

Asia-Pacific Forestry Week

Social Session

People, Forests, and Human Well-being

Managing Forests for People in a Period of Rapid Change



Synthesis Report

National Convention Center (NCC)

Me Tri, Tu Liem

Hanoi, Vietnam

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Organized by RECOFTC with the support from the Asia Forest Network and FAO



Summary of Key Points

To achieve the dual goals of sustainable forest management and improved human well-being, important changes in our understanding and practice are required:

- Improved understanding on who the poor are, what causes poverty, and why poverty persists is needed to develop suitable policies that can address livelihood challenges and the various dimensions of poverty. This requires a solid understanding of local people's livelihoods and power relationships.
- We must recognize that forests and forestry have limitations in addressing poverty, and that this potential varies depending on the "degree" of poverty suffered by local people.
- Providing broader livelihood options and alternative income-generating activities outside the forestry sector may lead to greater poverty reduction.
- For effective participation, local people need to have more decision-making power. Fundamental structural changes in power relationships are necessary to achieve this.
- The role of the state in decision-making processes that affect local people and forests needs to be better understood. Greater attention should be focused on its policy and regulatory functions, service delivery, and relationships with civil and political society.
- While small-scale enterprises and access to markets can contribute to improved human well-being, the equitable sharing of benefits and the need to find an appropriate balance between income generation and resource conservation remain key issues.
- Climate change mitigation strategies will likely lead to a greater emphasis on forest protection, but will also create new opportunities to direct income to local people via "payment for environmental service" schemes. However, issues regarding tenure, rights, access, and equitable benefit-sharing must be addressed to ensure such changes help rather than hinder local livelihoods.

Introduction

Presenters:

*Thomas Enters
Mary Hobley
Norman Jiwan
Frances Seymour*

Panelists:

*Yati Bun
Marcus Colchester
Modesto Ga-ab
C.T.S. Nair
Rowena Soriaga
Kari Tuomela*

Moderator:

David Cassells

Session Summarizer:

Ken Piddington

The first-ever Asia-Pacific Forestry Week (APFW), held around the 22nd Session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) in Hanoi 21–25 April 2008, brought together individuals from governments, non-government organizations, research institutions, regional and international networks, UN agencies, and the private sector to share perspectives and seek solutions to the most challenging issues facing forests and forestry today. During the week, each day was devoted to one of the three pillars of sustainable development: social, environmental, and economic. This particular synthesis captures key points and recommendations discussed during the social session, focusing on forests and poverty issues. It is meant as a medium to share lessons to a wider audience.

The session, organized by RECOFTC with support from the Asia Forest Network (AFN) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), questioned some of our assumptions and deepened both conceptual and practical understanding of fundamental issues affecting people, forests, and human well-being. Four presenters examined different aspects of the challenge from a range of perspectives, from the local to the global level. The issues raised were then debated by the audience and five panelists chosen to represent different interests. In the afternoon, the APFC reflected on the morning's debate as the basis for developing recommendations for action.

Background

In the State of the World's Forests 2007 report, FAO (2007) reported that the relative contribution of the forestry sector to GDP in the Asia-Pacific region has been declining for the past decade. The region is now the biggest net importer of forest products in the world and the largest exporter of non-wood forest products. Variation in the net rate of change in forest area is much more pronounced in the region. Several countries, such as Indonesia and Myanmar, are losing forests at rates exceeding 1.5% per year, among the highest rates of loss in the world. APEC leaders in 2007 made a commitment to increase forest cover in the region by 20 million hectares by 2020. Forest conservation and management have now returned to center stage in the global debate on environment and development due to recognition that forest loss and degradation result in more greenhouse gas emissions than the global transport sector.

The Asia-Pacific region has emerged as the global epicenter of economic growth and change. This growth, along with increasing regional integration, has been accompanied by an increase in social mobility, a rise to middle-income status, and growing inequality (RECOFTC, 2008). Models of development are being challenged, and no more so than in the forestry sector.

