

WORKSHOP ON FORESTS AND DISASTERS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

24-25 August 2016, Antipolo City, Philippines

SUMMARY

More than 40 government and civil society individuals from 8 Southeast Asian countries¹ recently participated in a two-day workshop² to share perspectives and experiences in forest management and disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM). Government participants came from both forestry and DRRM agencies at national and local levels. Civil society participants, mostly based in the Philippines, came from research, academe, community-based organisations, and the private sector.

The workshop was opened by Jose Luis Fernandez (FAO Representative in the Philippines) and Sylvia Micalat (Executive Director of Environmental Science for Social Change), representing the two co-organizers of the workshop. Participant introductions revealed that this event was the first opportunity for many government forestry representatives to meet and discuss with their DRRM counterparts. A [regional overview](#) presented: (i) disaster patterns and trends in Southeast Asia; (ii) the roles of trees and forests in different phases of DRRM; and (iii) enabling frameworks at regional and global levels.

Session 1 set the stage for discussing the roles of trees and forests in reducing disaster risks associated with hydrometeorological hazards, particularly: [typhoons and floods](#), [landslides and debris flows](#), and [tsunamis and storm surges](#). Session 2 panels provided country contexts and national DRRM structures, plans and programs, which motivated discussions about opportunities for and challenges to integrating forest-related actions within DRRM strategies. Session 3 generated country recommendations on the types of forestry assistance needed to strengthen resilience against disasters most frequently faced in the region.

Workshop participants also had the opportunity to engage with and learn from actual examples of how forest and disaster issues play out. Participants visited the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape where they were welcomed by Protected Area Superintendent Isidro Mercado from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. They learned about post-disaster recovery initiatives following Typhoon Ketsana from a multi-stakeholder panel that featured perspectives from: upstream and downstream communities, a private corporation, a bilaterally-funded research project, city government, and protected area manager. This case example helped to ground the discussions for the action planning exercise of the workshop, wherein country teams identified 2-3 priority actions that can be undertaken with closer collaboration among forestry, DRRM and other agencies, and the potential roles that local, national and international agencies can play to support these actions. The workshop achieved its planned objectives of: (i) Sharing experiences in relation to the use of trees and forests to mitigate the impacts and reduce risks associated with disasters; (ii) Increase technical coordination capacities in mapping risk areas, designing tree and forest protection systems and preparing readiness and response plans as part of broader land-use planning; and (iii) Obtain country inputs and recommendations into the design of an Asia-Pacific Regional Strategy on Forests and Natural Disasters. Key outcomes included: (i) increasing participants' technical knowledge on truths, myths and uncertainties with regard to relationships between forests and disasters; (ii) agreement on highlighting the importance of

¹ Government forestry and DRRM representatives from Cambodia (2), Indonesia (2), Lao PDR (2), Malaysia (1), Myanmar (2), Thailand (2), Viet Nam (2). Philippines as host had participants from government (10) and civil society (14). Keynote speakers came from Australia, Indonesia and Philippines. All in all, the workshop had 23 government representatives and 17 civil society participants from local community, research and private sector organisations.

² Links to: [Concept Note and Agenda](#) and [Speakers' Profile](#)

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partnerships and capacity building in a draft roadmap for a regional strategy on forests and disasters being formulated with support from FAO; (iii) requests for FAO assistance related to knowledge compilation, sharing and utilisation based on the country action plans.