

Communications & Networking Strategy

The ASEAN Social Forestry Network



The ASEAN Social Forestry Network must have a robust communications and networking strategy to facilitate cooperation and support exchange between diverse stakeholders.

ASFN recognizes that social forestry is a cost-effective way to do the following:

- Support sustainable local livelihoods through income generation
- Balance economic use and ecological conservation of forests
- Build capacity of forest communities to practice land stewardship and reduce forest destruction and degradation
- Combat illegal logging
- Share the benefits from forests among local communities
- Build on the inherited potential of local and indigenous communities to sustainably manage forests
- Promote democratic and transparent governance practices¹

In order to more effectively promote social forestry across the Southeast Asia region, ASFN is developing a communications and networking strategy.

Between November 2010 and January 2011, ASFN Member States and partner organizations gathered in Bogor, Indonesia, and Bangkok, Thailand, to develop a first draft strategy.

¹ As identified by workshop participants. RECOFTC facilitated the workshop organized by ASFN Secretariat, with support from SDC, GIZ / ReFOP, ASEAN Secretariat, and the Ministry of Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia.



Key Conclusions

Why Are Communication and Networking Priorities?

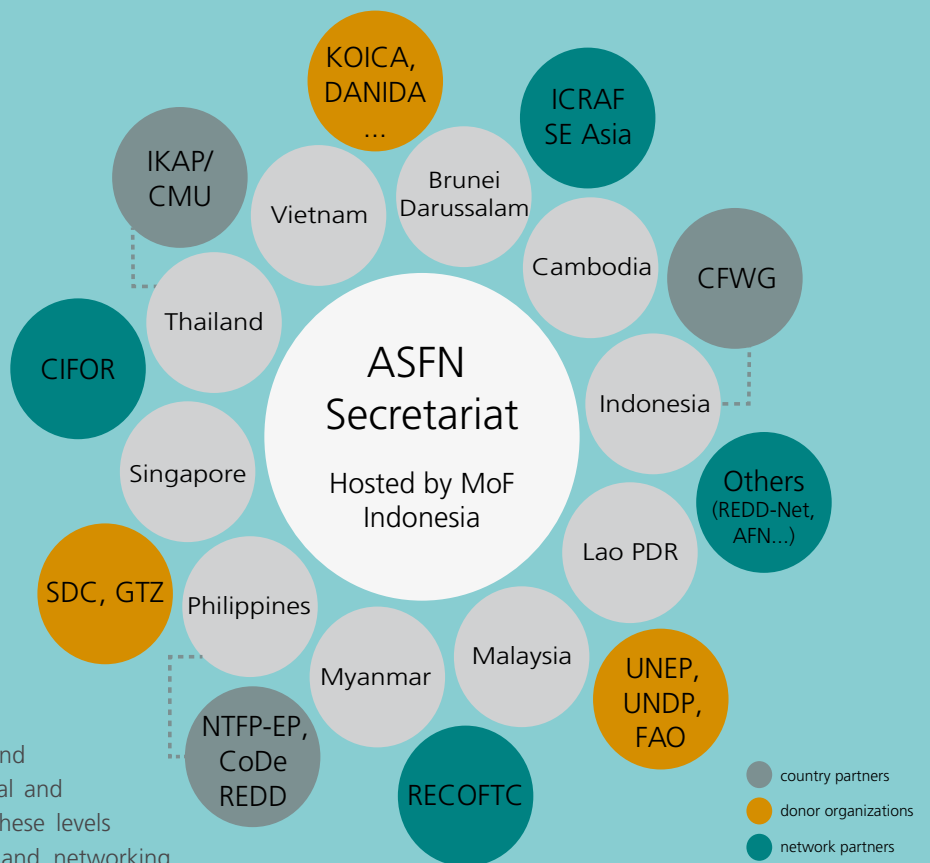
- Adequate information and knowledge are important to make informed policy decisions and to promote the scaling up of social forestry best practices.
- Information and knowledge networks can facilitate the learning process and build relationships across a range of stakeholders to achieve social forestry goals.
- Communicating and networking expand stakeholder participation in the sustainable management of forests.

Proposed Strategy

ASFN's proposed communications and networking strategy supports the network's larger objectives to contribute to food security and climate change mitigation through sustainable, efficient, and effective use of land, forest, and water resources. To achieve this, ASFN will engage audiences that are internal and external to the network. Internal activities will target the ASFN Secretariat, Member States, donors, and partner organizations (Figure 1). External activities, on the other hand, will target a broader group of policy makers, civil society organizations, research institutions, academics, and members of the private sector.

Internal communications and networking facilitate the exchange of experiences and expertise within the ASFN network in order to develop best practices and effective policy. Capacity building events - such as workshops, trainings, exchange visits, and conferences - will ultimately contribute to the refinement of materials for external communications and networking purposes.

External communications and networking illuminate and promote ASFN's work and social forestry development and practices throughout Southeast Asia. Major activities include the development and dissemination of case studies and audiovisual materials, as well as the use of social-networking tools. Accordingly, external communications and networking are essential in engaging organizations to commit to responsible business practices that support social forestry.



The Outlook

ASFN brings devolved forest management and social forestry to prominence at the regional and inter-governmental levels. Engagement at these levels may pose challenges for communications and networking.

Overcoming language barriers within Southeast Asia is a particular concern.

Such barriers affect the accuracy of information and the ability to share knowledge within the network. Accordingly, ASFN will need to enhance writing and public-speaking skills to ensure English language proficiency among network members. Negotiating conflicting interests in forestland use and management among diverse stakeholders will also be a major challenge. Contention over the use of land and forests is a long-standing and widespread issue, and accordingly, requires heightened sensitivity from ASFN.

Figure 1. The ASFN Secretariat coordinates participation from the multitude of Member States, donors and partner organizations that constitute the network

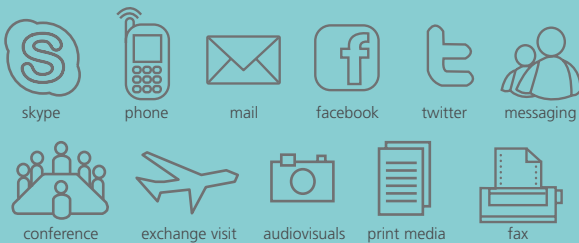
The effective implementation of the ASFN communications and networking strategy will necessitate additional financial and technological resources. Fund-raising and proposal-writing skills will be critical in garnering support. Likewise, ASFN must increase the sophistication of its technological skills and acquire the appropriate software for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Such improvements in resources will ensure the accuracy and consistency of information and knowledge flowing through the ASFN network.





Tools

Employing multiple communications and networking tools will help tailor messages to relevant parties, ensuring a dynamic exchange of information, views, and interests. For instance, direct contact would be the most useful method to understand the specific demands of local people and communities. Conferences and meetings are ideal platforms through which ASFN Member States and partner organizations can exchange experiences. Alternatively, print media would be more appropriate for reaching a broader audience of policy makers, and social networking would target civil society groups. The strategic use of these tools will help ASFN weave together a wide range of social forestry stakeholders.



“Members shall share their ideas openly and freely with the objective of learning from each other.”

Long Ratanakoma, National Community Forestry Program Coordination Committee, Cambodia

About ASFN

The ASEAN Social Forestry Network (ASFN) is the first government-driven social forestry network in Southeast Asia. It was established by ASEAN Senior Officials on Forestry (ASOF) in August 2005. ASFN links policy makers directly with members from civil society, research organizations, academia, and the private sector, as well as experts from relevant fields.


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