Little is known about the informal forestry sector, as national statistics on income and employment capture only the formal sector. “We often hear that 1 billion people are dependent on forests, but the reality is that the statistics and numbers are extremely poor. It is shocking that we are moving into the 21st Century and don’t really know how many people live in forests” (Marcus Colchester). Many studies indicate that the informal sector dwarfs the formal sector. It provides benefits, especially for poor people who are the main subject of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, people in the informal sector frequently work in the context of ill-defined rights where there is little incentive, if any, to manage natural resources sustainably. Under these circumstances, the challenge laid down at the social session was to question whether:

Under present and foreseeable economic and social trends in the Asia-Pacific region, can we achieve sustainable forest management and better realize the potential of forests and forestry to contribute to improved human well-being?

At the heart of this question lies the still relevant and important statements made by Jack Westoby, which have shaped much of international debate on forests over the last four decades:

“Forestry is as much about people as it is about trees.

BUT

What has forestry done to improve the lot of the common man, of the peasant? Precious little.” (Westoby, 1977 & 1989)

“On the whole, the development philosophy remains unchanged and we still rely on the ‘trickle-down approach’ to alleviate poverty and improve the environment. Development doesn’t happen through rapid growth and trickle-down.” C.T.S. Nair (FAO, Rome).

Six Propositions

For decades, foresters, conservationists, and social activists have been making the case that forests and forestry matter—to national economies, rural development and poverty reduction, environmental and cultural sustainability, biodiversity conservation, flood control, human health, conflict prevention, and most recently, climate change.

And yet forests continue to be degraded and converted to other uses at a rate that implies that they don’t matter very much at all to those with the power to control such processes. We have had numerous overlapping, and often contradictory, paradigms to making forestry matter (Table 1). Nevertheless, all of them have done little to slow the rapacious degradation of resources or to reduce poverty.

Table 1: Changes in Paradigms

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1960s Trickle-Down | Forestry for industrial development |
| 1970s Basic Needs | Forestry for local community development (Westoby model); oil crisis; fuelwood crisis |
| 1980s Participation | Social forestry; community forestry |
| 1990s Public Sector Reform | Institutional reform; collaborative and participatory forestry |
| 2000+ Good Governance | Focus on corruption; illegality; decentralization |
| 2000+ MDGs and Poverty | Poverty; livelihoods |
| 2007+ Renaissance Forestry | Forestry crisis; climate change; dramatic energy and food price spikes |

Six propositions underpinned the presentations and shaped the discussion:

1. Forests don't matter.
2. Poverty is not understood.
3. Change is driven from outside the forestry sector.
4. Changes in governance are essential.
5. Forestry and foresters don't matter.
6. Climate change—a moment of opportunity.

Do Forests Matter? The Reality

“Are forests a sideshow? Direct forest dependence is declining, indirect dependence through services is increasing, but it is not until the forests are gone that we will realize what we have lost. Only then will we get political and social reaction.” Rod Keenan (University of Melbourne, Australia)

The significance of forests has been overstated with respect to some benefits, and underappreciated with respect to others. The key question, however, is for whom are forests important? As the evidence has so far shown, for many people forests don't matter, but for some forests matter hugely. They provide a variety of ecosystem goods and services including timber, fuelwood and forage, fruits and vegetables, bushmeat and medicines, materials for handicrafts, hydrological services, pollination services, and climate regulation. For those living in or close to forests, and who depend on them for a range of livelihood, cultural integrity, and other services, they are of crucial importance. However, many urban people may view forests only as a source of timber or a resource ready to be converted to more lucrative land uses. Rarely is their importance as a standing source of biomass recognized and appreciated. Forests may even be viewed as a barrier to development.

Although we can talk about the effects of deforestation and forest degradation on people, there is nothing more powerful than hearing the stories from those

people who are directly affected by outsiders' actions and decisions. One such person, Norman Jiwan, is a member of the Dayak Kerambai people of West Kalimantan, Indonesia. He illustrated the profound effects on his people of decisions made in distant places, and changes in political regimes over the last 60 years. The Kerambai's customary lands and forests have been challenged by a succession of logging concessions, rampant illegal activities, and the expansion of oil-palm plantations, threatening their social and cultural integrity as well as their livelihood security.

As Norman Jiwan reminds us, for his people, "development without justice is not development, it is exploitation." Their entire cultural, social, and economic system depends on the forests; their human and environmental rights have been bulldozed, actually and metaphorically. For them, forests matter very much, and for all of us, forests should matter more than they currently do.

Poverty Is Not Understood

"Development strategy needs to move beyond the bounds of its present emphasis on economic growth—hundreds of millions of people are born poor and die poor in the midst of increasing wealth. Chronically poor people need more than "opportunities" to improve their situation. They need targeted support and protection, and political action that confronts exclusion. If policy is to open the door to genuine development for chronically poor people, it must address the inequality, discrimination, and exploitation that drive and maintain extreme poverty." (CPRC, 2005:vi)

We have not understood poverty. We do not understand who is poor and why. We have started in the wrong place: with the forests and forestry and trying to justify their pro-poorness or making them more pro-poor. We should have started with people and understanding the conditions that form and reproduce their poverty. Our attempts to place more control at the community-level have often led to increased elite capture in many of these schemes, with adverse impacts on the poorest of the poor.

"We should not assume if we give everything to the community it will be good for all." Mary Hobley (Mary Hobley & Associates)

A major problem with any pro-poor forest policy is identifying and targeting the poor. This is rarely done; the reasons being both pragmatic (it is very difficult) and also political (it is usually not desired by elites). The term "poor" is itself a problem, as it covers a multitude of different types of people in different degrees of poverty. So if we can't use shorthand such as the term "poor," how are we going to describe and understand poor people's relations with forests? There are three main ways of understanding poverty:

- **Spatial poverty (forest dependence argument)**
 - Rural areas where, because of remoteness, populations are considered to be poor in opportunity. Remoteness, however, is not necessarily a good indicator of poverty.
- **Temporal poverty (safety net argument)**
 - Seasonal and within life-cycle
- **Structural poverty (transformative argument)**
 - Social, economic, and political exclusion
 - Little or no voice (for all degrees of poverty—the extreme, coping, improving, and capable poor)

“The issue is about land tenure—who owns the land. We cooperate with forest farmers and villagers but who are the beneficiaries? It’s the top guys; the poor are not part of the committees, so they don’t benefit. This is the reality of South China.” Kari Tuomela (Stora Enso)

Policies have to address spatial poverty traps (sites of chronic poverty in remote rural areas). Policies need to respond to the livelihood challenges of those people in remote forested areas who have little other than forests on which to build their livelihoods. In such areas, chronic dependence means that changes in policies that affect forest usage have more profound effects on livelihoods than in areas with diverse livelihood opportunities. Across all areas there are also those who suffer temporal vulnerabilities, for whom forests and tree products may provide seasonal and/or life-cycle safety nets. The third level of vulnerability is suffered either by particular groups in society, often indigenous and other groups excluded because of caste or ethnicity, or by particular groups within communities excluded due to gender, caste, or life-cycle positioning. The effects of policies and their implementation—or lack of implementation—on these groups are again different from others in the same community who are not socially or economically excluded. For some, all three levels of vulnerability are in operation at the same time. Structural vulnerability is the most difficult to address. It is particularly resistant to change through technocratic solutions that lack due political process and clearly defined rights.

Unless we understand the different dimensions of poverty as described above, our policies will continue to reinforce poverty rather than provide the necessary changes to help the poor lift themselves out of poverty.

The implications of this analysis are three-fold:

1. **Poverty should be understood in a dynamic and differentiated way so that different forms of support can be effectively provided for those moving out of poverty and for those trapped in poverty.**
2. **It is important to understand both formal and informal relations—particularly the complexity of power relations that affect people’s capacity to obtain access to resources and limit others’ access—and to understand the risks for the poor in challenging these political spaces in person or through their proxies.**
3. **It is crucial that (i) linkages be established between sectoral policies and those that aim to provide social protection to the poorer groups in policy dialogues; and (ii) the formulation and implementation of pro-poor forest policies that take into account the broader livelihood**

constraints faced by the rural poor, such as issues of access to justice and access to land.

