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22–26 February 2016 | Clark Freeport Zone, Pampanga, Philippines

Key Findings of the Study on Drivers Affecting Forest Change in the GMS: Thailand

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Holiday Inn Clark, Pampanga, Philippines

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Background

- Thailand is situated in Southeast Asia within the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS).
- The total area of the country is 513,115 km² (51,311,500 hectare).
- An official RFD report in 2013 indicated that total forest area in Thailand was 163,391.26 km² (16,339,126 hectare) equivalent to 31.57% of national area.

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Background

- Forest cover target set at 40 % of total area (about 20.7 million hectare).**
- An additional forest area of 4.36 million hectare are needed.**
- The 40% target set in the 1985 National Forest Policy and the 11th National Plan (2012-2016) with support from the Internal Security Operations Command(ISOC) and the National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC).**

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Background

- ❑ **The ISOC and the NPKC has launched Master Plan for Forest Resources Protection and Sustainable Management in 2014.**
- ❑ **A strategic roadmap has been formulated and the national forest cover target is to be achieved by 2024.**

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Key Findings

1. Positive Drivers of Change

1.1 Demand for income and jobs:

- ❖ Those gaining benefits from forest tend to be more willing to protect them in a sustainable manner. Some forest types support ecotourism opportunities that create income and employment.
- ❖ RFD data shows that in 2012 revenue from timber and miscellaneous forest products (1,805,300 USD) contribute associated fees to national economy.

Key Findings

1.2 Enactment of Legislation relating to Forest Management

- **Strengthened enforcement of forest related legislation could improve forest protection and prevent national forest losses resulting in positive feedback for forestry.**
- **Figures 1 and 2 present statistics on cases and forest areas recovered following judgement. Most forest encroachment cases between 2010 and 2012 were from the Northern region of Thailand.**

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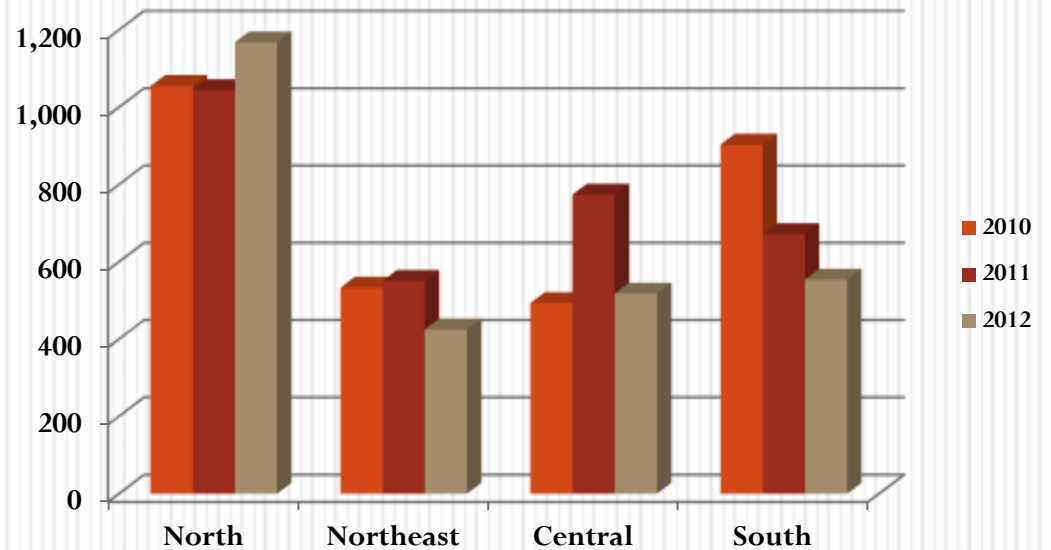


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Key Findings

Figure 1: Number of Legal cases concerning forest encroachment in National regions, 2010-2012



