

Stories of change

2008-2013

RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests

Includes annual report 2012/13



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Annual report 2012/13

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Stories of change

Foreword from the Executive Director and the Board Chairperson

Stories are our memories. Almost all of us have grown up listening to stories – from stories told by our parents when we were children, to stories we hear as adults. We learn a lot from stories – some motivate us to become better global citizens, other stories teach us valuable life lessons. The characters in such stories inspire us, and become our heroes and our role models. The best stories have the power to connect us with others, reach our hearts and minds, and change how we think, feel and act.

RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests regularly produces various kinds of information – research reports, annual reports, monthly newsletters and other publications – that bring our messages to particular audiences. However, stories are different. This publication aims to capture real-life stories about the relationships between people and forests, and the critical roles that courageous people are playing in promoting sustainable forestry in the Asia and the Pacific region. Through these stories, we hope to inspire and nurture how we think and what we feel about relationships between people and forests.

The stories told here illustrate the invaluable contributions being made by community members, pioneering government personnel

and others who are actively participating in forest management – leading to improved livelihoods, and more equity and a fairer share of benefits. The stories highlight the challenges faced and opportunities created by people in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam who are promoting community forestry. Through these stories, everyday heroes come alive, as we get a glimpse of how people are overcoming obstacles through defending their rights and managing their forests, and the benefits they are bringing to their communities and beyond.

We sincerely appreciate the efforts of the many people who played a role in these stories of change. We would especially like to acknowledge the guidance provided by our Board of Trustees members throughout this project and all our work. As you read these stories, please view this collection as an endeavor that continues to evolve. We welcome your feedback, suggestions and experiences.

Doris Capistrano, Ph.D.
Board Chairperson

Tint Lwin Thuang, Ph.D.
Executive Director

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Introduction

With an overall aim of promoting community forestry in Asia and the Pacific, RECOFTC works to develop the capacity of communities, governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, while also working to improve policies, institutions and practices of community forestry in the region. From 2008 to 2013, RECOFTC has made significant achievements toward its overall goals of developing capacities of stakeholders at all levels for community forestry, promoting policies that enhance resource rights of local people, and applying new knowledge so people and community forestry institution can respond effectively to change. These efforts are helping to reduce the adverse effects of major global and regional changes on local natural resource based livelihoods, and making positive impacts toward achieving local people's rights and addressing issues of equity and poverty.

RECOFTC's presence in community forestry in the region has been considerably enhanced with the opening of country program offices in Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, enabling RECOFTC to increasingly undertake operational activities in these countries, along with working in China, Nepal and Lao People's Democratic Republic. These country programs have opened new avenues for engagement with stakeholders, while allowing for a quicker response to emerging community forestry trends in these countries.

At the same time, RECOFTC continues to prioritize its role as a leading community

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forestry knowledge hub and capacity development organization, and has trained more than 22,650 people from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Viet Nam and other countries, from 2008 to 2013, at all levels in community forestry. The organization's capacity-development program consists of formal training courses, learning events and networks, workshops, and study tours. The trainings have enhanced skills in RECOFTC's thematic areas of people, forests and climate change, conflict management, livelihoods and access to markets and expansion of community forestry.

Analytical work related to conflict management and climate change have also increasingly dominated RECOFTC's agenda. More than 160 reports, case studies, briefs, training manuals, and other knowledge products on community forestry were disseminated through its Information Center and online through the People and Forests E-News and website.

The stories highlighted in this report aim to shed light on how RECOFTC's programs, projects and trainings, from 2008-2013, are making tangible changes on the ground. The stories offer a glimpse into the lives of empowered individuals – from local communities, governments and non-governmental organizations – who are making a difference. Each of the individuals portrayed is actively participating in enhancing resource rights of local people through community forestry, and addressing issues of equity

and poverty. While it is impossible to include the stories of the thousands of individuals who are making contributions on every level toward achieving these goals, the stories here demonstrate the ability of forest communities to respond effectively to a range of climate change, governance, conservation and livelihood challenges.





Cambodia



The trainer

Mr Chea Bunly is not an easy man to catch in the office. Somewhere between provincial government meetings and working in the field with local communities, he has earned the nickname that his colleagues in the Forest Administration and community people now refer to him by: “the trainer.” A smile radiates from his face, and the feeling of his inner confidence energizes those around him. “I never would have expected that we’d be where we are now,” he says, as he tells his colleagues and community members his story.

He is referring to community forestry (CF) in Cambodia.

Bunly started working for the Forest Administration in 1993. He was 25 years old and was sent to Pursat Province for his first job as a Forest Officer. “I was young and I had to deal with many things. Back then, there was a lot of illegal logging by community people themselves, as it provided them with a means to survive. There was the Khmer Rouge. And the area that I managed included an ELC (economic land concession) that was being protested by the local community – violently protested.”

“I got to know the local communities, and they often came to talk to me and ask my advice,” he says. “As a forester, I had a vision: to protect the forest. I did my best to persuade the community to protect the forest.” His vision, however, was neither backed up by the law at the time, nor did the people whose lives were affected have the know-how to attain Bunly’s vision.

It wasn’t until RECOFTC signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Forest Administration of Cambodia that the establishment of community forests in the area started to become a reality. “After the MOU

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As a forester, I had a vision: to protect the forest. I did my best to persuade the community to protect the forest.
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“ Finally, we all really understood what community forestry is in a tangible way. Most importantly, people in the community understood community forestry for the first time. ”

signing, I was the first person in Pursat to be trained by RECOFTC. What was special about the training is that it went into the details. RECOFTC gave technical training, starting from exploring the concept of community forestry, its benefits, and then training on Cambodia’s laws and guidelines for CF.”

Bunly took what he learned and put it into action. First, he began leading trainings for the village chiefs. He followed this with trainings for commune councils, the district government and other NGOs working in Pursat, “Finally, we all really understood what CF is in a tangible way. Most importantly, people in the community understood CF for the first time.”

“Before the trainings, we had worked together with other NGOs to ask commune councils to approve documents leading to formally establish community forests in Pursat, but we weren’t successful. We also sent letters to the provincial government but didn’t succeed,” Bunly points out. “Then, in 2011, we got word that the first CF agreement in Pursat was approved by the Forestry Administration (FA). Many NGOs that were working in the area were surprised that we were able to get approval. But I wasn’t. Unlike before, we weren’t working alone. This time, we reached out to different levels of government and community, and worked together, step by step.”







“ Without the agreement, we would not be able to protect our forest from outsiders. Now we can, and not only are we maintaining the forest, but we are making it bigger. It’s becoming less degraded, and many of us can supplement our income and daily food with what we get from the forest – mushrooms and other vegetables, honey, medicines, bamboo and fruit. ”

In response to Bunly, Mr Meas Roeurn, a community member in the Snam Preah Community Forest in Pursat Province, agrees, “I remember my first training with you and RECOFTC in 2010. We learned the process of how to establish a CF and obtain a CF agreement - what to do, step by step. We would not have gotten the CF agreement without the trainings.” His community formally established its 88-hectare community forest, which gives them tenure on their forest for 15 years.

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income and daily food with what we get from the forest – mushrooms and other vegetables, honey, medicines, bamboo and fruit,” adds Mr Roeurn.

Bunly gives strong credit to RECOFTC: “Without RECOFTC, we might not have CF now,” he believes. But the knowledge he has gained has not only benefitted Pursat communities - it has also advanced his career. He recently took an FA test, receiving high marks, leading to a higher job grade and salary – and importantly, his coveted nickname.

**Story by Caroline Liou
Photography by Subantita Suwan**

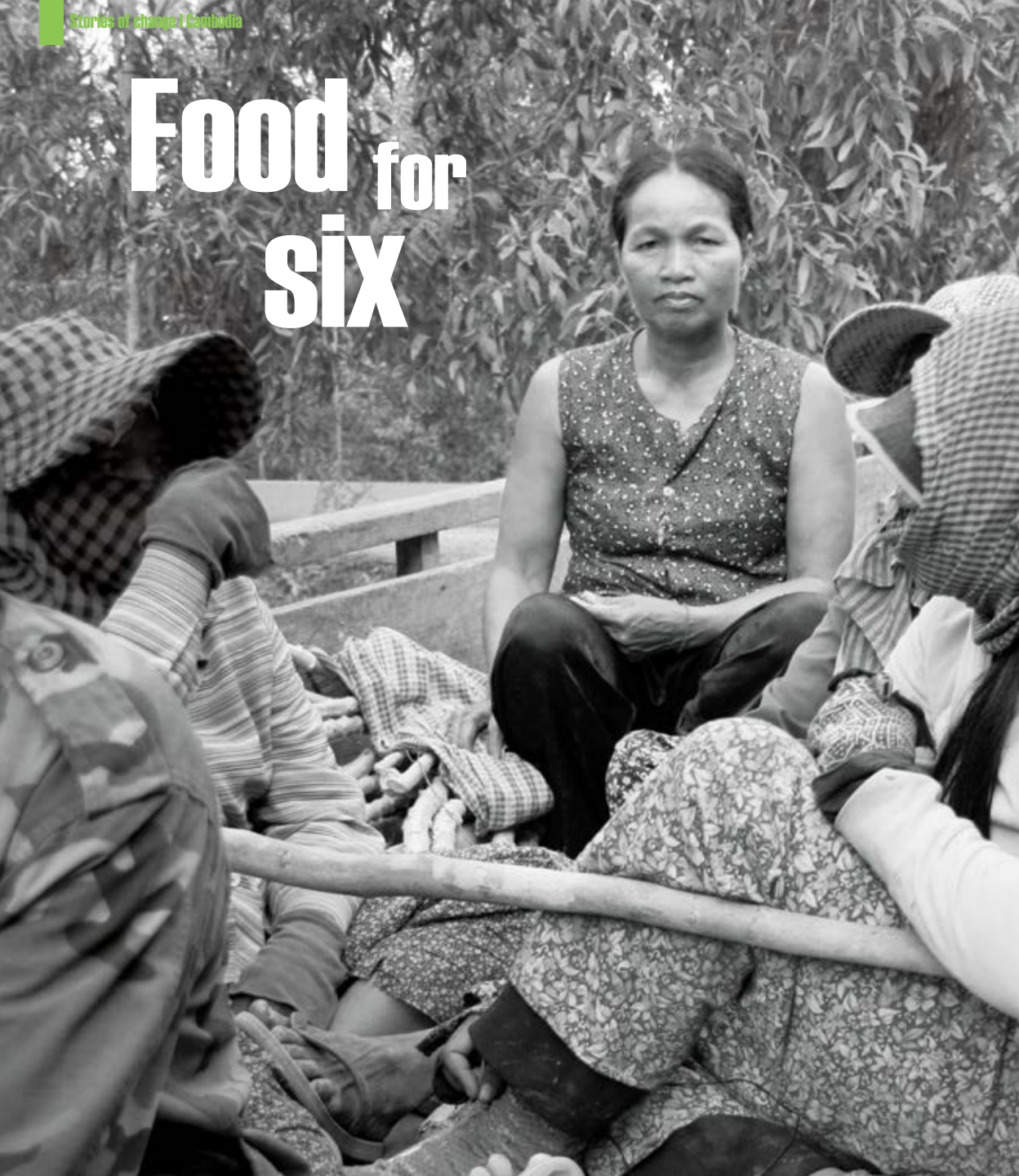
RECOFTC's capacity development programme for expanding community forestry in Cambodia is helping local communities develop approaches to manage local forests sustainably and successfully work through the community forestry registration process. The project is fulfilling a needed role in providing a link between the Forest Administration at cantonment level and local NGOs and villagers to advance the legalization of Community Forestry. In Cambodia, more than 2,000 RECOFTC trainees have supported the development of 260 community forests, of which 162 have received legal tenure from the government as of 2013.

In partnership with the Forestry Administration since mid-2007, RECOFTC has seen nearly 200,000 hectares of forest put into the hands of 60,000 families from 450 villages. It has directly supported more than half of the country's community forestry sites, and more than half of those with legal agreements, through training for action, facilitating partnerships, and more. There are currently 457 community forestry sites that have signed formal community forestry agreements with the government.





Food for six



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People and forests are interdependent, and caring about forests means caring about our lives.

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Putting food on the table to feed their six children is a major challenge that Um Roerng and her husband face every day. To feed her family, Roerng, a 56-year-old mother from Trapeang ROUNG, Cambodia, wakes up early every morning to look for wild fruits, mushrooms, vines and herbal grass from the forest.

On her way back from the forest, Roerng passes by Ny Nem, the head of the local Community Forestry Management Committee. "How's the forest?" he asks her.

"I collected lots of forest fruits," says Roerng. "My daughter's school fees are due, and I need to make at least US\$5 to pay it. But hopefully it will be a lucky day, and I'll make more than double that. I'm off to the market now to sell my fruit!"

With that, Roerng heads off to the market. Ny Nem watches her and smiles. He's happy that forests are once again providing the local community with a natural market, where they can collect food without paying for it. He knows that this 'market' not only brings income, but that it also provides the bulk of the food that many families here eat.

But this hasn't always been the case. Ny Nem remembers what it was like before the establishment of the community forest. Large swaths of forests were being lost to illegal logging, an industry controlled by powerful individuals and private companies. These events were the impetus that led the local community to establish a community forest in 1999, and then sign a 15-year CF agreement in 2009 that provides the community secured tenure.

In 2012, the local community here made history when, for the first time in Cambodia, the Forestry Administration officially approved their community forest management plan. The management plan covers all of Trapeang ROUNG Community Forest, a 978 hectare forest that includes three villages and is home to 502 families, and provides specific guidelines on how to sustainably manage the forest.

The first year of the plan included several activities ranging from patrolling, building a fire prevention system, posting the sign boards demarcating the boundaries of the reforestation area and more, all of which have been achieved. The community also planted trees and bamboo in degraded forest covering more than seven hectares. The plan provides a long-term,

balanced approach that addresses the multiple uses of the forest, while also ensuring the forest is conserved and restored for the future.

The forest is now steadily being restored: degraded forestland is being filled up with trees and healthy forest is coming back. The local community has realized that when the forests are sustainably managed, it provides benefits to the community and contributes significantly to alleviating poverty. "I never learned to read or write, but I know forests are crucial to my livelihood, as well as that of my neighbors," Roerng points out at a community meeting. "People and forests are interdependent, and caring about forests means caring about our lives."

“ I never learned to read or write, but I know forests are crucial to my livelihood, as well as that of my neighbors. ”



**Story and photography
by Chheng Channy**







The RECOFTC project 'Sustainable Forest Management and Rural Livelihood Enhancement through Community Forestry and REDD Initiatives' in Cambodia aims to gain legal recognition of CF sites from the Royal Government of Cambodia through the signing of a CF agreements; enhancing capacities of communities to sustainably manage and protect the forests and its resources; and, through establishing CF sites, enabling communities to enhance their livelihoods through benefits accruing from legal commercialization of forest products from sustainable forest management whilst maintaining the environmental services of the forest. The project targets CF members in 324 villages in nine provinces of Cambodia. To date, the project has reached almost 252,000 people in these areas.

Kampong Thom province has 82 CF sites, of which 64 sites have been approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and have signed a CF agreement that recognizes the completion of the CF formalization process in Cambodia.

Developing a CF management plan that balances various interests and functions is the next step in CF development after an agreement is signed. An effective CF management plan must be developed in a participatory way, and also can include technical and organizational guidance for communities to sustainably manage their community forest to support improved livelihoods through more organized, coordinated and better planned activities beyond the usual forest protection and patrol work. Thus, the first approved community forest management plan described in this story of change is being viewed by communities as an important step in empowering local communities to collectively decide how their CF should be managed to the benefit of all, building on their existing knowledge and skills, and more systematically investing their joint efforts to enhance their forest.





Indonesia

For my forest, for my people: Women preachers of Meru Betiri



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It's usually only men who get these opportunities. But this training is different – it's for Islamic women preachers to learn about climate change.
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Yuliatin is a 29-year old female preacher who grew up near Meru Betiri National Park in East Java, Indonesia, an area known as one of the last habitats of the Javanese tiger. One day, Yuliatin, who regularly conducts an Islam study class with other women in her village, receives important news. **“I've been invited to a training,” Yuliatin tells her friend Painsi. “I'm so surprised – it's usually only men who get these opportunities. But this training is different – it's for Islamic women preachers to learn about climate change.”**

She marks the training day on her calendar – 5 September, 2011. When the day arrives, Yuliatin and Painsi, who is also invited, go to another village where the training is held. Yuliatin is very excited, especially because the facilitators are from the national government's Center for Forestry Education and Training, RECOFTC and LATIN (Lembaga Alam Tropika Indonesia). She also feels nervous about being able to follow the lessons, as her formal education ended at a young age.

Twenty women preachers from five villages participate in the training. Yuliatin is one of the youngest; most of the women are senior preachers. She tries not to feel discouraged, and keeps in mind that her aim is to simply learn something new.

“I would like you to draw what your forest looked like back in 1999, after all the illegal logging,” the trainer asks at the start of the meeting. As Yuliatin thinks about her drawing, her mind flashes back to that time, 13 years ago...

“Boom!” Yuliatin could clearly hear the sound of a tree hitting the ground. As she lived very close to Meru Betiri National Park, she heard the sounds of falling trees almost every day, from morning to evening. It seemed that everyone was felling trees – even her own family. Yuliatin's father helped support her family by selling firewood, and as a teenager, Yuliatin often went to the forest with her family to gather wood.

Next, the trainer asks them to draw “the forest of your dreams.” Cherished memories from





Yuliatin's childhood flood back – she is six years old, swimming in a small river with her friends. The forest is full of big trees, fruits, tall bamboo and singing birds.

As Yuliatin compares the two drawings, she feels a sense of responsibility. She also took part in illegal logging back in 1999. She wants to help bring back the forest of her childhood.

Yuliatin learns about climate change, REDD+ and Islamic perspectives toward forests. It is an unforgettable two days – not only does she gain new knowledge, but new feelings when, at one point, she is wrapped in plastic to demonstrate how the impacts of climate change feel!

Inspired by the training, Yuliatin is motivated to share what she learned with others and encourages fellow villagers to plant more trees to rehabilitate the surrounding degraded forest. Her husband is the first person she shares with, "I learned a lot from the training. Now I know what climate change and the role of our forest is. I know why floods have been happening more frequently – it's because our forest has been badly degraded. We must plant more trees!" Her husband doesn't react as she had hoped, "You know that planting more trees will reduce

our harvest – our rice, our corn. You talk like you're smart. But I'm not sure a woman should talk about such issues. Don't worry about our forest, as a woman you just need to take care of our kids."

"I'm not against being responsible for domestic work. But this shouldn't mean that I can't do other things," she responds. "If we plant stinky bean, jack fruit or durian trees, we can sell the fruit and earn more income at the same time. If we don't plant more trees, floods will wash away our crops, and we will lose everything. Do you remember the floods in 2001, 2002 and 2007? Read this if you don't believe me." Yuliatin gives him a booklet on climate change and REDD+.

Yuliatin sees that convincing her husband is only the first challenge, and that she may well face more rejection from other people when she talks about climate change. "This is important to me, and I'm prepared to face challenges," Yuliatin says to Painsi. She confides to her friend why it's so important to her: "After junior high school, my family could not afford to pay for my education. So I went to Malaysia to find work to send money to my parents for a new house. I was only a teenager, and I was sure that city life would be better than living in a village - instead

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I'm so grateful to be home. Here I have a small patch of land from my father, and I can generate some income for my family. I want to preserve my forest and my home.”

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it turned out to be the hardest experience of my life. For three years, I was a domestic worker. The family I worked for treated me terribly. They didn't allow me to communicate with anyone, not even my family. I worked from 5am to 2am every day. One time I was accused of stealing clothes and beaten until I was unconscious. Another time, I was locked in a storage room for five days, while the whole family was away. They didn't leave me any food, and I survived on snacks I found in the room. That was the loneliest moment in my life – alone and starving. So that's why I'm so grateful to be home. Here I have a small patch of land from my father, and I can generate some income for my family. I want to preserve my forest and my home.”

One day after the training, she asks four other women preachers to come to her house to discuss what she learned at the training and how they could teach others. “I want to show you something from the training. I will wrap you in this plastic and ask you how you feel,” Yuliatin says as she copies the activity from the training. The women preachers try it and an interesting discussion ensues.

“Taking care of the forest will reduce flooding and erosion, and will give us more sources for water. Water plays a very important role in our worship – Muslims need water to clean their body and soul before praying,” says one of the preachers. At the end, they all understand they must protect the forest and plant more trees, and they agree that the lessons are worth sharing, especially together with the Islamic perspectives.

One day, Yuliatin's friend Paini tells her, “Some people are gossiping that during the training you were 'looking for chicken'. They say you're dressing differently and using make-up.” Yuliatin knows that when a married woman goes outside of the village without her husband, people suspect the woman of having an affair – this is what is meant by 'looking for chicken'.

“Women participating in a training is so uncommon – people just aren't used to it. But my belief is this: when you keep something smelly, it will smell bad. But if you keep something good, it will always be good. I am doing something good for my forest and my people. They will understand this eventually,” Yuliatin says, “I'm



not worried about what people think. My father always told me 'don't be afraid to fight for something right'."

The women preachers arrange their first training and invite 35 women. They soon realize that participants have varying levels of understanding - and agreement. Some question why they are learning about forests during Islamic class and cannot understand the connection. For the next training, Yuliatin develops a new strategy - she plans it together with a religious leader from her village, and also invites a facilitator from RECOFTC's partner, LATIN. She knows that they are well-respected by the community, and that people will listen to them. She conducts the training, with back-up from the two. She finds that this time, the participants are in agreement with the lessons. However, she finds that some participants are illiterate, so Yuliatin gives the handouts to their adult children, and ask their children to explain to their moms.

Yuliatin also shares the lessons beyond members of her Islamic class. She conducts a training for 20 community health volunteers in her village, who quickly grasp the concepts and in turn share with their husbands, asking them to plant more trees. She holds a training for 40 children in primary and junior high school. Yuliatin shares her knowledge in casual conversations with people she meets - during community meetings, or with other parents at school. Though she still faces challenges - sometimes people say she is 'showing off' because she participated in a training - Yuliatin feels she is not alone. She has a network - the other women preachers - that is supportive of each other. She's also very self-motivated, "When you are going to war, you need a weapon. My weapon is my big heart for my community. If the government will allow us to keep managing the forest, I can generate more income so my kids can become better educated." Now she sees that slowly, people



have started to believe in her, including her husband. People are starting to plant more trees. They understand that when they plant trees, they can receive multiple benefits, including non-timber forest products such as stinky beans, mangoes, jack fruit, and more.

Yuliatin's friend Paini recently told her the latest gossip, "People are saying that you are an important person. They are impressed that you were invited to Jakarta to share your experiences in a national event with RECOFTC." With this recognition, Yuliatin feels proud and strong enough to pursue her dream – to see her childhood forest again.

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Story and photography
by Gabriella Lissa



APUKA



While the international debate on REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) has evolved rapidly during the last few years, most discussions on REDD+ and climate change have been limited to policy makers, international organizations and academics, with little or no input from the diverse grassroots stakeholders. Since 2009, RECOFTC has been implementing a regional project on Grassroots Capacity Building for REDD+ with the aim of promoting the effective engagement of diverse grassroots stakeholders in the climate change and REDD+ dialogues in the Asia-Pacific region. From 2009-2013, the project has raised awareness on REDD+ and developed the skills of grassroots stakeholders through a variety of capacity development activities in Indonesia, Lao PDR, Nepal, and Viet Nam (and recently Myanmar).

The project has developed training materials, including manuals, flyers, booklets, posters, radio programs and short videos in national languages of the project's target countries, and organized street plays and puppet shows. More than 700 events such as training of trainers, awareness raising, mass rallies and expert seminars at national, sub-national and grassroots levels, reaching more than 35,000 stakeholders, where one-third are women. As a result, more than 50 percent of the project stakeholders have gained explicit knowledge on climate change; can explain links between forests and climate change, and the concepts of REDD+; and are aware of potential benefits from and challenges of REDD+.

Money from honey



Running for his life, Rabani doesn't wait to watch what happens. All the boys are running helter-skelter, some with amused looks and others ready to burst into tears. Suddenly, he hears buzzing right above his head, then a pang of pain pierces just below his left eye. Instinctively his hands go up to his face, but too late! Another sting pierces near his right eye. His hands frantically rub at the bee stings, to no avail. Three days later, Rabani is finally able to open his eyes fully and see the smirks on the faces of his primary school classmates. Thus begins Rabani's journey with bees, at the age of eight.

In the afternoons, Rabani watches the older kids from school collect entire honey combs from the forest. "Watch and learn," he tells himself, for soon he plans to get his own honey-combs. He is already familiar with the forest, from the many trips he made with his father, now it is just a matter of finding the bees.

Nearly 30 years later, in 2010, Rabani finds himself shocked at what he hears: "You have to find the queen bee and the rest will follow into your hive box." "What?" he thinks. "All this time I was getting stung while using my sarong to catch the bees when all I had to do was find the queen bee!" Rabani is attending a training on bee-keeping and management, conducted by RECOFTC and the University of Hasanuddin. It is one of the many trainings that the village head has been inviting the community members to attend. That day in April, and in subsequent trainings, Rabani learns all he needs to set up a new hive and harvest honey.

