



## **Baseline review and gap assessment on forestry strategic planning in Asia-Pacific economies**

for the  
**Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Network (FPN)**  
**Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management  
and Rehabilitation (APFNet)**

*In memory of Mr. Binesh Dayal,  
one of the earliest and most supportive  
members of the Forestry Planning Network.*



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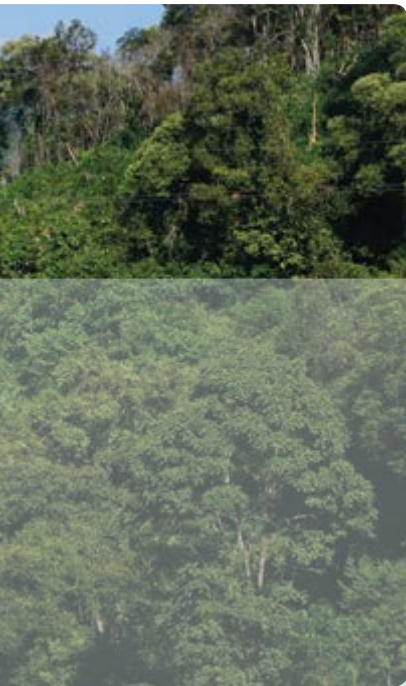
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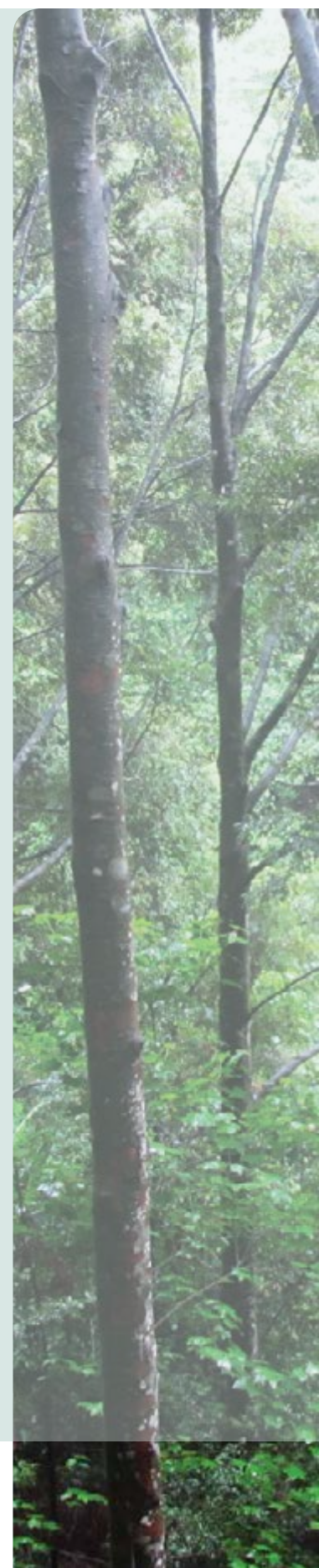
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## Executive summary

Over the last 30 years, several economies in the Asia-Pacific region have prepared national forestry plans or strategic forestry plans to respond to demands for forest products and services, and international conventions and agreements. When forestry was predominantly about wood production, preparing such plans was straightforward. However, societal demands have shifted towards more conservation and less production. Food security and poverty reduction have become major concerns, as have climate change adaptation and mitigation. Economies have changed and urban populations have increased dramatically, while rural populations have stagnated or even decreased in absolute terms.

These developments have made strategic forestry planning more complex, which calls for considerable strengthening in strategic planning capability, the engagement of multiple stakeholders and a new way of communicating on what forestry and forests are all about. The Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Network (FPN) of the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet) intends to address the planning challenges that economies are facing. As a first step, it commissioned this assessment of gaps and needs in forestry strategic planning in Asia-Pacific economies, and the development of recommendations for potential support. This review covered the following seven economies: Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, Fiji, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. It comprised of a self-assessment by FPN members, interviews during visits to four economies and a review of plans and related documentation.

Based on the information collected, the following key strengths and weaknesses can be observed across the seven economies, in terms of the strategy development and implementation process:

### Strengths:

- increasingly active participation of a wide group of stakeholders including disadvantaged groups;
- a better understanding of local situations through sub-national consultations;
- increasing opportunities to consider the interests and advice of all parties to improve strategic planning and implementation;
- improved clarity on the issues that need to be tackled most urgently; and
- joint understanding that top-down approaches need to be combined with bottom-up approaches.

### Weaknesses:

- dominance of the process by a small number of individuals;
- limited time for obtaining meaningful input;
- poor feedback mechanisms to maintain communication with consultation participants;
- difficulty obtaining interest and willingness from authorities to consider alternative views and/or new ideas;
- although most economies took considerable time to formulate new strategic plans, at times the process was rushed and important issues were overlooked; and
- data transparency.

Regarding the actual strategies or plans, the findings are as follows:

1. There is a shift from production forestry to the provision of environmental services and biodiversity conservation, although foresters continue to be more comfortable with their traditional role of producing raw materials for export and domestic industries.
2. While references to Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 are sparse, there is a recognition that forest management should contribute to poverty reduction and/or local livelihoods, that local people have a role to play in forest management and that the rights of local people need to be strengthened to truly benefit from forms of community forestry.
3. Climate change adaptation has emerged in some strategic plans.
4. Climate change mitigation has received little attention, likely because many foresters view REDD+ as separate from forest management. However, it should be noted that five REDD+ activities have significant overlap with sustainable forest management.
5. The term “governance” has been found in strategic plans, but it is not clear to what extent the components of governance are understood. There also appears to be a clear avoidance to approach issues related to corruption and illegal activities.
6. Monitoring and evaluation remain weak, and where progress indicators have been defined, they are often inadequate.
7. Having strategic plans approved at the highest level does not always appear to be an advantage. In fact, it may be a disadvantage, as it can create barriers to revisions and adaptations during the implementation of the plans, given the need for re-approval from highest level.
8. Strategic plans tend to be prepared to appeal to donor requests, and as a result can contain too many issues that need urgent attention, without sufficient clarity or specificity on how they will be addressed in a realistic way.
9. In some economies, there appears to be a tendency for attempts to expand (often with declining resources) into areas that would likely be more effective if managed by the private sector (e.g. forest plantations) or other public agencies (e.g. urban forestry).
10. Finally, while there has been a concern that strategic planners have not adequately addressed emerging issues, it is probably more serious that many strategic plans have not addressed ongoing issues. This includes addressing illegal logging and trade and/or the barriers to investments in plantation development and management or more general sustainable forest management.

Representatives of the seven economies highlighted a long list of gaps and needs. Many mentioned challenges with implementing their strategies or plans, or issues that are very specific to their own economy<sup>2</sup>. Some issues are politically sensitive and should be addressed by different bodies at the economy level or at the regional level.

While the list below relies, to some extent, more on feedback from the Philippines, the needs are quite common in the seven economies. These key needs are:

1. To strategically communicate the content of plans, and translate it into a material that can be understood by the general public and decision makers beyond the forestry sector, with the aim of promoting the importance of forests and their contribution to national economies.
2. To integrate and harmonize with the plans of other sectors, such as agriculture, tourism, planning and investment, agrarian reform, ancestral domain management, and public land management.

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<sup>2</sup> Consistent with APEC terminology, government members of APFNet are referred to as “economy” or “economies”.

3. To share knowledge and transfer the skills acquired during planning processes (e.g. consultations, workshops, cross visits) and other capacity building opportunities to technical staff, especially field personnel.
4. To develop and implement appropriate, efficient and cost-effective monitoring, evaluation, assessment and reporting procedures.
5. Institutional mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of projects and alignment to the targets of strategic plans.
6. To enhance the understanding of global conventions and agreements, environmental and forestry issues and direct and indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.
7. To strengthen skills in facilitating and managing constructive consultation processes that can involve participants meaningfully.

Also mentioned were challenges that are likely out of the feasible scope of the FPN, such as “the insufficient accessibility and transparency of research data”. In addition, some issues that were raised are being addressed by organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC), the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions (APAFRI) and several others.

The following are recommendations on feasible interventions that the FPN may carry out, to address the needs identified above. They are based on the findings of the previous sections. The focus is on three areas of support in order not to overwhelm the FPN and enable learning by doing. Once the FPN has gained more confidence, additional topics can be added if there is sufficient funding. Ideally, most interventions by the FPN are implemented in partnership with organizations based in the Asia-Pacific region to enhance impact and cost-effectiveness.

## Strategic communication

The Report of the Second Asia-Pacific Forestry Sector Outlook Study points out that:

“... it is of great importance that foresters learn how to better communicate to politicians and the public the importance of forests and related goals. ... With the current high profile of forestry, greater investment in communications may be warranted.”

This resonates with the first need on communications, as identified above. In the medium term, it is recommended that the FPN assists economies in developing communication plans that make a case for forests and forestry.

In the short term, it is recommended to organize a workshop or write-shop for communication staff of forestry agencies that could focus on:

- exchanging experiences on current approaches to communication by their forestry agencies;
- showcasing examples of communication products; and
- developing documents about the contribution of forests to their economies for the general public and decision makers outside the forestry sector, respectively.

It is expected that following the short-term recommendation would result in:

- products that can be circulated in the near future in each economy (hopefully in different, local and national languages);
- an appreciation of what can be achieved with relatively limited means; and
- a better understanding of how forestry agencies can engage in meaningful ways with different target audiences in the future.

## Understanding and knowledge on regional and global agendas and issues

Over the last decade, several developments at the international level including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement on climate change, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Aichi targets, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Bonn Challenge and the New York Declaration on Forests have impacted forests, forestry, forest policy and/or strategic planning. Clearly, the ongoing emergence of new issues, concepts, discourses and themes can pose a challenge to foresters and forest policymakers.

In response to this, the FPN Blog was developed to discuss ideas, articles and developments related to strategic planning in the forestry sector. It is recommended that resources such as the blog be used and developed to respond to the demand for clear and easy-to-understand information on the issues described above, and provide hyperlinks to online learning tools, training courses and relevant events. Other issues to cover include (but are not limited to):

- cross-sectoral planning (that goes beyond broader consultations);
- governance and rights;
- drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (or *Change drivers and societal changes* as referred to by the FAO); and
- strengthening private sector engagement.

In addition to blogs, other social networking platforms can be used, as well as policy or info briefs on topics of particular interest. It is expected that this will result not only in an enhanced understanding of new issues in the short to medium term, but also help forest planners and decision makers become more confident in engaging with stakeholders outside the forestry sector.



## Monitoring and evaluation

One of the biggest observed weaknesses of strategic plans and their implementation is monitoring and evaluation, which are often not cost-effective or based on SMART indicators. It is recommended that assistance is provided to economies in establishing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks to help planners meet monitoring requirements and policymakers to track progress. The framework should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate shifting priorities over time.

As a first step, the FPN should review existing material and provide a concise overview of the most critical issues and bottlenecks. Training in the logical framework approach should be organized. In addition, the FPN can provide suggestions or explore collaboration opportunities with FAO on expanding the coverage of monitoring and evaluation issues in their Executive Forest Policy Course for The Asia-Pacific.

The expected results from implementing monitoring and evaluation frameworks is that in the future, strategic plans can become a more useful tool for a wider group of stakeholders, to trigger discussions about the implementation of progress and emerging issues, inform the need for change, and enhance engagement with wider stakeholder groups.

## Some final thoughts

The recommendations made in this report should be viewed as a starting point only. As the FPN evolves, it may select, in discussions with its members and partners, to tackle additional matters. In doing so, it should recognize that:

1. The differences among economies are greater than their commonalities, and learning from more advanced economies may not necessarily lead to improvements under different situations.
2. Much work in communications is currently being developed in the forestry sector and there are many players involved. The FPN should be aware of and prevent the duplication of efforts.
3. There were many suggestions for workshops and opportunities for the exchange of experiences and lessons learned (including study tours). While such events are usually stimulating, their impact is frequently small, as the tools and lessons learned are often not shared when participants return home. The sharing of lessons learned should be strengthened, for example, by requesting individual participants to produce a learning report or slide show (for presentation to colleagues), in addition to an evaluation administered and facilitated by the event organizers.





