

# People and forests for a greener future

Empowering local people to effectively and equitably engage  
in the sustainable management of forested landscapes

## STRATEGIC PLAN

2013 – 2018





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# Executive summary

More than 450 million people in Asia and the Pacific are dependent on forests for part of their livelihoods – for food, fuel, fodder and other forest products – as well as for environmental services such as water and microclimate regulation, biodiversity and cultural conservation. Despite many positive developments, these forests are still subject to wide-scale degradation and conversion, and are becoming fragmented within increasingly diverse and intensively used landscapes. This often creates negative impacts for local people, particularly the poor and excluded, as well as on national and global issues such as climate change.

Community forestry and related community-based forest landscape management has proven to be an effective approach for reducing forest loss and degradation and improving forest conservation and restoration. It is a powerful approach for improving the rights, governance and fairer access to benefits of local people and smallholders and consequently, their livelihoods and food security. There is increasing national policy support for this approach in many forested countries in the Asia and the Pacific region, and greater interest in more sustainable forest management by national entities and international agencies.

These conditions provide promising opportunities for RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests. RECOFTC has been the primary institution for promoting community forestry in Asia and the Pacific since its inception in 1987. By building the capacity of the various stakeholders – from communities to governments to non-governmental organizations and the private sector – RECOFTC has worked in partnership to improve the policies, institutions and practices of community forestry in the region.

## 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.*

As assessed by an independent mid-term review of the Center's work conducted in 2011, RECOFTC has been successful in fulfilling its mission and achieving positive results. The review commended RECOFTC as an organization uniquely endowed with the skills, credibility, knowledge and committed staff to continue to expand its impact. More recently, an independent stakeholder review conducted in 2013 confirmed that RECOFTC is deemed highly relevant, has a recognized niche, and is effective in contributing to the outcomes desired by national governments and development partners.

This strategic plan for 2013-2018 builds upon the gains of the previous phase and identifies clearer strategic outcomes that RECOFTC hopes to achieve through partnerships during the next five years. Emerging issues such as landscape approaches, food, water and energy security and rural out-migration, and their linkages to community forestry will be explored. RECOFTC will also strengthen its rights-based approach founded on the three underlying principles that strong and secure rights, good governance and fair benefits are the basis of sustainable forest management.

The Center's thematic areas and functional approaches are outcome driven and focus on addressing key current issues to achieve measurable progress towards changes relating to these underlying principles:

Strategic Outcomes	Thematic Areas
Institutions and resources for securing community forestry are more effective.	Securing Community Forestry
Institutions are actively enhancing local livelihoods through sustainable CF practices.	Enhancing Livelihoods and Markets
Enabling environments for local people's engagement in forested landscapes in the context of climate change are strengthened.	People, Forests and Climate Change
Institutions to transform conflict are in place and increasingly effective.	Transforming Forest Conflicts

These results will derive from achieving intermediate outcomes that are the result of work in four functional areas for each thematic area both regionally and in program countries:

Intermediate Outcomes	Functional Approaches
<b>Enhanced capacities are used</b> by key stakeholders to provide quality support and professional advice to local communities.	Training and Learning Networks
<b>Enabling policies and regulatory instruments are adopted</b> to enhance rights for local people, improve forest governance, and ensure a fairer share of benefits.	Research, Analysis and Synthesis
<b>Communications strategies are used</b> to enhance awareness, attitudes and behaviours among target audiences.	Strategic Communication
<b>Improved practices</b> adopted in CF are effectively replicated.	Piloting and Demonstrating

During this strategic plan period, the Center will enhance the value of its approach by further fostering a learning culture and creating a learning environment within RECOFTC and with partners, and placing increased emphasis on addressing the cross-cutting issues of:

- social inclusion and gender sensitivity through a rights-based approach;
- community forestry leadership development;
- participatory monitoring and evaluation.

Parallel with its regional work, RECOFTC will increase its impact by consolidating and expanding its engagement with eight focal countries – Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, and Viet Nam – depending on stakeholder demand for RECOFTC's services, the opportunities for innovation, learning and leverage, and the availability of human and financial resources to support work in the country concerned. RECOFTC will, of course, also continue to engage with other countries in the region and beyond where it can add value and play an important mutual learning role. To carry out this program, RECOFTC will continue to rely on a balanced and increasingly diversified development partner and donor base both for its core functions and for supporting projects. The Center will rely on highly qualified, experienced and dedicated staff organized to maximize the effective realization of its mission to develop community forestry partners' capacities for stronger rights, improved governance and fairer benefits for local people from managing sustainable forested landscapes.

While implementing this strategic plan, RECOFTC will prepare to frame changing priorities in line with emerging global trends such as ASEAN's integration by the end of 2015. Such trends also include the post-2015 global development agenda in which The UN System Task Team calls for an integrated policy approach to ensure inclusive economic and social development, peace and security, and environmental sustainability to respond to the aspirations of all people for a world free of want and fear.



# 1

## Challenges and opportunities for people and forests in Asia and the Pacific

The Asia and the Pacific region is undergoing economic, social and environmental transformation. Unprecedented growth in China, Thailand, Viet Nam, India and Indonesia alongside emerging efforts to overcome poverty in countries such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal and Papua New Guinea are having massive impacts on the forests and local people of the region.

Demand for forest products and services is increasing. Conversion of natural forestlands for new commercial purposes, such as oil palm and rubber plantations and mining and hydropower projects, persists, often through clear-cutting and burning that releases millions of tons of carbon into the atmosphere. Forested landscapes are becoming a mosaic of different but more intensified land uses. Forests (both natural and planted) still play an important role within these landscapes through their contribution to livelihoods, including for food, water and energy security. Weak governance in both structures and processes and an increasing number of conflicts over forests and land, rooted in conflicting interests and policies, further undermine community rights in some areas. These trends have left many community institutions and traditional tenure practices even more vulnerable in coping with large industrial and state interests.

Still, over 450 million local people in Asia and the Pacific – most of them poor households – continue to rely on their nearby forest resources for a wide array of livelihood products and services. From domestic fuelwood to fodder, from wild foods to water and income from small-scale sale of a variety of forest products, the poor are still dependent on the forest resources in their communities and on their farms. These various benefits all contribute to the food security of local people. Women and minority groups such as indigenous people are often the most dependent and the least able to negotiate rights over these resources.

At the landscape and global scales, downstream communities are also dependent on these forest resources to safeguard the environmental services forests provide, such as storing carbon, protecting watersheds, regulating water quality, its release and microclimates, as well as conserving irreplaceable biodiversity in some of the world's key biological hotspots.

A comparison of population and forest data in eight focal countries is presented below.

