

Date of submission: 30 September 2014

Regional and Sub-Regional Inputs to UNFF11

Regional/Sub-regional Organization/Process:

Name:	Dr. Tint Lwin Thaug
Address:	P.O. Box 1111, Kasetsart Post Office, Bangkok 10903
Organization:	Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC); also known as RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests
Phone:	+66 2 940 5700
Fax:	+ 66 2 561 4880
Email:	tthaung@recoftc.org

Person to contact concerning the submission:

Name:	Phinyada Atchatawivan
Title:	Partnership Officer
Address:	P.O. Box 1111, Kasetsart Post Office, Bangkok 10903
Organization:	Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC); also known as RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests
Phone:	+66 2 940 5700 ext. 1217
Fax:	+ 66 2 561 4880
Email:	phinyada@recoftc.org

General Information

The multi-year programme of work – MYPOW (2007–2015) of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) sets a new focus on regional collaboration and partnerships. Since its eighth session in 2009 the Forum has solicited inputs from relevant regional and sub-regional forest-related mechanisms, institutions, organizations and processes as an integral part of session deliberations.¹

¹The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the parent body of the Forum, through its resolution 2006/49, agreed to “Strengthen interaction between the Forum and relevant regional and subregional forest-related mechanisms, institutions and instruments, organizations and processes, with participation of major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, and relevant stakeholders to facilitate enhanced cooperation and effective

The eleventh session of the UNFF (UNFF11) will be held from 4 to 15 May 2015 in New York. In accordance with the Forum's MYPOW, the overall theme of UNFF11 is *Forests: progress, challenges and the way forward on the international arrangement on forests (IAF)*, with the following sub themes:

1. Reviewing the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and consideration of all future options
2. Reviewing the progress towards the achievement of the Global Objectives on Forests (GOFs) and the implementation of the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (hereinafter referred to as the "Forest Instrument")
3. Reviewing the contribution of forests and the IAF to the internationally-agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),

In completing this questionnaire, you may choose to extract the relevant information and include it in your submission, if information is already available in existing reports and/or documents. Otherwise, you may provide the reference or document itself to the UNFF Secretariat, indicating the relevant section. Please note that the Year 2007 – the year of the adoption of the Forest Instrument (2007), should be used as a baseline throughout the document.

Moreover, in view of the limitation of sizing of the pertinent Secretary-General's report, the Forum Secretariat suggests no more than 250 words of written input per answer. We would be most grateful if you could send your inputs to unff@un.org, fax: +1 917-367-3186, by **30 September 2014**. In light of time constraints and financial limitations, you are kindly asked to provide your input in English.

Section I: Progress towards the implementation of the forest instrument and the achievement of the GOFs as well as the contribution of forests and the IAF to the internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs

A. Progress towards implementation of the Forest Instrument

1. Briefly describe actions (e.g. regulatory, financial/economic and informational/educational) taken by your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process to foster political commitment for sustainable forest management_(SFM).

RECOFTC holds a unique and important place in the world of forestry. It is the only international non-profit organization that specializes in capacity development for community forestry and devolved forest management. RECOFTC engages in strategic networks and effective partnerships with governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, the private sector, local people, and research and educational institutes throughout the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. With over 27 years of international experience and a dynamic approach to capacity development - involving research and analysis, demonstration sites, training products, and strategic communication - RECOFTC delivers innovative solutions for people and forests.

RECOFTC's mission is to enhance capacities at all levels for stronger rights, improved governance and fairer benefits for local people in sustainable forested landscapes in the Asia-Pacific region. RECOFTC works in the following four thematic areas in order to help realize the potential of devolved forest management: 1) Securing Community Forestry, 2) Enhancing Livelihoods and Markets, 3) People, Forests and Climate Change, and 4) Transforming Forest Conflicts. RECOFTC has four Strategic Outcomes to reach its goal: 1) Institutions and resources for securing community forestry are more effective. 2) Institutions are actively enhancing local livelihoods through sustainable CF practices. 3) Enabling environments for local people's engagement in forested landscapes in the context of climate change are strengthened. 4) Institutions to transform conflict are in place and increasingly effective.

Training and other learning events are central to all of RECOFTC's work, and are complemented by critical issue analyses, strategic communication as well as projects on the ground. RECOFTC is committed to the rights-based approach founded on the three underlying principles that strong and secure rights, good governance and fair benefits are the basis of sustainable forest management. RECOFTC works throughout the Asia-Pacific and has eight focal countries: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand.

Since its establishment in 1987, RECOFTC has developed an alumni network of over 25,000 professionals in devolved forest management, including national policy makers, researchers, practitioners, and local forest users in over 27 countries.

Please describe the main challenges encountered and/or lessons learned.

