

ENHANCING THE ROLE OF FORESTS IN ACCOMPLISHING CLIMATE ACTION TOWARDS LIVELIHOOD IMPROVEMENTS

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KEY MESSAGES

- ❖ Climate change is the common issue faced by the global communities. It is often associated with forests, where when cleared, overused or degraded, they react sensitively to a changing climate and when managed sustainably, **they produce woodfuels as a benign alternative to fossil fuels**; and finally, they have the potential to **absorb about one-tenth of global carbon emissions** projected for the first half of this century into their biomass, soils and products and store them – in principle in perpetuity. (FAO, 2010)
- ❖ Although forests have been recognized worldwide as a key part of the global response to climate change, many Asia-Pacific countries still have not integrated climate change strategies within national forest policies, laws and institutions. Forestry-related climate change initiatives are emerging nonetheless, and there is widespread evidence that countries are defining their own, unique country-specific strategies to harness the potential of forests for climate change mitigation.
- ❖ The issue of climate change has significant impacts on forest-dependent communities. Therefore, any activities and programmes implemented with regards to climate action must involve the communities through participatory approach which in turn can improve the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities.

INTRODUCTION

Deforestation and over exploitation of forests are the major issues which raised concern due to its impacts to climate change especially in the Asia-Pacific forests. Although various initiatives such as agroforestry, restoration and rehabilitation programmes implemented, but these efforts are not significant enough to mitigate the impact of climate change and in benefiting the rural people in the sense of improvement of livelihood.

Stopping deforestation and forest degradation are ways forward to mitigate the impact of climate change as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goal 13 – Climate Action. To do this, a strong commitment of the government through strengthening the existing legislation is seen as the main factors driving the change in implementation of Climate Action.

Climate change presents the single biggest threat to development, and its widespread, unprecedented impact disproportionately burden the poorest and most vulnerable. Almost every country in the region has suffered the impact of climate change (such as increasing temperature, floods, drought, etc). Urgent action to combat climate change and minimize its disruptions is integral to the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.



13 CLIMATE
ACTION



Climate change is already affecting the most vulnerable countries and populations, in particular the least developed countries and the small island developing States. The preparation of national adaptation programmes of action under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is helping the least developed countries address urgent and immediate needs, with support from the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Least Developed Countries Expert Group. In addition, the implementation of national adaptation programmes of action will help the least developed countries prepare and seek funding for comprehensive national adaptation plans, thereby reducing their risk of being left behind (United Nations, 2016).

While Asia and the Pacific have seen an increase of forest cover, when disaggregated, it is clear that this is largely due to an 'outlier' effect – the ambitious reforestation policies of a small number of countries, namely China, India and Viet Nam. The rest of the region and Southeast Asia in particular, continue to experience high rates of deforestation (Figure 1).

Investment in forest resources has been cited as essential in mitigating climate change and limiting global human induced temperature to below 2°C in 2030.