Facts	Cambodia	Indonesia	Thailand	Viet Nam	Myanmar	Lao PDR	Nepal	China	AP Region
<b>Population</b> (2010) in millions	15.1	235.5	68.1	88.9	53.4	6.4	28.0	1,338.0	4,140
<b>Land area</b> (ha) in millions	17.7	181.2	51.1	31.0	65.4	23.1	14.3	932.7	2,800
<b>Forest area</b> (2010) in millions	10.1	94.4	19.0	13.8	31.8	15.8	3.6	206.9	740
<b>Annual change rate</b> (ha) 2000-2010	(145,000)	(498,000)	(3,000)	207,000	(310,000)	(78,000)	(26,000)	2,986,000	1,404,000
<b>Forest under community forestry</b> (public/private)									
2008 (million ha)	0.06	0.26	0.25	3.29	0.04	5.78	5.830	181.38	
2010 (million ha)	0.13	0.36	1.15	3.48	0.05	5.90*	5.832	n.a.**	
<b>Forest management regimes</b>	community forestry, community protected area	community forestry, village forestry, community plantation forest and partnership forests	community forestry	community forestry, household forestry	community forestry	village forest, production forestry	community forestry, collaborative forestry, leasehold forestry, religious forests, buffer zone community forestry	collective forestry, household forestry	
<b>Carbon stock in living biomass</b>									
2000 (million tonnes)	537	15,182	881	927	1,814	1,133	520	5,295	
2010 (million tonnes)	464	13,017	880	992	1,654	1,074	485	6,203	

Sources: Population Reference Bureau; State of the World's Forests 2011, FAO; and Forest Tenure in Asia: Status and Trends, RECOFTC 2011, Sikor et al. 2013

\*data for 2012, as comparable data for 2010 is not available

\*\*data for China for 2010 is not available as the most recent inventory was held in 2008 (7th National Forest Inventory)





Fortunately, there are also expanding opportunities for community forestry in the Asia and the Pacific region. Promising policies for community forestry and decentralized governance are increasingly being developed. Despite varying scales from one country to another, approximately a quarter of forestland is under some form of community management and interest in community forestry is expanding within the region. Civil society has become increasingly active on issues concerning effective forest landscape management by local people and the number of change agents, including RECOFTC alumni, is increasing. Mechanisms and improved capacity for supporting community forestry and mediating conflicts are increasingly part of government and civil society agendas. New markets for forest products and livelihood diversification are emerging.

Attention to climate change has brought renewed international focus on forests, which may lead to the introduction of new financial incentives such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and Payment for Environmental Services (PES). Growing understanding of the linkages between forests and issues of biodiversity conservation, watershed protection and food and energy security have further underlined the importance of people and forests. The necessity of incorporating local people into these emerging approaches is increasing, along with greater interest in sustainable forest management and 'green' economic development.





# 2

## Opportunities for developing capacity for community forestry – RECOFTC’s role

The mid-term review of the previous strategic phase (2008-2013) and an independent stakeholder review conducted in 2013 assessed that RECOFTC is highly relevant, has a recognized niche, possesses relevant skills, credibility, knowledge and experience, and is effective in contributing to the outcomes desired by national governments and development partners. It is therefore well placed to assist the people of the Asia and the Pacific region to address challenges and take advantage of emerging opportunities for community forestry. Supporting and assisting government, non-government and community partners, the Center has shown that community forestry and related approaches can deliver results that both improve livelihoods and safeguard the environment.

RECOFTC also delivers services and products effectively by following the guiding principles and seeking positive changes for local people in the areas set out below:

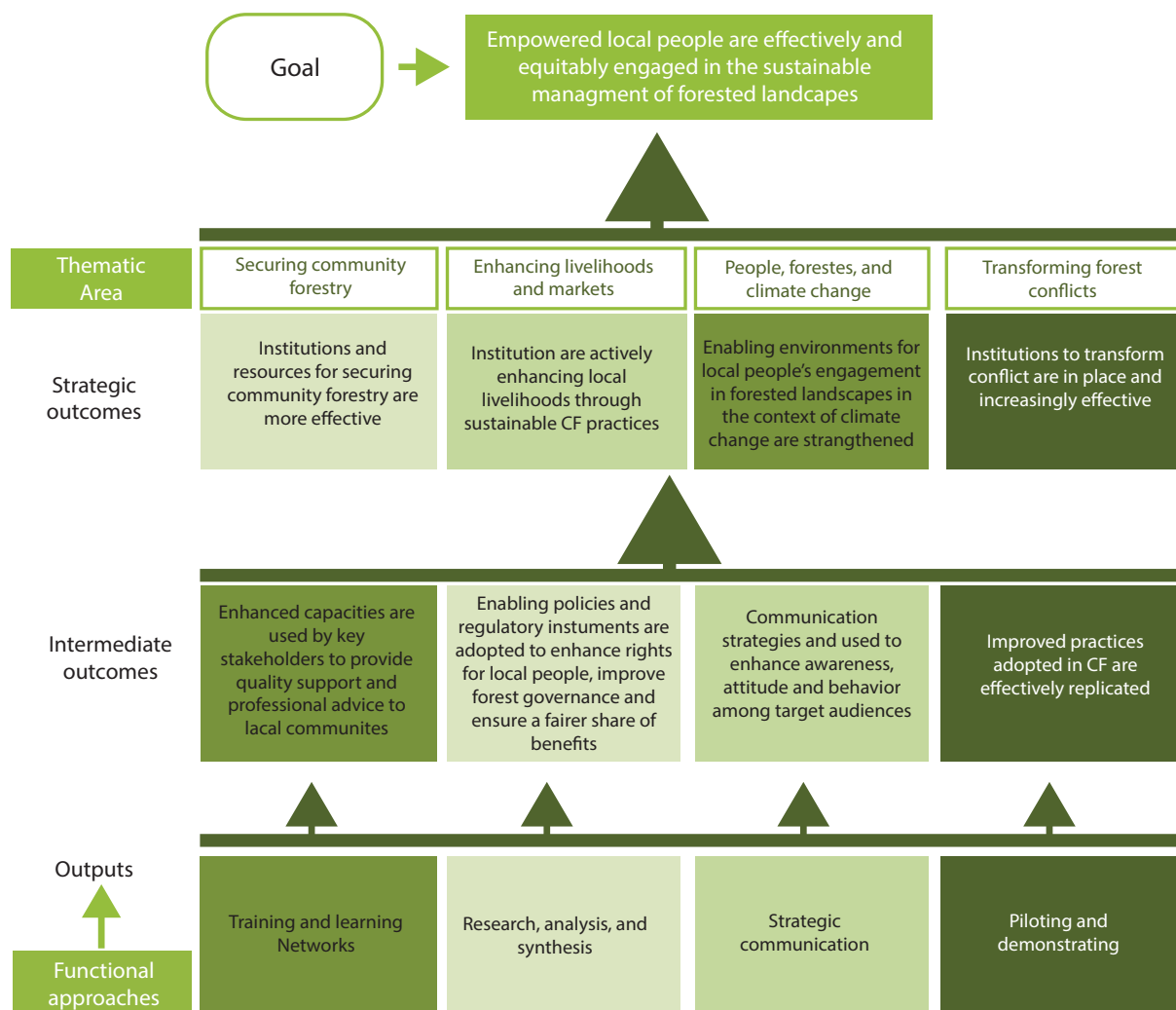
Principle	Rationale
Strong and secure rights	To strengthen rural livelihoods and ensure healthier forests in Asia and the Pacific, local people must have strong and clear tenure rights over forests.
Good governance	To ensure strong and secure rights and fair benefits for local people, decisions about forests must be participatory, transparent, accountable and enforceable.
Fair benefits	While many existing forest management practices provide short-term economic gains to a privileged few, community forestry secures a range of long-lasting benefits for the people who need them the most.

RECOFTC employs a rights-based approach that focuses on procedural rights critical to the subsistence and well-being of forest people – rights that are already recognized by states in their own national policies and legislation.

RECOFTC’s rights-based approach aims to strengthen the ability of states to fulfill their community forestry obligations systematically and programmatically as duty-bearers and to increase the opportunities for constructive engagement with rights-holders that leads to the complete and timely fulfillment of their rights. Where national legislation is not in line with internationally accepted human rights norms and standards in relation to community forestry, RECOFTC will assist governments to review and revise policies and laws to ensure conformity.

Building on over 25 years of experience as the premier capacity development and knowledge management center for community forestry in Asia and the Pacific, RECOFTC has developed an alumni network of over 25 000 professionals in this region and beyond. The Center has the track record, skills, networks, credibility and the proven capacity to continue to deliver innovative services to help partners meet a range of existing and related challenges and opportunities.