More than 450 million people in Asia and the Pacific are dependent on forests for part of their livelihoods – for food, fuel, fodder and other forest products – as well as for environmental services such as water and microclimate regulation, biodiversity and cultural conservation. Despite many positive developments, these forests are still subject to wide-scale degradation and conversion, and are becoming fragmented within increasingly diverse and intensively used landscapes. This often creates negative impacts for local people, particularly the poor and excluded, as well as on national and global issues such as climate change.

Community forestry and related community-based forest landscape management has proven to be an effective approach for reducing forest loss and degradation and improving forest conservation and restoration. It is a powerful approach for improving the rights, governance and fairer access to benefits of local people and smallholders and consequently, their livelihoods and food security. There is increasing national policy support for this approach in many forested countries in the Asia and the Pacific region, and greater interest in more sustainable forest management by national entities and international agencies.

However, there are still many challenges. A key challenge is that governments usually have alternative socio-economic models that do not support or conflict with community forestry. The challenge highlights the importance of UNFF as the unique multinational governmental organisation, however, sadly in its present form it is far from living up to this potential to influence the decision of its member governments particularly for benefits of local people.

2. Briefly describe efforts taken at the regional level to foster economically, socially and environmentally sound measures that act as incentives for the sustainable management of forests.

Efforts regarding increasing coordination and collaboration include:

- ASEAN mechanisms including the ASEAN Social Forestry Network (ASFN), ASEAN-German Programme on Response to Climate Change Agriculture, Forestry and Related Sectors (ARKN-FCC), ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN)) and ASEAN Human Rights Declaration
- Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet)
- Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO).

Efforts resulting from externally driven initiatives:

REDD+, FLEGT and investment made by donors such as in the Responsible Asia Forestry and Trade (RAFT) program under The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

RECOFTC collaborates together with most of the mentioned initiatives and networks mentioned above.

Please describe the main challenges encountered and/or lessons learned.

- Lack of coordination. Despite the above initiatives coordination is still a big challenge. One of the main issue being the lack of commitment of national governments
- Non-binding nature of agreements. As symbolised by the challenges facing UNFF (if is non-binding then highly unlikely to succeed)
- Lack of coordination between donors, and between donors and multinational governmental organisations such as UNFF.
- REDD+ symbolises the potential and the frustrations of efforts to achieve SFM. Countries will continue to allow (legal and illegal) deforestation as long as it pays, Economically REDD+ can't compete. REDD+ is further undermined by weak governance.
- Lack of government commitment to these initiatives - linked to lack of coordination, fact that many SFM agreements are non-legally binding, perception SFM doesn't pay, and lack of grassroots participation.

Lessons learned: Effective and equal participation is the key. Global and regional efforts need to recognise its value, not as an obligation but as a process for achieving success.

3. Briefly describe actions taken to enhance regional cooperation to promote international trade in forest products from sustainably managed forests harvested.

Initiatives, networks and organisations such as Forest Connect, ITTO, FLEGT-VPA, TNC-RAFT and WWF GFTN can play an important role in this area, including facilitating cooperation between sub-national and national level organisations to exchange experiences and knowledge. Forest Connect merits special mention in its attempts to link locally-controlled forest enterprises (LCFE) with each other, as well as to markets, financial and business support services and to decision makers, policy makers and policy processes. Initiatives such as Forest Connect are extremely important in their attempts to address the numerous barriers to LCFE trading their products on a national and international level, which is significant considering their role in forest management.

Please describe the main challenges encountered and/or lessons learned.

- Uneven playing fields between different producers and also sustainable versus unsustainable products
- Regulatory barriers

4. Briefly describe actions taken to enhance regional cooperation to address illicit international trafficking in forest products through the promotion of forest law enforcement and good governance.

Regional cooperation for illicit international trafficking in forest products is not one of the areas of RECOFTC expertise.

However, we would like to note that there has been substantial efforts made in the region through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN WEN), and United State's Lacey Act. RECOFTC also provided capacity building on conflict transformation to stakeholders involved in the timber industry through TNC-RAFT Phase I project. That capacity building program provided fundamental concepts and process of managing potential conflicts that are frequent in forest law enforcement of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Please describe the main challenges encountered and/or lessons learned.

We believe that corruption remains to be major challenge to the forest law enforcement and relatively low penalties in violations. The judicial systems in the countries to handle and curb these violations are also inadequate.

5. List and briefly describe activities aimed at mobilizing new and additional resources from all sources for SFM.

- Attempted scaling up of REDD+
- Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) in general, but none are really working though
- Private sector partnerships
- More significant development assistance linked to SFM

Please describe the main challenges encountered and/or lessons learned.