Rate of Forest Cover Changes in Asia-Pacific from 1990 to 2015

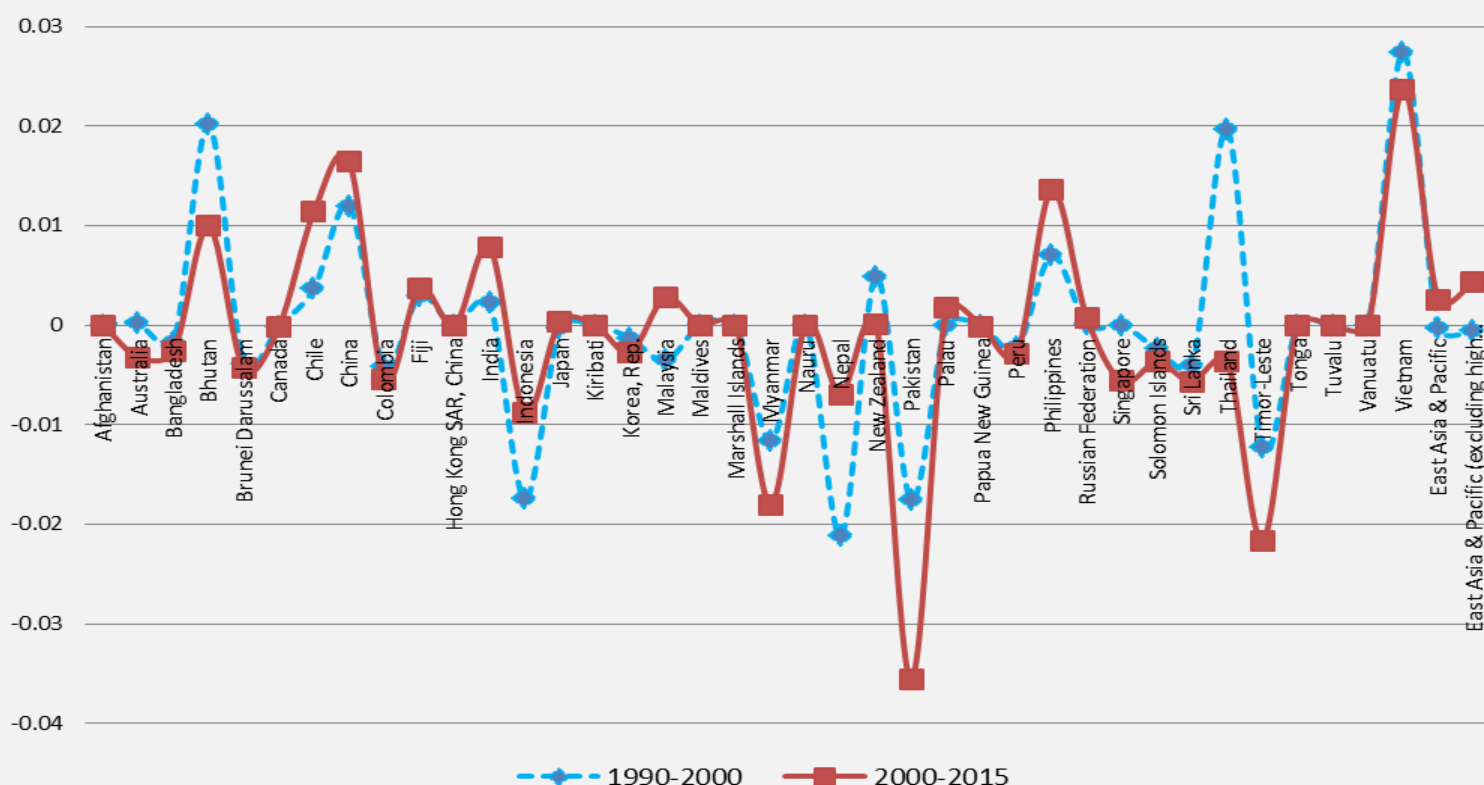


Figure 1. Rate of Forest Cover Changes in Asia-Pacific from 1990 to 2015

Source: World Bank, 2017

EXISTING SYSTEMS AND GAPS

The development of climate change-related policies, as well as the status and approaches to forest management in the context of climate change, vary widely throughout the region. Avoiding deforestation and forest degradation together with forest enhancement have implications for potential mitigation and adaptation strategies, and particularly for regional and international efforts to develop mechanisms, such as REDD+.

The involvement of forest-dependent communities through community forestry in Asia-Pacific varies from one country to another depending on the recognition of the government especially in terms of tenure right over the forest area. Community forestry has been gaining momentum and official recognition in recent years throughout the Asia-Pacific region. New laws and guidelines have been passed recently in Cambodia and Viet Nam, building on the experiences of countries like Nepal and the Philippines where community forestry has been well established for decades. The importance of local people as both managers and decision-making stakeholders in regional forests is gaining acceptance in international fora (See Box 1).

In this connection, strengthening the forest tenure policy framework is extremely critical to ensure the improvement of the livelihood and incomes of the forest dependent community (Yurdi, et.al, 2016). Those subsequent action should be capacity building in all institution at all level (Gilmour, 2016).



Box 1 Snapshot – Community Forest Management in Asia and the Pacific

COMMUNITY BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT IN ASIA-PACIFIC

Thailand

Community forestry has been recognized as a forest management strategy since the national logging ban was instituted in 1989. A Community Forestry Bill was drafted in 1993, but has yet to be passed due to difficulty reaching consensus on key provisions, such as allowing community forestry to be established in protected areas (RECOFTC, 2010)

Indonesia

A variety of social forestry-related approaches have been employed since 1998, when the period of “reformasi” began. Despite the successes of individual projects and efforts, political and legal barriers continue to prevent social forestry from being mainstreamed in national policy (RECOFTC, 2010). Furthermore, there are several types of Collaborative Management of Forest that managed by the Government and People. Several types of forest management divided into Social Forest, Social Plantation Forest, Village Forest and Indigenous Forest (Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2017).

