

ForInfo Newsletter

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ForInfo is a regional project of RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests, supported by the people of Finland.

For more information on the project, visit www.recoftc.org/site/resources/ForInfo/.

ForInfo - Improving livelihoods through innovation. One forest and community at a time.

Fostering Networks

BANGKOK, Thailand – Representatives from government forestry authorities, representatives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and partners from ForInfo's four project countries – Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam – met to discuss the outlook of the three year project in May.

The discussions fostered greater communication and network building for ForInfo with partners, sharing thoughts on the directions ForInfo's projects are taking, challenges they face and lessons learned over the past planning period.

Together, participants developed a road map for continued project activities.

As one of the meeting's results, ForInfo has developed a series of communication materials, which will be available online in the near future.

These materials intend to get lessons learned on community forestry out there, ultimately to improve knowledge and foster discussions on community forestry within a Southeast Asian context.

ROME, Italy - During the FAO Expert Group Meeting last March: 'Commercializing products from community forests' an agreement was made to test and improve the FAO Market Analysis and Development (MA&D) Manual as part of the field activities in the UNDP Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) ForInfo project sites in Cambodia.

For more information visit, <http://www.fao.org/forestry/enterprises/73076/en/>

Dear Readers,

We are happy to present the first bi-monthly ForInfo Newsletter. Uniting the four ForInfo project countries, our goal is three-fold: to provide information on activities on our community forestry sites throughout the region; to engage partners working towards strengthening community forestry; and to disseminate the latest updates on publications from ForInfo and RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests.

This issue focuses on the initiation of field activities, such as the development of an innovative teak plantation certificate in northern Lao PDR.

Upcoming issues will take a closer look at the communities ForInfo works with. ForInfo's goal is to share information on community forestry throughout the region to build an awareness of topics that impact people's everyday lives.

Sincerely,

Fabian Noeske

Technical Advisor, ForInfo

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Discussions support work in commercial community forestry in Cambodia

SEIMA, Cambodia - Discussion were held with Forestry Administration (FA) officers to apply new methodologies for inventories in large Community Forests (CF) (such as the proposed k-tree method, preparation of compartmentalized small area management plans and subsequent area merging).

Additionally, discussions with FA on commercial harvesting for CF continued, providing support for new procedures and initiatives. Together with World Conservation Society (WCS), ForInfo and the Cambodian FA are working and learning together how to move forward.

Additionally, timber market and cost analysis have shown promising results, but challenges lie ahead. These include connecting remote communities to markets, product quality and marketing, and lack of local expertise. Also, costs of mechanized steps of the harvesting process need to be assessed for greater project success.

A detailed analysis and synthesis on these topics is currently in the last development phase of a ForInfo and WCS milestone report on the Seima commercial community forest.

ForInfo has also conducted participatory information meetings in target villages on future harvesting operation procedures.

Finally, a study on equity and benefit sharing was conducted jointly between ForInfo and Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation (ESPA). As part of a larger research project, this study will inform ForInfo and other stakeholders on business development and the community benefit sharing process.



Smallholder teak plantation in Bokeo Province, Lao PDR.

Stakeholders participate in Teak Certification process and QGIS* meets target progress

BOKEO, Lao PDR – This month, ForInfo welcomes Mr. Sonphet Hacknorlath, Site Project Coordinator, and Project Associate, Mr. Simone Bianchi.

“In northern Lao PDR’s villages, community, farming and forestry are so interdependent it’s impossible to separate them from one other,” Fabian Noeske, ForInfo’s Technical Advisor commented.

Bianchi remarked, “The same is true for Cambodia. Now that I have worked for ForInfo in both countries, I am able to draw a comparative knowledge, which should contribute to our lessons learned here in Bokeo.”

Recently, ForInfo completed two introductory QGIS training sessions with 14 participants from the Department of Planning and Investment (DPI) in Bokeo. Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO) also conducted (DPI 11, PAFO 3) QGIS trainings. Participants walked away with a greater understanding of how to use QGIS technology, which will support future field operations.

Afterwards, ForInfo took the next steps in participants’ training, by organizing an additional training session with a specific focus on GIS requirements for Teak Plantation Owner Certificates.

The training will support the process for teak certificates and possible land titling activities in the future.

Feedback from both departments was very positive, requesting further full-time training. ForInfo is unfortunately unable to offer full-time comprehensive training, but will approach partners to explore further opportunities.

The Bokeo - Luang Namtha QGIS user group mailing list was established internally for peer support and learning exchange.

Mr. Sonphet Hacknorlath shared, “This is really what we need more of in Lao PDR, a platform to network and share knowledge, country-wide.”

