilience and dedication of the communities we serve and the partnerships we have forged.

Thank you all for your continued support and commitment to our shared mission.

Dr Nur Masripatin
Chair of the Board of Trustees, RECOFTC

Message from the Executive Director



Dr David Ganz
Executive Director, RECOFTC

Through strategic partnerships and a landscape approach, RECOFTC has improved forest governance, strengthened community-based enterprises and trained thousands of people involved in community forestry.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this annual report, showcasing how RECOFTC has driven positive change in 2022–2023. The stories it shares exemplify just some of ways that our work has had impact – from improving policies, boosting livelihoods and shifting attitudes to strengthening civil society organizations, amplifying citizen voices and harnessing the power of networks.

RECOFTC’s dedicated staff, partners and the many people we work with in communities, governments, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations and businesses have made this possible.

The period that this report covers was the final year of implementation of RECOFTC’s Strategic Plan for 2018–2023, and I am happy to report that we largely achieved all the strategy’s objectives and targets.

Key to this has been RECOFTC’s adoption of the landscape approach in interventions across our seven focal countries. This has enabled us to work across a variety of land uses and build strategic partnerships among stakeholders in our target forest landscapes. This approach has strengthened governance, promoted forest landscape restoration, and generated investments and business opportunities that are crucial to sustainability.

Over the past year, we provided technical advice, and support with market linkages, to 47 individually owned and 106 group-owned community-based enterprises selling products and services from forest landscapes. Over the course of our five-year strategic plan period, we facilitated 223 business agreements and partnerships between communities and private companies, such as buyers of sustainably harvested timber, bamboo and other products from community forests.

A central pillar of our work has been capacity building through workshops, study tours, online courses, mentoring and other approaches. Over the past five years, we built the capacity of more than 20,000 people in areas including collaborative forest landscape management, participatory forest governance, community-based enterprise development, and gender equality and social inclusion.

These interventions were directly associated with more than half a million hectares of community forest in our seven focal countries. We also contributed to the adoption by national and subnational governments of nearly 60 policies and practices that improve forest governance. And at the regional level, we supported implementation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Strategic Plan of Action on Forestry 2021–2025.

The period covered by this report also marked the transition into RECOFTC's next five-year strategic phase. We collaborated with staff, Board members and key partners over a 10-month period to develop our Strategic Plan for 2023–2028, through a participatory process that concluded in March 2023 when our Board of Trustees approved the plan.

Work to implement the new plan has begun. It is made ever more urgent by the accelerating climate crisis as well as other social, economic, environmental and political stressors. But even as challenges mount, we see many reasons for hope.

Key among these is the growing recognition that forest landscapes that are well managed by local communities have key roles to play in addressing climate change and conserving biodiversity. This is creating new opportunities to support communities to play these roles by exercising their rights to manage and benefit directly from these local forests. This aligns with the global movement to empower Indigenous People and local communities to be more directly involved and benefit directly from climate and conservation financing mechanisms.

Looking ahead, we will continue to innovate and adapt, leveraging our collective expertise. Together, we can build a more sustainable and equitable future, where communities prosper in thriving forest landscapes. Thank you for your continued support and collaboration as we work towards these goals.

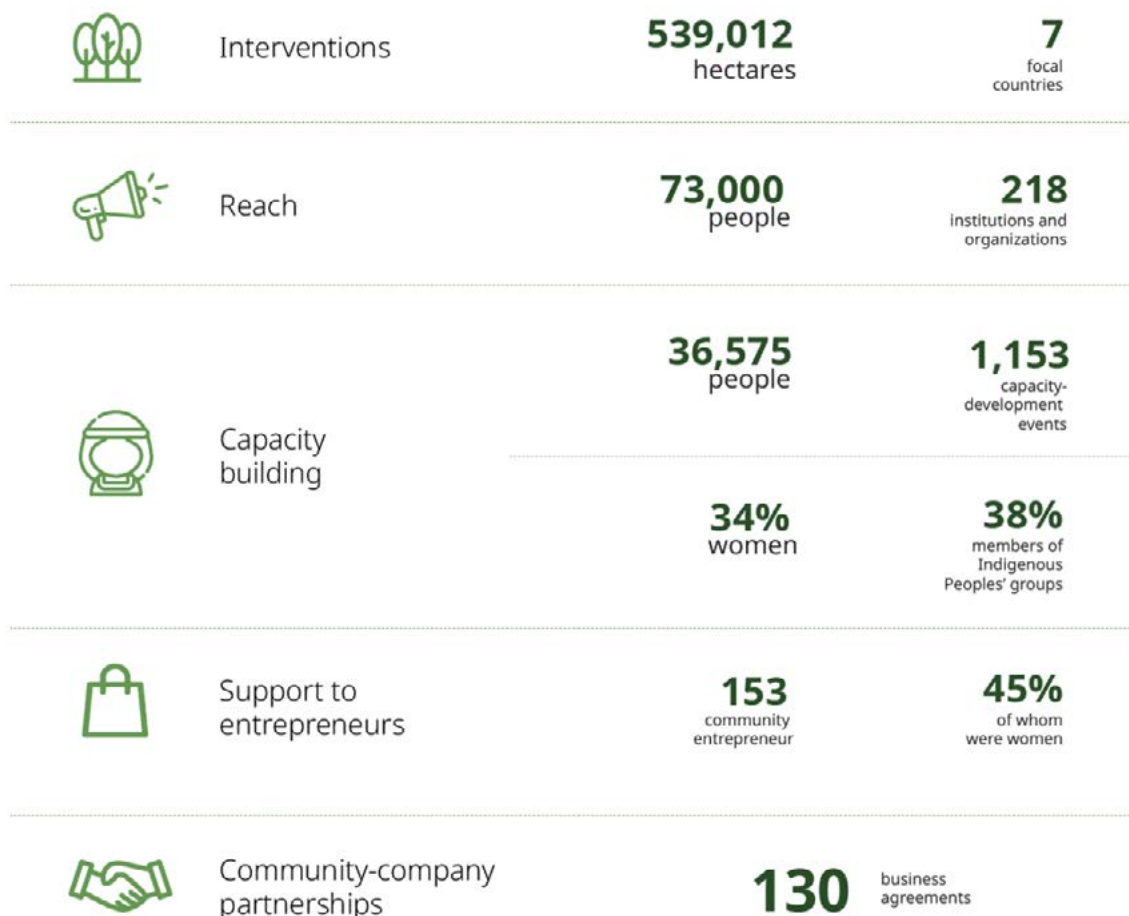
Dr David Ganz
Executive Director, RECOFTC

The year that was – RECOFTC by numbers

2022–2023 was an important year for us, marking a period of consolidation and of preparation. It was the final year of implementation of our 2018–2023 Strategic Plan, during which we laid the groundwork for our 2023–2028 Strategic Pan.