By the end of the second training, Rabani sells his first bottle of honey to the trainer himself, for 35,000 Indonesian Rupiah (US\$4). It is the

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Perhaps my children won't get to go to the best schools in the city, but they must have a healthy and nutritious diet. If you are saying that honey is good for your health, then you must teach me how to keep bees.

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first time he is paid for his honey. Within a week, he gets a call from the trainer's hometown – Makassar, the largest city in South Sulawesi. The caller says, "I tasted the honey from your farm, and I would like to buy 200 bottles of honey from you." Rabani answers, "I am so glad that you like the honey, but I am sorry I do not have that much honey to sell to you." He hangs up the phone with a mixture of excitement and disappointment. He knows his honey is good, but he needs a plan to produce more.

The next day, Rabani decides it is time to act on a recommendation made during his bee-keeping training – in order to develop and sustain a non-timber forest product enterprise, he needs to start a group of bee-keepers and set up an enterprise.

He begins speaking with farmers from across the village, including his elder brother who has been

keeping bees for years. By the end of the week, Rabani recruits 13 community members to come to a meeting. Rabani shares the news about the call from Makassar with them and tells them about his plans to start a honey enterprise. Some look interested and others don't understand why it is necessary. One shares his doubts, "But honey doesn't have much value, why should I invest time into bee-keeping, it's easier to get the honeycomb from the forest...anyway, you just got one call."

Rabani shares what he learned about honey from the training – how easy it is to catch bees and the health benefits of honey, "I just knew that honey was good for you and now I know exactly why, let me tell you..." Suddenly more faces light up. They are pleasantly surprised at how easy it is to catch bees and what they only think of as something 'sweet' to enjoy is indeed more than just sweet.

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Saenuddin is one of the people listening to Rabani. He didn't attend the trainings and he is not an avid bee-keeper. But while listening to Rabani, his interest peaks when he mentions the health benefits of honey. Saenuddin thinks of his two small children and says, "Perhaps my children won't get to go to the best schools in the city, but they must have a healthy and nutritious diet. If you are saying that honey is good for your health, then you must teach me how to keep bees."

Over the next few weeks, Rabani trains eight community members who agree to form a group. He shows them how to make the boxes, the tools they need, how to catch the bees and harvest the honey. Within a few months, the group has a total of 100 boxes. Today, four years after the training, Rabani says, "thank God I learned how to keep bees!"







The trainings that Rabani participated in are part of RECOFTC's Enhancing Capacity for Improved Community-based Forest Management Project (2008-2010) in Indonesia. The goal of the project was to contribute to the enhanced livelihood security of Indonesian forest dependent communities through greater accountability and responsiveness of public policies and institutions in natural resource governance. The project enhanced the capacity of forest-dependent communities to secure forest rights through effective engagement in the policy dialogue process (among other interventions), as well as to establish sustainable forest product based enterprises. In order to support local partner organizations and forest community groups in organizing sustainable forest management, the project developed a Memorandum of Understanding with Hasanuddin University and the Bantaeng district government. The second poorest district in South Sulawesi, Bantaeng has now become the model for village forests in the country. The district has high potential for developing non-timber forest products (NTFPs), based on which the project helped identify and enhance the development of specific NTFP-based enterprises.

The main activities conducted in target districts over the project duration reached 1,525 participants who took part in 64 different activities, including trainings and focus group discussions at the community and provincial levels. Trainings that Rabani and his fellow community members took part in as part of the project include: community rights in forest management, forest community enterprise development (including bee-keeping management) and participatory land use planning.



Lao PDR





A family's wealth

An unusual sense of foreboding filled the air one hot summer day in Houaythong village, Lao PDR. Something in the way his wife says, "Take care of the kids," before leaving their house to graze their carabaos gives Don Say a feeling of anxiousness.

A couple of hours pass uneventfully, then suddenly a neighbor bursts into his house, "Come quickly! Your wife had an accident!"

Don Say arrives at the scene of the accident and immediately realizes it's too late - his wife and mother-in-law lie lifeless in a field. He learns they were trapped in a burning rice field and died from smoke inhalation.

Don Say buries his wife, but not their dreams of a secure future for their children. Often, he visits the teak trees that he and his wife planted in 1996 and in 2005. He remembers his wife telling him, "We have three kids to support. Why don't we plant more teak trees on our smaller lot? Remember, you said, 'Teak is our future'."

Because he and his wife consider teak trees as their piggy bank for their children's education, Don Say does his best to keep his family afloat with rice farming, chicken livestock-raising and fishing in the Namtha River. When the situation gets tougher, he relies on the forest for food and medicine. He collects bamboo shoots, vegetables, mushrooms and medicinal plants for subsistence.

Years pass by and things don't get easier. Paying tuition fees for his children is a constant worry. Harvesting his teak trees before they are ready for sale is a constant possibility, but he does his best to sell something else - his cow or carabaos - before resorting to his teak trees.

In early 2012, fate tests him. One of his neighbors tells him a rumor, "Outsiders from the city





“ Teak is our future. ”

are grabbing land – both vacant lots and teak farms!” Don Say says, “This is not right. I already lost my wife, and I can’t allow our dreams to be taken away too.” With his cows and carabaos gone, he gambles his most precious possession: his teak trees.

The next day, Don Say goes to meet a small sawmill shop owner from a nearby village. “I would like to sell some of my teak trees,” Don Say says loudly, above the noise of the saws.

“Okay, let’s go to your plantation,” replies the sawmill owner. He quickly inspects the trees and asks, “How many are you selling?” “Eight,” is Don Say’s quick reply. The sawmill owner inspects the trees again. “Okay, I will buy your eight trees for 12,000 baht (US\$370). Take it or leave it.” Don Say doesn’t have a clue if the price is high or low, and accepts without bargaining. Faster than a bullet, the sound of saws fill the air. Moments later, his trees fall one by one. And each tree that falls makes his heart sink.

A few days later, he buys 600 rubber tree seedlings and plants them in the vacant lot

beside his small teak plantation. He tells his father, “I hope the rubber trees I planted will deter anyone from grabbing my land and my teak trees. I am having sleepless nights because of this land-grabbing rumor.”

“Son, the only way to be sure is to get a government certificate for your plantation,” his father advises him.

In a reversal of fortune, the second half of 2012 brings Don Say good luck. One morning, he hears Mr Humpheng, the village chief, announcing a training on teak plantation certification and management. However, Don Say is reluctant - he fears the government may actually be taking his land and teak trees, or that high fees might be charged for the training. At the dinner table that night, his eldest daughter begs him to join the training and says, “Maybe this is what you have been waiting for. Give it try.”

Still in two minds, Don Say decides to attend the training. He is surprised when he arrives and finds 30 others. Moments later, Mr Ong, the lead trainer, starts the training.



This certificate is not only proof that the trees are yours, you can also use this certificate to get a loan in the future. RECOFTC is working with us to find banks and financing institutions that will make this a reality.



Mr Ong explains, "This training is aimed at helping you better manage your teak plantations. After the training, those who are interested in receiving certificates can register. We will discuss how your certificates can be used as collateral for loans, which means you do not need to sell your young teak trees or cut the mature ones if you need cash." Immediately the room is buzzing, as farmers discuss the information with interest.

During the training, a farmer asks, "Is the certification program free? I heard we need to pay a hefty amount." "The program is free. All you need to do is clean your plantations for inspection," Mr Ong replies. Another farmer asks, "I heard that the government will use the certificate to stop us from cutting or selling our own trees. Is this the purpose of the certificate?" Mr Ong replies with smile, "Absolutely not true. Your certificate is your defense to anyone who might attempt to grab your land or to shortchange you when it's time to sell your teak trees. The government will not use it to restrict you." The crowd seems pleased with the

explanations. At the end of the discussion, Mr Ong calls on the farmers who are interested in the certification program to register. Everyone signs up.

A couple of days later, a government officer interviews Don Say and reminds him to start cleaning his plantations, and to clearly mark the boundaries. He is given an inspection date - 29 September, 2012 - for GPS boundary-marking, teak tree counting and measurement.

While he awaits this date, Don Say builds a bamboo ladder to prune his teak trees, just the way Mr Ong explained. A week after pruning, his teak trees seem to have grown straighter and bigger, but he is not sure whether his eyes are deceiving him. Nonetheless, he is happy he decided to attend the training and became part of the certification program.