## Acronyms

APAFRI	Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions
APFNet	Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CDM A/R	Clean Development Mechanism: Afforestation and Reforestation
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DOF	Department of Forestry (Viet Nam)
DOFP	Department of Forest Protection (Viet Nam)
EU	European Union
FA	Forestry Administration (Cambodia)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FPN	The Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Network
FLR	Forest landscape restoration
FSSP	Forest Sector Support Partnership (Viet Nam)
GDANCP	General Department of Administration for Nature Conservation and Protection (Cambodia)
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (Cambodia)
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Viet Nam)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MPFS	Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (Nepal)
NFP	National forest programme
NRAP	National REDD+ Action Programme (Viet Nam)
NRIFAP	National REDD+ Investment Framework and Action Plan (Sri Lanka)
NTFP	Non-timber Forest Product
RECOFTC	The Center for People and Forests
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SDG	UN Sustainable Development Goal
TWG	Technical Working Group (Philippines)
TWG-FR	Technical Working Group on Forestry Reform (Cambodia)
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USD	United States Dollar
VNFOREST	Vietnam Administration of Forestry (Viet Nam)
WBG	The World Bank Group





# 1. Introduction and objectives of the initiative

Over the last 30 years, several economies in the Asia-Pacific have conducted forestry sector reviews and prepared Forestry Sector Master Plans, National Forest Programmes or similar such plans.<sup>2</sup> National forestry plans or strategic forestry plans are important as they provide a framework for satisfying national demand for forest products and services, and for responding to international conventions and agreements. Like forest policies, they should be:

- “A negotiated agreement amongst the government and relevant stakeholders on a shared vision and goals for a country’s forests and trees, adopted by government;
- A way of addressing society’s needs and development goals while balancing various stakeholder interests;
- Strategic guidance for managing and using forest and trees;
- A comprehensive framework setting up adaptive implementation mechanisms for diverse contexts and changing conditions.”

## What is a strategic plan?

In general, a strategic plan is a broadly-defined plan aimed at creating a desired future. It frequently covers time horizons of more than ten and up to 25 years. It differs from a long-term plan, which usually has a planning horizon of five years (although it can be longer), and short-term plans.

In the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the term “national forest programme (nfp)” was coined. “It is a generic expression for a wide range of approaches to the process of planning, programming and implementing forest activities” (FAO, 1997).

For the purpose of this project the terms are treated synonymously.

What used to be relatively straightforward, when forestry was predominantly about wood production, has become rather complex for a variety of reasons. Over the last 30 years, economies have become increasingly interconnected and national economies have transformed; today several economies in the Asia-Pacific region are now middle-income economies. Societal demands have shifted towards more conservation and less extraction (especially unsustainable logging) and, since the price spike of many agricultural commodities in 2008, food security has become a major concern.

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, China completed its 13th Five-Year Plan for Forestry Development in 2016.

On top of this, there are international commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (not to mention the REDD+<sup>3</sup> mechanism that many economies plan to implement in the coming years), the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Aichi targets and many others, which economies need to consider. Other matters have affected the work of forestry and foresters, which has at times lead to changes in priorities and impeded progress on innovative initiatives.

These issues and others have made strategic forestry planning more complex than ever, which calls for the need to considerably strengthen the strategic planning capability of policymakers in the sector, the increased engagement of multiple stakeholders and a new way of communicating on what forestry and forests are all about. The Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Network (FPN) of the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet) is an informal network that aims to strengthen economy-level forestry planning processes through experience exchange, capacity building and technical support, to address the challenges that economies are facing.

Over the last four years, members of the FPN have met three times to discuss how strategic forestry planning can be enhanced. During the most recent meeting in January 2017, it was agreed that many gaps and needs in strategic forestry planning remain. Capacity needs to be strengthened to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of planning, particularly in terms of adapting to internal and external changes.

During the discussions on next steps, one of the top priorities identified for the FPN was a project to carry out a baseline review, and gap and needs assessment on forestry strategic planning in Asia-Pacific economies, and develop corresponding recommendations for potential support.

#### **The objectives of the project are to:**

1. compile a set of existing forestry strategic plans in Asia-Pacific economies as the starting point of a regional information base;
2. deepen understanding on the basic commonalities and differences in the approaches, challenges and areas of focus in Asia-Pacific forestry strategic planning;
3. deepen understanding on the gaps and needs in knowledge, skills and capacity in forestry strategic planning in Asia-Pacific economies; and
4. develop recommendations on feasible interventions that FPN may carry out to address the identified gaps.

This report covers objectives two to four.

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<sup>3</sup> REDD+ stands for *Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and the role of conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries*.

## 2. Structure of the report

After this section, the limitations of this study are outlined in Section 3. It was considered critical to discuss this, as policy making and strategic planning cover issues in economies that can be sensitive, and the level of diversity among economies is considerable in the Asia-Pacific region. Section 4 briefly introduces the approach adopted for this project. Section 5 then provides an overview of the challenges that economies are facing due to various changes and developments in recent years, many of which may not be that recent as they likely have affected forest policy and planning for decades. Section 6 covers the

challenges that forestry agencies and foresters have faced over the last 30 years of transitions. This is an important section as it provides context behind the conclusions and recommendations. Section 7 provides an overview of forestry strategic planning in the Asia-Pacific region. The section is divided into four subsections, each ending with a set of key strengths and weaknesses. Section 8 presents the findings of the study, namely the gaps and needs on forestry strategic planning, which is followed by Section 9 that covers recommendations for the FPN.

## 3. Limitations of the study

The Asia-Pacific region is perhaps the most diverse of all regions. This study has been limited by its small sample size of only seven economies (i.e. Cambodia, the People's Republic of China<sup>4</sup>, Fiji, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam). The FPN is conscious of this limitation and views this work as only an initial review.

The seven economies are also very diverse in terms of many variables (e.g. geographical area, population size, economy size and growth, political system, forest cover and contribution of forestry to GDP). The FPN is aware that major wood producers have not been covered by this initial work, which is certainly a shortcoming.

There are also significant data limitations, and it was not possible to clarify all matters during the implementation of the study.<sup>5</sup> There were also tremendous differences in views. For example, while some interviewees expressed that their strategic plan continues to be very relevant, others commented that the development of their strategic plans may not have been the most effective use of resources and that the plan was no longer used.

As will be discussed later, it was not possible to focus only on the strategic plans or national forest programs in

this project. Other documents that were covered include a five-year plan, a policy, and a master plan.<sup>6</sup> While this complicated the review, it did not significantly affect the findings and recommendations. What complicated the review of existing documents was that some of them were available only in national languages. Since no official translations were available, only unofficial translations of quite diverse quality could be used in this study.

Finally, eliciting views on gaps and needs or strengths and weaknesses can inherently be sensitive. In the self-assessment, adopted as a first step for obtaining information, questions related to these issues were in some cases not answered. Follow-up interviews also did not always shed more light on the matter. Because of these sensitivities, this report will provide an overview of these topics for the seven economies as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> The Republic of China is hereinafter referred to as China.

<sup>5</sup> Some Local Contacts did not respond to written comments, others were not available for interviews, and several people interviewed were unfamiliar with the FPN and the project.

<sup>6</sup> Regardless of the diversity in the text below, reference will only be made to "strategic plans".

## 4. Project approach

The project approach contains five steps (or tasks) that, to some extent, run in parallel.

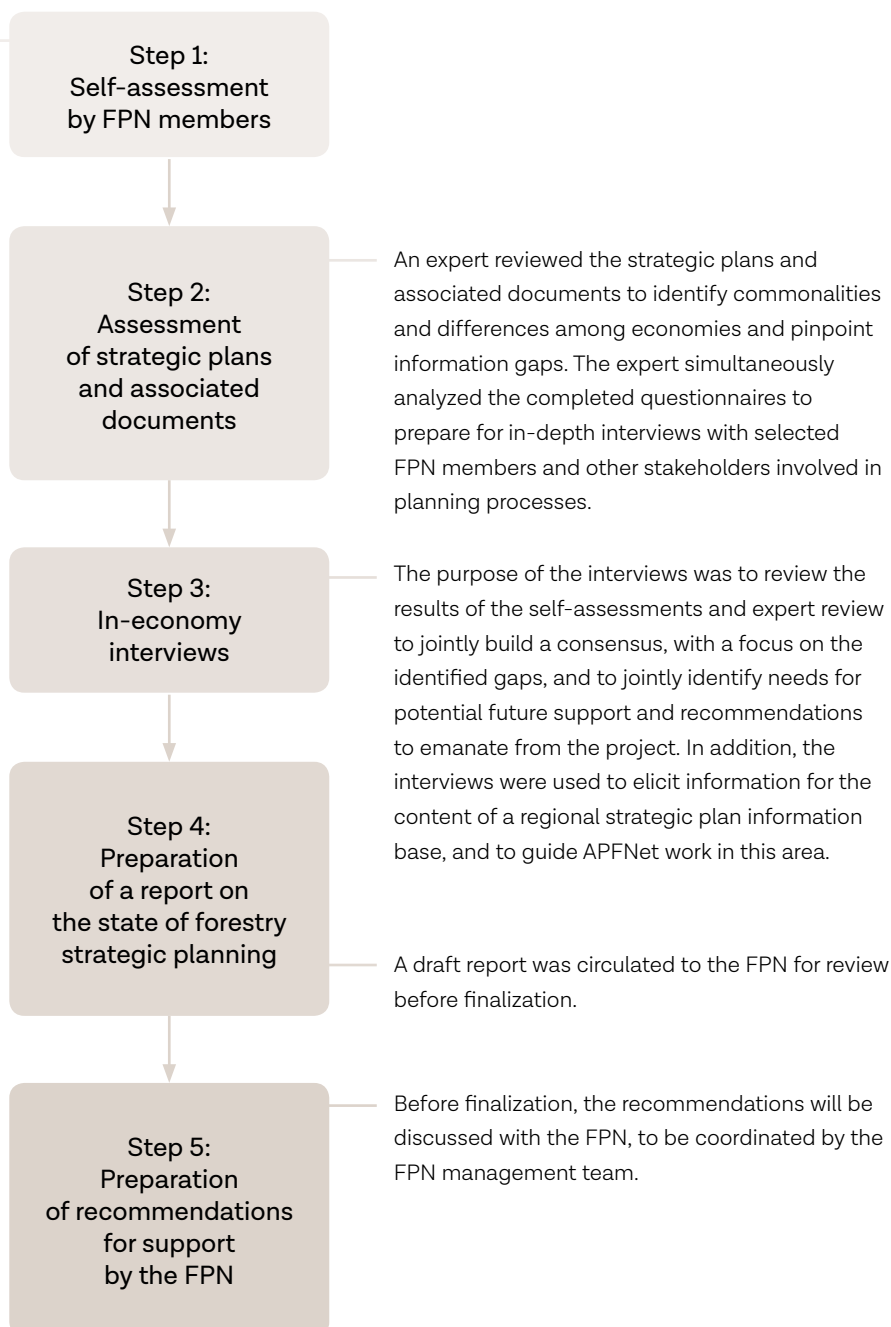
FPN members were requested to review strategy development processes and final outputs, based on a questionnaire framework related to:

- the preparation for the strategy development process (focused on analysis and communication);
- the actual development or formulation process (focused on the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement or involvement to generate broad-based support and ownership);
- the content of the strategy document (focused on key themes or thrusts, and key strengths and weaknesses); and
- gaps and needs to guide future support of the FPN.

The questionnaire comprised the following six parts (see Annex I):

1. General information
2. Preparation of the development process
3. Development or formulation process
4. Content of the forestry strategy
5. Gaps and needs
6. Other issues and comments

The objective of Step 1 was to strengthen the direct involvement of focal points in the project, enhance their ownership of the process and provide guidance for the following steps. The self-assessment was completed during the month of June by a forestry agency representative in each of the seven economies.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> In the Philippines, the FPN Local Contact of the Forest Management Bureau opted to have the assessment completed by a team, which proved to be advantageous. In China, the assessment was completed by three representatives of the Chinese Academy of Forestry.



## 5. Context

The Asia-Pacific region, with over 4.5 billion people (as of 2016), is home to three-fifths of the world's population. It contains seven of the world's ten most populous economies, and also some of the world's smallest island nations in the Pacific (UNESCAP, n.d.).

### But change is nothing new

It should be noted that many of the discussions about change and how it affects forests in the Asia-Pacific region, forest policy and strategic planning have been analyzed and described for decades. It is important to keep this in mind, to build on past and existing efforts while avoiding the unnecessary duplication of others.

For example, the Asia-Pacific Forestry Sector Outlook Study (1998) describes forest sector trends as follows:

“The forestry sector in the Asia-Pacific region is undergoing substantial policy change in response to broader developments such as rapid industrialisation, improvements in rural infrastructure, economic growth, globalisation of economies, privatisation, trade liberalisation and UNCED-related attention to sustainable development (particularly sustainable forest management).”