Change Is Driven From Outside the Forest Sector

For decades, efforts to implement sustainable forest management (SFM) have focused on the forestry profession and on strengthening forestry-related institutions. The preoccupation with the technical aspects, of what foresters believe forestry is all about, has distracted many from seeing the bigger picture and understanding the increasing complexity of forestry. It is high time to acknowledge that the main drivers of change lie outside the forestry sector.

Why is it that after 60 years of development and economic change in Indonesia we are still rehearsing the same arguments? If we look further into the region, the debate on the future of forests in Asia and the Pacific tends to focus on recurring themes and major barriers to bringing about SFM, such as financing constraints, massive and diffuse corruption, and the persistence of outdated and unenforceable laws. We are all familiar, perhaps even comfortable, with these themes and barriers. This allows us to continue to bemoan their existence, but does not propel us into any action to challenge and change them.

In the meantime, emerging drivers of change and new realities have made the headlines, hardly noticed by those deliberating the removal of old barriers. These new drivers have already had a significant impact on forests, and some of them will have an increasing impact in the future. It is imperative that we take their potential implications seriously. Examples of new drivers include:

- **Demand and commodity price increases:** Steeply rising demand and prices of commodities (not just forest products), as well as growing rates of consumption, are increasing pressure on all types of forests and triggering conversion to other land uses such as oil-palm plantations. Increasing levels of food insecurity and associated civil unrest will change land-use policy priorities.
- **Energy price hikes:** Surging energy prices have increased interest in bio-energy plantations. In the region, energy self-sufficiency is expected to fall from 77% (1992) to 38% in 2030.
- **Rural transformation and urbanization:** The relative importance of agriculture in national economies is declining as people find better employment opportunities in the service and industrial sectors. Remittances to the Asia-Pacific region from more than 50 million migrants (approximately US\$114 billion in 2006) play a greater role in poverty reduction than forests and forestry. More options are available for young people to turn their backs on forests and agriculture. Employment in agriculture is projected to decline by 160 million people between 2006 and 2015.

“Where is all the land for this 20 million ha of forest? One of the impediments to increasing forest cover is competitive land uses—lands that have potential for forestry are equally attractive to agriculture and energy production.”
Kari Tuomela (Stora Enso)

“Scarcity and instability—two core drivers of change.”
Yam Malla (RECOFTC)

- **Market changes:** Shifts in markets and trading patterns are reshaping political influence and business practices. New investors, new values, and new rules have repercussions for markets, investment, financial systems, and natural resources, particularly in the financing of processing capacity where the “hungry mills” drive an unsustainable demand for timber products. Chinese imports of logs and wood products have increased by 250% between 1997 and 2003.
- **Water scarcity:** Populations and areas under absolute and economic water scarcity will increase considerably. This will stoke the debate on the role of forests in water supply.
- **Changes in global financing:** New sources of funds are currently driving different types of investment choices. Analysts put current sovereign wealth fund assets in the range of US\$1.5 trillion to US\$2.5 trillion. This is projected to grow sevenfold to US\$15 trillion during the next 10 years. However, these funds are usually invested in forestry where there is political stability, secure land tenure, and an independent judiciary to protect investor rights. In this region, there are very few countries where such conditions prevail.
- **Climate change:** Increasing attention to the role of forests in climate change adaptation and mitigation significantly influences the forest agenda. Payment for environmental services and particularly carbon credit schemes (via international initiatives such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD)) will shape international discourses on forests and forestry in coming years.

Changes in Governance Are Essential

“If there is going to be change we need to focus on tenure, rights, access to justice, acceptance of customary laws. We need to be respectful of people’s cultures and traditions. We need a rights-based approach to forestry, where rights are central and taken seriously.” Marcus Colchester (Forest Peoples Programme)

Fundamental changes in governance—including both substantive and procedural rights related to forests—are necessary for the people to whom forests matter most. Indigenous peoples have limited protection against external forces that determine the ownership and use of their land. Despite large amounts of money and attention devoted to public sector reforms, policy development and implementation continue to be weak, plagued by the persistence of unenforceable regulations.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the forest area actively managed by tens of millions of local people exceeds 25 million hectares and is increasing. Decentralized bureaucracies are often weak, politicized, and unable to address the real needs of local people. Their decision making may also be less far-sighted and increase the speed of deforestation and forest degradation. Current attempts to recentralize and further bureaucratize forestry may further deprive those populations whose livelihoods rely on forest access. At the same time, they will

have a negative impact on forest conditions. There is still a need to reorient and reform national forestry agencies and policies. Capacity-building initiatives at all levels are required for foresters to facilitate the engagement of local people in forest governance and management. This is not an easy task as evidence demonstrates that earlier efforts have so far had only limited success.

Forestry and Foresters Don't Matter

Clearly they do, but only if governance structures are changed and foresters and forestry become part of the wider institutional framework. Although foresters cannot change the direction or magnitude of the emerging drivers of development, by continuing to neglect taking them seriously, and by solely focusing on conventional barriers, deliberations on how to bring about SFM will remain stuck in a blind alley. We should also question how much forestry has been part of the structures that sustain social exclusion—marginalizing people and reinforcing the structures that exclude (Marcus Colchester). Moving on from this, the words of Westoby (1968) are as relevant today as they were 40 years ago. They remind us forcefully of our moral responsibilities: “foresters are agents of change—social and economic.” We have a responsibility to recognize the importance of human well-being along with the well-being of forests.

“Institutional silos—foresters always meet with foresters but decisions are made by others!” Thomas Enters (RECOFTC)

Climate Change: A Moment of Opportunity

The international community's new appreciation of the role of forests in mitigating climate change provides an historic opportunity to shift the political economy of forests. Debate at the international level, in forums where forests usually do not feature, is now dominated by discussions on the role of forests in climate change and its mitigation. New mechanisms and aid architecture are being put in place to finance SFM. This provides an opportunity to ensure that the lessons learned from 40 years of practice can inform these debates, held among people who have not been intimately involved in forestry practice and learning. Critically, it is a moment to ensure that the social dimensions of carbon financing for forestry are carefully understood to prevent or mitigate negative effects on the poor. A particular issue concerns the protection and assertion of the rights of local people as the sellers of carbon. In fact, it should be clear to all of us, that ensuring benefit flows to all relevant stakeholders, particularly to the poor, is essential for the effective and long-term success of strategies to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

“REDD money may finally come from trees left standing—an opportunity to change the political economy of forestry.” Frances Seymour (CIFOR)

Improving What We Do: Making It Possible to Combine SFM and Improved Human Well-being

"We should see ourselves as accompanying others and respecting the integrity of human culture. Where people are treated with respect and recognition, it makes a big difference."

Rowena Soriaga (Asia Forest Network)

If we accept these six propositions, it is clear that we need a lot of efforts to change the nature of the debate and the outcomes for people, forests, and human well-being. The current global debate on climate change provides an important window of opportunity to influence the course of policy and practice. Based on what we have discussed in the social session of APFW, there are seven areas where we have to improve our understanding and practice:

1. Start with the poor: We must understand their different interests and livelihoods, and not just impose our understanding. In our desire to reduce complexity we constantly seek for "the" single solution. We need to accept that there can be no "one size fits all" package. Change is not amenable to single agency solutions. Responses must be:

- Politically differentiated—determined by political regimes;
- Socially differentiated—determined by social structures, hierarchies, and power relations;
- Spatially differentiated—adapted to levels of remoteness, connectedness to markets, and alternative employment and income-generating opportunities; and
- Resource-base differentiated—dependent on landscape characteristics, i.e. forests, forest-agriculture mosaics, and agricultural landscapes with trees; and the quality of the resource, i.e. from almost pristine to severely degraded.