Don Say and his father eagerly await the arrival of the inspection team. Finally, Mr Songphet and Mr Khammuan from the Provincial Agriculture

and Forestry Office (PAFO) arrive. They proceed to the plantation sites. Don Say's face brightens up as each of his teak trees is inspected, measured and recorded. He wishes his wife is there with him to witness their 'family wealth' finally being secured from abusive traders and land grabbers.

One month later, Don Say receives the certificate from PAFO indicating the number of trees, volume and estimated value of timber. Mr Songphet explains to Don Say, "This certificate is not only proof that the trees are yours, you can also use this certificate to get a loan in the

future. RECOFTC is working with us to find banks and financing institutions that will make this a reality."

Don Say leaves the PAFO office in Houayxai fulfilled and with the certificates in hand. He feels his journey to secure his teak trees for his children's future is complete. With the possibility of getting loans from banks without sacrificing his trees, he no longer feels worried. Finally, he feels his ownership of his teak trees is secure.



**Story and photography
by Jephraim Oro**

This story is part of RECOFTC's Livelihood Improvement through Generation and Ownership of Forest Information by Local People in Products and Services Markets, or ForInfo Project. The project is being implemented from 2011-2014. It is one of the many activities that RECOFTC undertakes to enhance resource rights for local people, improve forest governance, and achieve fairer share of benefits.

The teak smallholder plantations component aims to help teak farmers to apply sound silvicultural practices and increase the value of their holdings through issuance of ownership certificates recognized by the government and financial institutions, and by securing user rights, improving efficiency and methods in harvesting and transporting of timber, and trading between smallholder and sawmillers using timber volume measurements and plantation inventories.

Ultimately, the project aims to lay the groundwork for a sustainable, efficient and competitive forest-based livelihoods system through the use of innovative approaches and close collaboration between smallholders, forestry officials, sawmill owners, timber traders and credit associations.

From 2011 to 2014, RECOFTC-ForInfo has helped PAFO/DAFO to provide teak ownership/management certificates to more than 100 farmers in Bokeo, Lao PDR. And with the introduction of the 'moveable assets' policy in Lao PDR, RECOFTC-ForInfo team is optimistic that banks and micro-financing institutions will soon agree to accept standing teak trees as collateral for loans.









Myanmar

A black and white photograph of a large, dense tree in a field. A person is standing at the base of the tree, providing a sense of scale. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

Moving forward faster — while managing forests equitably



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RECOFTC understood the complexity of the situation and the strong need for CSOs and government to communicate with each other. Having a third party to coordinate the discussions made it less daunting. It came as a pleasant surprise when I learned that both sides agreed to come to the table and talk

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Things were not moving as quickly or as smoothly as Salai Cung Lian Thawng had hoped. As an advisor for a local programme (called Pyoe Pin) aimed at strengthening civil society, Salai's job is to foster networks around issues of forestry and land governance. It is not an easy task. While the Myanmar government's target for community forest land is 2.27 million acres (918,636 hectares) by 2030, in 2010, the area of community forest land was only around 100,000 acres (40,468 hectares).

"As a member of civil society in Myanmar, the idea of working together with the Myanmar government seemed improbable at the time," says Salai. "Still, there was a general feeling on both ends that collaboration could help things move forward faster. If civil society and the Government keep working separately on community forestry issues and aren't aware of the work that the other is doing, then we



Without RECOFTC’s intervention to form the roundtables, the Community Forestry National Working Group would have never formed.”



could be working on the same thing and not even know it. We were delaying progress on community forestry because we didn’t know how to work with each other.”

“I was unsure of how to start the process. With all the new tasks and duties facing a new government, community forestry was not the number one priority. Plus, CSOs were different from government; a different work style, a different way that information is shared, and most importantly, the fact that CSOs were not government staff. Government departments were only comfortable cooperating with other government departments,” continues Salai.

Ad-hoc collaborations, where Salai contacted individuals he knows in the government, sometimes took place, though these were mostly on the local level where CSOs and government staff interact more often. But there was no formal engagement and coordination between CSOs and government at the national level.

In 2012, Salai was skeptical but enthused when RECOFTC contacted him about the potential to bring CSOs and government staff to the same table for a roundtable discussion about the barriers to establishing community forestry in Myanmar. RECOFTC took the lead to contact both sides, explain their common goals and to encourage them to sit together to have an open discussion.

“RECOFTC understood the complexity of the situation and the strong need for CSOs and government to communicate with each other. Having a third party to coordinate the discussions made it less daunting. It came as a pleasant surprise when I learned that both sides agreed to come to the table and talk,” says Salai.

Three roundtable discussions were held in 2012, offering for the first time, a platform for participants to discuss the challenges to expanding community forestry further and making it more sustainable. Altogether 39 people from the Planning and Statistics Department, Forest Department, Dry Zone Greening Department, University of Forestry, and representatives from civil society took part. At the roundtable meetings, participants gave priority to six main interventions that could support community forestry development. They include the development of a community forestry law, establishment of a community forestry government unit, a capacity building and research program for government and non-government personnel, establishment of a national working group and a neutral platform for practitioners. Ideas and plans for making each intervention viable were discussed. Participants from both government and civil society were happy to share their commitments and contributions to support these interventions. They appreciated the roundtables as a good start for bringing practitioners from government,



academic institutes, and civil society together, and supported the idea of holding such meetings regularly.

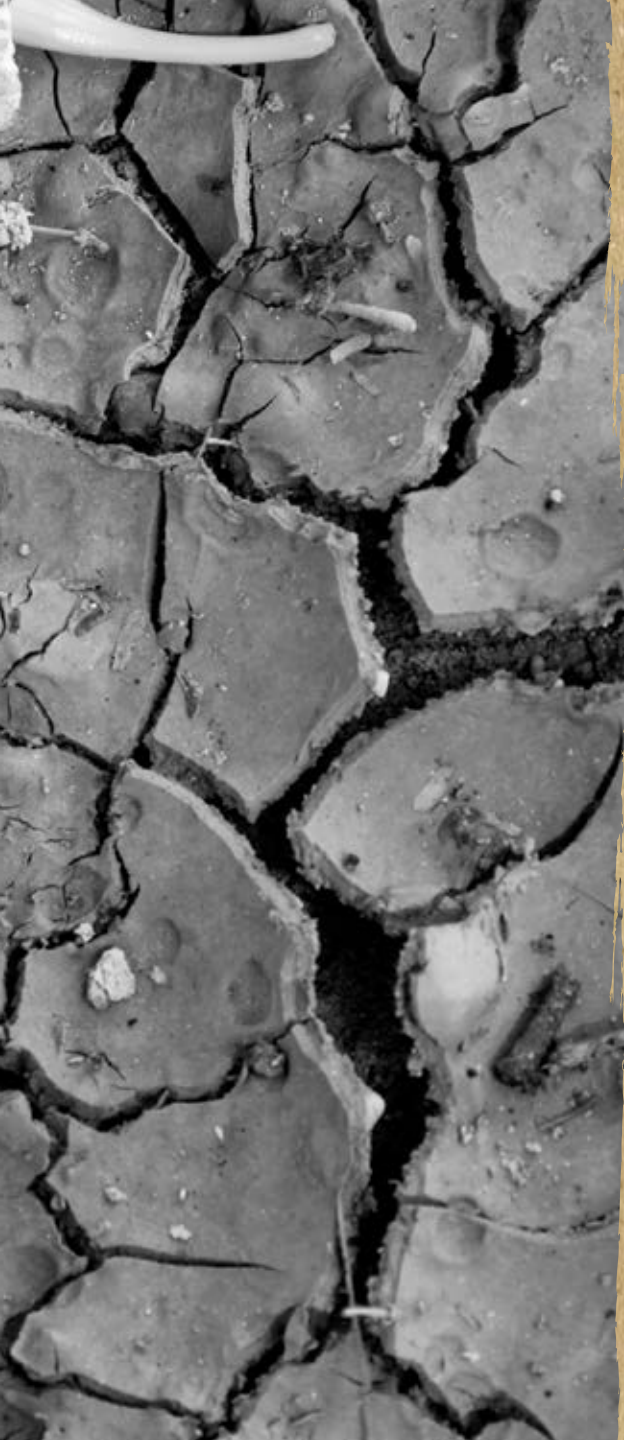
“The discussions went smoother than I expected. Both sides agreed that the lack of collaboration and communication made things more difficult. I’m particularly hopeful about the potential of the Community Forestry National Working Group (CFNWG), through which government officials and CSO staff, as well as other organizations, can work together regularly,” says Salai.