Another FAO publication of 2010 starts with quite similar text: “Tremendous social and economic changes are taking place in the Asia-Pacific region and hopes are growing that a long

awaited reconciliation of tensions between environment and development is a possibility. Rapid economic growth and heightening demands for materials, commodities and land have resulted in the depletion of forest resources in many countries around the region. Continuing deforestation and forest degradation together with environmental shocks and the threat of climate change have sensitized politicians and populations to the need to maintain the natural environment. In particular, natural disasters including floods, droughts and landslides have resulted in reversals in forest-related policy and forest cover in several Asia-Pacific countries. Realization of the huge availability of financial resources to cope with other threats to global society has also questioned the low prioritization of the natural environment. Increasing consensus over the threat posed by climate change and growing commitment to related international initiatives are hoped by many to bring new life to forestry and to help broaden implementation of the much discussed concept of ‘sustainable forest management.’”

Globally — and particularly in the Asia-Pacific region — forests are under threat, although there has been a slowdown or even a reversal of this trend in terms of forest cover (see forest cover trends in Table 2 for the economies covered in this report). Although population growth has slowed over the last 25 years (Table 1), consumption patterns in middle-income economies have substantially increased the demand for food, fiber, energy and minerals, which are exacerbating pressures on natural forests. Forest management is further challenged by the impacts of climate change, weak forest governance, illegal logging and trade and poor land and/or forest tenure, to name just a few issues. While some economies in the region have been able to bring stability to their forest cover, broadly speaking deforestation and especially forest degradation persist.

	1990	2000	2010	2016
<b>Cambodia</b>	3.2	2.2	1.5	1.6
<b>China</b>	1.5	0.8	0.5	0.5
<b>Fiji</b>	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.7
<b>Nepal</b>	2.5	1.8	1.0	1.1
<b>The Philippines</b>	2.5	2.1	1.6	1.6
<b>Thailand</b>	1.4	1.0	0.5	0.3
<b>Viet Nam</b>	1.9	1.3	1.0	1.1

**Table 1:** Population growth (annual %) (World Bank, 2017)

	1990	2000	2010	2016
<b>Cambodia</b>	71.50	63.78	55.76	52.24
<b>China</b>	16.43	18.51	20.98	21.78
<b>Fiji</b>	52.16	53.66	54.35	55.68
<b>Nepal</b>	32.73	26.50	24.70	24.70
<b>The Philippines</b>	21.85	23.42	22.80	26.80
<b>Thailand</b>	27.29	33.15	31.67	31.96
<b>Viet Nam</b>	28.29	35.43	42.69	44.64

**Table 2:** Forest area (in % of total land area) (World Bank, 2017)

On paper, most economies in the region have adopted sustainable forest management as the basic tenet for managing their forests, balancing economic, social and environmental considerations. Greater engagement of various stakeholders in determining the priorities of forestry is a major positive development in recent decades. The shift from managing forests predominantly for timber towards the provision of environmental services is also notable. Extensive tracts of forests have been set aside as protected areas (Table 3), and logging bans have been imposed in many economies. Demand for environmental services stems from diverse sources – global, regional, national and local. Also, Asia-Pacific economies have become an integral part of global forest value chains, which are significantly increasing the share of traded products. Forestry planning is tasked with striking a fine balance between the different demands and negotiating trade-offs between competing claims.

In this decade, several developments at the international level including the UNFCCC Paris Agreement on climate change, CBD, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Bonn Challenge<sup>7</sup> and the New York Declaration on Forests<sup>8</sup> have also impacted forests, forestry, forest policy and/or strategic planning. Some economies have taken steps to mainstream forestry into the SDGs and to make forests an integral part of climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions. In addition, evolving concepts and themes, such as forest landscape restoration (FLR), will also impact economies.

<sup>7</sup> See [here](#) for more information.

<sup>8</sup> See [here](#) for more information.

	1990	2000	2010	2016
<b>Cambodia</b>	0	23	26	52.24
<b>China</b>	14	15	17	21.78
<b>Fiji</b>	1	2	4	55.68
<b>Nepal</b>	8	17	16	24.70
<b>The Philippines</b>	9	11	11	26.80
<b>Thailand</b>	12	17	19	31.96
<b>Viet Nam</b>	5	6	6	44.64

**Table 3:** Terrestrial protected areas (% of total area) (World Bank, 2017)

But even over the 50 years before 2010, various discourses (or schools of thought) have considerably influenced global forestry debates, policy-making, planning and programs on the ground. Such discourses have led to short- and long-term reactions and policy reforms. They have also directed or redirected international aid and mediated policy instrument choices in both the forestry sector and the broader economy.

The various discourses (Figure 1 shows ten discourses) have considerably structured the way we think about forests, forestry, forest policy, strategic planning and programs.

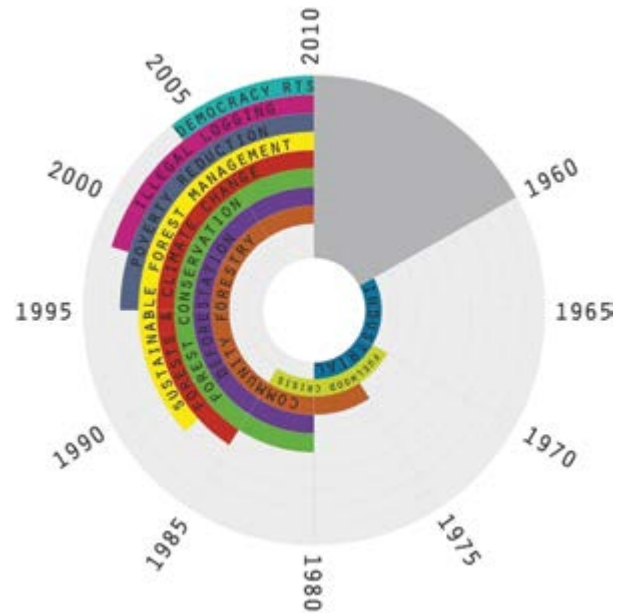
It is obvious that with all the changes and challenges, but also opportunities, traditional or business-as-usual, and arguably, narrow forest planning, focused on balancing local supplies and demand, is today of little use. Enhancing competitiveness of forest products in trade has become less relevant for many economies.

Various international entities and economies have responded to the changes experienced over the last 20 years and revised their strategies. In 2016, The World Bank Group (WBG) published its Forest Action Plan FY16-20. It “focuses on two priority areas: investments in the sustainable forest management; and ‘forest-smart’ interventions, in which the WBG will aim to take a holistic look at **forest landscapes**, so that its work in sectors like agriculture, transport and energy does not erode forest

capital and generates instead positive forest outcomes” (WBG, 2016). The Plan is guided by three **cross-cutting themes** that are crucial for achieving progress on forests and forestry: climate change and resilience, rights and participation, and institutions and governance.

Also in 2016, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) approved the Strategic Plan of Action for ASEAN Cooperation on Forestry (2016-2025). Historically, earlier plans or programs had focused on enhancing the global competitiveness of ASEAN’s forestry products and promoting intra- and extra-ASEAN trade, and greater private sector investment in the forestry sector. The new vision of the Plan is stated as follows: “Forest resources are sustainably managed at the **landscape** level to meet societal needs, both socio-economically and culturally, of the present and future generations, and to contribute positively to sustainable development” (ASEAN, 2016); the earlier narrow focus has been broadened to address new demands on forests.

Similarly, the 2013 European Union (EU) Forest Strategy replaced the previous strategy of 1998. As elaborated in a press release, the European Commission (2013) noted that the new framework was needed “in order to respond to the increasing demands put on forests and to significant societal and political changes that have affected forests over the last 15 years.” It continued by emphasizing that “the Strategy **‘goes out of the forest’**, addressing aspects of the ‘value chain’ (i.e. the way forest resources are used to generate goods and services), which strongly influence forest management.” It also stated that the “Strategy highlights that forests are not only important for rural development, but also for the environment and biodiversity, forest-based industries, bioenergy, and in the fight against climate change. Stressing the need to adopt a holistic approach, it also emphasizes that the impacts of other policies on forests and developments taking place **beyond forest boundaries** should be taken into account.”



**Figure 1:** Ten discourses that shaped forestry between 1960 and 2010 (RTS stands for “Rights, tenure and security”).

In the Asia-Pacific region, economies have responded to these new challenges. Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam have developed National REDD+ Strategies or Action plans since 2012. In Viet Nam the revised National REDD+ Action Programme (NRAP) was only approved on 05 April 2017, and Sri Lanka’s National REDD+ Investment Framework and Action Plan (NRIFAP) was launched on 09 May 2017. Other economies will follow suit in 2018. In January 2016, the Philippines adopted its Master Plan for Climate Resilient Forestry Development, which indicates how serious economies are taking climate change and its impacts. The scope of new guiding documents has increased (some include urban forestry), although challenges in applying cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches need to be strengthened. Also, some changes and constraints (or direct and indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation), especially outside the mandate of forest agencies, have not been considered and addressed. It is therefore widely acknowledged that national forestry planning processes would benefit from enhancement.

## 6. Challenges faced by forest agencies and foresters in the Asia-Pacific

An understanding of forestry-related historical developments in the Asia-Pacific region and the origin and definition of forestry is critical to appreciate the challenges that forest agencies and professional forester have faced over recent decades.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary provides the following two definitions for forestry (2017):

- a. the science of developing, caring for, or cultivating forests
- b. the management of growing timber

The same definition can also be found in other dictionaries. A more detailed one is provided by My Agriculture Information Bank (2015):

*“Forestry is defined as the theory and practice of all that constitutes the creation, conservation and scientific management of forests and the utilization of their resources (Anon, 1966). It includes all thinking and all actions pertaining to creation and management of forests, including harvesting, marketing and utilization of all forest products and services. It includes not only management of existing forests but also the creation of new forests.”*

Scientific forestry has its origin in Central Europe, and in past centuries and in many economies foresters were called the forest police, who until recently wielded significant authority and managed vast and valuable resources. This explains why for decades, if not centuries, scientific forestry put foresters and timber production at the center of forest management. Little consideration was given to environmental services, the role of local people in forestry, and certainly not poverty reduction, biodiversity protection, landscape-level and cross-sectoral approaches, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Today, in the Asia-Pacific, the once vast forest resources have dwindled. Since the 1970s, economies that used to be net wood exporters have become net importers. For example, Thailand became a net importer of timber in 1977, when imports of roundwood reached 61,000m<sup>3</sup> and then

200,000m<sup>3</sup> in 1979 (Donner, 1984). Similar developments happened in other economies. Although the contribution of value-added processing continued to increase in some economies (Table 4), overall the contribution of the forestry sector to GDP has decreased (Table 5). This is not surprising and not only a function of deforestation and forest degradation, but also as a result of economic changes in many economies, where the share of the manufacturing and service sectors to GDP has increased considerably since the 1980s.

	1990	2000	2005	2011
Cambodia	155	248	325	390
China	17,434	30,834	56,898	124,622
Fiji	50	88	71	62
Nepal	270	260	156	105
The Philippines	1,626	865	546	529
Thailand	2,307	2,686	3,097	3,169
Viet nam	644	1,073	1,538	2,356

**Table 4:** Contribution of value-added in the forestry sector in million USD at 2011 prices and exchange rates (Lebedys, A. and Li, Y.S., 2014)

	1990	2000	2005	2011
Cambodia	5.5	4.5	3.8	3.2
China	1.9	1.2	1.5	1.7
Fiji	2.2	2.9	2.2	2.0
Nepal	3.5	2.0	1.1	0.6
The Philippines	1.6	0.6	0.3	0.2
Thailand	1.5	1.2	1.0	0.9
Viet Nam	2.1	1.8	1.6	1.7

**Table 5:** Contribution of the forestry sector to GDP (Lebedys, A. and Li, Y.S., 2014)

With a decline in the importance of the forestry sector, popular support for forest conservation (later followed by ecological restoration) increased significantly; in New Zealand as early as the 1970s. Some economies were experiencing a “forestry crisis,” where forest exploitation was seen as ineffectively regulated or “out of control”, which ensued debates on the purpose of forests and forestry. In some economies, this led to the imposition of full or partial logging bans (Durst and Enters, 2017). The decision to close forests to loggers was triggered by natural disasters in some economies (i.e., devastating floods and landslides, which took the lives of 400 people in southern Thailand in 1988; catastrophic floods that killed 7,000 people in Ormoc City, the Philippines, in 1992; and flooding in the Yangtze River valley that affected hundreds of millions of people in China in 1998). These disasters were initially believed by many to be a direct consequence of poor forest management, and although subsequent scientific assessments have debunked this theory<sup>9</sup>, the disasters have nevertheless sparked the calls for new logging bans and reinforcement of commitments to maintain previously imposed partial logging bans.