Nepal

According to the recent Forest Policy of 2015, there are six participatory forest management modalities namely Community Forest (CF), Leasehold Forest (LHF), Collaborative Forest Management (CFM), Buffer Zone Community Forest (BZCF), Protected Forest (PF) and Religious Forest (RF). Among these CF, LHF and CFM have well recognition in all around the world. Altogether, 38.5% of total forest land of the country that is 2.3 Million Hectares of forest is being managed by more than 3.8 Million households under the broad regime of community based forest management (Nepali Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, 2016).



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APPROACHES AND ACTION PLANS

Strengthening the Tenure Policies

The forest tenure policies should be reformed in such a way that could provide strong basis for local benefits from its management. Clarity of the tenure could assure:

- ❖ The tenure holders will invest in forests
- ❖ Tenure holders will look after the forests
- ❖ Maximizing the benefits
- ❖ Reducing the conflicts
- ❖ Enhanced participation and empowerment
- ❖ Strengthen tenure holders in decision-making

Therefore, the Government needs to strengthen its current policies to enable tenure reform which clearly define land tenure.

Law Enforcement

The current laws and regulations with regards to deforestation and degradation is already in place but its implementation needs to be further emphasized to ensure effectiveness

Capacity Building

Capacity limitation is apparently the factor that affects the smooth implementation of activities with regards to climate change mitigation adaptation.

The technical capacity of both the public sector and the community require attention to enable the activities planned to be implemented successfully and bring benefit to local communities in uplifting their livelihood besides addressing the environmental issues

Financial Support Mechanism

Developing countries could receive international climate financing through diverse resource streams (private investment, traditional development aid, dedicated national funds, carbon markets, etc.), but it is fragmented both in terms of its source as well as its destination (various line ministries, general budget support, national implementing agencies, private sector, etc.). Additionally, application processes vary both in length and requirements.

Public Private People Partnerships (PPP)

The PPP could be implemented to ensure that the local communities benefited from forestry activities. In Indonesia for example the third party roles and venture partnerships is the model which could be emulated.

While the rural population densities of the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Java are comparable to India, land tenure is somewhat different. About 75% of the total land area is classified as state forest land, falling under the jurisdiction of the Department of Forestry, which allocates logging and/or plantation rights to private companies. The government also has a central policy of promoting partnerships between companies and local smallholders or communities, with support from a Reforestation Fund that accrues from levies on logging.

One company that has greatly benefited from the Reforestation Fund has been PT Xylo Indah Pratama, a Sumatra-based company allied to Faber Castell. Unable to obtain sufficient raw materials for its pencil factory from its forest concession, the company used research and development to identify a local weedy species as a viable alternative. An outgrowing scheme based on 50-50 profit sharing was established with smallholders who had unused land (mainly due to labour constraints).

Develop Monitoring, Reporting, and Verifying Systems for Climate Action

Measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) refers to a set of processes and procedures through which factual information is provided, assessed and checked to determine whether, when and how PPP effectively meet their respective obligations. As such, MRV can play a key role in building trust among Parties to ensure the long term collaboration.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening the Legislation and Policies

The strengthening of existing legislations and policies need to explicitly addressed the issues of deforestation and to ensure the effectiveness of its implementation. For recognition of the rights of legitimate tenure holders especially the local communities, there should be a legal provision which will ensure the equitable share of benefit.

Capacity Building

To ensure the effective implementation of reformed policies and legislation, all parties involved shall be equipped with necessary capacity enhancement.

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Financial Support Mechanism

Appropriate financial support mechanism shall be put in place as one of the enabling condition to implement the action plan and activities related to climate change mitigation.

Enhance Public Private People Partnerships

To ensure equity, benefit sharing, participation and effective forest management, a PPP approach could be enhanced if the government could facilitate the formulation of memorandum of understanding (MOU) and review it implementation regularly. The Strengthening of the existing legislation and policies is necessary to encourage Public Private People Partnership in order to promote private sector investment in forest-based enterprises, improving harvesting and efficient marketing of forest products.

Effective Monitoring, Reporting and Verifying Systems should be well-functioned

Robust, comprehensive, accountable, comparable and transparent MRV system need to be put in place in order to effectively implement the action plan as envisioned in different climate agreement.

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TENTH EXECUTIVE FOREST POLICY COURSE
GROUP 1 POLICY BRIEF:
ENHANCING THE ROLE OF FOREST IN MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS
TOWARDS LIVELIHOOD IMPROVEMENTS

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