After the roundtables, a Terms of Reference for the Community Forestry National Working Group were agreed in 2013. The CFNWG aims to build collaboration and information sharing between different organizations, both governmental and non-governmental. Salai says, “Without RECOFTC’s intervention to form the roundtables, the Community Forestry National Working Group would have never formed.” The first official national CF working group meeting will be in 2014.



Story by Emily Etue
Photography by Ronnakorn Triraganon





Myanmar is an original signatory to RECOFTC's charter in 1987 and was active in the early years of the organization. Over the course of 20 plus years, RECOFTC has trained a significant number of Myanmar nationals, many of whom are in key forestry positions in government institutions and civil society today. Even before recent political changes elicited strong international interest in Myanmar, RECOFTC has been working in the country with various partners and has significantly ramped up its country engagement in the last year.

A key challenge facing Myanmar as it opens up to the world is the careful management of its abundant natural resources, including its forests. Building the country's capacity to manage its forests equitably while protecting them and using them as a sustainable natural resource is a big task, but one which begins with small steps.

RECOFTC's Myanmar Country Program supported the National Community Forestry Roundtable Meetings and the development of the Community Forestry National Working Group, which aims to bring stakeholders together to discuss and find solutions to make community forestry in Myanmar more progressive. RECOFTC is also conducting a capacity development needs assessment in the country and developing a national CF training team.



Nepal



Connecting the dots



Hom Bahadur Gurung stands in the crowded meeting room packed by the Hariyali community forestry user group from Bardaghat, Nepal. Over 40 people wait for him to begin. While many of the community members have heard about climate change, most have little idea of what it really means. The meeting is full of women because they are the ones who work in and manage the forest. Word has spread that water sources may no longer be consistent, and they want to – need to – know more. So the group gathers the funds – 10 dollars – and hire Hom for the day.

As a child, Hom grew up near Pokhara, a forested area of Nepal where fires burned freely and outsiders came in and ravished the forest without any order. At the time, he knew nothing about forest management – it was non-existent in Nepal. Still, Hom understood the importance of forests and from an early age, had an insatiable desire to know everything about trees.

It was while he was working in a temporary agroforestry job in Saudi Arabia that he first made the connection between healthy forests and local weather, water and agriculture. The area in which he was working was sweltering and bone dry, “only half an hour of rain a year,” he recalls. But the government and local people realized the role of forests in water management and started planting trees. Soon fruit orchards sprang up in areas where nothing had previously grown. He was fascinated, and returned home to Nepal determined to help communities around him better manage their forests.

He became a key member of his community in Chisapani (Nawalparasi district), actively campaigning for community forestry. It was 2001, and community forestry was beginning to blossom in the Terai area of Nepal. The

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Before the training from RECOFTC’s Grassroots project, I would talk all day trying to throw all the knowledge I had into the room. I was so excited to share all my knowledge that I didn’t quite know how to properly teach people. Participants would learn facts, but didn’t quite know what to do with them or how to put them together. I learned how to communicate clearly, rather than simply lecturing.

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RECOFTC was the first and only one that connected the dots. I learned not only facts, but how those facts have impacts on the ground. And most importantly, I have learned how to teach so that the community listens.

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government was granting rights to communities to manage their own forests. Hom was right there in the action, “I was the most curious person. How it happens. Why it happens. The community would always send me off to the trainings because I could not stop asking questions.” Then, in 2011, his community sent him to attend a RECOFTC training on REDD+ and climate change mitigation, organized under its regional project on grassroots capacity building for REDD+.

“Before the training from RECOFTC’s Grassroots project, I would talk all day trying to throw all the knowledge I had into the room. I was so excited to share all my knowledge that I didn’t quite know how to properly teach people. Participants would learn facts, but didn’t quite know what to do with them or how to put them together. I learned how to communicate clearly, rather than simply lecturing,” he recounts.

Now, as he stands in front of his eager audience in Bardaghat, he smiles broadly and begins, “These cards are for you to use at any point

during the day. Whenever you have a question that you may be embarrassed to ask in front of the group, write it down, and I will try to answer your questions throughout the day,” he states as he passes out note cards to all of the participants. From his experience, he knows the cards show him the true knowledge of the participants. He is able to see the gaps in their knowledge, so that he can fill the void, wherever it is. Today is no different. He glances at the cards participants pass to him, and realizes there are lots of myths floating around the community that reflect a lack of basic knowledge of climate change. He now knows how to make his training more effective.

Hom is thus able to connect the science of climate change to the community’s everyday life. He first focuses on the basics of climate change and the potential impacts on the community – shifting weather patterns that can have a direct impact on their crops and water reliability. The community appears distressed, members of the group whispering to one another, worried. At just the right time, Hom changes direction, “Our forest is helping the problem. Without our







forest, this problem could become much worse. We are a part of the solution.” The faces around the room quickly change as Hom reinforced the pride the community has for their forest. “We need to protect our forest,” he says, “but we need to go further. We must be ready for the changes that are coming. We need to create plans to protect our water sources and better manage our grazing animals. In the future, the resources may become more scarce and we need to preserve them.”

At the end of the day the community meeting room is bustling with members drawing out plans and asking questions, “I have attended many trainings that have taught me many technical aspects of forestry,” Hom recalls, “but RECOFTC was the first and only one that connected the dots. I learned not only facts, but how those facts have impacts on the ground. And most importantly, I have learned how to teach so that the community listens.”

**Story and photography
by Nick Wilder**





Since first hiring Hom to conduct a training on climate change in 2011, the Hariyali community forestry user group has hired him back twice to help them create plans to adapt to the affects of climate change. They now have two main initiatives in action. In order to conserve water, they created a protected area near their water source. In addition, they have drafted a grazing plan for the district that both sustains their forest and protects their water sources.

The training that Hom attended was one of 16 trainings of its kind conducted in Nepal by RECOFTC's Grassroots Capacity Building for REDD+ project in partnership with Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN). Since 2009, RECOFTC has been implementing the regional project, with the aim of promoting the effective engagement of diverse grassroots stakeholders in the climate change and REDD+ dialogues in Asia-Pacific region. For more information, see p 26.





Thailand



City girl

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We're part of the 'social media generation' - we have access to all kinds of information on our smart phones. But I've never thought about how our forests are being destroyed, or the issues of climate change and people's rights... it's all new to me. We need to do something too.

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Kan is a city girl who has lived her whole life in Bangkok. As a high school student, her biggest worry is getting to class on time. Rushing to beat the bell, she carelessly dumps her plastic water bottle on a table, next to those left behind by other students. Reaching the classroom, she sees that the teacher hasn't arrived yet. All of her friends are chatting, many on mobile phones. Kan scans the room for an empty plug, and sees they're all being used by other students charging their smart phones.

Her teacher arrives and makes an announcement, "Is anyone interested in going to the Young Seedlings Network Camp at Erawan Waterfalls?" Kan listens with interest. "You'll learn about forests and climate change and have a chance to meet youth from the provinces," the teacher continues. A chance to see the waterfalls and have a change of scenery, Kan thinks. When the teacher finishes, Kan raises her hand to join, motivated mainly by the chance for a trip out of town.

Weeks pass and finally Kan arrives at the camp. The first night, she's moved by the stars dazzling in the sky with only the sound of wind whistling melodies intertwined with nature. Kan's friends from the city – Fern, Baiteoy, Oan and Sand – have also joined the camp. They've never seen the stars shine so bright.

At the camp, they meet several youths who have already been part of the Young Seedlings Network for some time. Kan is impressed by the projects that the rural youth have already initiated: recycling forest litter to earn funds for community activities like tree planting; collecting land-use information in their villages; measuring the carbon, growth and water usage of their trees; creating a community-based learning center about bamboo; establishing a farmer's





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Now my dream is to one day be a teacher in a remote area, teaching about environmental issues so that others realize the value of nature just as I have come to. I want to do something for our world.

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market for community forest products; and creating short films related to their local natural resources.

Time flies and Kan and her friends meet up on the last night of the camp. Kan's friend Fern says, "We need to do something too. We're part of the 'social media generation' - we have access to all kinds of information on our smart phones. But I've never thought about how our forests are being destroyed, or the issues of climate change and people's rights...it's all new to me."

Her words resonate with Kan, who thinks about what her role could be in all of this, "If people have the information in advance, they'll

be better able to make decisions about climate change." Fern says, "Tomorrow we're going back to Bangkok, and we all want to share what we've learned here. Let's design a show - something that includes all we learned from this camp, something that would be relevant to the everyday life of students in Bangkok. Shows at our campus are always the same old thing about sex education. One about the environment will surely get attention."