Forestry agencies had to change from emphasizing production to conservation, at a time when organized transboundary environmental crimes and the power of timber tycoons increased, land grabbing for the production of various crops (e.g. oil palm, rubber, cassava, wheat, coffee, bananas and pepper) started to increase and when the prices of many commodities peaked in 2008, which raised concerns about food security in many economies. In addition, over the last 30 years, many economies in the Asia-Pacific region have been actively engaged in reforms to transfer responsibilities and power from the center (i.e. central government) to the periphery (e.g. state, province, district or local level). Almost all sectors are affected by this incremental shift and forestry is no exception. The

re-orientation of forest management through devolution and other forms of decentralization has an even longer history. Locally, managed forests have existed for centuries, for example, where traditional practices were the dominant form of forest management (Edmunds and Wollenberg, 2004). As a result of a global movement toward participatory management, political and administrative decentralization and social justice, devolution is increasingly viewed as the norm in forest management.

In response to the various pressures described above, forestry agencies were restructured (see examples below), wood production was shifted out of natural forests into plantations, wood imports have increased dramatically in economies with expanding wood processing facilities, and agency staff started taking on new roles (e.g. in conservation or community forestry), for which many were ill-prepared. Until recently, their training had focused on the management of growing timber.

This metamorphosis in job description has overwhelmed the profession, especially the previous generation of foresters. Because the decline in timber resources and the shift to conservation have decreased overall income in the forestry sector, in some economies the interest in studying forestry has also decreased. As one interviewee in Cambodia remarked, “good students do not select forestry for their degree anymore, which has resulted in a decline in the number of top entries into the profession”. There is also frustration about the constant flow of new demands, requirements and interventions from higher government agencies and the international community. As was remarked in one self-assessment, “due to the quick dynamics in forest policy and management some traditional foresters seem to be unable to adjust to the new environment and thinking especially when it comes to participatory and inclusive approaches.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> More information on this can be found, for example, in FAO, 2005. Forests and floods: Drowning in fiction or thriving on facts. RAP Publication 2005/3. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Bangkok; Gilmour, D. 2014. Forests and water: A synthesis of the contemporary science and its relevance for community forestry in the Asia-Pacific region. The Center for People and Forests (RECOFTO), Bangkok.

<sup>10</sup> This quote has been edited to clarify its meaning.

## 7. Overview of forestry strategic planning in the Asia-Pacific

### 7.1 General background

The seven forest agencies were requested to select the main forestry strategy document of their respective economies for assessment in this study. The documents selected are as follows:

<b>Cambodia</b>	National Forest Programme (2010–2029) Approved by: The Prime Minister (no date available)
<b>China</b>	The Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Forestry Development of the People's Republic of China (2016–2020) Approved by: Head of the State Forest Administration (no date available)
<b>Fiji</b>	Draft Strategic Development Plan 2017–2030 To be approved by: Cabinet (at a future date)
<b>Nepal</b>	Forest Policy 2015 Approved by: The Prime Minister (no date available)
<b>The Philippines</b>	Philippine Forestry Master Plan for Climate-Resilient Forestry Development (2016–2028) Approved by: The Director of the Forest Management Bureau, but not in writing
<b>Thailand</b>	20-Year National Strategy of the Royal Forest Department (2017–2036) Approved by: The Prime Minister (no date available)
<b>Viet Nam</b>	Viet Nam Forestry Development Strategy (2006–2020) Approved by: The Prime Minister on 05 February 2007

Excluding China and Nepal, the duration of plans is between 12 and 19 years. The earliest expiration date for any of the above plans is 2020.

Most plans were approved or endorsed at a high level; four were approved at the level of the Prime Minister. This gives the impression of strong political support and commitment. However, other sectoral plans (e.g. agriculture) that may compete with the forestry sector (e.g. for land) may also be approved at the same level. The forestry sector is therefore not necessarily in a more advantageous position.

The most common reasons for preparing these strategic plans were the recognition that previous documents were outdated, significant changes in the international agenda (e.g. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), SDGs, UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) decisions, Aichi targets of the CBD) have matured and dramatic changes to domestic circumstances have occurred. The availability of donor funds also helped facilitate the development process in four of the economies. In Cambodia, the formulation of the National Forest Programme was triggered by a logging moratorium (2001), and guided by the Forest Law 2002, the Independent Forest Sector Review 2004 and the Action Plan for Forest and Environment 2007–2010. Nepal, on the other hand, was a special case. The formulation of the Forest Policy 2015 was apparently triggered because the Department of Forests felt that it was unable to participate in the development process of the Forestry Sector Strategy for Nepal (2014)<sup>11</sup>, which was spearheaded by the Multi Stakeholder Forestry Programme.

Six of the respondents completing the self-assessment felt that the current document was still highly relevant. The exception was Viet Nam, which also confirmed this response during interviews. This should not come as a surprise, as the plan was approved more than ten years ago. In addition, “until 2010, this responsibility was carried out by two specialised agencies created by MARD (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development), namely the

<sup>11</sup> In Annex 8 of the strategy document, a “List of organizations and individuals involved and consulted in the MPFS review and forestry sector development process” was supposedly included. However, the list was found to be empty.



Department of Forestry (DoF) and Department of Forest Protection (DoFP). In January 2010, to avoid duplication and to strengthen the workforce, MARD established the Vietnam Administration of Forestry (VNFOREST), tasked with advising and supporting the minister in managing the country's forests." (Pham Thu Thuy *et al.* 2012, p. 20). A similar development took place in early 2017 in Cambodia, where large forest areas were transferred from the Forestry Administration (FA) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) to the General Department of Administration for Nature Conservation and Protection (GDANCP) under the Ministry of Environment. Because of these major structural changes, several interviewees were therefore of the opinion that Cambodia's National Forest Programme (NFP) had outlived its usefulness. The Technical Working Group on Forestry Reform apparently has not met since June 2016 and the last progress report of the NFP was also dated in 2016.

The above developments in Cambodia and Viet Nam beg the question as to whether strategic plans are formulated for the forestry sector of an economy or whether they are in the first instance the guiding documents for forestry government agencies. While interviewees said that their strategy was for the economy's forests, some were also adamant that it was outdated because of recent administrative changes. Thailand is the only economy that explicitly developed a strategy for one of its forest agencies: the 20-Year National Strategy of Royal Forest Department (2017-2036).

## 7.2 Preparation of the development process

In preparing for the strategy development process, most economies started with a domestic review of the forestry sector to-date, issues outside the domestic forestry sector and an analysis of global issues. Four of the seven economies also covered transboundary issues. In Thailand, a strong link to the economy's self-sufficiency philosophy was noted. Similarly, Fiji noted the links to key objectives and targeted outcomes under the SDGs, the Fiji Green Growth Framework and Fiji's National Development Plan (currently under review). While not specifically listed in the self-assessments of the other economies, it emerged during interviews that links to other domestic plans and strategies were considered early in the development process.

Most reviews were conducted by a team of forestry professionals joined in some economies by academics and other specialists from external forestry agencies. Where additional funding was available from donor agencies, an inter-ministerial working group was established and/or national consultants (e.g. the Philippines) or international consultants (e.g. Cambodia and Viet Nam)<sup>12</sup> were engaged. In the Philippines, a Technical Working Group (TWG) was organized, composed of representatives from different divisions of the Forest Management Bureau, the Biodiversity Management Bureau and the Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau. The TWG was tasked with overseeing the implementation of the Master Plan development process and provide technical assistance in the review, consultation and revision of the document.

For the seven economies, the results of the reviews were shared in different ways to seek further inputs. It could not be ascertained how many economies had uploaded their draft reports on agency websites. Most economies relied on circulating documents to forestry agency staff and selected stakeholders outside the government. All seven economies organized national and sub-national meetings (or a series of events, where funding was available), workshops or consultations to raise the awareness of and validate the findings that would influence future strategies.

<sup>12</sup> In Viet Nam, the Forest Sector Support Partnership (FSSP) facilitated the development of the strategy and engaged four national and three international consultants.

Sub-national events also provided opportunities to gather additional information about the needs and problems of resource managers and forest-based industries, including their recommendations on the necessary support and policy requirements to improve on-site management, which was especially the case in the Philippines.

Forest agency representatives were requested to identify a suite of drivers, and internal and external changes that were considered during the strategy development process (see Annex 2). The results of this part of the self-assessment (and the interviews at a later stage) are not conclusive. A review of the strategies did not show that all the drivers and internal and external changes identified affected the final strategic documents. Many were not referred to in the strategies, and there appeared to be a tendency to fall back on more traditional forestry matters, such as supplying the domestic wood-processing industries with raw materials.

Reviewers were asked the following question: “What are the key issues, themes, thrusts or potential solutions for implementation emerging from the review or the analysis?”. The question was interpreted in different ways, so it was not feasible to draw conclusions from comparisons. For example, Nepal provided the following answer: “positive gains, for example gradual restoration of the forest restoration of the degraded land of the middle hills, increase in Non-timber Forest Product (NTFP) farming, expansion of protected areas, increases [in the] number of tigers and rhinos, increased participation of local people in [the] conservation sector and climate change has been recognized as a critical issue of the country but there are still several problems that are failed to address by previous policies for example deforestation in the plains of Nepal and Churiya hills, the current forest management practice failed to supply enough forest products to sustain the needs of the country, the private sector is not motivated to invest in the forestry sector, climate change mitigation and adaptation mechanism is not well developed and the potentialities of the forest to contribute in [the] national economy is not fully utilized.”

The following statements below were taken directly from the survey.

In **Thailand**, on the other hand, the following four key issues were identified:

1. Stop forest deforestation and maintain the remaining forest by using law enforcement.
2. Rehabilitate degraded forest land in order to enhance more diversity and forest cover.
3. Promote private reforestation in both small scale and large scale.
4. Link forest resource management strategy with the global issues and mechanism.

In **Viet Nam**, the following key issues emerged<sup>13</sup>:

The necessity to connect forestry development to the poverty reduction and rural livelihood improvement objectives:

1. How forests and forest-based products can sustainably contribute to improving the living conditions of forest-dependent people of Viet Nam.
2. Development of a sector monitoring and evaluation system.
3. Propose five programs: 1) Sustainable forest management; 2) Forest protection, conservation and environmental services; 3) Timber and forest product processing and trade; 4) Forest research, extension, training and education; 5) Strengthening forest sector policy, organizational, planning and monitoring frameworks.
4. Mainstreaming gender issues into the strategy.
5. Strengths and weaknesses in preparing for the development process

<sup>13</sup> The following two reports provided information for developing the strategy:

1. Report on Forestry, Poverty Reduction and Rural Livelihoods in Vietnam
2. Report on Gender issues in the forestry sector in Vietnam

It should therefore not surprise that poverty reduction and gender emerged as key issues, although gender as such does not appear in the Strategy. Instead, women were in numerous paragraphs referred to alongside poor households and ethnic minorities. This indicates, to some extent, the difficulties that foresters have with certain new concepts and requirements.



Eliciting the strengths and weaknesses of the preparation for the strategy development process proved to be difficult. Many responses either lacked information or were vague.

What appeared to be common in terms of **strengths** were:

- active participation of a wide group of stakeholders;<sup>14</sup>
- a better understanding of local situations through consultations;
- clarity on what issues needed to be tackled most urgently; and
- a joint understanding that top-down approaches needed to be combined with bottom-up approaches.

In terms of **weaknesses**, the following issues emerged:

- poor feedback mechanisms to inform the participants of consultations on whether their concerns were heard and considered (e.g. meeting minutes and response matrixes were often not produced and circulated);
- although most economies took considerable time to formulate new strategic plans, at times the process was rushed and important issues were overlooked;
- lack of availability in up-to-date baseline data and information; and
- data transparency issues.

In conclusion, it can be observed that the preparation for developing strategic plans has evolved from a rather narrow approach (characterized by in-house processes that exclude relevant stakeholders), to a more open approach that attempts to draw in a wider group of stakeholders. Although experience has shown that the approach is far from perfect, this evolution should be welcomed, as cross-sectoral approaches have not yet become mainstream. This matter will be further discussed at the end of the next section, covering the strategy development process.