As a result of our effort to leverage and mobilize resources across our programs and projects, there was great synergy between our four Strategic Goals:

- Landscape collaboration in a changing climate
- Governance, institutions and conflict transformation
- Private sector engagement and enterprising communities
- Social inclusion, gender equity and public action



Together, our Strategic Goals contributed to the training of 14,335 people, influencing 28,983 individuals.

Through capacity building events, we directly enhanced the skills and knowledge of 36,575 people. The 1,153 capacity-development events organized included training, learning events, workshops, study tours and coaching or mentoring in the field. Among the trainees, around 34 percent were women and 38 percent were members of Indigenous Peoples' groups.

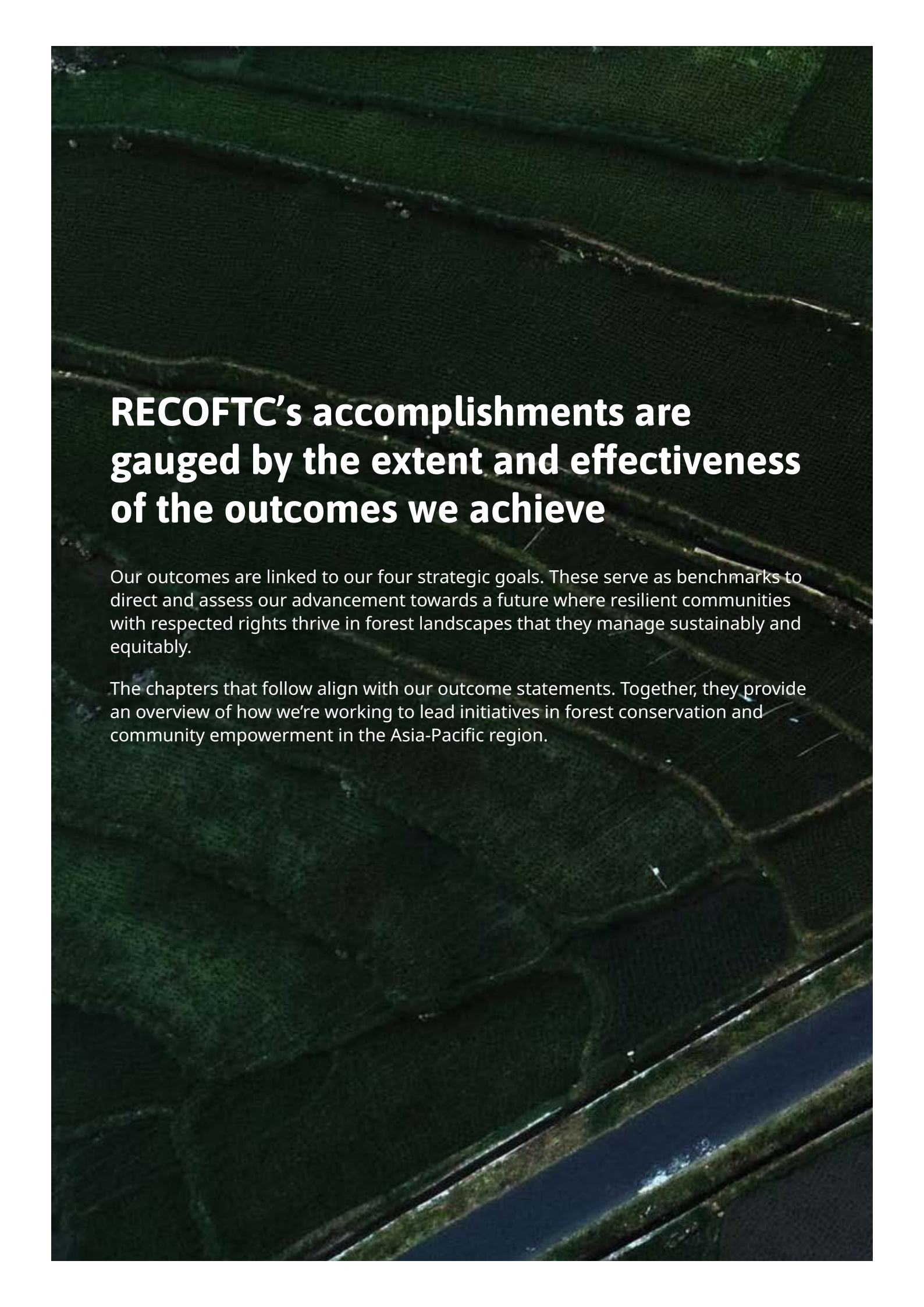
We were able to directly reach nearly 73,000 people and a range of stakeholders representing 218 institutions and organizations through 171 major events. Stakeholders included national policymakers and staff from line agencies and civil society organizations as well as researchers and practitioners, youth group members, local forest managers and users and staff of private companies.

We also supported 153 community entrepreneurs, 45 percent of whom were women, with market analysis and linkages and technical advice. We were able to facilitate 130 business agreements and partnerships between communities and private companies.

We published a comprehensive guide that provides an overview of the formal community forestry models in RECOFTC's seven focal countries, detailing the range of community members' rights and responsibilities. Additionally, we co-developed guiding principles to enhance social forestry legal frameworks in ASEAN. We also partnered with FAO to launch a manual for trainers from organizations that provide support to forest sector smallholders, communities, the private sector and national stakeholders in the production of timber and other forest products.