This accumulative learning experience provides the basis for RECOFTC's operating conviction and theory of change: RECOFTC believes that the outputs from training and learning networks; research, analysis and synthesis; strategic communication; and piloting and demonstrating community forestry will enhance the capacities of stakeholders at different levels. These enhanced capacities will result in: secured community forestry; active engagement of local people in sustainable forest management; enhanced livelihoods and market access; and forest conflicts transformed into productive opportunities. By using a rights-based approach, RECOFTC ensures that the enhanced capacities of stakeholders will lead to stronger rights not only to request, but also to provide, services. The attainment of our strategic outcomes will lead to the empowerment of local people to actively engage in the sustainable management of forested landscapes in the Asia and the Pacific region.



This fundamental belief provides the basis for *RECOFTC's vision: Empowered local people are effectively and equitably engaged in the sustainable management of forested landscapes*, and hence the Program Framework for the Center for the next five years.





# 3

## Key thematic areas and strategic outcomes

To achieve its strategic outcomes and contribute to its goal of stronger rights, improved governance and fairer distribution of forest benefits to local people, RECOFTC will focus its work on four interlinked thematic areas. Each theme addresses sets of issues that are inhibiting the full realization of RECOFTC's vision. Interventions must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each country but have a commonality of perspective that enables mutual learning and regional value addition for capacity development and knowledge management. Each theme will be addressed both regionally and in focal countries through the Center's functional approaches that are designed to complement each other to produce synergy and more effective outcomes and be strengthened by addressing key cross-cutting issues.

The key issues underlying each strategic outcome and the overall strategy taken by each thematic area to address these issues are outlined below.

### Securing community forestry

***Strategic Outcome 1: Institutions and resources for securing community forestry are more effective.***

RECOFTC will continue to work to help local people manage forests more securely. A rights-based approach guides RECOFTC's work to secure community forestry within the changing landscapes in the Asia and the Pacific region as local tenure over forest resources is critical to RECOFTC's mission and each of the other thematic areas. Under this thematic area RECOFTC will support partners to:

- Establish local tenure rights: Without basic supporting laws, policies and regulations in place, community forestry cannot happen. Through policy engagement, analysis and networking with key stakeholders, RECOFTC advocates for forest tenure reforms that give local people legal and institutional recognition and protection. Through field projects with partners, RECOFTC practically supports local people through the process of formalizing community forests.
- Exercise their rights: Once a legal framework for community forestry is in place, the next step is to implement this equitably for all eligible people, as even with official rights local people often face practical barriers such as the limited capacity and resources of officials, access only to severely degraded forests, and complex and long procedures. RECOFTC and its partners help identify and overcome the constraints and increase opportunities for local people to establish community forestry through in-country community forestry pilot programs, developing the capacity of relevant stakeholders, and engagement in national forest programs and policy dialogues.
- Defend their rights: Laws and policies evolve and even constitutions change, especially in politically unstable countries, sometimes to the detriment of local people. Regulations can hinder or destroy community forestry just as easily as they can advance the cause. RECOFTC develops and strengthens capacity of local, national and regional community forestry networks so they can have a stronger voice in national-level decision-making.

Capacity development in community forestry with a variety of stakeholders will continue as the primary hallmark of RECOFTC's work in this thematic area, both to empower rights holders and to ensure improved service provision by duty bearers. RECOFTC will continuously work to build its recognized store of knowledge on successful community forestry implementation and practice to feed into its capacity development. In the next five years, RECOFTC will give particular attention to developing a core group of suitably qualified, skilled and experienced community forestry leaders to enhance the capability of regional community forestry institutions. Strategic communications support will foster mutual learning and added attention to issues of social inclusion and gender. In addition, RECOFTC plans to improve its reach to political representatives at national and local levels.

RECOFTC will assist governments and people in the Asia and the Pacific region to develop the enabling policies, laws and institutions through appropriate research and analytical work. This work will seek to expand current policy knowledge by disaggregating data on impact and decision-making by gender and excluded social groups where available and relevant. It will seek to understand the policy and legislative processes in each selected country and identify the most promising drivers of reform. The identification of critical issues and methods for encouraging their change will provide indicators of ongoing progress in this work.

RECOFTC considers national mainstreaming of community forestry as the most effective means for achieving this strategic outcome. Building on proven successes (such as Nepal and China) and promising newer programs (such as Cambodia and Viet Nam) RECOFTC will work with local partners to improve and strengthen the enabling environment for community forestry in all program countries.

Piloting and demonstrating that community forestry is both possible and effective will also help to achieve this outcome. RECOFTC will assist governments and communities to implement community forestry programs on the ground. The Center will focus on learning from these efforts and assisting partners in using that learning to leverage more effective and equitable community forestry in the region.

Improved community forestry practices promoted by RECOFTC include:

- socially inclusive participatory practices (particularly relating to gender);
- partnership and programmatic approaches (joint planning);
- forest landscape and agroforestry approaches;
- sustainable forest-based livelihoods approaches and climate proofing;
- incorporation of local knowledge;
- information management and reporting;
- internal governance considerations;
- collaborative action research;
- participatory mapping;
- participatory and simplified community forest management planning and implementation;
- participatory monitoring and evaluation.



## Enhancing livelihoods and markets

### *Strategic Outcome 2: Institutions are actively enhancing local livelihoods through sustainable CF practices*

Community forestry policies have frequently emerged from global and national concerns with subsistence forest product needs such as fuelwood and fodder, as well as from the potential of community forestry to enhance environmental services. Community forestry programs in a few countries have focused on their economic potential for livelihood enhancement through market-based enterprises. As a result, community forests' potential contribution to poverty reduction and social inclusion is undervalued and the enabling policies and practices needed to maximize these benefits are often lacking. This misconception – widely held in national policy circles and forest sector agencies – has abetted wide-scale land conversions and concessions through outsiders and consequent impoverishment of forest-dependent peoples.

Without forgetting the subsistence uses and environmental services forests provide to local people, RECOFTC will work to demonstrate how members of communities can participate fairly in enterprise development and obtain a range of socio-economic benefits through market-based strategies and equitable partnerships with public and private sector operators. This public-private-community approach is based on the experience that when organized local people have sufficient control over forestland and are equipped with the right skill sets to decide and develop economically feasible and sustainable forest management models, their livelihoods can be significantly improved. Combining subsistence uses, environmental services and income generation through community forestry contributes to the food security of local people. The Center's strategy is to help foster the policies and develop the capacities of key stakeholders to achieve these enabling conditions through:

- understanding the trade-offs between different landscape uses and functions, and the benefits of multi-purpose forest management;
- increasing the capacity of local people to manage forests and forest-based enterprises and work with private sector operators;
- brokering linkages and dialogues between private sector and forest-based community enterprises to develop 'win-win' business models and equitable partnerships;
- improving the feasibility of community forestry enterprises;
- linking the products and services of community forests to markets;
- reducing regulatory barriers that inappropriately obstruct community tenure and access to economic resources;
- decreasing perverse incentives and unfair competition to competing sectors and enterprises;
- increasing efficiency in forestry operations (harvesting and primary processing);
- integration with and development of pro-poor 'green economy' approaches.

Based on research into policies, practices and value chain analyses, a basic set of courses, curricula and training materials will be developed. These will include both organizational and technical skills to support community forest enterprises and small and medium forest enterprises, and to work through equitable partnerships with other private sector operators.

RECOFTC will continue with its strategy of working with partners and key stakeholders to stimulate, introduce and advocate for community forestry approaches within sustainable landscapes that can improve incomes and provide for fair distribution. Through its partnership demonstration projects, RECOFTC will experiment with innovative enterprise modalities or cost- saving methodologies.