If we are going to make any difference at all, we must invest in understanding what makes people poor and traps them in poverty. We should put poor people and their vulnerabilities at the centre and not the forests. We must understand the complexity of power relations that affect people's capacity to secure access to resources. We must also recognize the high risks for the poor in challenging the power relations that threaten their livelihoods and rights to forest resources. Above all, we need to accept and implement wider livelihood-based approaches linked to governance arrangements that promote structural transformation (at local, national, and international levels).

"Forests in Nepal are regenerating but the truth is that people's well-being still has far to go. In Nepal we are only partway there."

Jagdish Baral (Nepal)

2. Understand and work with the limitations of forests and forestry: We should accept and understand degrees of poverty, which determine to a considerable extent capacities to pursue forest claims and to make effective use of forest resources. Disregarding degrees of poverty is an open invitation to failure. We need to ask for whom forests can realistically make a difference. The likely answers to this questions are:

- For the capable poor and the well-off—yes!
- For people with some assets—maybe!
- For the extreme poor—rarely!

3. Provide broader livelihood options: The region is changing fast; migration and remittances are playing an ever-increasing role in rural people's livelihoods, shifting the relationships between people and the rural environment. Therefore, we must accept that working **outside the forestry sector** may lead to greater poverty reduction, such as working for appropriate land-use policy and land reform; creating attractive non-farm and off-farm employment options; strengthening social service provisions; and developing social protection processes that prevent decline into poverty, protect people, and help them move out of poverty.

4. Harness politics and power to build active citizenship: This requires significant attention to the role of local governance, and an acceptance that participation without an accompanying structural change in relationships rarely benefits poor people. Attention paid solely to the poor, without understanding their relationships with the elites, will not lead to sustained change.

"We need a public that cares about forests to get the political will that we need." Rod Keenan (University of Melbourne, Australia)

5. Understand the role of the state: Policy, regulatory functions, service delivery, and relationships with civil and political society all have major effects on how decisions are taken, and by whom and for whom they are taken. Attention to these aspects is necessary to ensure that local people who depend on forests are not made further insecure by decisions taken at international, national, or local levels.

6. Role of markets and enterprises, and the potential for growth: There is persuasive evidence pointing to the importance of establishing pro-poor enterprises, but equally cautioning against the promotion of these forms of growth as the panacea for poverty reduction. Growth and poverty have recently become key focuses in forestry, with increasing attention on ways in which forest production can be commercialized to benefit the poor. The increasing demand for socially responsible forestry by investors and consumers is driving a top-end change in corporate behavior. At the local level, changes include supporting community-based commercial logging, trade in non-timber forest products, and state asset transfers through the allocation of plantations and natural forests to communities. The equitable distribution of benefits remains a key issue that requires serious attention. As commercialization can also threaten natural resources, concerted efforts are needed to balance commercialization—with the intention of generating income—and resource conservation, which is critical for obtaining such income in the long term.

7. Global geo-politics and effects on people and forests: Currently the major drivers at the local level are coming from international pressure to change national practices regarding forests and forestry. Climate change may offer a rare opportunity to influence the direction of policy and practice. However, necessary changes are likely to have profound effects on local people, where pressure to reduce forest degradation and deforestation at the local level will increase national incentives to enforce forest protection. Local people may be prevented from using forests for their livelihood needs, or from using

forest land to farm (often an important route out of poverty). Although the new financing instruments may mean that “trees will grow on money,” there is a real risk that this money will end up in the wrong hands and pockets.

Hope for the Future?

“Success cannot be measured by sustainability in an unsustainable world. We need to look at sustaining people before we talk about sustaining forests.” Pedro Walpole (Asia Forest Network)

The response of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission to the social session:

“The Commission requested FAO to continue providing support for (i) enhancing community-based forest management and forestry initiatives that help reduce poverty; and (ii) effective implementation of national forest programs.