Back in Bangkok, Kan meets her advisor, who is in charge of the school drama club. She convinces her teacher to add a show on environmental issues into the drama curriculum.



“Before the camp, I admit I was pretty apathetic about the community and environment. After my experience with the Young Seedlings Network, I have a fuller understanding of the role of natural resources not only in my life but others, especially youth who live near forests. But most importantly, I’m trying to pass on what I’ve learned,” says Kan. “Now my dream is to one day be a teacher in a remote area, teaching about environmental issues so that others realize the value of nature just as I have come to. I want to do something for our world.”

**Story and photography
by Thippawan Maidee and
Atcharaporn Daisai**



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THE CENTER FOR
PILE AND FORESTS

RECOFTC's Young Seedlings Network increases opportunities for rural and urban youth in Thailand to learn about community forestry and natural resource management in a series of events that encourage youth to articulate and think critically about the role they can play in sustainable forest management.

Participating in the Young Seedlings Network helps youths gain the confidence and technical skills to support and, in some cases, spearhead these community projects. The program builds a community where participants can connect through a shared commitment to social values and responsibilities, while strengthening their knowledge and confidence – ultimately fostering young community forestry ambassadors.

In Thailand, more than 500 youth have participated in Young Seedlings Network activities between 2008 and 2013.





Transforming conflict into harmony in Mae Ra Ma Luang Refugee Camp





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At first, I only thought about benefits for myself and my family. I admit that I didn't care about the forest in Thailand. I only thought about how the Thai villagers were blaming us, and I blamed them back. But then, through working on a project together, I had the opportunity to meet regularly with the district chief, local agencies, local government and NGOs. We shared information and I started to understand and even sympathize with the villagers.

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When Pati Phipui finally arrives at the Mae Ra Ma Luang Refugee Camp he is overcome with relief. He is one of thousands of refugees in the camp – all Karen people from Burma who crossed the border from Myanmar into Thailand's Mae Hong Son Province fleeing the Burmese army. "This is a safe place," assures the camp officer, "We have food – rice, beans, sugar – and shelter, everything you need."

But as more and more refugees arrive, the situation in the camp changes. “There isn’t enough food and basic provisions for all the refugees. I need to do something,” says Pati Phipui to a sympathetic camp officer, “I will look for work nearby. Some of the others here are being hired by local people as day laborers for farm work. I know this isn’t allowed under the rules of the camp, but I have no choice.”

The officer personally agrees, “The local people here are Karen, same as you. They’re basically your relatives. So in the planting season, if they need help, why not hire you? It’s a win-win situation. I know that people here in the refugee camp need an income due to the lack of food here.”

But soon it becomes apparent that not everyone is able to find work, and not everyone is as sympathetic as the officer. Pati Phipui and other refugees learn that the media is carrying news about refugees who have come to Thailand and are ‘causing a lot of trouble.’ The refugees are portrayed as ‘invaders’, foraging the forest, hunting wild animals and destroying the forest for plantations. In the public eye, the Karen refugees have become a group of criminals. Pati Phipui is incredulous that camp residents are portrayed as ‘criminals’, and looks to his trusted camp officer for understanding, “If we hunt and forage, it’s only because we are trying to make ends meet. Why can’t others understand our situation?”

The guard is sympathetic, but tells him, “People think that you are only thinking about your own family, and not about how surrounding villages also need the forest for their benefit. But you will have your chance to speak at a camp meeting.” Pati Phipui learns that RECOFTC and The Border Consortium (TBC) - are bringing together representatives from his camp and another

nearby camp, Mae La Ou Camp, with local government officials and representatives from surrounding villages to discuss the situation. He’s sure it will be a good opportunity to explain his side.

The day of the meeting arrives, and the room is packed. A local village leader is the first to speak, “People in the camps are destroying our forest – and they must be prohibited from collecting forest products. Furthermore, the camp NGOs are damaging our roads with their big trucks going to the camps. They also need to stop this. These things are affecting our lives and we can’t tolerate it anymore.”

Pati Phipui listens, and for the first time sees things from the eyes of the villagers. The meeting goes on for several hours as everyone airs their point of view, one side blaming for this, the other side blaming for that. Finally, when everyone is exhausted, the meeting ends – not much has been solved, but they agree to meet again to try and find solutions to the problems.

Over time, the group continues to meet and share information. One day, a guest speaker arrives and talks to them about forest management. Moa Je, a villager, confides to Baan Mae Ra Ma Lhuang, the village leader, “I’m confused,” admits Moa Je, “why do we need to talk about forests, water and even our own culture? Aren’t we here to ban the camp residents from the forest?”

But slowly, through trainings, the relationship between forest and people – both villagers and camp residents – becomes clearer. The trainings include exploring and monitoring the forest, learning about the difference between degraded and healthy forest, and methods to increase soil fertility. Together, the group agrees on their own project – to explore the Le Ga Ti water source





to make a management plan to restore and conserve the area as a fishery sanctuary. Baan Mae Ra Ma Lhuang seeks out his fellow villager, Moa Je, "At first I was discouraged and asked myself why we have to have so many meetings. But then I realized when we were working on the project together that we started to trust each other. We came up with this project only through the process of consultation and listening to each other."

Pati Phipui listens and shares his view too, "At first, I only thought about benefits for myself and my family. I admit that I didn't care about the forest in Thailand. I only thought about how the Thai villagers were blaming us, and I blamed them back. But then, through working on a project together, I had the opportunity to meet regularly with the district chief, local agencies, local government and NGOs. We shared information and I started to understand and even sympathize with the villagers."

Three years pass and the group continues to meet. Moa Je is elected as a local government representative, "Three years ago, I was just a youth with no confidence in talking to anyone. But I joined in every training organized by RECOFTC, and I've grown – in my thinking, my speaking and in my ability to plan activities. I have new skills in natural resource planning and GPS mapping. I love my work, it's very important to me," says Moa Je.

Pati Phipui is now the Chair of the Collaborative Management Committee for Sustainable Natural Resource Management, formally established in 2012. Committee members include representatives from two refugee camps and three Thai villages located near the camps. The group's model of collaboration through participatory processes is being shared and replicated in other refugee camps, and the

benefits of participatory processes have become clear to all.

As Pati Phipui strolls in the camp, he walks past the bamboo hut they use as the meeting room, made from bamboo planted by camp residents and villagers. He passes a career training center and the school that teaches in both English and the local language. Natural resources around the camp are being well managed, and rules developed by the management committee are in place. Some children run past, laughing. He smiles.

**Story and photography
by Somying Soontornwong**

In 2011-14, RECOFTC and TBC jointly implemented a pilot project in the Nupo Refugee Camp in Tak province as well as Mae Ra Ma Luang Refugee Camp aimed at strengthening refugee and local Thai community cooperation in natural resource management, and exploring sustainable and environmentally sensitive livelihood opportunities for both refugees and Thai villagers using a community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) model. CBNRM fosters the management of natural resources and helps to identify sustainable livelihood activities within specific natural environments. Developing such community capacity ensures that resources will be there for use by communities generation after generation and as a result lowers the potential of conflict with neighbouring villages that also rely on these resources.

Stakeholder networks have been established in pilot areas, bringing together refugees, Thai villagers, local authorities, the Royal Forest Department of Thailand, the Wildlife Sanctuary Umphang (Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation), the Royal Thai Project, Sueb Foundation and the Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT). The main focus is on increasing understanding and strengthening relationships between these actors through various capacity building activities. Activities include a socio-economic survey, climate change and participatory ecosystem assessment and participatory training for sustainable natural resource management.

Refugees and Thai communities worked together in this capacity development process in order to establish effective community-based structures and develop ideas and plans for shared and mutually beneficial activities. Their focus is in the field of livelihoods, environmental conservation and reforestation including bamboo and tree planting, and watershed management, among others.