The 2013-2018 strategy will also place greater emphasis on demonstration and learning with regards to issues of silviculture and simplified technical forest management to enhance productivity and operational efficiency, and environmental service provision to ensure economic viability and sustainability. In alignment with external legality and certification standards, RECOFTC will assist government agencies, communities and forest enterprises to develop forest management plans for their sustainability, productivity, benefit distribution and social inclusion to help promote better community forest management.

## People, forests and climate change

### *Strategic Outcome 3: Enabling environments for local people's engagement in forested landscapes in the context of climate change are strengthened.*

RECOFTC's strategy is based on strengthening local people's capacities to manage forests to respond to both climate change mitigation and adaptation. Sustainable forest management through community forestry is an important strategy in reducing global greenhouse gas emissions as well as proactively minimizing the adverse impacts of climate change already being experienced in the region. RECOFTC will therefore develop capacities to provide more meaningful incentives, engagement and fair rewards to local people for vital environmental services through well-managed community forests that will enable them to adapt to climate change as well. This will include developing community adaptive capacity for coping with the impacts of climate change – particularly for the poor and women who are impacted more – and increasing institutional capital, livelihood resilience and food, water and energy security along with more sustainable forest management practices on the landscape level.

The importance of forests as both a sink for and a source of greenhouse gas emissions is globally recognized. Deforestation and forest degradation contribute some 12-17 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Forest-related mitigation measures, such as improved forest conservation, management and restoration, have received considerable attention and are seen as practical and cost-effective interventions to slow global warming – as well as providing other environmental and livelihood services which may support the adaptation of both communities and forest ecosystems. Mechanisms such as REDD+ have been the focus of expanding national programs throughout the region while initiatives related to PES and forest based biomass for renewable energy under the CDM have garnered strong donor interest. While it remains unclear how much traction REDD+ will gain in the coming years given irrefutable evidence of climate change, there will inevitably continue to be strong interest in forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation.

To encourage national and regional level support for forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation, RECOFTC will facilitate grassroots initiatives and piloting aimed at increasing adaptive capacity and demonstrating community forestry's role in climate change mitigation. RECOFTC will also put greater emphasis on influencing policy-making and legislative processes to better recognize and integrate the role of forests in a context of climate change. Research studies, workshops, targeted communications and practical demonstrations will be developed to assist partners in influencing policies and legislative processes promoting local people's role in managing forests for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

## Transforming forest conflicts

### *Strategic Outcome 4: Institutions to transform conflict are in place and increasingly effective.*

Conflict over land and forests in Asia and the Pacific is widespread: In Indonesia, an estimated 7-20 million people are affected by forest conflict.<sup>1</sup> One of the main reasons for these forest conflicts is that dominant models of forest management – especially industrial-scale timber harvesting and conservation in national parks – exclude the interests, needs and values of local and indigenous people, who see their rights disputed and diminished. Add to this the intensified allocation of vast areas of forestland to development projects for agro-industrial concessions, mining and hydropower, and we see conflict brewing throughout the region. This exclusion usually occurs when powerful government and private sector interests, often for short-term economic gains, exploit unclear or unfair forest rights for local people.

RECOFTC's strategy recognizes that conflict affects the weakest and poorest stakeholders the most. However, it also understands that conflict can provide a starting point for positive change that can lead to more sustainable and equitable forest management.

RECOFTC's strategy aims to reduce the incidence and negative impacts of natural resource conflict in the region and to tackle the root causes of conflict. Promoting good governance for and within community forestry is an essential element in this strategy. Strengthening the capacity of key stakeholders – including local and indigenous people, women and other socially excluded groups – to transform conflict in positive ways is the principal means for supporting fairer and more sustainable conflict management.

RECOFTC's strategy also includes supporting better understanding of the underlying causes, impacts and solutions of forest conflict. Disputes, policies, forestry programs and regulatory frameworks in the region will be analysed, and findings will be used to improve advocacy efforts, raise awareness and develop capacity of stakeholders to mitigate and manage forest-related conflict constructively.

RECOFTC will continue to support the development of community forestry institutions in target countries that serve as formal mechanisms to help local people report and arbitrate instances of conflict as well as informal institutional mechanisms. RECOFTC will promote the institutionalization of the right to FPIC as a mechanism that can contribute to preventing conflict. It will continue to facilitate knowledge and information exchange between policy-makers and practitioners through learning networks.

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace J., & Conca K. 2012. Peace through sustainable forest management in Asia: The USAID Forest Conflict Initiative. In High-Value Natural Resources and Peacebuilding, ed. P. Lujala and S. A. Rustad. London: Earthscan (in: [http://environmentalpeacebuilding.org/sites/default/files/503-528\\_wallace\\_and\\_conca.pdf](http://environmentalpeacebuilding.org/sites/default/files/503-528_wallace_and_conca.pdf); Accessed online on September 9, 2013)

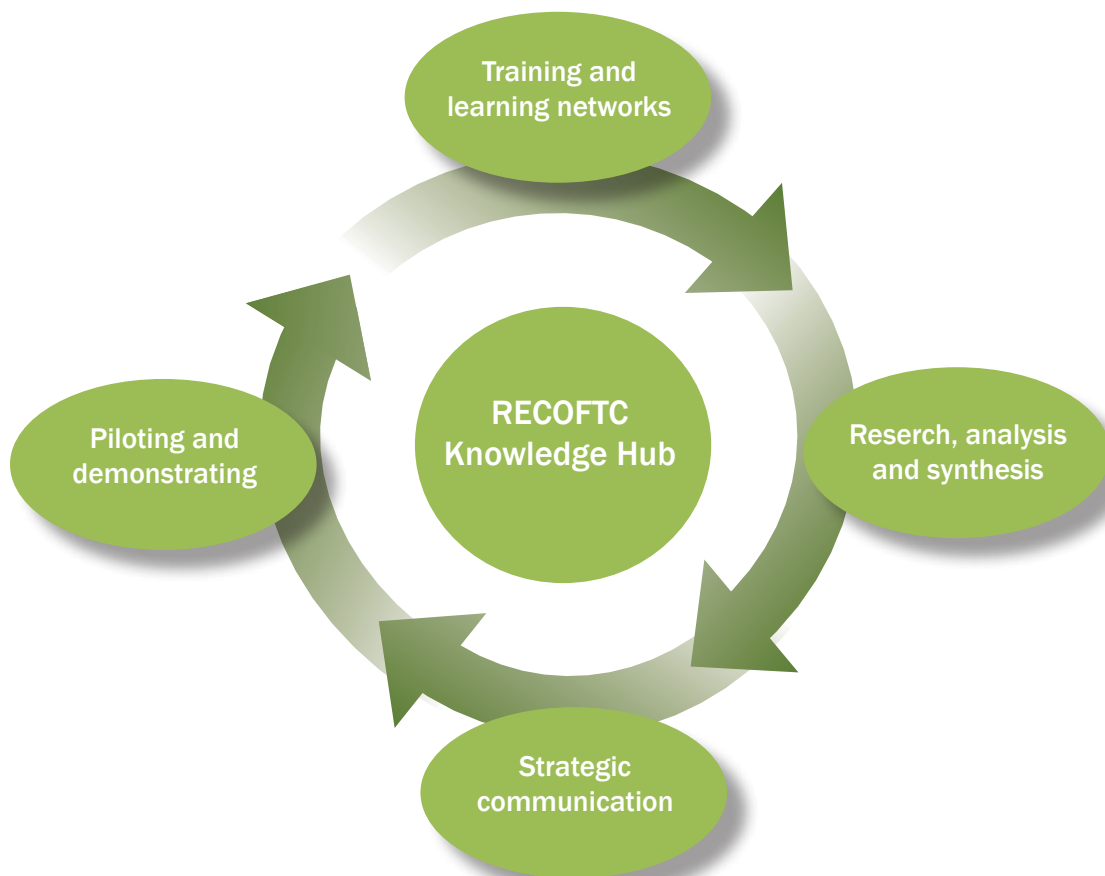


# 4

## Functional approaches

As presented in each of the thematic areas, intermediate outcomes from RECOFTC's functional activities work closely together to contribute to the overall strategic outcomes. In addition, these functional activities also interact with each other in a capacity development cycle through inter-unit project and task teams to provide the content and form of these intermediate outcomes as illustrated in the following Figure. The strategic method used by each approach is presented below.