It remains unclear how rigorous the processes are for reviewing the importance of issues in new strategies. First, forestry planners are aware that some data they have to rely on are quite outdated and/or of poor quality. Hence, planning may rely too much on the conventional understanding of forestry trends (e.g. that forests continue to be destroyed by shifting cultivation and massive floods are caused by the conversion of forests to other land uses), and opinions (which can be accurate at times but not always be shared by all stakeholders). Second, the understanding of the drivers behind deforestation and forest degradation, emerging issues and trends, and what constitutes strong governance and rights remains weak. Third, forest planners are challenged when they are requested to provide hard evidence about the value of the resource they have been trained to take care of. According to the self-assessment completed by China, for example, this results in the issue where “the forestry strategy is not regarded as important enough, and the forestry ecological construction mainly arranges the annual tasks according to the state’s financial funds.” Expressing the value of environmental services or ecological benefits in monetary terms is important in discussions with alternative land uses, and to make a case for sustainable forest management. But this continues to be an insurmountable task. Although efforts have been made to overcome this challenge, many consider discussions beyond growth rates and yields of forest plantation species for supplying domestic markets to be a challenge. Finally, politically sensitive matters such as illegal logging and corruption are often restricted, and thus not mentioned or tackled. All of these issues indicate that strategic plans can exhibit significant gaps.

<sup>14</sup> In most economies, engagement with the private sector was very weak, which continues to be the case during the development of national REDD+ strategies.



### 7.3 Development or formulation process

This process typically starts when there is a common understanding of the current situation of forests and/or the forestry sector in the respective economy. Many issues here are not very different from issues raised in the previous section. For this reason, it will be covered in less detail.

There is no clear answer to how long it should take for the formulation (including approval) of a new strategy to be completed. In this project, the two extremes were Nepal (less than one year) and Cambodia (between three and four years). Most economies spent around two years to complete the process. It is likely that a shorter process does not provide for an adequate preparation and consultation process. A longer process leads to fatigue and loss of interest among stakeholders. As a result, in many cases the desire to simply complete the strategy formulation process results in a loss of quality and relevance of the final product.

As in the preparation of the strategy development process, the formulation process itself is often conducted by a team of professionals (frequently from outside of the forestry agencies), with its composition and size largely depending on the level of funding. Caution should be taken when relying only on international consultants. Many of the forestry sector master plans of the 1980s or 1990s were prepared by international consultants, which reduced economy ownership. Some plans found their way quickly to the bookshelves, not because they were of poor quality, but because within the economy there was a lack of ownership, or even worse, some people did not understand major sections of them.

Consultations were organized for a variety of stakeholders, especially forestry agency staff at national and sub-national levels and staff of related ministries (e.g. agriculture and/or environment) at national and sub-national levels. Broader groups including academics and representatives of national research institutes also attended. Some economies apparently opted not to engage with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Engagement with the private sector was even more limited. It also remains unclear how ministries beyond the forestry sector were represented. Although cross-sectoral and private sector engagement have been requested by the UNFCCC in the development of national REDD+ strategies, quite frequently only junior representatives attended the consultations. The problem with this is that they may not actively engage, which at times would defeat the purpose of collecting constructive input.

How the feedback received during consultations affected the formulation of new forestry strategies is also unclear. Although most economies reported in the self-assessment that consultation meeting minutes and response matrices were produced and widely circulated, some interviewees mentioned that they had never seen such products, indicating potential gaps in communication. In the Philippines, feedback and recommendations gathered during consultations were incorporated into the final document, according to representatives of the Forest Management Bureau. While this is commendable, it is difficult to see that all matters raised during presentations could be considered, which emphasizes the importance of a response matrix.

## 7.4 Strengths and weaknesses of consultations during development processes

What were the strengths and weaknesses of the consultations that are an important integral part of the strategy development process?

The **strengths** listed included the following:

- consolidation of diverse ideas, interests and priorities from within and outside the forestry sector;
- enabling disadvantaged groups to have a voice (although they were not necessarily always heard);
- ability to enhance the understanding of stakeholder expectations and needs;
- improved understanding of the role and contribution of the forest agency;
- improved quality of decision-making by the forest agency itself;
- availability of the latest information to a wide stakeholder group; and
- ability to consider the interests and advice from all parties to improve strategic planning and implementation.

**Weaknesses** included:

- dominance of the process by a small number of individuals;
- limited time for obtaining meaningful input;
- absence of a recourse (or grievance) mechanism;
- difficulty obtaining interest and willingness from the authorities for considering alternative views and/or new ideas;
- stakeholders selected by forest agencies may at times be biased, or often known to be agreeable with the suggestions of the agency, which can undermine the value of consultations; and
- participants frequently have a limited understanding of the matter at hand, as they were delegated to participate in a consultation without sufficient briefing.

The last issue is very important and was raised in the self-assessment questionnaire of the Philippines as follows:

*“Consistency in participation — The consultations that were conducted were participatory wherein attendees were able to freely raise and discuss their concerns. However, although there were several consultations conducted during the formulation of the document, not all those who attended the first round of consultations were able to join the second one. Thus, most of the first-round participants were not able to participate in the presentation of strategies and solutions identified during the latter part of the review process.”*

In conclusion, it can be observed that there has been an evolution to wider stakeholder engagement, not only through consultation processes. In Cambodia for example, NGOs such as The Center for People and Forests and the Wildlife Conservation Society were invited to draft sections of the National Forest Programme (2010–2029), which is uncommon in the Asia-Pacific region. However, in many other economies, the engagement of stakeholders appears to be performed mainly to satisfy certain demands (which at times can be donor organizations), and their input may not be taken as seriously. In fact, in some economies stakeholder engagement is viewed as problematic as it broadens the agenda “unnecessarily” (as described by one interviewee), by introducing issues such as gender, environmental protection and/or poverty reduction, although the three issues cover three of the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>15</sup>

While some forestry planners and decision makers welcome the challenge of opening up the strategy development process to a wider group of stakeholders, other influential individuals may attempt to reduce its usefulness and/or impact by paying lip-service only. Also, in an increasing number of economies, NGOs and CSOs feel the pressure to conform with government directives and be less critical.

A challenge that was raised by numerous people during interviews was that strategic planning is conducted for the sake of generating another plan in parallel with, yet more

<sup>15</sup> For more information on the MDGs, please check [here](#).

plans. For example, in Viet Nam, the Viet Nam Forestry Development Strategy (2006-2020) was superseded by the National REDD+ Action Programme of 2012 and the revised (as well as much improved) version of 2017<sup>16</sup>. At national and provincial levels, there are Five-year Forest Protection and Development Plans. Five-year Socio-economic

Development Plans at national and sub-national levels also touch on forestry. The economy also has a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan that covers forests. Similar situations of sometimes competing plans can be found in other economies, which can reduce the value of individual plans.



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<sup>16</sup> Provincial REDD+ Action Plans have also been prepared for several provinces.

## 7.5 Content of forestry strategies

In the self-assessments (see Annex 1), economies were asked to indicate topics that were covered in their strategic plans.<sup>17</sup> Because not all economies reported on national forestry strategy documents, the results in Table 6 should be viewed with discretion. For example, Nepal's self-assessment covered its 2015 Forest Policy and Fiji reported on a draft document. Also, there may have been some misunderstanding of terms. For example, Cambodia's self-assessment indicated that there were

no *solutions for implementation* of its National Forest Programme (2010-2029). However, Section B of the Programme covers nine challenges that are addressed by nine corresponding objectives, and nine strategic directions which can be understood, indeed, as solutions. In fact, in the case of Cambodia, the application of a logical framework analysis made it easy to infer and understand the decision making in the strategy itself.

Topic	Cambodia	China	Fiji	Nepal	The Philippines	Thailand	Viet Nam	Total
1 Rationale for developing the new forestry strategy	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
2 Status of the forestry sector and forest policy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
3 Context	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
4 Forestry scenarios	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
5 Vision	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
6 Goals and objectives	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
7 Solutions for implementation	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	5
8 Implementation arrangements	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	6
9 Implementation schedule	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
10 Specific numerical or measurable targets	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	5
11 Budgetary requirements	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	3
12 Financing program	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
13 Promotion of domestic and international investments	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
14 Short- to medium-term priorities	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	5
15 Monitoring and evaluation	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	5
16 Mid-term review	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1

**Table 6:** Topics covered in forestry strategies

<sup>17</sup> Economies were also provided with the option to provide additional topics. The Philippines added the following:

- Summary of accomplishments, problems/issues/facilitating factors and recommendations based on the previous forestry master plan.
- Matrix of Regional and Provincial Vulnerability to Climate-related Hazards and Poverty.

China added the following:

- Institutional System
- Strengthening of Organization and Leadership

Each of the strategic plans have strengths and weaknesses and it was not the purpose of this project to evaluate them in detail. However, at this point it can be noted that some weaknesses exist in terms of “implementation schedule, budgetary requirements, financing programs, promotion of domestic and international investments, and the requirements for a mid-term review”. For example, Cambodia conducted a “Review of implementation of the National Forest Programme and Baseline Data” funded by the European Union in 2013. Viet Nam also conducted a comprehensive review of the implementation of its strategy. However, as the strategic plans were not viewed as living documents, none of the plans were revised (although circumstances quite dramatically changed in several economies). In Cambodia and Viet Nam<sup>18</sup>, monitoring also weakened over the years. The key reason in Viet Nam was that it became too onerous and costly to report on 72 indicators. Cambodia prepared annual progress implementation reports of the National Forest Programme work plans between 2012 and 2015. This was discontinued in 2016, apparently because donor funding for the Technical Working Group on Forestry Reform discontinued, but also because of institutional changes in the forestry sector.<sup>19</sup>

Priorities or programs of the seven national strategies are as follows:

### **Cambodia**

#### **National Forest Programme (2010-2029)**

Cambodia’s National Forest Programme (NFP) responds to nine challenges that touch on numerous issues including poverty reduction, climate change, poor cross-sectoral planning, illegal activities, weak forest governance, limited capacity and knowledge, and inadequate financing for sustainable forest management. In their response to the self-assessment, the NFP outlines six programs that are expected to optimally contribute “to equitable macro-economic growth and poverty alleviation particularly in rural areas through conservation and sustainable forest management”.<sup>20</sup> The roles of stakeholders are

acknowledged, and their participation is encouraged. To achieve its objective by 2029, the NFP emphasizes the implementation of a systematic and transparent forest demarcation and classification system, strengthened forest law enforcement and governance, community forestry, research and development and sustainable forest financing. The financing requirements for the 2010 to 2019 period are estimated to be USD 5.1 million.

### **China**

#### **The Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Forestry Development of the People’s Republic of China (2016-2020)**

The Government of China recognizes the importance of forestry for sustainable economic and social development. The economy’s population attaches a high value to a healthy environment and ecological forest benefits. The 13th Plan therefore builds on the achievements made in recent history in the areas of forest protection and restoration, the reform of the forest tenure system, the modernization of forest industries, support to housing in forest areas and capacity development. The implementation of the plan until 2020 foresees an expansion of the forest area from 21.66% (2015) to 23.04%, improved forest quality and environmental services, enhanced welfare of people engaged in forestry and considerably enhanced forest governance. Key threads in the Plan are the deepening of reforms, modernization and innovation, greener landscapes and strengthened institutional systems, organizations and leadership.

### **Fiji**

#### **Draft Strategic Development Plan 2017-2030**

The Government of Fiji recognizes that the forest sector plays a vital role in contributing to the economy’s social, economic and environmental development. As of August 2017, the draft of the 2017

<sup>18</sup> Both economies have the oldest strategic plans.

<sup>19</sup> Also, monitoring relied heavily on only one indicator, i.e. disbursement of funds, which is insufficient in terms of monitoring progress towards reaching the targets listed in the NFP.

<sup>20</sup> See the Overall NFP Objective.

to 2030 plan was still being deliberated. The Ministry of Forests provided a Discussion Framework outlining six strategic priority areas to achieve sustainable forest management. Objectives include strengthening forest resource management frameworks in support of legislative and policy imperatives, enhanced knowledge and capacity development as well as organizational effectiveness, strengthened governance and streamlined financial systems. Although adaptation and mitigation are not directly mentioned, the draft document makes reference to the delivery on the Sustainable Development Goals and the building of a culture of social awareness with regards to forests and global change.

### **Nepal** Forest Policy 2015

The Forest Policy 2015 was prepared to address the new *Forestry for Prosperity* concept. This is expressed in the Policy's long-term vision to "Contribute in local and national prosperity through sustainable management of forest, biodiversity and watersheds", and the desire to strike a balance between the improvements of poor people's livelihoods and the conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems. The Policy comprises seven sub-policies that cover forest production, environmental services and equitable benefit distribution, watershed management, various forms of participatory forest management, the involvement of the private sector, good governance and social justice, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Although various references are made to carbon trading and only one to REDD+, knowledge gaps remain on the purpose of REDD+ and how it works.

