

STRENGTHENING FORESTRY COMMUNICATIONS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

17-19 September 2013, Hanoi Viet Nam

WORKSHOP CONCEPT NOTE

1. Overview

Policymakers, Governments and international organizations increasingly recognize the urgent need for the forestry sector to improve its communication capacity and activity across countries and regions.

Communications was a key element of the International Year of Forests, 2011 and there is a growing appetite for a more strategic approach to strengthen the ability of forest-related bodies to communicate effectively.

A strategic approach requires a clear understanding of different audience groups and their needs, agreement over key messages, understanding how communication channels can be used to reach different audiences, and set of common communication principles to foster trust and credibility.

A Forest Communicator's Network has been operating successfully in the UN European region for almost 20 years and has been productive in providing sharing opportunities, training and development modules and in coordinating pan-European activities such as research work, toolkits and providing assistance to the EU and the UN forestry bodies. It provides a useful working model for new networks in other regions.

An opportunity exists to support capacity development efforts through the creation of other regional expert networks, including in Asia and the Pacific. This workshop will assess the need for, and possible benefits of, establishing a regional forest communicators' network, as well as helping to develop skills in key communications areas and identifying opportunities for collaboration on forestry communications among countries and agencies.

2. Background

(a) Asia-Pacific Forestry Week

During Asia-Pacific Forestry Week (APFW) 2011, FAO collaborated with IUCN and RECOFTC to organized a plenary session on forestry communications: *New media – new messages: forestry communications in Asia and the Pacific*. FAO also held an APFW

workshop: *Towards an inclusive and useful communication platform in Asia-Pacific forestry.*

During the workshop, various organizational representatives gave perspectives on potential goals and functions of an Asia-Pacific communication platform and how such a platform might work. Suggested included: (i) establishment of a common web portal for posting communications materials; (ii) provision of training sessions and workshops for communication officers; and (iii) activities to enhance member countries' capacities to communicate their forestry messages effectively.

Participants agreed there is a crucial need for countries and international organizations to strengthen cooperation and further develop capacity for effective communications in forestry. The workshop resolved to request that the APFC establish a Forestry Communications Working Group, under the auspices of the Commission.

(b) Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission

Proceedings of the APFW plenary session and workshop were discussed during the 24th session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission, which recommended:

to establish a Forestry Communications Working Group, under the auspices of the Commission, to pursue the following objectives: (i) share experiences and knowledge related to forestry communications among member countries and international partner organizations; (ii) exchange communication materials, photographs, mailing lists, expertise, etc. and facilitate the access to other resources for effective information management; and (iii) strengthen member countries' capacity to effectively address communication issues and challenges.

The workshop will address this recommendation.

3. Workshop objectives

The workshop aims to identify important communications challenges in the forestry sector in the region. Key objectives include:

- Sharing best practices and tools to implement effective communication campaigns, programs and forestry projects in the region.
- Promoting learning through participation and interaction and generating new contacts and alliances.
- Exchanging knowledge and experiences and exploring the possibility of creating a regional network of communicators working on forest issues.

The workshop will consist of two main components: training and sharing sessions (approximately 1-2 days) and exploring regional networking opportunities (approx 0.5 day). The workshop is designed to be practical and participatory encouraging open dialogue with, and among, participants.

4. Profile of participants

The workshop will be aimed at specialists engaged in forestry communications from 8-12 countries, and international organisations, NGOs and other forestry institutions in the region. Around 20-25 participants are expected to attend. Participants will most likely come from different backgrounds and might have quite diverse communications skills.

5. Expected results of the workshop

At the end of the workshop participants are expected to:

- Share a common understanding of key aspects of communications.
- Have developed skills in key communications areas
- Have explored new ideas to implement in their respective programs and projects.
- Have identified key contacts and potential new partners and form formal/informal networks.
- Have assessed the need for, and possible benefits of, establishing a regional forest communicators' network.
- Developed a set of “next steps” to provide a clear path forward towards establishing a regional forest communicators' network or alternative communications platform.