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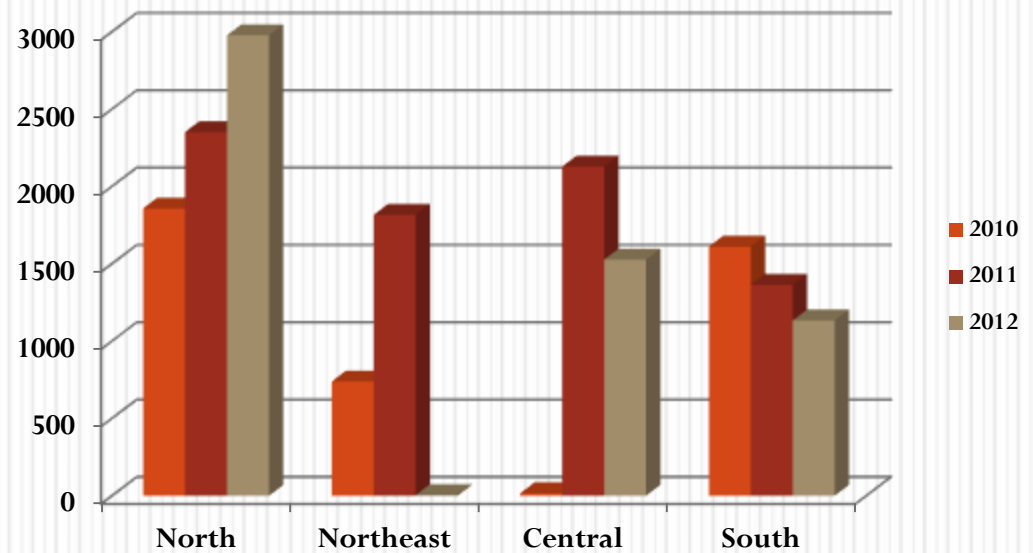
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Key Findings

Figure 2: Forest area in hectare retrieved based on encroachment cases, 2010-2012



Key Findings

1.3 Community Forestry

- **The RFD created the Community Forestry Programme in 2000 initially to increase forest area and provide timber for household use.**
- **The programme is in conforming to the concept of Sustainable Forest management (SFM). Public participation has been incorporated with overall support from the Thai Government.**

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Key Findings

Table 1: Results of the
Community Forestry
Programme between
2000 and 2013

Region	Number		Total area (ha)
	Villages	Programmes	
North	2,694	2,624	284,348
Northeast	4,200	3,768	171,768
Central	1,034	953	66,028
South	737	741	25,707
Total	8,665	8,086	547,850

Key Findings

1.4 Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+)

- ❖ **Thailand has the potential and capacity to carry out REDD+ projects in many parts of the country although some obstructions exist as a result of misconceptions, lack of technical knowledge and lack of clarity over benefit sharing and carbon rights.**

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Key Findings

Table 2: Forest areas potentially developed for REDD+ projects

Status	Area (ha)
Forest Reserve Areas	23,028,100*
127 National Parks	6,217,400
58 Wildlife Protection Areas	3,655,400
Duplicated areas among 1, 2 and 3	7,691,800
Handed over to Land Reform Office	5,215,200
Forest Reserve Areas under the RFD	9,961,000
Permanent forest areas (of the reserve areas)	1,682,800
Total	49,759,900

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Key Findings

1.5 European Union-Forest Law Enforcement, Government and Trade (EU-FLEGT)

- **Thailand has begun negotiating a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) under the EU-FLEGT process to ensure that wood products can be exported to the EU while natural forests are protected.**
- **The EU-FLEGT scheme will not only support lawful timber but is likely to help promote reforestation and afforestation.**

Key Findings

1.6 Employment of Technology in Forest Management

- Employment of appropriate technology can help government agencies achieve targets in an effective manner.
- Thailand has adopted satellite technology to support forest management since the beginning of the first National Plan (1961-1966).