To amplify forest science and governance findings and updates, we disseminated 355 communication products, including training and research materials, online and social media products, news stories and journal articles. This included topical, externally generated materials and stories featured in RECOFTC's external communication channels.

Overall, our interventions were directly associated with 539,012 hectares of community forest across our seven focal countries.

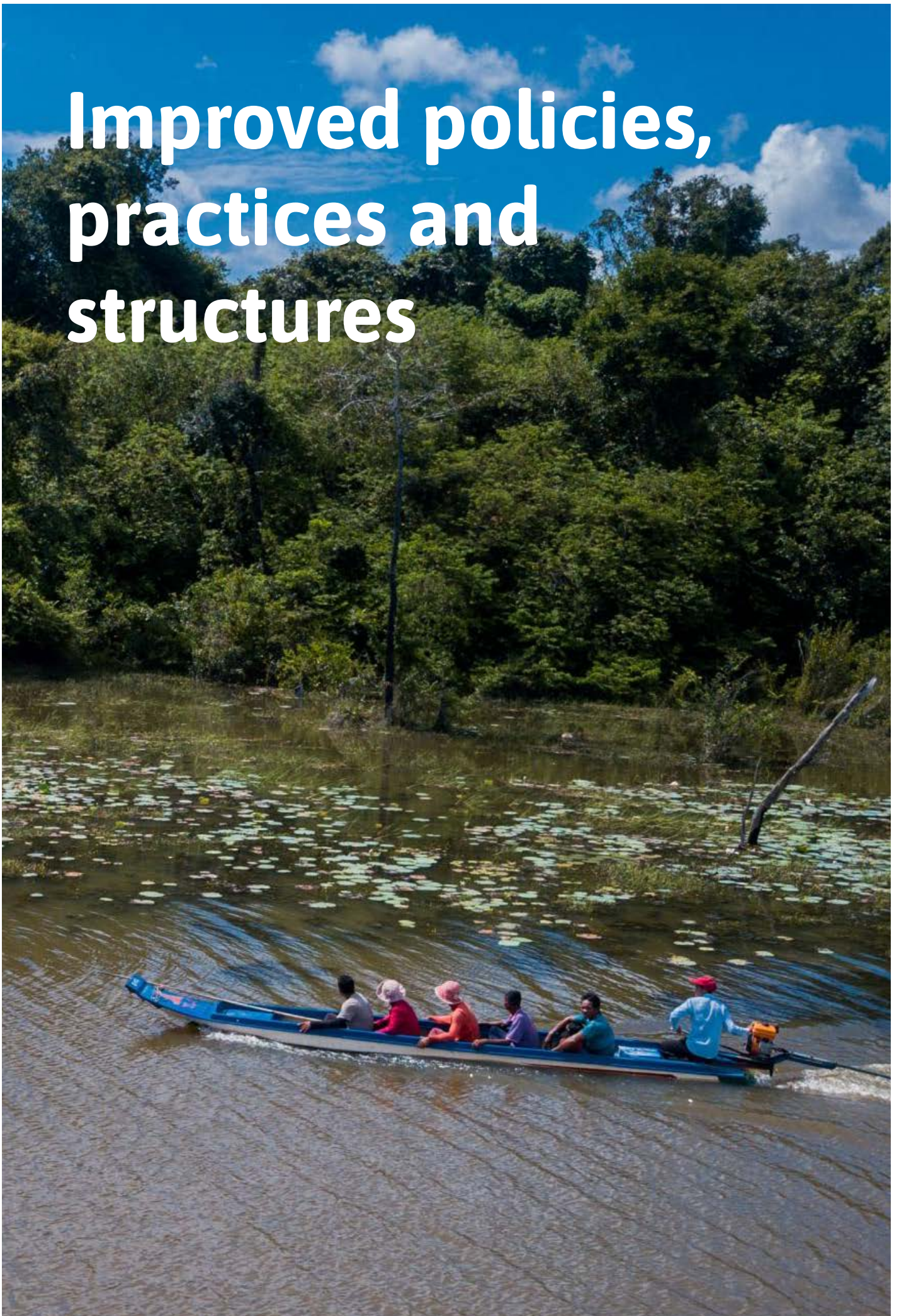


RECOFTC's accomplishments are gauged by the extent and effectiveness of the outcomes we achieve

Our outcomes are linked to our four strategic goals. These serve as benchmarks to direct and assess our advancement towards a future where resilient communities with respected rights thrive in forest landscapes that they manage sustainably and equitably.

The chapters that follow align with our outcome statements. Together, they provide an overview of how we're working to lead initiatives in forest conservation and community empowerment in the Asia-Pacific region.

Improved policies, practices and structures





Improved policies, practices and structures

Promoting community-led fire management in Asia

In Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam, social forestry is supporting a transition from fighting wildfires to strengthening community preparedness and prevention.

The warmer, drier conditions created by a changing climate are lengthening forest fire season. The seasonal wildfires that rage across the lower Mekong countries drive home the importance of community-based fire management (CBFiM).

Forest fires release carbon emissions, harming public health, livelihoods and ecosystems while exacerbating climate change. Effective and sustainable fire management requires a shift to community-based strategies that focus on preparation and risk reduction. Such a shift needs to align with local needs and involve government collaboration.

RECOFTC began the Community-based Fire Management Project in Asia, a five-year partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, in October 2022. Since then, the CBFiM project has been supporting communities and governments in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam to manage landscape fires and increase climate resilience.

Through CBFiM, we are applying adaptive management strategies to enhance resilience in fire-threatened landscapes. This multistakeholder, multisector approach prioritizes community perspectives and shared benefits for nature and people.

In 2023, we worked with community members to co-design, develop and implement tailored CBFiM plans. Using participatory approaches to include community voices and fire agency experts and practitioners, we assessed social, economic and cultural contexts to promote community-led fire management across the region.

As the threat of wildfires increases, it is essential that we strengthen the resilience of forest communities while empowering them to manage fires in their localities.



Improved policies, practices and structures

Updated policy guidance on sustainable forest management in Viet Nam

Consultations with local communities and practitioners have informed revised official guidance on SFM to be more in line with community needs, national policies and global agreements.