Capacity development cycle



## Training and learning networks

For over 25 years, RECOFTC has been known as the major source of community forestry training in the Asia and the Pacific region. To date the Center has trained over 25 000 people from more than 30 countries in the region and beyond. Building on the success of its training program, it will be critical for RECOFTC to continue developing the capacity of relevant individuals, stakeholders and organizations working on community forestry and community-based natural resource management. One of the key approaches for doing so is through opportunities for lesson-sharing, application and scaling up provided by networking.

RECOFTC promotes action-oriented capacity development and experiential learning using participatory tools to build on participants' skills, knowledge and experience. The Center's recently developed integrated approaches to learning and networking will be expanded. This includes the facilitation and organization of events, including study tours, policy dialogues, focus group discussions and workshops where participants can learn from the practical experiences of what was done, what worked (or not) and why, so as to draw relevant lessons for their own policy development or practice. The selection of key individuals at multiple levels to participate in these events and their long-term engagement in networks embeds learning in sustainable processes supporting change. Exchange of knowledge and experience amongst stakeholders will provide valuable opportunities for continuous and cumulative learning and sharing.

RECOFTC's training approach is to build long-term capacity through coaching and networking, and it will continue to support local training institutions and partners through training of trainers (ToTs) so that they can use their knowledge and skills to train others. Particular attention will be given to facilitating leadership development and the integration of social inclusion and gender issues in all RECOFTC training programs and activities. RECOFTC will continue to mobilise its alumni into relevant networks, consolidating and building upon lessons learned from previous networking experiences and those of innovative networks outside of RECOFTC. Thematic networks, e.g. conflict, climate change (mitigation and adaptation) and livelihood learning networks, will support alumni both in the learning process and in connecting lessons to policy processes. RECOFTC will support internships for young professionals/practitioners from the region. It will also provide for secondment of staff from national forest agencies and other relevant organizations to RECOFTC, as this brings enhanced capacities back to the secondees' home agencies and catalyses action.

In addition, a number of new innovations to the Center's training, learning and networking will be explored, such as:

- delivery of training and learning in various national and local languages in the region;
- online and distance training or e-learning;
- targeted study tours for decision-makers and executives;
- convening of learning networks for continued exchange and learning;
- organizing 'champions' into networks aimed at policy influence;
- supporting the capacity of grassroots community foresters through Leadership Program.

RECOFTC will ensure gender-balanced participation in its training, learning and networking and provide opportunities for excluded and under-represented groups, including indigenous people and youth, to fully participate in these training and learning opportunities.

## Research, analysis and synthesis

Evidence-based policy recommendations and capacity development are key activities of RECOFTC. The Center will continue to strengthen and consolidate its research, analysis and synthesis to support strategic capacity development for people and forests. In the next five years RECOFTC will conduct research and analysis, as well as synthesise relevant research products regarding policy processes and field practices. Particular attention will be given to knowledge distillation and documentation of lessons learned from both areas to feed into training and learning networks.

The starting point of all RECOFTC's research, analysis and synthesis is local people, i.e. those who reside in and around forests and whose livelihoods heavily depend on forest products and services. Local people include indigenous communities, ethnic minorities, migrants and smallholder farmers in rural areas.

A key feature of RECOFTC's approach to research, analysis and synthesis is that it focuses on partnership by promoting collaboration with national and international institutions and shared learning. By partnering with relevant institutions, RECOFTC will add value to ongoing research processes and initiatives while enhancing the capacity of national partners. Realizing that there are large bodies of literature and findings on many topics, synthesis of existing results will form a significant part of RECOFTC's approach. Where relevant, RECOFTC will also directly involve itself in empirical ground research through local partnerships. RECOFTC will also continue to promote the synthesis of local wisdom and customs with modern knowledge and institutional frameworks to foster both a deeper understanding and respect for community rights and the potential of community forestry to contribute to national social, economic and environmental development.

## Strategic communication

The world of communications, information generation and knowledge management has undergone significant change during the last strategic plan. As commended by the recent independent mid-term review of the Center's work, RECOFTC responded to this change through strategically boosting its output, image, reach and voice to new levels. The Center has increased its capacity to support behaviour change at the grassroots and policy level and to more clearly articulate the case for community forestry in the context of global environmental issues such as climate change, tenure security, watershed management, agriculture, biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods.

In this next strategic plan, RECOFTC will build on the new opportunities provided by increasing demand and will create new channels for communication. These channels will take into account the fact that target audiences, including those in second-tier cities, towns and villages, are increasingly accessible through internet and mobile phone. RECOFTC will mobilise new partnerships to expand its capacity to respond to these new communication opportunities in the following ways:

- engaging with and influencing regional and national working groups and networks working on issues important to people and forests;
- supporting external knowledge management through internal communications platforms for knowledge sharing, human resources and financial reporting as well as real time connectivity;
- creating a robust knowledge management system to capture learning across countries, including mobile apps and e-learning possibilities;
- helping country programs and project targets at the grassroots level to develop effective, country-specific communications and partnership strategies and to generate, advocate and disseminate new knowledge in national languages.



## Piloting and demonstrating

Community forestry has developed region-wide through people trying new approaches or adapting older approaches to different contexts. This piloting has generated a breadth of experience that feeds into RECOFTC's evidence-based policy recommendations, capacity development and strategic communication. 'Seeing is believing' works, and RECOFTC recognizes that people often learn best from the practical demonstration of different approaches and their outcomes in the real world.

RECOFTC's piloting and demonstration work aims to assist partners to identify, pilot and develop new approaches in different situations, share the practical lessons effectively with others, and scale up the overall impact of the program through partnerships with implementers. A particular focus of RECOFTC's work in the future will be to ensure social inclusion is mainstreamed into community forestry practices so that currently marginalized and vulnerable groups, including women, are empowered to be involved more effectively in these processes. Experiences and lessons learned from piloting and demonstrating will be documented and disseminated through various communication channels.

As with all RECOFTC's work, a key focus of piloting and demonstration is on partnership: this is how innovations get noticed, adapted, passed on and scaled up to have wider-reaching impacts for people and forests.





# 5

## Key cross-cutting issues and quality assurance

### Social inclusion and gender – a rights-based approach

The Asia and the Pacific region contains a rich mosaic of cultures, ethnic groups and governance systems at various stages of socio-economic development. Social and economic diversity within countries is often as great as between them. Forested areas are often home to indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities whose cultures and languages differ from those of the majority within each country. This, along with remoteness, poverty and limited basic social services, contributes to their continued exclusion from mainstream socio-economic development. Rapid landscape land-use changes can leave these already excluded groups even more vulnerable if special efforts are not made to enhance their rights and capabilities.

Similarly, while rapid strides in development and education services have benefited many women in the region, in the forested hinterland women are often more excluded from actively participating in forest governance and management than their male family members despite the increasing feminization of rural areas as men migrate in search of paid employment elsewhere. Barriers can be social or economic, but experience has shown that special efforts are usually required to provide women with equal pathways to participation. Too often, women shoulder the burden of forest product collection without receiving equitable returns on their labour and investment or participating in decision-making processes.