### **Philippines** Philippine Forestry Master Plan for Climate-Resilient Forestry Development (2016-2028)

As the name of the Plan indicates, it particularly addresses concerns related to the impacts of climate change on forest ecosystems and people. In response, the Plan proposes programs and strategies to strengthen the resilience of forest ecosystems and

communities, effectively respond to demands for forest ecosystem goods and services and promote responsive governance. The Plan comprises the following four programs:

- Program to Strengthen Resilience of Forest Ecosystems and Communities to Climate Change;
- Programs to Respond to Demands for Forest Ecosystems Goods and Services;
- Strategies to Promote Responsive Governance in the Forestry Sector; and
- Other Support Programs and Strategies.

The total budget for implementing all activities is around USD 1.27 billion, of which more than 47% is for commercial forest plantation development for roundwood production with a significant potential financial contribution from the private sector.

### **Thailand** 20-Year National Strategy of the Royal Forest Department (2017-2036)

The 20-year Strategy aims to support the late King of Thailand's philosophy of a sufficiency economy, which is based on the three principles of moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity, and the strengthening of governance for national development. The strategy is to be reviewed every five years, which needs to be approved by the parliament. To enhance the contribution of forests and forestry to sustainable development, four strategies are directed at stopping deforestation, accelerating forest restoration, promoting reforestation by the private sector and linking the strategy to global issues and mechanisms. Priorities include enhancing the understanding of all stakeholders on the significance of Thailand's forest resources, leveling the playing field for all stakeholders involved in forest management, strengthening law enforcement, supporting local livelihoods and enhancing household income, developing capacity and knowledge about sustainable forest management for all stakeholders, and promoting people's participation.

## Viet Nam

### Viet Nam Forestry Development Strategy (2006-2020)

The development of Viet Nam's Strategy responded to the need for renovation and trends in the global economy at the turn of the millennium, and was to pave the way for increased domestic and foreign investments in the forestry sector. The Strategy's objectives cover the sustainable management of 16.24 million hectares of forests, to increase forest cover to 43% by 2010 and 47% by 2020, encourage wider participation from various economic sectors and social organizations in forest development, increase their contributions to socioeconomic development, environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and environmental services supply, reduce poverty and improve the livelihoods of rural people, and contribute to national defense and security. Research, education, training and forestry extension are viewed as important means of achieving results, as are the decentralization of decision making and implementation, more effective policy, legal and institutional systems, the managed adoption of market mechanisms and the establishment of specialized monitoring and evaluation units.

## 7.6 Strengths and weaknesses of strategic plans

While the themes or programs of the national strategic plans (above) do not provide a complete picture of the content of the plans, the following observations can be made, which were also confirmed during interviews:

1. In general, there is a shift from production forestry to the provision of environmental services and biodiversity conservation, although foresters continue to be more comfortable with their traditional production role. In economies with logging bans, forest agencies expressed a keen interest in wood production in plantations.
2. While references to MDG 1 are sparse, there is recognition that forest management should contribute to poverty reduction and/or local livelihoods, that local people have a role to play in forest management (albeit still limited in most economies) and that rights need to be strengthened for local people to really benefit from various forms of community forestry.
3. Climate change adaptation has started to appear in the strategic plans, most strongly in the Philippines.
4. Climate change mitigation has received little attention, likely because many foresters view REDD+ as separate from forest management. However, it should be noted that five REDD+ activities have significant overlap with sustainable forest management.<sup>21</sup> There is also very little recognition that climate change adaptation and REDD+ often go hand in hand.
5. The term "governance" has been found in strategic plans, but it is not clear to what extent the components of governance are understood. At times, it appears as if "forest administration" and "forest governance" are used interchangeably. There

<sup>21</sup> According to the UNFCCC, the five REDD+ activities are:

- Reducing emissions from deforestation;
- Reducing emissions from forest degradation;
- Conservation of forest carbon stocks;
- Sustainable management of forests;
- Enhancement of forest carbon stocks.



also appears to be a clear avoidance of approaching issues related to corruption and illegal activities. Only Cambodia in its NFP states that the forestry administration will “Co-operate with other agencies to include forest crimes in inter-agency efforts to fight corruption and address organised crime”.

6. Monitoring and evaluation is weak. As the examples of Cambodia and Viet Nam indicate, it is taken seriously in the early years of strategic plan implementation, but is then viewed as too burdensome, to a large degree because the indicators that were selected were not SMART.<sup>22</sup> This weakness can undermine the value of preparing a strategic plan in the first place.
7. Having strategic plans approved at the highest level does not always appear to be an advantage. In fact, it may be a disadvantage, as it can create barriers to revisions and adaptations during the implementation of the plans, given the need for re-approval from highest level. The example of the National REDD+ Action Programme in Viet Nam indicates that revised documents can be approved quite quickly.
8. As many interviewees observed, strategic plans tend to be prepared to appeal to donor requests, and as a result can contain too many issues that need urgent attention, without sufficient clarity or specificity on how they will be addressed in a realistic way.
9. In some economies, there appears to be a tendency for attempts to expand (often with declining resources<sup>23</sup>) into areas that would likely be more effective if managed by the private sector (e.g. forest plantations) or other public agencies (e.g. urban forestry).

10. Finally, while there has been a concern that strategic planners have not adequately addressed emerging issues, it is probably more serious that many strategic plans have not addressed old issues. This includes addressing illegal logging and trade and/or the barriers to investments in plantation development and management or more generally sustainable forest management.<sup>24</sup>

The self-assessments also revealed numerous weaknesses affecting the implementation of national strategic plans, although this was not part of the project. Examples of Thailand are instructive and also reflective of situations in many other economies<sup>25</sup>:

1. Uncertain political circumstances have affected the implementation of the forestry strategy.
2. Shortage of manpower especially of staff working in the field.
3. Overlapping responsibility of agencies regarding land management and lack of coordination.
4. Rural poverty, which makes law enforcement politically more difficult and sensitive.
5. Fluctuation of the prices (especially increase) of agricultural commodities (e.g. palm oil and rubber).

While some of the issues raised for Thailand can be addressed in a strategy, especially if cross-sectoral approaches are applied, others can arise in unexpected ways and can hardly be foreseen.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> A SMART indicator is one that should be specific, measurable, available/achievable in a cost-effective way, relevant for any project, programme, plan and/or strategic plan, and available in a timely manner.

<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, it should be noted that budgets for forestry agencies in some economies have recently increased substantially (e.g. the Philippines).

<sup>24</sup> Numerous agencies (e.g. FAO, UNODC, FLEGT, The World Bank) have provided advice on such matters over the last two decades, but changes in many economies are slow.

<sup>25</sup> Some of the text below was edited.

<sup>26</sup> A good example would be the booms and busts of many commodity prices over the last ten years, which took even most experts by surprise.

## 8. Gaps and needs

To some extent, the identification of gaps and needs emerges from the discussion of the above strengths and weaknesses. Questions regarding gaps and needs in the self-assessments appeared to be problematic. Two economies provided no information. Most economies centered their replies on challenges implementing their forestry strategies, or mentioned challenges that the FPN would be ill-prepared to tackle such as that “the accessibility and transparency of the research data is insufficient”.

This section will therefore start with the replies from the Philippines (see below), complemented with additional information from other economies (through self-assessments and interviews) and expert views:<sup>27</sup>

1. Strategically communicating the content of the plan and translating it into a document understandable by the general public and decision makers beyond the forestry sector, to increase understanding of the importance of forests, and explain in simple terms how the themes and/or programs of the strategy will enhance the contribution of forests to national economies.
2. The document is very sectoral and it needs to be integrated/harmonized with the plans of other sectors such as the agriculture sector, tourism, agrarian reform, ancestral domain and public lands, among others. Program or convergence budgeting<sup>28</sup> can be used as incentives for various sectors.
3. Lack of knowledge-sharing and transferring of skills acquired during planning processes (e.g. consultations, workshops, cross visits) and other capacity building opportunities to the technical staff especially to field personnel.
4. Appropriate, efficient and cost-effective monitoring, evaluation, assessment and reporting procedures.
5. Institutional mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of projects developed and implemented to support the achievement of strategic plan targets.

To this, the following can be added (as reported by other economies):

6. Weak awareness and understanding of global conventions and agreements, environmental and forestry issues and broader socio-economic trends as they may affect forest management and governance.
7. Closely linked to this are poor awareness and understanding of direct and indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, which to a large extent determine the future of an economy's forests.
8. Weak skills in facilitating and managing constructive consultation processes, potentially reducing participants' confidence of being taken seriously.

<sup>27</sup> Again, the text has been edited and this time also somewhat expanded.

<sup>28</sup> Program or Convergence Budgeting - is a budgeting approach to facilitate and incentivize inter-agency collaboration along Key Results Areas of the Social Contract to ensure that priority interagency programs are planned, budgeted and implemented in a coordinated manner (Department of Budget and Management of the Philippines, 2016).

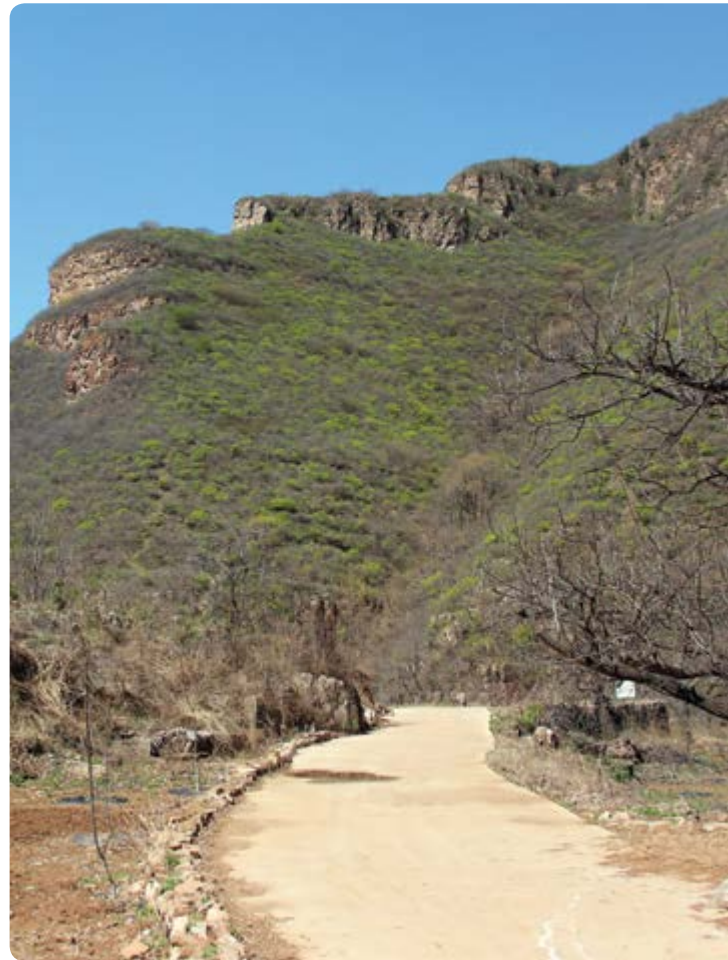
## 9. Recommendations for the FPN

The following recommendations on feasible interventions that the FPN may carry out to address the identified gaps are based on the findings of the previous sections. They do not address all the gaps and needs identified in the self-assessments and interviews, as some issues raised were of a very specific nature to the economy (e.g. weak database). Others are politically sensitive and should be addressed by different bodies at the economy or regional level. In addition, some issues that were raised have been previously addressed by organizations such as the FAO, CIFOR, RECOFTC, APAFRI and several others. Another example would be generating an enabling environment for the private sector to invest in forests and forestry (see e.g. FAO, 2010a or Enters *et al.*, 2004).<sup>29</sup>

Ideally, most interventions by the FPN are implemented in partnership with organizations based in the Asia-Pacific region to enhance impact and cost-effectiveness. This is particularly important for experience sharing via meetings or study tours. While such modes of raising awareness, enhancing understanding and/or developing skills are frequently requested, their impact is usually low as only a very small number of people can be reached.<sup>30</sup>

**At this point, the following three interventions have been identified:**

1. Assisting economies in engaging in strategic communication.
2. Enhancing understanding and knowledge on regional and global agendas and issues, and their relevance to forests and forestry at the level of an economy.
3. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation.



<sup>29</sup> For readers particularly interested in smallholders and their contributions to commercial forestry see: Midgley, S.J., Stevens, P.R. and Arnold, R.J., 2017). Hidden assets: Asia's smallholder wood resources and their contribution to supply chains of commercial wood, Australian Forestry

<sup>30</sup> Experience also shows that sometimes economies do not nominate the most suitable candidates or participants change over a series of events, which has a negative effect on learning.