Since 2018, Viet Nam's Circular 28 on Sustainable Forest Management – officially, 28/2018/TT-BNNPTNT – has been a crucial regulatory framework promoting the sustainable use and management of its forests. In 2023, it was amended and reissued as Circular No. 13/2023/TT-BNNPTNT to help strengthen working principles, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management (SFM) in the country.

The changes include additions and amendments that bring the circular in line with other policies and laws, promote gender equality and community participation in sustainable forest management, and clarify and speed up procedures for approval of sustainable forest management plans. The reforms also improve and simplify the outlines of sustainable forest management plans presented in the circular's appendices.

In September 2023, RECOFTC co-sponsored a consultation workshop in Ha Noi to collect comments on this revision. “While the 2018 circular was an important part of Viet Nam’s commitment to sustainable forest management, five years of implementation revealed some gaps in the text,” says Ly Thi Minh Hai, country director of RECOFTC Viet Nam. “There was a need to address the inconsistencies with other parts of Viet Nam’s legal and regulatory framework.”

Our stakeholder consultation was organized to support the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development’s invitation to relevant parties to provide inputs to the update. Attendees included government officials, academics, RECOFTC staff and representatives of communities in Lao Cai, Son La, Hoa Binh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Quang Tri and Quang Nam provinces.

The meeting enabled participants to learn about proposed changes to the circular and share their insights and recommendations to streamline complexities. “Our consultation enabled representatives from community forests to share their experiences and reflections on how to improve the circular to better align with local practices,” says Dien Tien Vu, deputy country director of RECOFTC Viet Nam. “Bringing communities and decision-makers together to discuss challenges in the forestry sector helps to ensure that practice can influence policy. With the new amendments, the circular better reflects the realities and needs of communities managing local forests.”

Updates to the circular were officially issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on 30 November 2023.



Improved policies, practices and structures

Possible model for legal harvesting of timber in Cambodia

The concept of legal timber harvesting from community forests is new to both communities and the government agencies responsible for the sector. The outcome of a PaFF project engagement has shown how it could work.

On 12 May 2022, the management committee of the Chheu Teal Prus community forest (CF) submitted a timber harvesting request letter for their CF area. The request, which was presented along with the timber harvesting plan for the CF, was approved by the Director General of the Cambodian Forestry Administration on 13 October 2022.

The approval marks the first time a community forest in Cambodia has received a formal permit to harvest timber. The related timber harvesting plan was developed by the Chheu Teal Prus CF management committee along with the Forestry Administration, local authorities and timber buyers.

Cambodia's community forestry scheme does not have clear provisions outlining legal and technical procedures to harvest and sell timber. The resultant gap has prevented communities from fully benefiting from their forests. The approved timber harvesting request from Chheu Teal presents a model that could lead to further change.

The plan is one of several outcomes of a decade-long RECOFTC project, the Partnership for Forestry and Fisheries Communities in Cambodia (PaFF), which was implemented from November 2014 to June 2023.

Among our core PaFF engagements were those with representatives of the Cambodian Forestry Administration and local community forestry groups to draft legal and technical procedures for timber harvesting in community forests.

Through financial and technical support, we provided the necessary backstopping to develop and test procedures to harvest timber legally. The pilot was led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, with RECOFTC as implementing partner.

“The results of this pilot project will shape revisions to the legal framework on commercial timber harvesting from community forests,” says Heng Da, Field Operation Manager, RECOFTC Cambodia. “This will ultimately have impacts across the country and strengthen incentives for communities to manage their forests sustainably. Legal timber harvesting will create a new income stream to support the management of forests and improve the livelihoods of communities.”



Over a decade-long period, PaFF was able to positively impact the lives of as many as 85,460 people from 30,172 households in rural Cambodia. In our efforts to enable local people to better manage and benefit from community forests and fisheries through the project, we helped build community and government capacity.

Furthermore, we:

- enhanced rights and capacities for 120 community forests, 24 community fisheries and 11 community protected areas
- ensured significant involvement of women and Indigenous Peoples in management roles
encouraged active community-led patrolling and reporting, leading to better enforcement of laws against illegal logging and land encroachment
- helped improve livelihoods through the formation of ecotourism groups and support of income-generating activities
- set up sustainable financing mechanisms including 141 credit schemes and 76 mini trust funds
- made contributions to the development and revision of 17 policies and regulations supporting community-based natural resource management.

PaFF's legacy will continue through integrated practices in daily community life, ongoing support structures like credit schemes and continued sharing of knowledge and best practices.

The project was primarily funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Government of Sweden.



Improved policies, practices and structures

Mainstreaming gender into Indonesia's forestry sector

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry is using an online course to train staff to integrate gender and inclusivity into projects and policies.

Women in forest landscapes tend to have weaker rights, fewer resources and less say in decision-making than men. To address these gaps, it is important that gender is integrated into policies, programs and projects.

The Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry is taking steps to achieve this goal by training its employees on why and how to mainstream gender and social inclusion into their work.

The training is informed by a RECOFTC-designed approach that the ministry's Center of Environment and Forestry Human Resource Education and Training (CEFHRET) has incorporated into a curriculum.

In January 2023, RECOFTC and CEFHRET worked together to implement training that combined both in-person and online learning. In September 2023, CEFHRET moved the trainings entirely online in the form of a course that participants could complete at their own pace.

Despite being accustomed to in-person interactions, and facing some challenges with internet connectivity, most of the trainees adapted to the exclusively online environment. Of the 199 individuals who registered for the course, 147 completed it.

The course is equipping the ministry's staff to identify ways that projects and policies affect marginalized groups so they can help ensure greater inclusivity. It has taught the trainees to collect and analyze gender-disaggregated data so they can assess the impacts of their projects on women and men.

The gender mainstreaming module was developed through our Weaving Leadership for Gender Equality (WAVES) program, which promoted gender equality in the governance, management and use of forest landscapes and their resources in the Asia-Pacific region.