By following the principles of a rights-based approach, RECOFTC's strategy is to apply the analytical lens of social inclusion and gender across its program to better understand the exclusionary barriers that prevent effective participation in forest management by women and minorities, including access to services and fair shares of community forest-related benefits and rights. A rights-based approach means building the capacity of local people (rights holders) to request services and participate in government programs on the one hand, whilst building the capacity of service providers (duty bearers) within government, civil society and the local community leadership, to provide the services requested by local people effectively, equitably and efficiently.

The overall strategy includes mainstreaming gender and rights across the program and organization to:

- increase partner and in-house capacity in rights-based approaches and gender sensitivity;
- strengthen organizational functions, processes and policies;
- enhance monitoring and evaluation systems;
- provide advisory support and technical inputs on new concepts and project proposals;
- expand the portfolio of projects on gender and rights by identifying new opportunities, including the Community Forestry Leadership Development initiative;
- integrate social inclusion and gender into specific projects and events and reorient RECOFTC's core functional areas to accentuate inclusion issues, including developing specific gender-focused communications;
- collaborate and partner with various relevant alliances, networks and forums at national, regional and international levels for wider media advocacy and policy influence.

## Community forestry leadership development

Achieving RECOFTC's strategic outcomes will require strong community forestry leadership in the region, especially among the new generations who will be the drivers of policy and improved field practices in the future. RECOFTC has an extensive network of more than 25 000 individuals from its training programs who could be organized better and whose potential to contribute to community forestry could be tapped. These alumni will be mobilised by building a database and facilitating networks for information exchange and mutual motivation.

### RECOFTC's rights-based approach

Beyond simply aiming to fulfill the 'needs' of local people, RECOFTC recognizes the rights-based approach as a framework that integrates the norms, principles, standards and goals of the international human rights system into the plans and processes of development.

In order to support a positive transformation of power relations among the various development actors, RECOFTC employs a rights-based approach that focuses on procedural rights critical to the subsistence and well-being of forest people that are already recognized by states in their own national policies and legislation.

Through such legislation and social contracts with their citizens, governments have a responsibility as 'duty bearers' to respect, protect and fulfill these rights. Likewise local people, as 'rights holders' and regardless of ethnicity, wealth, gender, education, and religion etc. possess the right to participate in governance processes that affect them and to understand and claim their rights. 'Moral duty bearers' such as private companies, community leaders and NGOs have the responsibility of safeguarding and ensuring such rights are upheld. It is the obligation of all duty bearers to protect and promote the rights of the most vulnerable.

RECOFTC's rights-based approach aims to strengthen the ability of states to fulfill their community forestry obligations systematically and programmatically as duty-bearers and to increase the opportunities for constructive engagement with rights-holders that leads to the complete and timely fulfillment of their rights. Where national legislation is not in line with internationally accepted human rights standards in relation to community forestry, RECOFTC will assist governments to review and revise policies and laws to ensure conformity.

#### The reciprocal relationship between rights holders and duty bearers



RECOFTC will develop a new cross-cutting initiative to develop leadership opportunities for regional talent. Within existing national and regional networks, the Center will prioritize a focus on youth. It also plans to build a network of community forestry champions from both government and non-government sectors, in particular from user federations and networks and those of marginalized groups. This will take the form of capacity development programs for potential leaders over time, including participation in various training activities, study tours, learning networks and other learning events.

In addition, the Center will build the leadership capacity of its own staff, partners and alumni through:

- identification of potential leaders;
- leadership training;
- capacity-building programs in community forestry and related issues;
- internal institutional learning;
- internships and secondment program for young professionals and staff from forest agencies and other relevant organizations;
- promoting career development opportunities;
- proactive recruitment of professional staff from the region;
- increasing linkages with academic institutions;
- developing youth networks and a program of local student volunteers or internships including academic field practicum.

By the end of the strategic period, the following outcomes are expected to be achieved:

- a database of potential CF leaders;
- capacities of potential leaders are improved;
- a network of potential CF leaders is established.

## Participatory monitoring and evaluation

RECOFTC has been developing a detailed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system based on its logical framework, and indicators have been developed to measure performance at program and project level. This system has been updated to fit the new 2013-2018 strategic plan and provide a sound basis for performance management. Implementing partners will be encouraged to participate in M&E.

This plan identifies the overall impact and strategic outcomes that RECOFTC seeks to influence at different levels. While attribution at these levels is challenging, RECOFTC has improved its M&E tools to document changes with plausible causal pathways related to its work. It also conducts external evaluations such as mid-term reviews for the Center as a whole and for large projects, and regular stakeholder surveys that provide independent assessments of performance.

At the level of intermediate and project outcomes, RECOFTC identifies specific milestones that will be assessed on an ongoing basis through a variety of tools noted below. Monitoring of inputs and specific outputs (such as number of people trained, information accessed, etc.) is carried out on a regular basis by RECOFTC and its collaborators and incorporated into the Center's annual planning and reporting. The specific indicators used are currently being examined to increase their sensitivity to issues of social inclusion and gender.

Tools that will continue to be used by RECOFTC to measure performance outcomes include:

- in-depth studies of national forestry strategies in the region;
- detailed analysis of national community forestry issues by RECOFTC country programs;
- stories of change and case studies from communities;
- quantitative and qualitative assessments through regular stakeholder surveys;
- citation and quotation analysis for RECOFTC knowledge products;
- stakeholder and user satisfaction surveys;
- training evaluations.

For long-term evaluation of the outcomes of capacity development activities such as trainings, workshops and study tours, RECOFTC uses the four-stage Kirkpatrick Evaluation methodology. Level one evaluates the immediate reactions of participants and level two measures the increase in knowledge or intellectual capability from before the training experience to after. Both are conducted during the capacity development activity. Level three occurs when participants are interviewed after the activity by the trainers or by RECOFTC's M&E team to evaluate the extent to which the participants applied their learning or changed their behaviour. The fourth and final stage evaluates the uptake of the new knowledge and skills. Much training in the development world is only evaluated at the end of the training course or project. As commended in the 2011 mid-term review, RECOFTC goes further and evaluates changes in organizations and in communities caused by newly acquired knowledge and skills. Depending on the length of the project, funding to conduct evaluations at Kirkpatrick levels three and four may be independent from project funding (which might have ended by the time of the evaluation). This will be determined during the initial M&E planning process for any new project.

The Center will establish additional CF sentinel sites in selected countries using the methodology established by the International Forestry Resources and Institutions (IFRI) initiative. The CF sentinel sites will be used as sample sites for an in-depth monitoring of changes in forest governance, benefits and condition.







# 6

## Focal countries and regional approach

RECOFTC plans to continue to pursue a balanced program of relevant regional activities and national programs. Regionally, RECOFTC will continue to provide a platform for knowledge distillation, mutual learning and information exchange. The Center will also provide increasing support to facilitate the work of its regional learning networks in key areas such as forest tenure, livelihoods and markets, climate change and conflict transformation. Participation in networks and events that have a more global reach will enhance the Center's ability to serve the region as a knowledge hub.

For this strategic plan, RECOFTC reviewed its country engagement during the previous program phase. The conclusion reached is that targeted engagement focusing on particular countries can make a significant difference on the ground for people and forests through 'learning and leverage'. Country programs enable RECOFTC to be grounded in reality, develop long-term and more effective relationships whilst being more responsive to requests for support. Operating in local languages also expands the reach of RECOFTC's work.

The level of engagement in the particular countries will be influenced by national priorities, stakeholders' demand for RECOFTC's services, the opportunities for innovation, learning and leverage, and the availability of human and financial resources to support work in the country concerned. RECOFTC country programs will enhance rather than displace the capacities of national partners through a strategy of long-term capacity development. Adding value through two-way learning exchanges between national partners and the wider region will be the hallmark of RECOFTC's modus operandi.

