



21 March  
International Day of Forests



## Press release

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### **New films highlight community voices from the forests of Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand**

**Bangkok, Thailand – 12 March 2015**

In celebration of the International Day of Forests on 21 March, RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests, together with Venice Arts, today released the first of a series of participant-produced films from community members in Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand, all of which will be released leading up to 21 March.

In the three short films, which were produced following training in participant-led media techniques and documentary filmmaking, community members share their own stories about their lives as they relate to the forests in which they live.

“Many challenges in forest conservation have occurred because local people’s participation in management has been undermined,” said Tint Lwin Thuang, Executive Director, RECOFTC. “Good governance of forest resources relies on involving local communities, as their livelihoods depend largely on forest resources. These videos show the stories of three local communities – their aspirations and how they can contribute to sustainable forest management.”

The films were shot in Inle, Myanmar; Pursat, Cambodia and Khao Rao Thian Thong, Thailand, with communities identifying their own stories to tell in a short (5–7 minute) format.

In Myanmar, when a mother of two loses her husband, she can no longer gather resources from the forest by herself and must ask her eldest daughter to leave school in order to help support the family. They value the importance of the forest in their lives, but seek more support in understanding how it can fit into a sustainable future for their family.

In Cambodia, two village leaders work to protect the forest together with their own and other communities in a regional community forest network. They bring us on a night patrol of the local forest and discuss what the forest means to them and why it’s important.

In Thailand, a female member of a bamboo shoot processing cooperative tells the story of the group’s work to improve the area’s degraded forest while promoting the sustainable use of forests. As a result of its efforts, forest resources in Khao Rao Thian Thong are being used sustainably and community members’ livelihoods have improved.

The short films show how local communities sustainably manage their forests through stories from the communities themselves, revealing how the forests in which they live are important to them. The films will be used in communities to foster dialogue, as well as nationally and internationally among forest decision-

makers to bring community voices to the fore.

The films are available in English and Thai/Khmer/Myanmar-language and can be viewed on RECOFTC's website in the lead-up to the International day of Forests.

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**Notes to editors:**

- While community forestry in the region enhances livelihoods and covers subsistence needs of forest-dependent households; reduces deforestation and improves forest conditions and quality; and strengthens governance and rural people's political rights, these benefits only occur on a small scale with significant potential for scaling up. This scaling up requires action by all stakeholders, but particularly governments. More communities must have tenure to their forests and regulations that govern communities' interaction with their forests must be revised to ensure that communities are able to make a living from the forests sustainably. For more information, see [recoftc.org](http://recoftc.org).

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