## 9.1 Strategic communication

The Report of the Second Asia-Pacific Forestry Sector Outlook Study (FAO, 2010b, p. 194) remarked that it is an “unfortunate fact in many countries ... that forestry, regardless of its economic importance, is accorded relatively low priority within government”. In Section 7 on Priorities and Strategies, the Report highlighted the following (p. 195):

“Communication is very much at the heart of this issue and it is ironic that foresters may often be more inclined to retreat from the hue and cry and make for the woods. Nonetheless, it is of great importance that foresters learn how to better communicate to politicians and the public the importance of forests and related goals. Globally, and within the region, governments and larger organizations have employed communication specialists to bring key messages to wider audiences. With the current high profile of forestry, greater investment in communications may be warranted.”

Perhaps the most important concept to understand regarding strategic communications is that it should be seen from the perspective of different target audiences. This means that each time an organization communicates it should ask itself the question of what information a target audience requires to make a necessary behavioral change. In the medium-term, it is recommended that the FPN assists economies in developing communication plans that, in a timely and cost-effective manner, can make a case for forests and forestry (not to be confused with a centric vision of forestry agencies only). Ways in which it could do this include:

1. Identifying target audiences at international, national and sub-national levels and their information needs.
2. Selecting broad key messages, based on consultations with key stakeholders (i.e. audiences).
3. Recommending internal and external communication tools and proposing channels of communication, including but not limited to: websites, online tools, printed material, audiovisual, press, side events at important events and presentations.
4. Developing options for documenting, publishing and disseminating experiences gained during the development and implementation of strategic plans.
5. Developing a system for monitoring the effectiveness of implementation of the communications plan.
6. Identifying gaps in communication and media skills of forestry agencies.
7. Identifying constructive engagement with key personnel in the media, such as journalists, for strengthening the outreach of key messages.
8. Providing cost estimates for alternative strategy components.

In the short term, it is recommended to organize a workshop or write-shop for communication staff of forestry agencies that could focus on:

- exchanging experiences on current approaches to communication by their forestry agencies;
- showcasing examples of communication products;
- discussing and refining the approaches to develop communication plans and their content; and
- developing documents (possibly also presentations that can be easily updated) about the contribution of forests to their economies for the general public and decision makers outside the forestry sector, respectively.

It is expected that the short-term recommendations would result in:

- products that can be circulated in the near future in each economy (hopefully in different, local and national languages);
- an appreciation for what can be achieved with relatively limited means; and
- a better understanding of how forestry agencies can engage in meaningful ways with different target audiences in the future.

## 9.2 Understanding and knowledge on regional and global agendas and issues

As discussed briefly above, over the last decade, several developments at the international level including the UNFCCC Paris Agreement on climate change, the CBD and its Aichi targets, the UN SDGs, the Bonn Challenge and the New York Declaration on Forests have also impacted forests, forestry, forest policy and/or strategic planning.

Clearly, many foresters struggle with the constant emergence of new issues, concepts, discourses and themes. For example, in 2007, the Conference of Parties under the UNFCCC decided to include REDD under the work of the Bali Action Plan (decision 1/CP.13). Three years later REDD was broadened to REDD+. While these decisions were made years ago, until today many foresters still struggle with the difference between REDD and REDD+ today, and confuse REDD+ with Clean Development Mechanism: Afforestation and Reforestation (CDM A/R). Similarly, many foresters are not comfortable with the concept of FLR.

APFNet recently launched the [FPN website](#), which is one instrument that aims to strengthen national forestry planning processes in the Asia-Pacific region. The website also hosts the FPN Blog, which discusses ideas, articles and developments related to strategic planning in the forestry sector. It is recommended to respond to the demand for clear and easy-to-understand information on such issues as described above and provide hyperlinks to learning tools, training courses and relevant events. This mode of communication should also be used to enhance the understanding of issues such as:

- cross-sectoral planning (that goes beyond broader consultations);
- governance and rights;

- drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (or using FAO's terminology: *Change drivers and societal changes*)<sup>31</sup>; and
- strengthening private sector engagement.

The Blog currently targets FPN members as well as policymakers and other forestry practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region. Over time APFNet may want to consider expanding the audience, for example to forestry research institutes and the media. If this step is taken, it will be important to review the experiences of other organizations such as CIFOR, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), or RECOFTC with their blogs and news outlets.<sup>32</sup> Any efforts should complement what others are already offering and avoid duplication.

In addition to blogs, other social networking media can be used and requests for policy or info briefs on topics of particular interest should be responded to positively. However, it should be kept in mind that with regards to the latter some very topical news can become outdated quite quickly.

It is expected that following the recommendations will result not only in an enhanced understanding of new issues, concepts, discourses and themes in the short- to medium-term, but also encourage forest planners and decision makers to come out of the woods (see FAO's quote above), think outside the box and seriously attempt to engage with stakeholders outside the forestry sector.

<sup>31</sup> See also Yasmi, Y., Durst, P., Rehan Ul Haq and Broadhead, J. 2017. Forest change in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS): An overview of negative and positive drivers. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Bangkok.

<sup>32</sup> See also websites such as [Mongabay](#).

### 9.3 Monitoring and evaluation

The third recommendation touches on one serious weakness of strategic plans themselves, and also of their implementation: monitoring and evaluation in a cost-effective manner that is based on SMART indicators. It is recommended to assist economies in establishing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to help planners meet monitoring requirements and policymakers to understand the reasons behind the speed of progress. At a minimum, the framework should focus on the need to monitor progress toward desired conditions of key resources (biological diversity; land health and vitality; soil, water and air; social benefits; economic benefits; and infrastructure capacity), although the content should not be prescribed, and choices should be left to individual economies. The framework should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate shifting priorities over time. Properly applied, such a tool could/should trigger discussions about progress and emerging issues, inform the need for change, and increase the capacity of collaborative efforts by involving a wider stakeholder group.

A wealth of guidelines for effective monitoring and evaluation already exists, and there is therefore no reason to reinvent the wheel. As a first step, the FPN should review existing material and provide a concise overview of the most critical issues and bottlenecks. Economies moving towards REDD+ implementation are currently also developing National Forest Monitoring Systems and Safeguard Information Systems, which will provide substantial insights and learning regarding the way forward.

Training in the logical framework approach, with a particular focus on SMART indicators, should be organized. In addition, an expanded coverage of monitoring and evaluation issues in FAO's Executive Forest Policy Course for The Asia-Pacific could be discussed with FAO.<sup>33</sup>

It is expected that following the recommendation will result in monitoring and evaluation frameworks that will make a difference in the future, and make strategic plans more useful tools for a wider group of stakeholders.



<sup>33</sup> Incidentally, the course also covers Communication and presentation skills in a networked world.

## 9.4 Some final thoughts

The three issues touched upon in this section of the report should be viewed as a starting point only. As the FPN evolves, it may select, in discussions with its members and partners, to tackle other matters. In doing so, it should recognize that:

1. The differences between economies are greater than their commonalities. While it appears that some economies are more advanced than others and have achieved more, such economies may have selected a path that is not open to other economies or may have had substantial financial support that will never be available to other economies.
2. Much is currently being developed in forestry in the broadest sense and there are many players at work. The Local Contacts of the FPN are a small group and they may not always be up-to-date on all recent developments. While many suggestions made during the course of the project are very rational, some of them are already being implemented. Hence, the FPN should also be aware and avoid the potential duplication of efforts.
3. There were many suggestions for workshops and opportunities for the exchange of experiences and lessons learned (including study tours). While such events are usually stimulating, their impact is frequently small, as participants often do not share what they have learned. The sharing of lessons learned should be strengthened, for example, by requesting individual participants to produce a learning report or slide show (to be later presented to colleagues), in addition to an evaluation administered and facilitated by the event organizers.
4. Regardless of the three issues mentioned above there is great scope to enhance the development process of strategic plans and their implementation, but only as long as there remains commitment to implementation and timely revisions, and existing plans are not superseded at any time by new plans or decisions at the highest level, which can render plans outdated from one day to the next.

### What's a logical framework approach?

Planning (whether for projects, programs or plans themselves) requires a very logical approach. That's where the logical framework approach (LFA) comes in. It is a tool for:

- designing, planning, implementing, and monitoring and evaluating a project, program or plan;
- systematically discussing and agreeing upon key direct and indirect causes (or drivers), the construction of problem trees and the development of solution trees that address each problem;
- systematic thinking for relating inputs to the implementation of activities, activities to the production of outputs, outputs to the achievement of a defined purpose, and purpose to a high-level goal or impact;
- identifying and assessing risks by listing critical assumptions inherent in design and implementation, and conducting a SWOT analysis;
- monitoring and evaluating progress through objectively verifiable indicators and means of verification; and
- developing consensus and communicating a project's, program's or plan's intent and strategy.

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## **Annex 1: Self-assessment form**

# **Self-assessment of gaps and needs in forestry strategic planning in Asia-Pacific economies**

by

**Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Network (FPN)**

**Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management  
and Rehabilitation (APFNet)**





## Background

The Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Network (FPN) of the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet) aims to strengthen economy-level forestry planning processes through experience exchange, capacity building and technical support. It focuses on policymakers affecting forests and forestry in Asia-Pacific economies as the main target group.

During the Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Workshop held from 18 to 19 January 2017 in Bangkok, representatives exchanged experience and perspectives on forestry strategic planning in their respective economies. Participants agreed that many gaps and needs remain and the efficiency and effectiveness of strategic planning need to be enhanced, particularly in terms of adapting to internal and external changes. Participants agreed that the FPN would provide a useful platform to support and improve forestry strategic planning processes.

During the workshop's discussions on next steps and priorities for the program, one of the top priorities identified was for FPN to implement a project to carry out a baseline review, gap and needs assessment on forestry strategic planning in Asia-Pacific economies, and develop corresponding recommendations on potential FPN support.

The APFNet decided to initiate the project with a self-assessment by FPN members, which this self-assessment, with its guiding questions, is intended to facilitate. The focus of the self-assessment will be on the following aspects:

- preparation of the strategy development process (focused on **analysis and communication**);
- the actual **development or formulation process** (focused on effectiveness of stakeholder engagement or involvement to generate broad-based support and ownership); and
- the content of the strategy document (focused on key themes or thrusts, and key strength and weaknesses).

The self-assessment comprises the following six parts:

1. General information
2. Preparation of the development process
3. Development or formulation process
4. Content of the forestry strategy
5. Gaps and needs
6. Any other issues and comments

We would like to request you to respond to the questions below to the extent this is possible, keeping the following in mind:

- In completing the questionnaire, please delete the text in *blue italics*.
- If you are not sure how to respond, please ask for inputs from colleagues.
- In consultation with your colleagues and others, we suggest that you select the most relevant and/or important document for this self-assessment. If you and your colleagues feel that there are two or more documents of equal importance, you may want to select the most recent one.

- If there is no answer to a question (and that might happen), please fill in “N/A” (i.e. not available).
- Finally, please keep in mind that there will be follow-up interviews, which will enable you and others in your economy to add information on more than one document.

