

“Champions of Asia-Pacific Forests”

To help recognize and celebrate success of exemplary contributions to forests and forestry, FAO conducted a process to identify “Champions of Asia-Pacific Forests” as part of preparations for Asia-Pacific Forestry Week 2011. As the region’s forests are under pressure, people who make major efforts and use their abilities to reach out and effectively promote the value of forests at local and regional levels, can inspire others to do the same; they are invaluable for the forest and its dependents.

Two outstanding forestry practitioners have been selected as “Champions of Asia-Pacific Forests”. The two “Champions” will be recognized in an award winning ceremony during the APFW reception (Monday evening). Their stories and achievements can also be viewed in the CANoppy Room (308).

Nely P. Alzula

President, Organization Kapit Bisig Farmer’s Association and Regional CBFM PO Federation, Region IV A (Southern Tagalog Region of the Philippines), Philippines

Ms Nely Alzula, also known as ‘Nay Nely’ (mother) or ‘Ate Nely’ (big sister) in her community and members of the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) network. As President of the community organization and the regional federation of CBFM communities, she is actively engaged with various activities dealing with community forestry.



Being a mother to an impoverished forest-dependent family, she earned a living by buying and selling wood charcoal in the 70s. She was popular in the community. At that time, the government, through the Bureau of Forest Development (BFD), started to organize upland communities and eventually developed the Integrated Social Forestry Program (ISFP). Given her role in the community, the BFD invited Nely to attend orientation and training sessions on social forestry, natural resources management and the environment. Nely realized the importance of community forestry and the impacts of her activities. She then decided to stop her business in the charcoal industry and continued to participate in the extension and training programmes of the government. This pursuit led her to become the Vice President of the organization, tasked to handle the Education Committee.

With her considerable influence and skills, she worked for the provision of electricity in the community, empowerment of women leaders and integration of community perspectives in national policies. Advocacy-wise at the national level, Nely was one of those leaders who bravely faced high-level government officials when the CBFM Agreements were unilaterally cancelled. She has continued this kind of dialogue with government officials with the strong belief that the voices of the people should not only be heard but listened to.



As a farmer-trainer, she works in leading and organizing organizing, diversified farming technologies, conflict management and negotiation, Nely has been recruited by WISE as part of the REDD-Plus Community of Practitioners. Nely has definitely inspired many foresters in the Philippines and beyond with her work with the forest-dependent communities. Her personal experiences and lessons learned make a great forestry story.

If forest management can be carried out by Nely through hard work and continuous due diligence, then there is no reason for the rest of us not to do the same.

A Voice from the Forests... Nely Alzula

"We are planting trees not on the land but in the hearts and minds of people; this will ensure that we take care not only of the present but also future generations, bearing in mind the priceless value of our environment and natural resources".

Nely Azula has surmounted great personal difficulties and officialdom, to provide the hope for forestry-dependent communities across the country.

Bhishma P. Subedi

Executive Director Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources (ANSAB), Nepal

The basis for nomination of Dr Bhishma P. Subedi, Executive Director of ANSAB (Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources) is his more than 20 years of constant involvement, contributions and energy devoted to biodiversity conservation and livelihood improvement in Nepal and to make a difference. He has extensive experience in participatory programme design, management, monitoring and evaluation as well as research, university teaching, policy analysis and networking in the areas of resource management, community forestry and enterprise-based biodiversity conservation with 15 years of active leadership role in ANSAB. Since his involvement in ANSAB, the organization has started to work on creating enterprises based on sustainable use of natural resources; especially NWFPs despite many sceptics of the initiative. The initiative has emphasized ecological sustainability, social justice and equity and economic efficiency, with the introduction of a subgroup concept in the Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) of Nepal to ensure that ultra-poor and marginalized people benefit from the natural resources of their communities. This has led to the adoption of sustainable harvesting systems and practices; reduction in shifting cultivation, encroachment and poaching; the delineation of high conservation value forest areas; and the identification and management of rare, threatened and endangered species.



Dr Subedi has also been a proponent of forest carbon credits and PES in Nepal. He was one of the first scholars in Nepal to study how the community forestry mechanism can be used to develop forest carbon projects in Nepal. Lately, Dr Subedi has been a key player for a civil society led-design and pilot REDD payment and benefits distribution mechanism for CFUGs in Nepal. The initiative has designed the pilot Forest Carbon Trust Fund in Nepal.



Dr Subedi has worked with stakeholders including the Government of Nepal working on forestry issues through his founding/coordinating role in the Nepal NTFP Network and Public Private Alliance for the Promotion of Nepali NTFPs. He has also contributed to the Herbs and NTFPs Development Policy 2004, the National Adaptation Plan of Action and REDD+ readiness activities in Nepal.

Dr Subedi's constant involvement and contributions to the NWFP and community forestry sector in Nepal have been helpful in promoting a fuller understanding of the essential connection between conservation and development in Nepal and other regions including Asia-Pacific. The enterprise-oriented biodiversity conservation model under the community forest framework can bring a significant area of forests and meadows under improved management, and at the same time can generate income at the community level.

Dr Subedi's visualization of the carbon projects in Nepal under the community forest framework also provides incentives to the community for the conservation and management of forests. This can also apply to management of forests in other parts of the region in the context of global climate change. The pilot REDD+ project in Nepal currently in operation with ANSAB and other two national partners is testing a governance system for REDD+, including a payment mechanism and compliance process. The lessons learned from this pilot will be helpful for the policy-makers and planners in Nepal and other countries of the region with similar settings to develop pro-poor and inclusive national-level policies for REDD+ payments in the future.