During the last program phase and based on criteria including the Center's charter, development partner and host government interest, proximity and of course learning and capacity development opportunities, RECOFTC formally established Country Program Offices in Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Viet Nam. At the same time, steps were made to move towards expanded engagement in Lao PDR and China, and more recently in Myanmar and Nepal. RECOFTC proposes to continue to strengthen and expand engagement in all these countries, six of which are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). As ASEAN's economic integration intensifies in 2015, there will be both increased associated challenges as well as opportunities to facilitate exchanges between countries and provide new opportunities for engagement at the regional level.

Myanmar – a RECOFTC founding charter country – is becoming a focal country as it opens up and in response to requests for support to reinvigorate its community forestry program. Nepal becomes a focal country to represent South Asia and provide lessons learned from a mature and well-developed community forestry program. RECOFTC has formal memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with the relevant government institutions in all focal countries.

RECOFTC's capacity development activities over the last strategic phase also reached some Pacific countries such as Papua New Guinea, Samoa and East Timor. The operational cost for activities in the Pacific countries is a major obstacle. This RECOFTC is seeking collaboration with ACIAR, AusAID and others for financial, technical and networking support for RECOFTC's work in the Pacific region.



# 7

## Governance and organization

The Center's overall governance and strategic program direction are overseen by the Board of Trustees. The Board consists of distinguished volunteer members who bring perspectives and experiences from working in governments, the private sector, non-governmental and civil society organizations, research and educational institutes. The Board of Trustees acts as the Center's policy-making body, approving its program and budget.

Overall management responsibility of the Center is vested in the Executive Director (ED), advised by an Executive Committee (EC) comprising senior managers led by the ED. The EC is responsible for developing the annual work plan and budget; keeping the implementation of plans under review; supervising implementation of all the activities of the Center and ensuring effective programming and implementation of activities. The Executive Director works through the Executive Office where administrative, fundraising and partnerships support is also housed, as well as the Center's monitoring and evaluation staff.

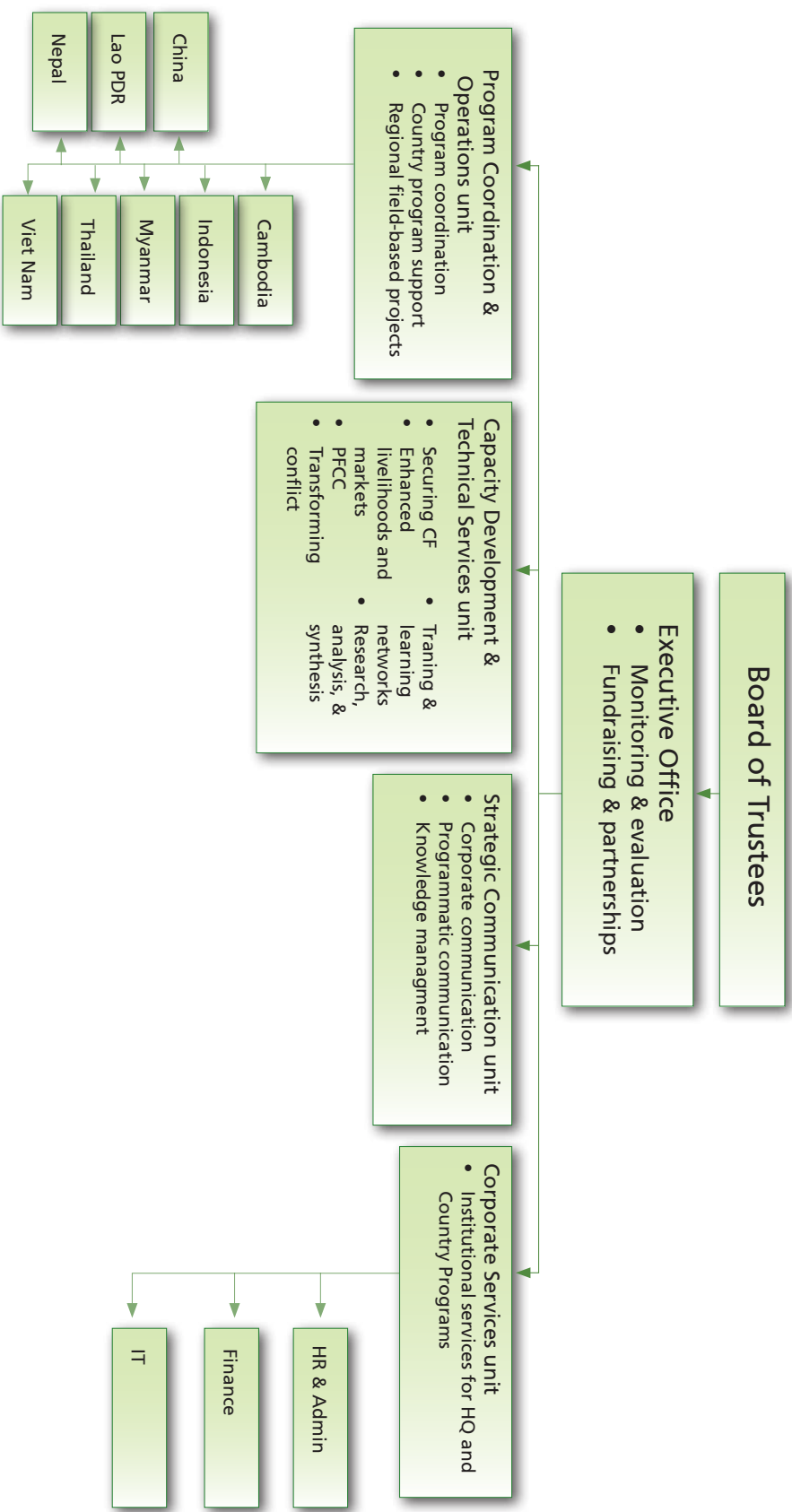
The Center's work is carried out by the units under the direct management of the ED as shown in the organizational chart. Fostering learning is RECOFTC's core function so the organization is structured to ensure maximum synergy between regional and national programs, as well as across and between thematic areas and functional approaches. Accordingly, the key operational modality is the use of collaborative, cross-institutional project and task teams to implement particular programs, activities and projects so as to also cultivate an adaptive action-learning culture in the conduct of this program.

Capacity Development and Technical Services (CDTS) is RECOFTC's core unit for training, learning and networking. The unit houses experts in different fields such as RECOFTC's thematic areas, as well as functional expertise relating to adult learning and research and analysis. The unit provides expert staff inputs into projects across the organization, both regionally and nationally, as well as gathering the lessons learned from these and others' experience for learning across the Center and with its partners.

Well-implemented and strategic communications were demonstrated to significantly raise RECOFTC's profile and learning outreach. Therefore, a unit dedicated to Strategic Communications (SC) remains a key part of the Center's organizational structure. The unit has a mandate to lead on corporate communications, support programmatic and project communications through project teams, to handle publications, electronic and other media, and oversee special events.

Overall program coordination is vested in the Program Coordination and Operations (PROCO) unit, where the Center's overall portfolio of projects is developed and managed to create synergy between functional units, thematic areas and regional and national programs. PROCO facilitates the establishment and planning of project teams. The development and day-to-day oversight and management of country programs and regional field based and multi-country projects are also coordinated by PROCO.

For RECOFTC's programmatic units to function effectively, efficient support in the areas of human resource (HR) management, administration, financial management and information technology (IT) is required. These institutional services are provided both at headquarters and to Country Programs through a unit named Corporate Services (CS).