These efforts remain to be uncoordinated. The short term nature/support of the activities also is a challenge where more long term resources are needed to see through impactful changes. There are also high transaction costs involved.

B. Progress towards the achievement of the GOFs

1. Please describe actions taken by your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process and/or by other major stakeholders in your region/sub-region to help achieve the following:

GOF1, "Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation"

RECOFTC believes that "local people hold the key to healthy forests." RECOFTC works through the four mentioned thematic areas (Question 1) to realize the potential

of devolved forest management. We believe that by putting local people at the heart of forest decision making and management, community forestry can make sustainable forest management a reality.

RECOFTC is working to help local people manage forests more securely. A rights-based approach guides RECOFTC's work to secure community forestry within the changing landscapes in the Asia and the Pacific region as local tenure over forest resources is critical to RECOFTC's mission and is supporting partners to:

- Establish local tenure rights: Without basic supporting laws, policies and regulations in place, community forestry cannot happen. Through policy engagement, analysis and networking with key stakeholders, RECOFTC advocates for forest tenure reforms that give local people legal and institutional recognition and protection. Through field projects with partners, RECOFTC practically supports local people through the process of formalizing community forests.
- Exercise their rights: Once a legal framework for community forestry is in place, the next step is to implement this equitably for all eligible people, as even with official rights local people often face practical barriers such as the limited capacity and resources of officials, access only to severely degraded forests, and complex and long procedures. RECOFTC and its partners help identify and overcome the constraints and increase opportunities for local people to establish community forestry through in-country community forestry pilot programs, developing the capacity of relevant stakeholders, and engagement in national forest programs and policy dialogues.
- Defend their rights: Laws and policies evolve and even constitutions change, especially in politically unstable countries, sometimes to the detriment of local people. Regulations can hinder or destroy community forestry just as easily as they can advance the cause. RECOFTC develops and strengthens capacity of local, national and regional community forestry networks so they can have a stronger voice in national-level decision-making.

Capacity development in community forestry with a variety of stakeholders will continue as the primary hallmark of RECOFTC's work, both to empower rights holders and to ensure improved service provision by duty bearers. RECOFTC will also assist governments and people in the Asia and the Pacific region to develop the enabling policies, laws and institutions through appropriate research and analytical work.

Sustainable forest management through community forestry is an important strategy in reducing global greenhouse gas emissions as well as proactively minimizing the adverse impacts of climate change already being experienced in the region. RECOFTC is therefore developing capacities to provide more meaningful incentives, engagement and fair rewards to local people for vital environmental services through well-managed community forests that will enable them to adapt to climate change as well. This includes developing community adaptive capacity for coping with the impacts of climate change. To encourage national and regional level support for forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation, RECOFTC will facilitate grassroots

initiatives and piloting aimed at increasing adaptive capacity and demonstrating community forestry's role in climate change mitigation.

RECOFTC's strategy aims to reduce the incidence and negative impacts of natural resource conflict in the region and to tackle the root causes of conflict. Promoting good governance for and within community forestry is an essential element in this strategy. Strengthening the capacity of key stakeholders – including local and indigenous people, women and other socially excluded groups – to transform conflict in positive ways is the principal means for supporting fairer and more sustainable conflict management. Our work also includes supporting better understanding of the underlying causes, impacts and solutions of forest conflict. Disputes, policies, forestry programs and regulatory frameworks in the region will be analysed, and findings will be used to improve advocacy efforts, raise awareness and develop capacity of stakeholders to mitigate and manage forest-related conflict constructively.

GOF2, “Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest dependent people”

Without forgetting the subsistence uses and environmental services forests provide to local people, RECOFTC is working to demonstrate how members of communities can participate fairly in enterprise development and obtain a range of socio-economic benefits through market-based strategies and equitable partnerships with public and private sector operators. This public-private-community approach is based on the experience that when organized local people have sufficient control over forestland and are equipped with the right skill sets to decide and develop economically feasible and sustainable forest management models, their livelihoods can be significantly improved. Combining subsistence uses, environmental services and income generation through community forestry contributes to the food security of local people. RECOFTC's strategy is to help foster the policies and develop the capacities of key stakeholders to achieve these enabling conditions through:

- understanding the trade-offs between different landscape uses and functions, and the benefits of multi-purpose forest management;
- increasing the capacity of local people to manage forests and forest-based enterprises and work with private sector operators;
- brokering linkages and dialogues between private sector and forest-based community enterprises to develop ‘win-win’ business models and equitable partnerships;
- improving the feasibility of community forestry enterprises;
- linking the products and services of community forests to markets;
- reducing regulatory barriers that inappropriately obstruct community tenure and access to economic resources;
- decreasing perverse incentives and unfair competition to competing sectors and enterprises;

- increasing efficiency in forestry operations (harvesting and primary processing);
- integration with and development of pro-poor 'green economy' approaches.