In the future, ForInfo’s exchange network could contribute to social networks such as *Forest Connect*. For more information visit <http://www.fao.org/forestry/enterprises/forestconnect/en/> or www.forestconnect.ning.com

Steps towards certification

As part of the initial steps towards Teak Certification, a detailed work and action plan was created jointly with

* QGIS or Quantum GIS is an open source geographical information software. This software has been installed at the Department of Planning and Investment (DPI) Bokeo Province with the intention to provide a tool at no costs to fulfill the growing demand to present and analyze geographical information - <http://www.qgis.org/>

government counterparts, reviewing the individually needed processes and steps towards creating and implementing teak plantation owner certificates.

A standard operating procedure for extension staff will be developed, explaining the step-by-step procedure to prepare the certificate and conduct the valuation of standing trees.

Discussions covered additional information that should be included in the existing plantation certificate, as well as ways to appraise and present the plantations commercial value for collateralization. Options to collect, enter, store, analyze and access certification data are being explored regarding their operational functionality for district and province staff.

Agenda discussion and exchange points with all stakeholders included:

introduction of the certification forms; identification of interested community members; identification of training needs for district staff and community members; organization of first field training and demonstrations including first certificate preparation.

Additionally, discussions were held with the Lao Women's Union (LWU) on micro-credit details and the potential to include a component on carbon accounting in the certificate.

Opportunities to include sawmill operators were discussed with District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO) staff and first contacts were established.

Finally, a field trip to Paktha was carried out to meet with representatives of the LWU, DAFO and community members to provide prior information on certification processes and the opportunity to raise questions.



ForInfo works together with local communities in all pilot sites.

Pilot site relocation allows for greater community involvement

QUANG TRI, Vietnam - In Vietnam, awareness raising activities and a workshop took place together with a ForInfo site visit. As an outcome of the field trip, it was decided to slightly relocate one of the two pilot sites. This strategic move will allow for greater community involvement and impact. As a better match for ForCES site selection criteria, the relocation will also assist the community to benefit from existing awareness on Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification.

As a step towards having a national FSC certification standard, national standards and initiatives are under review.

Spatial mapping discussions with the European Space Agency (ESA) about the action plan for planned mapping work were held. In this course, background information for pilot sites was updated and sent to ESA. Methods and techniques for forest function mapping were discussed between ForInfo/RECOFTC and SNV/ForCES. Visit, <http://www.snvworld.org/node/4087%20> for more project details.

Additionally, SNV submitted the mapping project document to VNFOREST for approval and reviewed revisions with key members. ForCES/SNV Project Manager Que Anh attended the Project Steering Committee meeting of ForInfo in Bangkok, Thailand

In July, the CIFOR/ForCES indicator workshop agenda was developed and logistical arrangements were kick-started.



Small-scale plantation teak timber processing along the Mekong River.

Rainy season imposes challenges

SEIMA, Cambodia – With mudslides, floods and roads washed out, the region's annual rainy season imposes difficulties, including for the field of forestry. Therefore, no long-term field activities are planned for this period. ForInfo maximizes this period by shifting focus from field activities to dialogue strengthening, capacity building and planning. For example in Seima, Cambodia, talks with the FA, joint trainings for commercial harvesting operations in CF and possibly the production of an additional harvesting manual are on the horizon.

Additionally, ForInfo will establish the CF Enterprise, as well as its registration, open bank accounts to ensure that when the rain lifts, projects are in place and ready to go. Also, improvements of the individuation and the selection processes of buyers, followed by subsequent drafting of contracts will be the focus in the upcoming months.

In October, when the region begins to dry, the pre-harvest-inventory and harvesting alongside work safety trainings on these tasks will be a priority for ForInfo, participating communities and the Cambodian FA.

Collaboration talks with the Tree Bank lead to planned roadmap for logging procedure documentation

CHUMPORN, Thailand – A meeting was held in late-May between ForInfo and Mr. Pongsa, Manager of the Tree Bank and staff. A decision was made to develop an activity and budget work plan that focuses on case study and plantation logging procedure documentation. The subsequently developed work plan is awaiting formalization after a ForInfo site visit to Chumporn, Thailand.

Currently, the Tree Bank maintains an extensive community member network. ForInfo plans to collaborate with the Tree Bank to synergize project activities and further expand their database and generate plantation forestry information. The Tree Bank will also cooperate with ForInfo in providing access to its information network.

What's ahead?

ForInfo plans a field trip to Chumporn, where the Tree Bank headquarters are located. The site visit is anticipated for mid-July, and will begin the first documentation activities. Future activities will include: Tree Collateral case study documentation; discussions with a Kasikorn Bank representative; and an AtoZ Documentation and example case of plantation logging and GoT/RFD procedure.



Would you like to join one of our trainings or events? Got a story on community forestry in the Greater Mekong Subregion you'd like to share with us? Contact ForInfo at Fabian.Noeske@recoftc.org

RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests

P.O. Box 1111, Kasetsart University Post Office
Paholyothin Road
Bangkok 10903 Thailand



Partners:

