

25th APFC Session Parallel Meeting

Workshop

“Forest Restoration at Landscape Level in Asia-Pacific Region”

3 November 2013, Rotorua, New Zealand

FAO-RAP & RECOFTC

Background

Globally, deforestation continues unabated. In the last few centuries we have lost more than half of the earth’s original forest, and currently we continue to witness an annual loss of about 1 million hectares. The impact of such loss is felt far more acutely in the Asia-Pacific region which has only 18 percent of the global forest area, but 55 percent of the human population. In the decade 1990-2000, the Asia-Pacific region saw a cumulative loss of 1,275,000 hectares of forest. A large portion of the remaining forests have been subjected to destructive harvesting practices, fires, and shifting cultivation. The alteration has been so severe that they exist as fragmented, modified and degraded secondary forests, and often are devoid of the environmental protection values. In early 2000 it was estimated that in Southeast Asia alone, there exists ca. 100 million hectares of the remaining forests that are severely degraded and over 80 million hectares of forest land that was converted to agriculture and are now barren, or exist as grassland and shrubland.

The above situation calls for a massive rehabilitation of forests. The benefits are multifold: arresting erosion of biodiversity and ecological functions, enhancing timber production, strengthening livelihood opportunities for rural communities, and ensuring the various environmental services are safeguarded. In recent times, the role of forests in climate change mitigation has received heightened attention, and therewith renewal of interest in the rehabilitation of forests. Overall, this reflects the huge scale of opportunities, and the possibility of reversing the entire decline of forestry in the region through forest restoration/rehabilitation.

However, much of the rehabilitation work remained *ad hoc*, technical in focus, failed to address the underlying causes for degradation, and was not linked to socio-economic and development issues. This required a more holistic approach that integrates development within the forests, the surrounding landscape, and is linked with people’s needs. Since early 2000 the concept of ‘Forest Landscape Restoration’ (FLR) has begun to emerge. FLR is an approach to manage the dynamic and complex interactions between people, natural resources and land use within a landscape. FLR brings people together to identify, negotiate and implement practices that restore the ecological, social and economic benefits of forests and trees within a broader pattern of land uses. It is defined as “a planned process that aims to regain ecological integrity and enhance human wellbeing in deforested or degraded forest landscapes”.

Recognizing the need for a new approach to rehabilitate and restore large areas of degraded forests and denuded areas, many international, regional and national initiatives have been launched. Notable regional ones include Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and

Rehabilitation (APFNet) and ASEAN-Korea Forest Cooperation (AFoCo) which have made forest rehabilitation as an important component of their overall objectives. Several international initiatives have also been launched, one dedicated to promoting FLR being the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration (GPFLR), an initiative led by IUCN, with FAO and other partners. The FLR theme received a significant political boost at the ministerial conference in 2011 in Bonn, Germany – the Bonn Challenge was launched targeting the restoration of 150 million hectares of degraded land by 2020. This was followed up recently by APEC (August 2013) which pledged to boost their forest land by 20 million hectares by 2020. In order to meet this challenge, among other institutions, FAO is proposing the establishment of a new Forest and Landscape Restoration Facility. Reflecting the current developments, RECOFTC is raising the significance of the role of FLR in its new strategic plan being formulated.

Asia-Pacific Study

Recognizing the importance of FLR approaches for the Asia-Pacific region, FAO-RAP and RECOFTC launched an initial multi-country study to review the status of forest rehabilitation in the region, and the scope for implementing FLR approaches. The principle objective of the study is to contribute to the development of strategies, actions, and policy guidance for the sustainable restoration of forest resources reflecting multiple objectives, including conservation of forest biodiversity and genetic resources, and poverty reduction. The main outcome would be enhanced knowledge and capacity to address forest landscape restoration and related forest rehabilitation techniques through identification of best policies and practices.

Regional workshop

The multi-country study is organized to bring out: a) an overall synthesis paper; b) eight country case studies; c) a concept note for developing a regional program on FLR; and d) a publication synthesizing the main report with the country case studies. As part of these activities, a regional expert group meeting (workshop) is being organized in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) Session in Rotorua, New Zealand (3 November 2013). The participants would include the authors of the country studies, as well as selected international experts. Institutions such as ITTO, IUCN, APFNet, AFoCo and others who are strongly promoting forest landscape restoration efforts would also be invited. The APFC Session generally brings together senior forestry officers from the region. They too would add considerable value to the meeting's discussions.

The main objective of the workshop is to facilitate a partnership among institutions in the Asia-Pacific region for promoting a better understanding of the FLR principles and to guide implementation of related activities in the region. The specific objectives of the workshop are to:

- a. Provide a forum for familiarizing with the concept of FLR and all the related issues and identify opportunities to implement such an approach in their home countries;
- b. Review the country case studies, especially the unique approaches being undertaken by the individual countries, and how they would relate to other countries in the region;
- c. Facilitate partnership among institutions dealing with FLR and develop practical recommendations for their cooperation;

- d. Stimulate political support, policy and partnership arrangements, and identify investment needed to implement effective FLR activities; and
- e. Provide recommendations for developing a concept note for developing a regional program on FLR.

The structure of the expert group workshop would be as following:

- Welcome addresses (FAO, RECOFTC, Sponsors, Host)
- Introduction to workshop, mapping the opportunities for FLR, and increasing understanding of the related technical, socioeconomic, and policy issues
- Country case studies and discussion on the structure and content of final report
- Breakout Groups and Plenary: How to move forward – partnerships, investment needs, and political support
- Discussions and recommendations for concept note for developing a regional program
- Close of workshop