# General information

**Name of your economy:** *Please respond here*

**This assessment will cover the following document, which covers the following period:**

*Please complete by providing the name of the document here*

**The above document superseded the following document:**

*Please complete by providing the name of the earlier document and the year it was approved or adopted here*

**The highest approval on the current document was given by:**

1. The President of the economy
2. The Prime Minister of the economy
3. The Minister of the Ministry of *(please provide name)*
4. The Director General of the *(please provide name of agency)*
5. The document was not officially approved, but is recognized as adopted
6. None of the above

Please provide additional information on the approval or adoption of the document, if deemed necessary:

*(Please use this space to provide your response)*

**The development or formulation of the document was triggered by** (check all that apply):

1. The recognition that the previous document was outdated
2. Dramatic changes to domestic circumstances
3. Changes in the international agenda (e.g. MDGs, SDGs, UNFCCC CoP decisions, Aichi targets of the CBD, etc.)
4. Pressure from the public
5. A natural disaster
6. Availability of donor funds
7. None of the above

Please provide additional information on the “trigger”, if deemed necessary, especially if none of the options above apply to your economy:

*(Please use this space to provide your response)*

**Relevance of the document:**

1. The document continues to be highly relevant
2. The document continues to be somewhat relevant
3. The document is no longer relevant (it has outlived its purpose, and should be reviewed and revised)
4. None of the above

Please provide additional information on the “relevance of the document”, if deemed necessary:

*(Please use this space to provide your response)*

## Preparation of the development process

**The development or formulation of the document began with** (check all that apply):

1. A domestic up-to-date review or situational analysis of the forestry sector
2. A domestic situational analysis that went beyond the forestry sector
3. A situational analysis covering transboundary issues
4. A situational analysis covering global issues
5. None of the above, as no situational analysis was conducted

Please provide additional information on the scope of the “up-to-date review or situational analysis” if deemed necessary, or if none was prepared:

*(Please use this space to provide your response)*

**The up-to-date review or situational analysis was conducted** (check all that apply):

1. By a small group of forestry agency staff
2. By an inter-ministerial working group established *(please indicate whom)* for the purpose
3. By a group of national academics and specialists
4. By a group of national and international consultants funded *(please indicate whom)*
5. None of the above (please provide relevant information below)

Please provide additional information on the communication process that was involved in the up-to-date review or situational analysis, if deemed necessary and especially, if none was prepared:

*(Please use this space to provide your response, especially if you checked options 2 and 4 above)*

**The results of the up-to-date review or situational analysis were communicated:**

1. On the forestry agency website *(please provide website URL here, if still active)*
2. On a dedicated website *(please provide website URL here, if still active)*
3. By circulating the document to forestry agency staff only
4. By circulating the document to government staff only
5. By circulating the document to selected stakeholders also outside the Government
6. During a meeting, open to all relevant stakeholders
7. None of the above

Please provide additional information on the process of communicating the results of the up-to-date review or situational analysis, if deemed necessary and especially, if none was prepared:

*(Please use this space to provide your response)*

**Was there political support at the highest level for the development or formulation of the document:**

1. There was support at the President or Prime Minister
2. There was support at the ministerial level
3. No support was ascertained but the timing appeared to be opportune
4. None of the above

Please provide additional information on the “political support”, if deemed necessary and especially, if none was prepared:

*(Please use this space to provide your response, especially if you selected option 4 above)*



**Besides domestic issues, the up-to-date review or situational analysis covered the following issues (see also the drivers of change survey by APFNet and additional input from individual economies):**

**Demographic changes:**

- Population growth
- Changing age structures
- Urbanization
- International migration

**Economic changes:**

- Growth in incomes
- Income distribution, inequality and poverty
- Emergence of a middle class
- Structural changes and dependence on land
- Investments in industries and infrastructure
- Globalization and its impacts
- Fluctuations in agricultural commodity prices (e.g. palm oil, rubber, coffee)

**Politics, policies and institutions:**

- Politics and governance
- Policy changes
- Institutional changes
- Forest governance issues

**Environmental drivers:**

- Local environmental issues
- National environmental issues and increasing demand for ecosystem services
- Regional and global environmental issues and scenarios
- Climate change mechanisms (for mitigation and adaption)

**Technological changes:**

- Productivity-enhancing technologies
- Harvesting and processing technologies
- Energy policies and technologies
- Technologies from outside the forest sector

None of the above, but others as described in the box below

Please provide additional information on the issue, if deemed necessary:

*(Please use this space to provide your response, especially if you believe that options relevant for your economy are missing)*

### **Key issues emerging from the up-to-date review or situational analysis**

What are the key issues, themes, thrusts or potential solutions for implementation emerging from the review or the analysis?

Please provide information in the box below:

*(Please use this space to elaborate on key issues, themes, thrusts or potential solutions for implementation that you believe should be part of the assessment here. Please list at least five, but no more than eight, "priority areas")*

### **Strengths and weaknesses of the up-to-date review or situational analysis**

Please use the box below to provide information on the strengths and weaknesses of the review or the analysis that was prepared for the development of the new forestry strategy (or similar document such as a national forest programme):

The **strengths** of our up-to-date review or situational analysis process are:

The **weaknesses** of our up-to-date review or situational analysis process are:

# Development or formulation process

## Duration of the process

In your economy's case, it took:

1. Less than six months
2. Less than one year
3. Between one and two years
4. Between two and three years
5. Between three and four years
6. More than four year years

Please use the box below to provide information on the duration of the strategy development process:

*(Please use this space to provide your response, especially if the process took less than one year or more than two years)*

### Stakeholder involvement or engagement in the process

In your economy's case, the following stakeholders were **directly** involved in the process (i.e. this means they were part of decision-making processes and strategy drafting teams or working groups, but excludes participation in consultations or similar processes):

1. Forestry agency staff only
2. Staff of related ministries was included (e.g. agriculture and or environment)
3. Broad inter-ministerial group
4. Broad inter-ministerial group assigned by the Prime Minister or President
5. Broader group including also academics and representatives of national research institutes
6. Very broad engagement including representatives of intl. research institutes, NGOs and/or CSOs, and the private sector

Please use the box below to provide additional information of the involvement of stakeholders in the forestry strategy development or formulation processes:

*(Please use this space to provide your response on stakeholder engagement, especially if none of the six options above were relevant to your economy)*

**Drafts of the forestry strategy were communicated:**

1. On the forestry agency website *(please provide website URL here, if still active)*
2. On a dedicated website *(please provide website URL here, if still active)*
3. By circulating the document to forestry agency staff only
4. By circulating the document to government staff only
5. By circulating the document to selected stakeholders also outside the Government
6. During a meeting or meetings in the capital, open to all relevant stakeholders
7. During national and subnational meetings, open to all relevant stakeholders
8. None of the above

Please provide additional information on the “communication”, if deemed necessary and especially when draft documents were made available before consultations:

*(Please use this space to provide your response)*

### Stakeholder reviews and consultations

In your economy's case consultations were held (check all that apply):

1. For forestry agency staff only at national level
2. For forestry agency staff at national and subnational levels
3. Staff of related ministries was included (e.g. agriculture and/or environment) only at national level
4. Staff of related ministries was included (e.g. agriculture and/or environment) at national and sub-national levels
5. Broader group including also academics and representatives of national research institutes only at national level
6. Broader group including also academics and representatives of national research institutes at national and sub-national levels
7. Very broad engagement including representatives of natl. and intl. NGOs and/or CSOs, and the private sector only at national level
8. Very broad engagement including representatives of natl. and intl. NGOs and/or CSOs, and the private sector at national and sub-national levels

Please use the box below to provide additional information of the involvement of stakeholders in the forestry strategy development or formulation processes:

*(Please use this space to provide additional information on consultation processes (e.g. number of events, duration of events))*

### Stakeholder reviews and consultations

In your economy's case, the following were part of the consultation process (check all that apply):

1. Meeting minutes were produced and widely circulated
2. A response matrix to all comments was produced and circulated widely
3. No consultations were organized, but the document was uploaded on a website and feedback was requested
4. Drafts of the strategy were never shared and never discussed with a broader audience

*(Please use this space to provide additional information on elements of the consultation processes, especially if none of the options above applied to your economy)*

### Strengths and weaknesses of the consultations

Please use the box below to provide information on the strengths and weaknesses of the consultation and/or review process in your economy:

*(Please use this space to provide detailed information on strengths and weaknesses, focusing on the extent that stakeholder input changed or affected the content of the forestry strategy)*

## Content of the forestry strategy

Most forestry strategies follow a similar structure and focus on a small number of themes, thrust, sub-strategies and/or programs, which emerged during the development or formulation process as most important.

Please list below the **themes, thrust, sub-strategies and/or programs** of your economy's forestry strategy, as they are shown in the table of contents:

*(Please use this space to provide your response)*



The following issues are *directly referred to in the themes, thrust, sub-strategies and/or programs of the forestry strategy*:

**Demographic changes:**

- Population growth
- Changing age structures
- Urbanization
- International migration

**Economic changes:**

- Growth in incomes
- Income distribution, inequality and poverty
- Emergence of a middle class
- Structural changes and dependence on land
- Investments in industries and infrastructure
- Globalization and its impacts
- Fluctuations in agricultural commodity prices (e.g. palm oil, rubber, coffee)

**Politics, policies and institutions:**

- Politics and governance
- Policy changes
- Institutional changes
- Forest governance issues

**Environmental drivers:**

- Local environmental issues
- National environmental issues and increasing demand for ecosystem services
- Regional and global environmental issues and scenarios
- Climate change mechanisms (for mitigation and adaption)

**Technological changes:**

- Productivity-enhancing technologies
- Harvesting and processing technologies
- Energy policies and technologies
- Technologies from outside the forest sector

None of the above, but others as described in the box below

Please provide additional information on the issue, if deemed necessary and especially:

*(Please use this space to provide your response)*

**The following issues shaped the content of the forestry strategy but are *not directly* referred to in the document:**

**Demographic changes:**

- Population growth
- Changing age structures
- Urbanization
- International migration

**Economic changes:**

- Growth in incomes
- Income distribution, inequality and poverty
- Emergence of a middle class
- Structural changes and dependence on land
- Investments in industries and infrastructure
- Globalization and its impacts
- Fluctuations in agricultural commodity prices (e.g. palm oil, rubber, coffee)

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- Climate change mechanisms (for mitigation and adaptation)

**Technological changes:**

- Productivity-enhancing technologies
- Harvesting and processing technologies
- Energy policies and technologies
- Technologies from outside the forest sector

None of the above, but others as described in the box below

Please provide additional information on the issue, if deemed necessary and especially:

*(Please use this space to provide your response)*

**The forestry strategy is covering the following topics**

1. Rationale for developing the new forestry strategy
2. Status of the forestry sector and forest policy
3. Context
4. Forestry scenarios
5. Vision
6. Goals and objectives
7. Solutions for implementation
8. Implementation arrangements
9. Implementation schedule
10. Specific numerical or measurable targets  
(please indicate the targets in the box below)
11. Budgetary requirements
12. Financing program
13. Promotion of domestic and international investments
14. Short- to medium-term priorities
15. Monitoring and evaluation
16. Mid-term review
17. None of the above

Please provide additional information on the “content”, if deemed necessary:

*(Please use this space to provide your response, including any topics not listed above)*

### **Strengths and weaknesses of the forestry strategy**

Please provide additional information on the “strengths and weaknesses”. We understand that such information is usually of a subjective nature and often sensitive. We will therefore follow up on the matter during the interview stage.

The **strengths** of the forestry strategy are:

The **weaknesses** of the forestry strategy are:

## Gaps and needs

From your perspective, what have been the **most important gaps** in the forestry strategy development process as well as in the content of the forestry strategy document? Please list between three and five aspects for each the process and the content. Please pay particular attention to the “drivers or change”, the “weaknesses” and institutional gaps (e.g. related to skills, knowledge and experience) identified in this self-assessment.

*(Please use this space to provide your response)*

The three immediate objectives of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Network (FPN) are listed below. In line with these objectives, what do you think are the most important needs (related to forestry strategy development) that the FPN should address over the next several years?

- Objective 1.** To **develop an informal network** of planners and policymakers in the Asia-Pacific region, enabling regular exchange of knowledge and collectively strengthening strategic planning capabilities resulting in improved planning processes and more effective strategic plans in the forest sector.
- Objective 2.** To **improve the knowledge base relevant to forestry strategic planning** in the Asia-Pacific region through preparation of policy briefs and development of data bases relevant to strategic planning enabling planners and policymakers to effectively respond to the emerging opportunities and challenges.
- Objective 3.** To **provide technical support and guidance for strategic planning** through preparation of guidelines and enhancing human resource capacity.

*(Please use this space to provide your response on needs in forestry strategy development that the FPN as a regional network should address. Please think particularly in terms of exchanging experiences among economies and not stand-alone activities for just one economy. Please list no more than five needs and how they should/could be addressed by the FPN)*

## Any other issues or comments

This self-assessment may not have touched on a critical issue for your economy. If that is the case, please provide any such information below:

*(Please use this space to provide your response)*

**Thank you very much for completing the self-assessment!**

**We will contact you if we have any questions.**

## Annex 2: Drivers, internal and external changes

Forest agency representatives were requested to tick off the following drivers, internal and external changes that were considered during the strategy development process:

### Demographic changes:

Population growth  
Changing age structures

- Urbanization
- International migration

### Economic changes:

- Growth in incomes
- Income distribution, inequality and poverty
- Emergence of a middle class
- Structural changes and dependence on land
- Investments in industries and infrastructure
- Globalization and its impacts
- Fluctuations in agricultural commodity prices (e.g. palm oil, rubber, coffee)

### Politics, policies and institutions:

- Politics and governance
- Policy changes
- Institutional changes
- Forest governance issues

### Environmental drivers:

- Local environmental issues
- National environmental issues and increasing demand for ecosystem services
- Regional and global environmental issues and scenarios
- Climate change mechanisms (for mitigation and adaption)

### Technological changes:

- Productivity-enhancing technologies
- Harvesting and processing technologies
- Energy policies and technologies
- Technologies from outside the forest sector

None of the above, but others as described in the box below









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