The Commission requested FAO to (i) assist countries in developing effective mechanisms, as appropriate, to collect and equitably distribute payments for environmental services; and (ii) develop guidelines to assist countries in developing policies and practices relating to social aspects of sustainable forest management and poverty alleviation.” (FAO 2008)

As the current food and energy price hikes illustrate, global poverty reduction and food security challenges will not go away in the near future. Engaging in current debates and making good use of the rich forestry development experiences are essential to ensure that those who are already threatened by our global actions are not further driven into poverty and insecurity. We must take these lessons and apply them in a way that is morally responsible and sensitive to the context of individuals and their rights.

What is clear from the discussion and debate is that it will be a difficult and contentious process to increase forest cover in the region by 20 million hectares (as proposed by APEC), in particular when we still continue to disagree on the definition of “forests.” As Marcus Colchester asked, “does it include oil-palm and large timber estates? The target can be achieved, but people will be massively marginalized in the process.” The importance of local determination was emphasized during the debate by Yati Bun and Modesto Ga-ab. Rather than signing-up to other people’s targets, each country should determine its own targets based on an understanding of local and national needs and contexts. Honesty about what is possible should underpin the approach to future forest development: “it doesn’t work to adopt other people’s targets; we should know what can work in our own country and start from within. We need to have decent processes of consultation that really bring communities into the debate” (Yati Bun).

Returning to our opening challenge, is it possible to combine SFM and human well-being? Yes it is, but only with a major effort to restructure the way we work. Most importantly, we need to take seriously our moral responsibility for ensuring the rights of people.

Without recognizing and acting on the complex reality illustrated in the seven areas of work, it is clear that we will continue to reproduce the concluding statement made by Ken Piddington:

“My painful conclusion is that the preconditions for sustainable forest management simply do not exist at the present time, with the exception of isolated cases where circumstances have combined with political will to create effective insulation from the pressure of commercial interests.”

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Acknowledgements

This synthesis, written by Mary Hobley with inputs from Thomas Enters and Yurdi Yasmi, draws on the presentations, subsequent debate, and questions from the audience.

Interested to Know More?

If you would like to know more about the People, Forests, and Human Well-Being session at the Asia Pacific Forestry Week in Hanoi including obtaining copies of the presentations, or to learn more about RECOFTC, please send a message to info@recoftc.org or visit the RECOFTC website at www.recoftc.org.

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The Organizers

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

Website: <http://www.recoftc.org>

Asia Forest Network (AFN) is dedicated to supporting the role of communities in protection and sustainable use of Asia's forests. AFN is comprised of a coalition of planners, policy makers, government foresters, scientists, researchers, and NGOs. Five strategies serve as guidepost in its development approach: Regional Exchanges, Country Working Groups, Development of Field Methods, Cross-Visits, and the Documentation of Case Studies. AFN shares community practices and developments in forest management, facilitates exchanges on creative relationships and strategies for enhancing the quality of local governance and collaborative agreements, and creates national and regional awareness of what communities, support organizations, local governments, and working groups are achieving in natural resource management.

Website: <http://www.asiaforestnetwork.org>

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Serving both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. FAO is also a source of knowledge and information, and helps developing countries and countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices and ensure good nutrition for all. Since its founding in 1945, it has focused special attention on developing rural areas, home to 70 percent of the world's poor and hungry people. FAO's activities comprise four main areas: putting information within reach; sharing policy expertise; providing a meeting place for nations; and bringing knowledge to the field.

Website: <http://www.fao.org>

Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)

The Department of Forestry (formerly Department for Forestry Development) was established in 1996. It is charged with the management and development of Vietnam's forest resources. The Department is coordinating the nation-wide implementation of the 5-million Hectares Reforestation Program (5MHRP). The Department is the national focal agency for several international agreements and organizations related to forests (e.g. UNFF, UNCCD, APFC, AFP, INBAR) and has managed numerous projects funded by different donors.

Website: <http://www.mard.gov.vn>

The Team

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