Inter-unit task teams





# 8

## Information technology

With an increased budget, staff and programs and their heavier load on support services, RECOFTC plans to invest in more efficient IT systems that interlink various modules such as Finance, HR, Fundraising, Communication, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Management Reporting. The IT upgrade is also important for initiatives such as e-learning which will extend RECOFTC's outreach in and beyond its program countries.





# 9

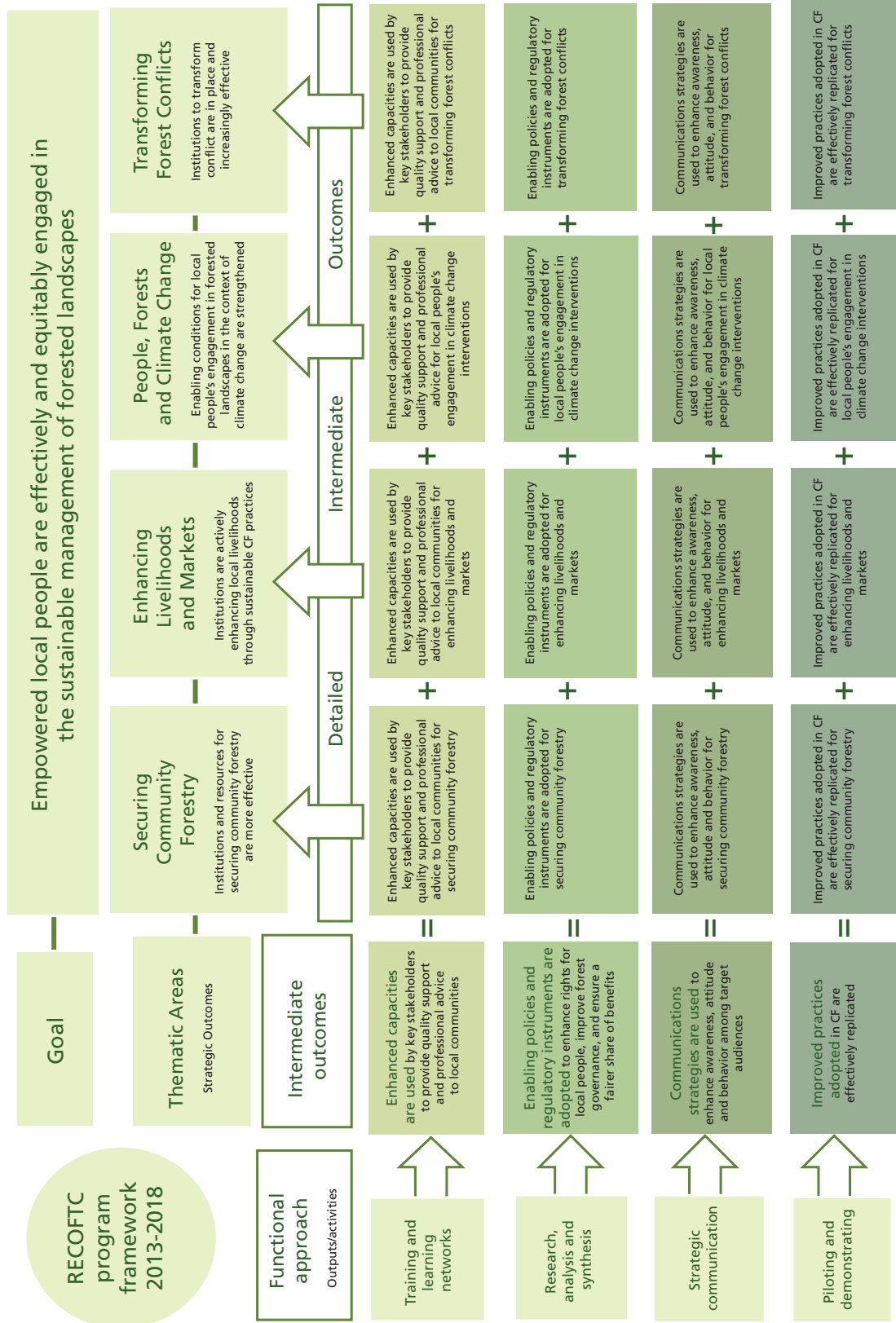
## Anti-corruption

RECOFTC has developed a firm policy on anti-corruption, which is integrated into the Center's procedures. This policy forms the basis for RECOFTC's work to counteract the risks of corruption in its activities and those of its implementing partners. RECOFTC applies a strict zero tolerance policy on any form of corruption in its activities and will take necessary and appropriate action in order to address the issue.

# Annex



# Annex 1: Detailed intermediate outcomes



## Annex 2: Human and financial resources

To achieve the outcomes and milestones laid out in the strategic plan, RECOFTC will seek to expand its financial resources and work to recruit and retain the most suitable talent in the sector for regional and country programs and corporate services. To support this expansion the Center will improve and upgrade its IT infrastructure to provide real time communications – both internal and external – with country offices and to integrate information and knowledge systems.

Overall, the Center’s plan calls for a budget of approximately US\$55 million, of which 46 percent is anticipated to be raised as core funding and 54 percent as project funds. This level of funding would enable RECOFTC to employ approximately 150 staff, of which more than half would be program and project professionals.

### Estimated Total Funding Required for Five-Year Strategic Plan 2013-2018

	Core Funds	Project Funds	Total Funds
Total 2013-2018	25,000,000	30,000,000	55,000,000
Avg. 2013-2018	5,000,000	6,000,000	11,000,000

## Finance

RECOFTC will continue to fund raise for its activities for both core, unrestricted funding and restricted project funding. The Center plans to diversify the base of its core funding donors and increase internal revenues. Core funds will be leveraged to formulate proposals – either independently or in partnership with other institutions – for such projects that contribute to RECOFTC’s overall strategy. The Center will seek out potential new donors, including some regional countries with good economic growth that are showing increasing interest in funding RECOFTC initiatives. This will provide an opportunity for RECOFTC to build new relationships through this strategic plan period and beyond. In addition, RECOFTC will also take a renewed approach to building relationships in the corporate sector through the corporate social responsibility route.

RECOFTC will also continue to work on other sources of revenue such as provision of open subscription trainings, study tours and technical consulting services in its areas of expertise. The guest rooms and facilities will be marketed better to earn greater revenue from that source.

With the growth in its funding and the resultant reporting requirements, as well as the need for management to be able to monitor the progress of activities, RECOFTC needs to upgrade its IT systems to a higher level. This will include the introduction of an Intranet as well as integrated modules for finance, HR, fund raising, project administration etc. RECOFTC is also in the process of strengthening its IT unit and recruiting competent IT staff. All these investments will ensure that RECOFTC has the necessary IT infrastructure and modern systems to tackle better the challenges of accounting, monitoring and reporting on multi-donor multi-country operations.

## Human resources

As a fast-growing international organization that operates in a highly competitive environment, RECOFTC will engage highly qualified, competent and dedicated staff at all levels to deliver the objectives set in this strategic plan.

### RECOFTC values

Integrity	Highest ethical standards, honesty and transparency
Respect	Respect for differences in race, gender, culture, religion and national values
Inclusive	Proactively promoting women and disadvantaged individuals and groups
Excellence	Highly professional, evidence-based, rigorous and politically neutral
Partnership	Collaborative planning, programming and monitoring with communities and a variety of organizations with shared interests
Learning and Innovation	Continuous learning and strategic innovation

The HR policies, procedures and practices are being revised following the HR review carried out in 2012 to better serve the needs of a growing international organization. RECOFTC will strive to position itself as a responsible employer in all the countries where it is present, and will provide a happy and productive work environment with the highest ethical and professional standards.







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 sites and training products – RECOFTC delivers innovative solutions for people and forests.

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