



Mangrove forest in Carood Watershed Model Forest, Philippines

The Regional Model Forest Network – Asia

In many regions of the world, protecting and managing forests sustainably depends on social and economic policies that provide income-generation opportunities beyond forest harvesting or forest clearing for agriculture. For the 430 million people who depend directly on Asia's forest resources for all or a substantial part of their livelihoods, there is a delicate balance between meeting their livelihood needs and addressing the significant pressure that these subsistence activities exert on the landscape. In Asia there are increasing pressures on forest resources from many sources, including livestock grazing and the collection of fuel wood, building materials and non-timber forest products (such as charcoal).

Successful Model Forest development and regional program implementation across Asia confirm that large-scale partnerships for sustainable development can work in a variety of cultures, landscapes and economic scenarios.



Left: Terraced agriculture in Margowitan Model Forest, Indonesia

Right: Local community members are allowed to grow porang, a high-value crop, in the teak plantations in the Margowitan Model Forest, Indonesia

Model Forests in Asia provide a strong stakeholder- and community-based approach to natural resource management. Although community-based approaches in the Asia region are not unique, what sets them apart is that they are generally enshrined in national legislation. Model Forests in Asia provide a link between national government focal points and local-level organizations, facilitating stakeholder dialogue and in turn opens doors to opportunities to strengthen governance and collaborative planning. This explicit link between national-level policy-makers and operations at the landscape level provides Model Forests with the opportunity to influence national policy.

Beyond the influence that they can exert on existing national policies, Model Forests also offer discrete and cost-effective testing grounds for national initiatives. Involvement of governments in the Model Forest development process has enabled national-level policy testing and development to be directly linked with on-the-ground demonstration.

Development of a Regional Model Forest Network in Asia

The promotion of Model Forests in Asia began in 1997 when China initiated development of the Lin'an Model Forest, which was formally established in 1999.

Also in 1999, the government of Japan provided a grant to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in support of Model Forest development in China, Thailand, the Philippines and Burma (Myanmar). This two-and-a-half-year project had its roots in a series of international workshops initiated by the Forestry Agency of Japan, held between March 1998 and October 2000, entitled the "Model Forest Approach for Field-Level Application of Sustainable Forest Management." A follow-up evaluation¹ found the FAO project to have been timely and relevant, producing broadly positive results.

¹ Lai, K.C., Ishida, K. and Canonizado, J. (2002). *Terminal evaluation report of FAO project GCP/RAS/177/JPN – Assistance for the Implementation of the Model Forest Approach*. Bangkok, Thailand: FAO Regional Office for Asia-Pacific.

With the establishment of Model Forests in these countries, an informal regional network emerged. As well, a regional secretariat based at the FAO during the project carried on and continues to be an active partner in development of the regional network and Model Forests. In addition to the critical support provided by national governments, funding is also provided by the Government of Canada and the International Development Research Centre.

Over the first several years, the main focus of regional activities was on capacity building within the Model Forests. At regional workshops, Model Forest representatives met to discuss ways to strengthen capabilities in a range of areas, such as resource mobilization, criteria and indicators (C&I) for sustainable forest management, forest policy and related legislation, and project monitoring and evaluation. Strategic planning workshops were also held. Subsequent development at the site level focused strongly on the continued exploration and use of the Model Forest governance approach. During this period there was also an emphasis on economic development projects using sustainably managed forest resources.

In March 2010, an Asia Regional Model Forest Network (RMFN – Asia) office was officially opened in Beijing. This new regional Secretariat

facilitates the ongoing governance of Model Forests in Asia and communicates site-level activities to regional and international audiences, while at the same time supporting the maintenance and expansion of the regional network. Hosted by the Chinese Academy of Forestry, the office is co-located with the newly established Secretariat

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of the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation, set up to promote sustainable forest management in the Asia-Pacific and APEC regions.