Improved policies, practices and structures

Endorsement of new policy boosts forest governance in Lao PDR

Policy No. 1858/MAF will help combat illegal logging and timber trade, deforestation and forest degradation while improving governance.

The Government of Lao PDR aims to increase its forest cover from 62 to 70 percent by 2035. It is currently reforming policies and strategies to curb forest degradation and deforestation and reduce violations of forest laws.

An important step towards improved policies, practices, structures and governance came in March 2023, when the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry endorsed Policy No. 1858/MAF on forest inspection and proceedings on forest resources.

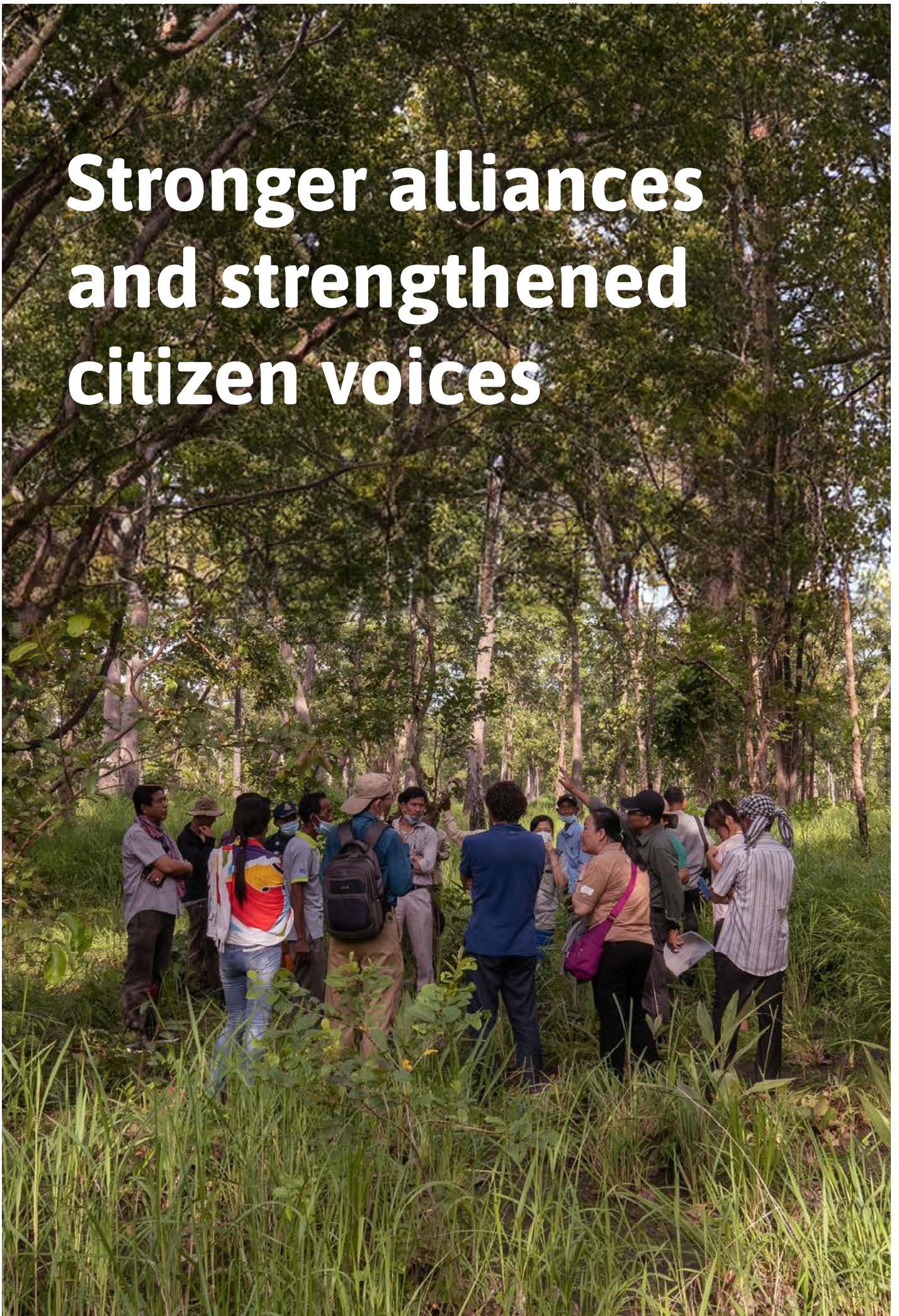
The policy was proposed by the Department of Forest Inspection, with support from RECOFTC, to address inconsistencies between an existing policy and the country's updated forestry law and other regulations.

The new policy is set to enhance law enforcement across the timber supply chain and strengthen the national Timber Legality Assurance System. It also seeks to prevent violations of forest laws and regulations while improving the monitoring, inspection, management, development and utilization of forest resources.

So far, the ministry has distributed the policy to 18 provinces. In each province, the respective Provincial Office of Forest Inspection is working closely with central government agencies, local communities and other stakeholders to implement the policy.

RECOFTC is supporting policy implementation through our ongoing activities with the ministry and other stakeholders, including capacity building, training and awareness-raising.

Stronger alliances and strengthened citizen voices





Stronger alliances and strengthened citizen voices

Strengthening research on forest landscape governance

The world's only research network and community of practice focused on forest landscape governance is expanding and applying relevant knowledge in Southeast Asia.

Seven teams of academics are exploring ways to improve forest landscape governance across Southeast Asia. These research teams are active in six RECOFTC focal countries – Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Myanmar and Viet Nam – and in the Philippines and Timor Leste.

The second phase of the Explore initiative started in October 2022. It is working through a research grant mechanism for capacity development, informed policy and research networks, communication and knowledge management, and addressing gender barriers in research.

In 2023, to lay the ground work for achieving these results in forest landscape governance, the Explore Secretariat visited grantees and senior leadership at universities in Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Philippines and Viet Nam that received research grant funding of up to USD 190,00 each under Explore.

These visits and meetings have been crucial to facilitating research projects and fostering future collaboration with the host universities. Recipients of Explore grants discussed project implementation, including grant and financial

compliance, and potential research collaborations in sustainable forest management, forest governance, livelihoods and natural resource management.