Key Findings

1.6 Employment of Technology in Forest Management

- ❑ **Satellite images and aerial photos can be used to indicated forest areas and boundaries with high accuracy and cost effectiveness and can combine with patrol techniques to help protect forests and safeguard communities.**

Key Findings

2. Negative Drivers of Change

2.1 Illegal Logging and Forest Clearance

- ❖ **Forest encroachment in Thailand results from both direct and indirect factors including investment for hotel and resort development, land clearance for tourism activities, golf course development and agricultural expansion.**



Key Findings

2.2 Forest Fires

- ❖ **Dry season fires are significant direct cause of forest degradation.**
- ❖ **Fire is the cheapest method for clearing land for farming.**
- ❖ **Fire can also be used to stimulate fresh growth of vegetation for cattle.**

Key Findings

2.3 Lack of Technical Knowhow, Manpower and Insufficient Funding

- The consequence of the Government policy in 2002 to restructure the former RFD into three departments according to the principle of area based management has intensified the structure of each organisation.**

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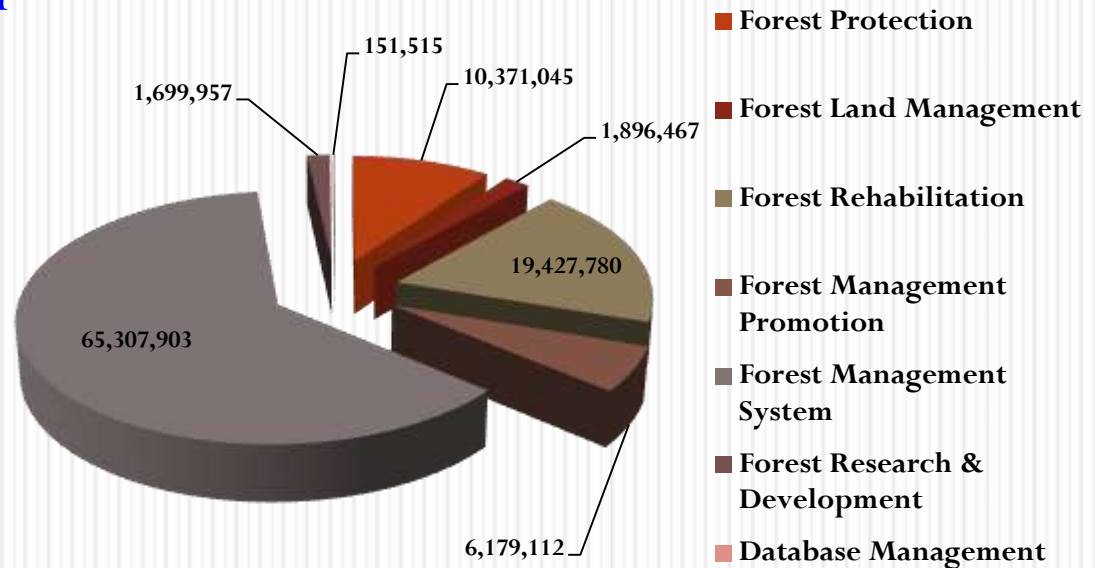
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Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Key Findings

Figure 1: Budget allocation for 2012 Forest Management Programme (USD)



Key Findings

2.4 Law Enforcement

- Forest management in Thailand has been constrained by a lack of common understanding of forest conservation between the forest conservation authorities and forest dwellers.**
- It is estimated that more than one million households are present national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and national forest reserved lands. The law considers these inhabitants as illegal occupants in protected areas.**

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Key Findings

- ❑ **Due to the lack of legislative clarity, judgements given in favour of one party or another have been based on subjective legal interpretations influenced by conflicting interests.**

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Concluding Remarks

- ✓ **The major factors behind deforestation and forest degradation in Thailand are connected to policy gaps.**
- ✓ **The institutional framework lacks internal harmonization.**

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Concluding Remarks

- ✓ **There has been no holistic view of forest management since the original RFD was divided into three separate departments (RFD, DNP and DMCR) in 2002 and transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.**

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Concluding Remarks

- ✓ **Since then, forests have been managed according to different underlying perspectives based on forest type and site.**
- ✓ **The tasks and responsibilities for which there are overlaps among the three departments can promote forest loss due to information inconsistencies and conflict between forest dwelling people and the government.**

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Thank You

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