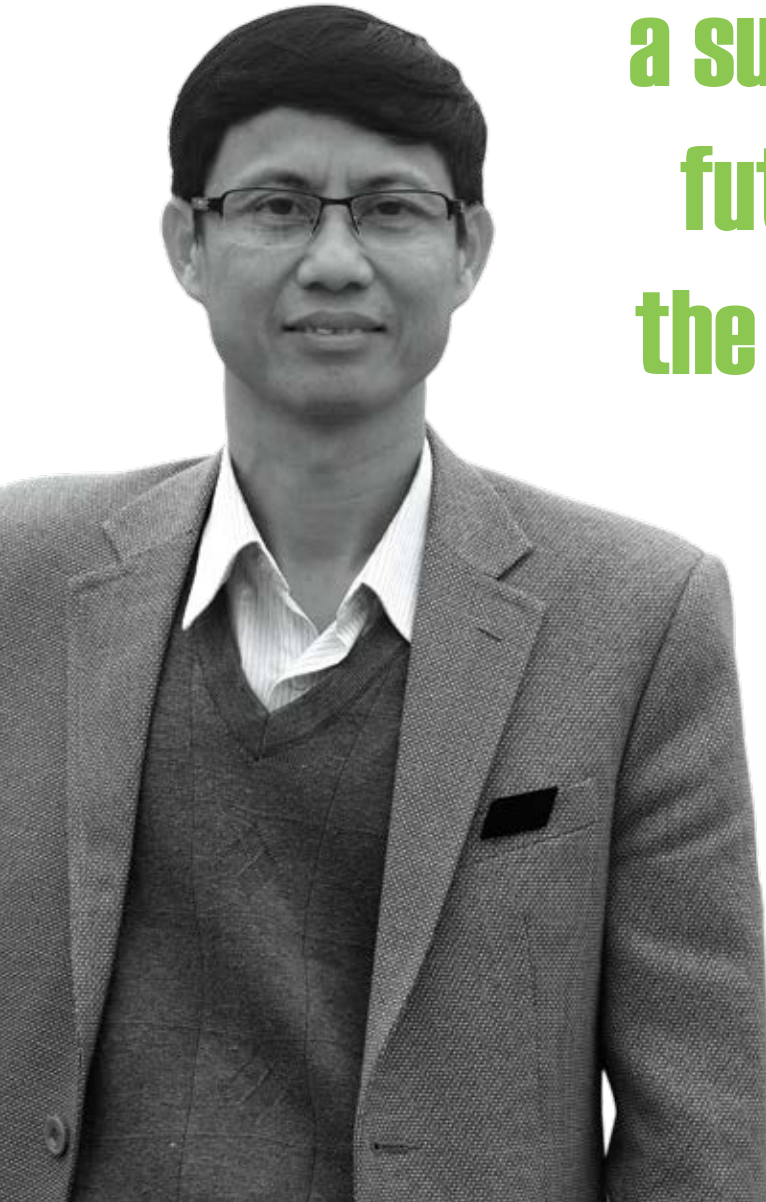








Viet Nam



Paving the way to a sustainable future with the Red Book

On the trip back to the university, Hoang Huy Tuan passes a patchwork of landscapes. In the blink of an eye, acacia plantations change to patches of remnant natural forest, then to large swathes of cleared land. The road crosses rivers, and changes from paved to dirt and back to paved again. A truck blocks the road ahead, laden high with pale acacia logs, glistening in the light rain. The acacia logs bring his thoughts to the local community in Thon Bon village, a small village of houses built from mud and palm leaves and inhabited by K'Tu people (Ba Na ethnic minority).

Tuan, an instructor from the Hue Agro-Forestry University, has been coming to the village and surrounding area for several years – first as a researcher on forest tenure and benefit sharing arrangements among local communities, and then as a trainer aimed at promoting legal titles to forests among local communities.

In 2005, the village received the legal title (called the Red Book) to 60 hectares of forest land. Of this, 50 hectares was designated by the local community to remain as natural forest where villagers can gather forest products like mushrooms and insects. The remaining 10 hectares was designated for growing acacia trees for profit.

When Tuan first came to the village in 2008 he soon realized, however, that local community members did not have enough information about what having a legal title meant, and there was no plan for what should or could be done with the forest land. Tuan thought, “There is a huge gap between the policy level and community level that needs to be addressed. If people don’t understand their rights, how can they manage the forest in a sustainable way?”

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There is a huge gap between the policy level and community level that needs to be addressed. If people don’t understand their rights, how can they manage the forest in a sustainable way?

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The Red Book is important to us. Without it, how can people in other villages know the forest belongs to us? If someone logs in the forest, we cannot prevent them.



With this in mind, Tuan organized the first training for the community in 2008. However, he soon found that community members seemed to expect him to bring them a huge investment for livelihoods development, “How much money will you invest?” community members ask Tuan over and over again. Tuan explains to the village head, and then to the whole community, during many meetings “I have come to bring knowledge - so you know your rights.”

After working to build trust with the community, Tuan finally gets proof that his work is paying off. In 2010, he receives a call from Le Xuan Xiem, the new village head of Thon Bon, who confides in him in a worried tone, “We lost the Red Book. The previous village head didn’t pay any attention to keep this important document.” “So how may I help you?” Tuan asks.

This was actually what the village head was looking to hear, an offer of help, which not only he but the whole village needed, “Could you please help us to re-obtain the Red Book?” “But Xiem, do you think it is really necessary? It’s just a piece of paper you don’t even use,” Tuan tests. “The Red Book is important to us. Without it, how can people in other villages know the forest belongs to us? If someone logs in the forest, we cannot stop them,” Xiem continues.

Tuan smiles as he listens to Xiem. Despite the bad news, he could see that Xiem realizes the importance of the Red Book. This is what he has been trying to help the Thon Bon villagers to understand.

Tuan persuades the authority in Nam Dong District to reissue the Red Book to Thon Bon, where it is now well-kept by the village head. After this event he told Tuan, “I will keep it safe for the sake of our villagers.”

A few months later Tuan once again visits the village but this time with a group of people from Dak Lak province as part of a study tour. Villagers in Thon Bon are now confident to share their knowledge and their understanding of their rights and responsibilities with others. Tuan knows that there are many more villagers that need the same support as Thon Bon village. If he wants to have an impact in all these villages, there are many more people who must be equipped with knowledge. He thinks about how his work shows the crucial role of forest governance, which may result in the success or failure at the macro level of the whole forestry sector. In addition to local communities, more forestry officers must also firmly understand basics about forest governance.





In his most recent trip to the village, Tuan learns that the village has harvested four ha of the acacia trees that they planted in 2006. The profits brought them a new road and 1.3 million dong (approximately US\$65) to each of the 32 households. The villagers are pleased to share their good news and their upcoming plans, “We’d like to plant more acacia this year.” Tuan realizes the village now has the opportunity to further utilize their knowledge in forest management, combining livelihoods development and sustainable forest management – and he strongly believes that community forestry can contribute to ultimately lift the local community out of poverty.



**Story and photography
by Xuan Phung
and Elsa Dominish**

The Forest Governance Learning Group connects forest-dependent people who are marginalised from forest governance with those who control it. It is an informal alliance of in-country groups and international partners across seven African and three Asian countries. The project (2009-present), supported by ILED, works to address the challenge of how to put the right leadership, institutions, policy decisions and practical systems in place to improve forest governance. RECOFTC is a member of the steering group, and provides support for project development and implementation in Viet Nam and Indonesia. In Viet Nam, RECOFTC focuses on sharing experiences and learning on poverty alleviation through community forestry, including raising awareness and promoting the allocation of forest titles to local communities.





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Financial report 2012 - 2013

Revenue (in US\$)	Budget	Actual
Grant	3,113,000	3,012,788
Core funds from SIDA, Norad and SDC		2,966,121
Royal Thai Government		46,667
Internal Income	1,200,000	1,593,442
Contribution from projects		1,081,403
Service provision		243,288
Dorm and facilities		186,629
Other income (interest and misc)		82,121
Total	4,313,000	4,606,230

Expenditure	Budget	Actual
Units		
Capacity Development and Technical Services	1,006,339	1,022,745
Communications, Marketing and Fundraising	481,460	460,586
Program Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation	1,243,293	1,220,389
Governance		
Executive Office	280,594	269,473
Support		
Corporate Services	731,351	794,987
Central Operating Expenses	50,000	53,966
Capital Expenses	122,250	46,867
Total	3,915,287	3,869,012
Depreciation		118,967
Surplus	397,713	618,251

External Project Funding utilized	3,004,982
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**THE CENTER FOR
PEOPLE AND FORESTS**

RECOFTC's mission is to enhance capacities for stronger rights, improved governance and fairer benefits for local people in sustainable forested landscapes in the Asia and the Pacific region.

RECOFTC holds a unique and important place in the world of forestry. It is the only international not-for-profit organization that specializes in capacity development for community forestry. RECOFTC engages in strategic networks and effective partnerships with governments, nongovernmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, local people and research and educational institutes throughout the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. With over 25 years of international experience and a dynamic approach to capacity development – involving research and analysis, demonstration, communication and training services – RECOFTC delivers innovative solutions *for people and forests*.

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