Left: Elephant in Kodagu Model Forest, India

Middle: Young tree planter, Ngao Model Forest, Thailand

Right: Training in Ulot Watershed Model Forest, Philippines



THE REGIONAL MODEL FOREST NETWORK – ASIA 3



Asia Model Forest Regional Priorities and Activities

The Model Forests of the RMFN – Asia are collectively working towards a vision in which:

- Forest resources in Asia are managed sustainably
- Local people are able to make use of forest resources for better lives
- Concerned individuals, agencies, groups, organizations and institutions work together to ensure the sustainable management of forests and other resources within the region

To realize that vision, members of the RMFN–Asia have agreed to focus their collective efforts on two priority themes: ecological goods and services, and integrated landscape management. Under these two themes, six types of site-level activities have also been identified. For these, individual Model Forests are now coordinating their research and demonstration efforts.

Regional Priority Themes and Activity Focus Areas

Ecological Goods and Services

Exploring ecological goods and services provided by forests

Integrated Landscape Management

Promoting poverty alleviation and food security

Enhancing forest cover and biodiversity conservation

Ensuring water security

Improving governance and law enforcement for sustainable forest management

Assessing climate change vulnerability and facilitating community adaptation

Kodagu Model Forest, India





Looking Forward

In the coming years, the RMFN – Asia will focus on the following four main strategies to achieve their objectives in each theme area: capacity building, networking and knowledge sharing, promotion of the Model Forest approach, and research. At the same time, they will combine with the regional pilot projects already underway as part of two of the IMFN’s strategic initiatives – Ecological Goods and Services, and Climate Change.

Both the regional network and the individual Model Forests are also continuing to expand and mature, with increasing collaboration on projects occurring between Model Forests within the region and between the region and key regional forestry organizations. Successful Model Forest development and regional program implementation across Asia confirm that large-scale partnerships for sustainable development can work in a variety of cultures, landscapes and economic scenarios.

Milestones

- 1998** Forest Agency of Japan sponsors international workshop series on “The Model Forest Approach for Field-Level Application of Sustainable Forest Management”
- 1999** Lin’an Model Forest established in China
Government of Japan sponsors regional Model Forest project through the FAO’s Asia-Pacific office in Bangkok, Thailand
- 2000** Ngao Model Forest established in Thailand
Ulut Watershed Model Forest established in the Philippines
Paukkhaung Model Forest established in Burma (Myanmar)
- 2002** Berau Model Forest established in Indonesia
- 2004** Margowitan Model Forest established in Indonesia
National-level launch of Model Forests in Indonesia
- 2006** Paukkhaung Model Forest closes
- 2009** Regional Model Forest Network – Asia office opened by the Government of China’s State Forestry Administration
Berau Model Forest in Indonesia closes
- 2010** Carood Watershed Model Forest established in the Philippines
- 2011** Kyoto Model Forest established in Japan
First CUSO-VSO cooperant volunteers start work in Carood and Ulut Watershed Model Forests, Philippines

Top left: Shade-grown coffee in Kodagu Model Forest, India

Top middle: Margowitan Model Forest, Indonesia

Top right: Bamboo, Lin’an Model Forest, China



CASE STUDY

Building National Strategies on Local Success in the Philippines

Since its establishment in 2000, the Ulot Watershed Model Forest has been used to develop and test on-the-ground applications for several national-level initiatives. For example, the Model Forest acted as a landscape-level pilot for identifying criteria and indicators (C&I)

of sustainable forest management. The success of the C&I pilot project was then transferred to the national C&I program and subsequently used in various forest management units around the country.

CASE STUDY

Training and Capacity Building

Since 1999, Lin'an Model Forest in central China has offered workshops to farmers on the cultivation and processing of bamboo shoots, hickory nuts and tea. The workshops are unique in China as they work towards enhancing sustainable management practices by providing a comprehensive skills training program that included three elements:

- Establishing a demonstration bamboo plantation for vocational training
- Developing capacity building courses on cultivating and processing bamboo shoots, hickory nuts and tea
- Working with the local Rural Cooperation Bank to establish a small loans program for the disabled once they are trained

Since training began, more than 600 persons have benefited from the training and the small loans program. For example, through the "Association of Disabled Peoples of Lin'an" – a stakeholder organization that participates in the Model Forest – workshop participants received small loans and free tree stock to assist them in establishing their farms. Household survey data collected clearly demonstrates that participating households have risen above the poverty line, as their average annual income was shown to have tripled.

Top left: Ulot Watershed Model Forest, Philippines

Top right: Harvested bamboo ready for processing in Lin'an Model Forest, China