GOF3, "Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests"

Please refer to response for GOF1.

RECOFTC is, however, not in favor to just protect forests and increasing area of protected forests without negotiation for local communities to sustainably manage and utilize forests. RECOFTC is also helping to promote an alternative model of community managed Protected Areas wherever there is enough policy, legal framework and institutional strength to do so in our focal countries.

GOF4, "Reverse the decline in ODA for SFM and mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM"

We would like to note that there is not a decline in ODA due to the widespread support and resources dedicated to REDD(+).

Although our activities might not all be directly aligned with the GOFs, demand for RECOFTC's work has been increasing and our approach has been well accepted any many donors in achieving their international development cooperation or aid goals.

2. Please provide additional information specific to your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process on progress towards the achievement of the GOFs.

As mentioned in previous response, the demand for RECOFTC's work is increasing. RECOFTC has expanded in size, geographically, scope and financial resources in the last 4-5 years. The interest and effort can be also reflected in the increasing number of partnerships and cooperation with governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, the private sector, local people, and research and educational institutes throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

C. Contribution of forests and the IAF to the internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs

1. Please describe studies or initiatives in your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process that capture the contribution of forests to the achievement of the internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

Partnerships

1. Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA)
2. Global Forest Watch partnership (forest cover)
3. FAO-TECA partnership (agricultural technologies in rural and forest communities)

Publications

1. The role of Social Forestry in Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in the ASEAN Region,
2. Current Status of Social Forestry in Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in the ASEAN Region,
3. Community forestry in Asia and the Pacific: Pathway to inclusive development)

IFRI sentinel sites**Institutional M&E**

2. What indicators have been, or could be, used to assess the contribution of forests to the MDGs?

3 relevant MDGs

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
 - correlation of forest tenure to poverty levels especially in rural, forest communities
2. Ensure environmental sustainability
 - proportion of land area covered by forest
 - access to payment for environmental services of communities
 - quality of forestlands awarded to communities
 - forest-based local livelihoods
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
 - disaggregation of male-female data in forest communities
 - social inclusion and gender equity practices
 - gender mainstreaming policies

3. Please provide additional information specific to your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process on MDGs forest-related work.

- CF links these 3 relevant MDGs together and therefore tenure must be in new SDGs

Section II: Review of the effectiveness of the current IAF and the future options

1. From the perspective of your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process, please provide a general evaluation of the strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement of the current IAF.

Strengths:

- We believe that the IAF has strong potential as most governments/countries have agreed to it.

Weakness:

- While the IAF was probably accepted by many countries because it is non-legally binding, there are weakness that it has no teeth
- The IAF is only focused on forests where many of the root cause of the problems lay outside/beyond forests
- The IAF is lengthy and complicated to understand
- No clear follow up mechanism to measure the progress

Areas of Improvement:

- In addition to the IAF, it should be a clear and simple action plan (e.g. an Agenda) to implement the activities of the IAF
- Have linkage with other sectors and issues that might be root causes of the challenges

2. Has the input of your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process been adequately taken into account in the Forum's deliberations?

No input has been shared and thus, taken into account. RECOFTC has not attempted nor has UNFF reached out to RECOFTC, until now.

3. What measures has your organization undertaken to strengthen the current IAF?
Please list the most important measures(maximum five):

None.

4. How would your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process envisage a strengthened regional/sub-regional component in a future IAF?

We believe that the weaknesses identified under the first question of this section have to be addressed. Greater involvement and active involvement from CSOs is needed in strengthening the regional/sub-regional component in future IAFs. A stronger emphasis on tenure for forest communities is also needed to ensure the success of the IAF as well. There should also be a platform or network to communicate, exchange and have joint efforts. There also must be more and stronger linkage with other regional efforts as well.

5. Has your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process worked jointly with member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)² and/or major stakeholders to support the work of UNFF? If yes, please evaluate the overall collaboration.

RECOFTC works with many of the member organizations of the CPF, but do not directly collaborate to support the activities of UNFF.

6. How would your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process envisage a strengthened collaboration with CPF member organizations and/or major stakeholders in a revised IAF?

We envisage a strengthened collaboration with CPF in a revised IAF through the following points:

- Improved communication through regional hubs with the aim to facilitate participation
- In addition to the Secretariat, secretariat members or coordinators/assigned focal points should be placed in CPF member organizations so they then can strengthen collaborations amongst stakeholders
- There should have regional level CPF members organizations as well, such as RECOFTC
- Clear and available information of who are the focal points for member organizations in the Asia Pacific and their contact information

² CPF member organizations: Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Secretariat of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat (UNFF), Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), The World Bank, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)