These collaborations, carried out in partnership with the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) and other partners, are strengthening our partnerships and expanding our reach in the region. Together, we are setting the stage for co-designed projects to promote good forest landscape governance.

Taking a transboundary approach, scientists and practitioners are working through the Explore research network and community of practice to enable policymakers and other stakeholders to participate in transnational knowledge exchange, promote transboundary solutions, and share data, information, knowledge and tools.



Stronger alliances and strengthened citizen voices

Local communities lead conservation

The Green Environment Development Association is engaged in community development and mangrove forest and biodiversity conservation.

Community members in Pyapon township in the Ayeyarwady region of Myanmar are successfully leading an association focused on conserving natural resources and promoting sustainable local development.

In December 2022, a group including youth and older residents came together to establish the Green Environment Development Association (GEDA) and agreed on its objectives, structure and functions. In June 2023, GEDA received legal status.

Currently, GEDA is engaged in mangrove forest and biodiversity conservation, community development activities and climate change initiatives in collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund, the Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network and RECOFTC Myanmar.

“Sustainable development in forest landscapes depends on action that is rooted in and accountable to local communities,” says U Thein Saung, Chairperson of GEDA. “The training that RECOFTC provided a decade ago gave our founder members the insights and skills needed to play this important role.”

The founders were inspired to set up the association after participating in two capacity-building projects that RECOFTC Myanmar ran in the 2010s. These projects focused respectively on community forestry and on REDD+. The trainings covered livelihood improvement, institutional strengthening, conflict management, development of forest management plans, leadership and financial management.



Stronger alliances and strengthened citizen voices

Community women engage with local government

Women active in community forestry in Nepal have successfully advocated for gender-specific funding from their local government.

Between June 2022 and January 2023, RECOFTC collaborated with the Kavrepalanchowk Division Forest Office in Nepal to implement a district-level Grassroots Gender Leadership Development Program.

Nineteen women from four community forest user groups participated in this three-part pilot. They were provided training on gender sensitization, leadership, planning and communication under the larger umbrella of community forest management. The trainees were also provided information about local government budget lines set aside specifically to provide support to women.

After completing the trainings, participants from Bhagwanthumki and Gosaikunda community forests created women's groups that have successfully advocated for gender-specific funding. The local government is supporting a number of women-led income-generating activities. To strengthen income generation at the household level, it has provided buffalo calves and goat kids for rearing. At a more strategic level, the local government now consults with these women's groups regularly and sends their members to various skills development trainings.

The district-level program that yielded these results was led by Sarita Lama, an assistant forest officer and gender focal point for the Kavrepalanchowk Division Forest Office. Lama is a graduate of a training program initiated by three Nepali gender leaders supported by RECOFTC's Weaving Leadership for Gender Equality (WAVES) program. She replicated the program with women working in forests at the local level within months of taking the WAVES alumni-organized training.



Stronger alliances and strengthened citizen voices

Addressing gender based-violence in community-based NRM

We are working with communities to reduce gender-based violence in Cambodian community forests and protected areas.

Increasing women's participation and leadership in community forests and community protected areas is essential for promoting sustainable use of natural resources and ensuring equitable benefit sharing.

Over the past decade, RECOFTC has worked to improve communities' resilience to economic and natural shocks through equitable community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). However, ensuring women's participation continues to present multiple challenges. Many women experience resistance from their families or others in their communities, putting them at risk of harassment and physical and psychological stress, even assault.

Through the Rise UP! Project, we are supporting communication, training, campaigning multi-sectoral platform processes and men's dialogues to encourage all community members to acknowledge women as essential and equal partners in CBNRM. We are working to embed a gender-based violence lens into existing programming to further support, protect and empower women in these networks.

Since its launch in April 2023, Rise Up! has been providing a platform for women in communities to voice their concerns about addressing gender-based violence barriers to women's participation and the other challenges they face. We are working to help create conditions in which women can fully and safely participate in CBNRM.

Presently, Rise Up! is being implemented in three community forests and five community protected areas in Pursat and Kampong Chhnang provinces. Gender issues are first being assessed in each site. Based on these assessments, we work with our partner, Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC), to provide trainings for the communities overseeing each area. Our focus is on prevention and attitude and behavior change at the individual, interpersonal and community levels. It is key that men are included in the process.

Rise Up! is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and managed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) under the Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Environments (RISE) grant challenge.



Stronger alliances and strengthened citizen voices

Crowdfunding campaign supports restoration of degraded land

Farmers in northern Thailand are restoring tree cover to the upper reaches of the Nan River watershed.

Close to 100 farmers in Thailand's Nan province are engaged in helping convert monoculture agricultural land into diversified agroforestry models, one tree sapling at a time. From February 2022 to November 2023, 97 farmers signed up to receive monetary support to plant trees on their land, and nurture and monitor their growth. Over this period, more than 12,000 trees have been planted and are being monitored, with around USD 35,000 raised to support these efforts.

RECOFTC is working through our Trees4All project to facilitate this restoration, which is backed by a crowdfunding campaign. From January to November 2023, this campaign raised USD 21,600 through direct contributions from over 700 individuals and five business groups. Farmer sign-up rates increased significantly last year, with 64 farmers committing to planting and monitoring 8,332 trees in the Nan River watershed area.

The project is on track to meet its fundraising goal of USD 60,000 by the end of 2024. Key to this success has been growing public awareness that they can contribute to forest landscape and biodiversity restoration by supporting farmers through sponsorships of individual trees.

Our marketing strategy for the campaign was co-developed with the Bangkok-based ChangeFusion Institute and Taejai.com. In January 2023, we teamed up with members of a local development network in Nan, the Rak Santisuk Group, to set up a community-based enterprise that now facilitates liaison with participating farmers and supports tree monitoring and management of all Trees4All finance. The enterprise received approval from Thailand's Department of Agricultural Extension in June 2023.

With direct financial and appropriate technical support, farmers in Nan are helping improve their ecosystems and contributing to global action on climate change. The Trees4All model shows that people and companies in downstream areas are willing to pay to protect watersheds. Experiences and lessons learned from Nan could be replicated elsewhere in Thailand and scaled out to the Asia-Pacific region.

Shifted norms and attitudes





Shifted norms and attitudes

Teak growers engage in sustainable planted forest management

Koklouang village, in Lao PDR's Bokeo province, presents a case where sustainable timber harvesting is helping people invest in their livelihoods.

Community forests are called village forests in Lao PDR. In Bokeo province, members of the village forest in Koklouang grow and sell teak. They harvest the trees legally following a work plan approved by the district governor and using a teak certificate issued by the District Agriculture and Forestry Office.

The teak growers of Bokeo first formed a group to share knowledge, access external support and collectively negotiate a partnership agreement with their timber buyers in 2020. The Koklouang Teak Group has a partnership agreement with a local sawmill, Singthoun Company, enabling them to secure a market and guaranteed pricing.

The group has a fund from which members can borrow money at an interest rate of one percent per month. As borrowers repay their loans with interest and as timber sales increase, the fund continues to grow. By March 2023, the fund had grown to over USD 900. The group issues loans to its members to support the planting of rubber and Indian gooseberry plants. Such agroforestry investments can provide short-term annual income while teak trees mature.

These developments in Kokluang are built on strong partnerships that RECOFTC has helped facilitate and support. Villagers, local government and the private sector are all key players in the partnership. The experience so far shows that legal teak sales from village forests can bring wider benefits and foster sustainable livelihoods in local communities. Scaling up such successes can contribute to the government's goals on sustainable development, forest cover, climate change and biodiversity.



Shifted norms and attitudes

Youth participation in Indonesia's forestry sector

Engaging with youth in community forests can have lasting impacts. Their participation is crucial to ensuring sustainability.

In Indonesia, youth are a significant demographic. In 2023, 24 percent of the population – over 64 million people – were aged between 16 and 30. Across the country, youth are receiving support to become leaders in social forestry and sustainable agriculture in forest landscapes.

Workshops, capacity-building initiatives and ongoing support for cooperatives are helping empower young people engaged in forest-based livelihoods. RECOFTC's work with youth in forest communities has had ongoing impacts in the country. We have been providing technical support on agroforestry, business training and coaching, and supporting mechanisms to access finance since the past decade.

Abdul Malik, currently secretary of the Akar Tani Cooperative, a coffee cooperative, joined the group as a young farmer. His first training in coffee roasting was funded through a 2019 Give2Asia campaign that we supported. In June 2023, the Ministry of Agriculture selected Malik to represent young farmers and entrepreneurs from Bantaeng Regency as one of 50 Young Ambassadors for the national Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Support Services (YESS) program.



Together with relevant government agencies, we are continuing our work with youth in the country. In August 2023, we hosted a workshop on social forestry in Sentul, West Java. The event brought together 12 participants, including five young women, who work as farmers, environmental activists and tourism guides in their respective villages in South Bandung, Sentul and Banten.

Workshops, trainings and youth engagement events impart essential knowledge, help build networks and foster a sense of camaraderie among attendees. In many ways, sustainable forest management depends on young people being able to secure decent livelihoods from local forests.



Shifted norms and attitudes

Local municipalities adapt successful agroforestry model to fit Nepal's mid-hill context

A beekeeping and agroforestry project has evolved to integrate goat farming, garnering government and community support, with local municipalities owning and scaling up the project.

Municipalities in Nepal's mid-hill district of Sindhupalchok have adapted, adopted and scaled up an approach for improving rural livelihoods. RECOFTC's Trees and Bees agroforestry model was first implemented in 2015 in Sarlahi, a district in the country's Terai plains. In 2022, we modified the approach to fit the context of Sindhupalchok district's Indrawati rural municipality by replacing beekeeping with goat farming. Three community groups with leasehold rights to use local forests participated, with RECOFTC Nepal providing 45 goats to 22 of the most vulnerable and marginalized households.

The project's positive impacts on livelihoods in Indrawati led us to replicate the model in the nearby Chautara Sangachowkgadhi municipality. In June 2023, the municipality agreed to adopt and scale up the updated model to enhance the livelihoods of marginalized communities and women utilizing community forests. The local government's ownership of the initiative is essential to sustainability.

“Goat farming can be lucrative, allowing farmers to potentially achieve profits of USD 200–350 every three months,” says Ram Prasad Gautam, chair of ward-13, Chautara Sanghachokgadhi municipality. This is significant as about 27 percent of the district’s population, including women and the historically oppressed and excluded Dalit community, live in extreme poverty.

The costs of the goats are shared, with RECOFTC Nepal covering 15 percent, the Chautara Sanghachokgadhi municipality, ward-13 office providing 35 percent and the participating households contributing 50 percent. What started as a crowdfunding program to support the livelihoods of marginalized people has been scaled up and is now owned by local government.



Shifted norms and attitudes

Community forestry generates crucial income in Wakon village, Myanmar

Community forest user groups have been empowered to generate significant income through their stewardship of natural resources.

In Myanmar's coastal Pyapon township, residents of Wakon village manage two community forests. Effective policy, external support and clear rights and tenure have fostered good governance of these resources, ensuring adaptive management that balances the interests of multiple stakeholders.

Stability and sound management have enabled the villagers to conserve and improve their forests, strengthening livelihoods and providing a reliable and sustainable source of income. In 2023, 61 households across Wakon's two community forest user groups earned the equivalent of USD 35,000 from their forests. For each household, the generated annual income amounts to USD 575 on average.

This income was generated organically, building on systems put in place with support from RECOFTC and other organizations over the past two decades.

Wakon's community forestry program took root over two decades ago, marking the start of a change for its people.

Wakon's community forestry program began in 2000. Initially, the community forest user group did not function well, as its 41 member households lacked the necessary knowledge and skills.

Things changed from the mid-2010s. We provided training, networking opportunities and money to establish a revolving fund, which enabled borrowers to improve and diversify their livelihoods. During this time, another 20 households in Wakon established a second community forest. We included this group in our capacity building and networking project.

Today, Wakon's forest guardians care for and benefit from a combined community forest area of 140 hectares, including an area of mangrove forest. The two community forests have specific forest management plans approved by the Forest Department.

In 2023, the community forestry user groups reported a collective income of USD 35,000.

Supported by effective policy, governance and 30-year tenure rights, community members have enhanced the quality of their forests. They have restored degraded forest by selectively cutting down unhealthy trees to allow younger ones to thrive. They sell all surplus branches and wood from the removed trees to nearby villages.

Similar thinning operations in mangrove plantations have also yielded firewood, poles and posts that the villagers can use or sell to other villages. Moreover, with improved forest quality, the sustainable collection of mangrove propagules has emerged as a lucrative enterprise, with organizations reforesting mangroves eager to buy them.

A holistic forest management approach has fostered environmental stewardship and provided economic dividends.

In 2023, the community forest users earned the USD 11,585 from firewood, poles, posts, mangrove propagules, palm poles and sawn wood for construction purposes. Some villagers have also begun harvesting honey from their community forest, earning an additional USD 570 annually.

Two decades of conservation work is also generating tangible benefits from fisheries. Protecting and restoring mangroves has created ideal breeding grounds for species of fish, shrimp, mud crab and barnacles. In 2023, community forest users earned USD 23,200 from selling these species, with mud crabs providing 82 percent of the total. The total income from community forestry in 2023 was around USD 575 per household.

Wakon's successful management has communities at the heart of its success. While organizations such as ours have been involved, the management practices have been co-developed with local communities driving the actual changes.



Shifted norms and attitudes

Strengthening capacities for biodiversity management in Thailand's community forests

A group of 28 community forests across Thailand have committed to integrate biodiversity assessment and monitoring into their community forest management activities.

Community forests are widely recognized for their ability to improve rural livelihoods and increase forest cover. Not as much attention has been focused on their potential to conserve biodiversity and on the economic benefits this can bring to communities.

Addressing this gap is important for countries such as Thailand as they work to meet their commitment of protecting 30 percent of their territory for nature by 2030. This '30x30' target is part of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework that parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity agreed in 2022.

While protected areas are the standard approach that governments use to conserve nature, community forests could also contribute to the 30x30 target if they can be shown to conserve biodiversity. Through our Darwin Initiative, RECOFTC is working

with our partner, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), to develop a capacity development initiative for biodiversity management-integrated community forest management planning across Thailand's community forests.

In June 2023, we hosted a consultation with participants from government agencies, civil society organizations and technical experts to discuss key issues and trends related to biodiversity in the context of Thailand's community forests. In July and August 2023, we led two three-day training workshops for members of 28 community forests from 10 Thai provinces. The first workshop focused on the importance of data collection and biodiversity surveys. In the second workshop, participants learned how to do such surveys and integrate them into their community forest management plans.

We now have a simplified method for assessing and monitoring biodiversity to provide community forest users with data that they can use to plan the conservation of their biological resources, as well as sustainably utilize and develop forest-based products and services.

These developments will ensure better management of biodiversity in community forests by informing changes to management practices. We also hope the documented information will lead to opportunities for community forests to become recognized under 'other effective area-based conservation measures' or gain more support in the future. Ultimately, biodiversity management could also enable community forests to attract new flows of finance while helping Thailand to achieve the 30x30 target.



Annual Report 2022–2023

Onward and upward: Our strategic goals for the next five years

RECOFTC takes a long-term, landscape-based and inclusive approach to supporting local communities to secure their land and resource rights, stop deforestation, find alternative livelihoods and foster gender equality.

RECOFTC’s new Strategic Plan for 2023–2028 presents our updated vision — a world where resilient communities with respected rights thrive in forest landscapes that they manage sustainably and equitably. For the next five years we will work to strengthen capacities, rights and governance to ensure that local people can maintain and benefit fairly and equitably from sustainable forest landscapes.

We will work towards four interlinked goals related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, gender equality and social inclusion, governance and rights, and benefits to communities.

Mutually reinforcing strategies will help us achieve our goals. We will empower communities to become key players in climate change adaptation and mitigation through sustainable forest management. We will continue to implement community-based forest management practices that increase local resilience and secure ecosystem services at the landscape level.

Our strategy also focuses on securing rights and fostering inclusive governance. We will address gaps in legal frameworks and advocate for multistakeholder

participation, empowering marginalized groups to assert their rights and engage in decision-making processes. By promoting good governance principles, we aim to ensure that communities, governments, and businesses respect and protect community rights.

Supporting the growth of forest-based enterprises is another crucial aspect of our mission. We will enable communities to manage and profit from enterprises selling forest products and services, facilitating equitable partnerships with value chain actors.

We will focus on improving, replicating and scaling up sustainable business models and community forest credit schemes that have proved effective. By promoting accountability and fair benefit distribution, we aim to integrate communities into the low-carbon green economy.

Securing finance for forest landscapes is another priority. We will encourage investments in inclusive and sustainable management practices and support communities to manage finance effectively.

Across all our work, we will continue to generate and communicate evidence of the benefits and practicalities of inclusive and sustainable forest landscape management and restoration.

Achieving our goals will contribute to the overall impact we want to see, which is that: resilient communities sustainably and equitably manage forest landscapes in collaboration with other stakeholders, ensuring that these landscapes provide goods and services that benefit all community members and wider populations, including by contributing to climate action and biodiversity conservation.

We invite allies, old and new, to join us as we implement this new Strategic Plan.

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RECOFTC is an international nonprofit organization working towards a future where resilient communities with respected rights thrive in forest landscapes that they manage sustainably and equitably. We take a long-term, landscape-based and inclusive approach in supporting local communities to secure their land and resource rights, stop deforestation, find alternative livelihoods and foster gender equality. With more than 36 years of experience, we have built trusting relationships with partners from communities, governments, businesses, academia and civil society organizations. Our innovations, knowledge and initiatives enable countries to foster good forest governance, mitigate and adapt to climate change and achieve the UN Global Goals.

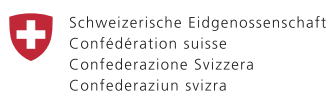
We operate in the Asia-Pacific region, with country offices in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam.

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