AFoCO Impacts & Best Practices

Full Report 2022

Asian Forest Cooperation Organization

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AFoCO

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An evaluation of
seven AFoCO regional projects
in Southeast Asia

Asian Forest Cooperation Organization

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFoCO	Asian Forest Cooperation Organization
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASOF	ASEAN Senior Officials on Forestry
CF	Community Forest(ry)
CFE	Community Forest Enterprise
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FLR	Forest Landscape Restoration
FRA	FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment (reporting provided by all countries to FAO)
GFG	Global Forest Goals (of the UN Forum on Forests)
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
MBC	Mekong Basin Countries
NTFP-EP	Non-Timber Forest Products - Exchange Program (a civil society forum)
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (the "+" signifies the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks)
ROK	Republic of Korea
RS	Remote Sensing
RECOFTC	The Center for People and Forests (uses today only the acronym RECOFTC)
RETC	Regional Education and Training Center
SEARCA	Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture
SDGs	The UN Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1. Introduction

AFoCO's vision is "A greener Asia with resilient forests, landscapes, and communities." Its mission is to strengthen cooperation in the forest sector and promote action-oriented practices of sustainable forest management through policy support, capacity development, and inclusive partnerships to address the adverse impacts of climate change. AFoCO is a treaty-based organization with 16 Member Countries - 13 Parties consisting of ASEAN countries (except Malaysia and Singapore), Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea (ROK) and Timor-Leste as well as 3 Observers, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, and Singapore. From among AFoCO's Member Countries, ROK, through the Korea Forest Service, provides 80% of the operational costs of AFoCO, including voluntary contributions (around $4-5 million/year) since 2013.

AFoCO's work has a particular emphasis on applying advanced technologies in forest management, and its work program includes (i) action-oriented implementation, (ii) regional-based partnerships, (iii) country-driven project development, and (iv) providing training to forestry staff in AFoCO's member countries. With these member countries, AFoCO promotes action-oriented cooperation projects on sustainable forest management, including alternative livelihoods, biodiversity conservation, maintenance and enhancement of ecosystem services, as well as reforestation and forest rehabilitation. There is also an emphasis on climate change mitigation and adaptation activities and supporting REDD+ initiatives to reduce deforestation, forest degradation, desertification, and land degradation in order to mitigate the impacts of forest-related disasters.

Recognizing the global megatrends, including Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the objectives of the Agreement on the establishment of AFoCO, the current AFoCO Strategic Plan (2019-2023) was developed following the organization's establishment on 27 April 2018. AFoCO's development and implementation of new projects and programs lie under the framework of strategic priorities over the five years of the Plan. However, the projects implemented before that period were generally guided by relevant/applicable provisions of the ASEAN-Republic of Korea Forest Cooperation Agreement.

Two projects, 001 and 002, were developed following guidance provided from an International Workshop on Forest Cooperation, organized by Korea Forest Service in Seoul on 8-10 December 2010 to improve cooperation with ASEAN. The workshop identified the following four key areas of cooperation to be considered for future cooperation projects:

1. Mitigation of climate change effects through rehabilitation/restoration of degraded forests and ecosystems, environmental service, community forestry, and REDD+ activities;

2. Conservation of biodiversity and eco-tourism;

3. NTFP development and renewable biomass energy; and

4. Human capacity development (scholarship and training programs).

Projects 003, 004, 009, 010, and 011 were developed under Article III of the "Scope and Areas of Cooperation" of the ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation Agreement, as follows:

1. To achieve the objectives stated in Article ll, the Agreement shall focus on action-oriented field activities while ensuring synergies and complementation of existing cooperation, regional and international organizations.
2. Areas of cooperation under the Agreement shall include the following:

a) promoting sustainable forest management (SFM);

b) addressing deforestation and forest degradation in the framework of the adaptation and mitigation of climate change, combating desertification, restoring and rehabilitating degraded land, promoting community-based forestry activities, and preventing forest disasters;

c) strengthening capacity-building, public awareness, and research and development in the forestry sector, including through technology transfers and technical information sharing in the forestry sector, including, inter alia, wood-based and forest products;

d) enhancing forest carbon stocks and supporting initiatives, including mitigation and adaptation of the impacts of climate change in forestry;

e) undertaking dialogue towards the establishment of AFoCO;

f) enhancing and mobilizing existing and future financial resources in the forestry sector; and

g) any other areas of forestry cooperation to be mutually agreed from time to time by the Parties.

The latter five projects were also discussed and invited to the Technical Meeting of the 3rd Session of the Governing Council of the ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation Agreement, held on 16-17 October 2012, in Singapore. At that meeting, to promote further collaboration between ROK and ASEAN Member states, ROK invited the submission of new proposals from ASEAN Member States for medium-term (3 to 5 years) to long-term (6 to 10 years) projects to be launched in 2014. A project budget allocation was approved for up to a maximum of $100,000 per year, per country, and the project should be designed with multilateral cooperation, involving at least two ASEAN Member States plus ROK in each project. The project proposals could include equal in-kind contributions, or higher, from the implementing countries.

AFoCO has implemented, or is currently operating, 21 projects across Asia, mostly in Central and Southeast Asia. In addition, AFoCO is also sustaining several ongoing training courses through the AFoCO Regional Education and Training Center (RETC) in Myanmar prior to the coup in 2021. Some courses were in cooperation with the World Bank and international partner agencies, such as RECOFTC and FAO, including developmental, research, and academic institutions in ROK. These institutions intend to strengthen the capacities of member countries by enhancing knowledge and understanding of forest management and providing greater access to advanced technologies. The AFoCO Strategic Plan (2019-2023) has three key objectives:

(1) Achieve the global goal of increasing forest cover up to 3% worldwide;

(2) Implement the Paris Agreement on climate change, particularly in pursuit of policy approaches for adaptation in the forestry sector; and

(3) Improve livelihoods and income through forestry-related activities.

This report evaluates seven projects conducted through AFoCO, taken together as a program to improve forest management capacity in Southeast Asia (Table 1), one of which (Project 010) is still ongoing. The report assesses their impacts, evaluates progress, and draws conclusions about lessons learned and best practices. The intent of this review was not as an ex-post review of the individual projects. Rather, it provides an overview of the suite of projects together as a program that contributes to the AFoCO agenda. The objective is to assess the projects with a view towards possible improvements of project delivery for future SFM programs on forest management in Asia.

2. Methodology

2.1 Overview of methods

AFoCO has guidelines for project reviews[1], which indicates five principles: impartiality (take into account the views of stakeholders), utility (value to audience), credibility (high professional standards), measurability (use data and indicators as much as possible), and partnership (involving multiple stakeholders). While this program evaluation examines the objectives and outcomes of each project to determine whether and how individual outcomes were achieved, the main contribution of this review is to assess the overall value of the program, and to provide a measure of the AFoCO program contribution towards improving the status of development in the project areas. The assessment was done to strengthen the effectiveness of the development program, guide and support decision-making and policymaking, guide future project development, and assist in developing an organized system for innovative approaches to sustainable forest management through lessons learned and best practices.

This review consists of three main components: (1). A review of documents to provide a project-by-project assessment, which were then summarized into a review of the program. The report also relates to the strategic plan (2019-2023) of AFoCO and took advantage of past evaluations of two of the projects (003 and 011). (2). Based on the initial findings, a validation exercise was completed by interviewing project personnel to ensure that the initial findings were accurate and supplement the report with other useful information derived from the interviews. (3). Following validation, the final report was completed, focusing on lessons learned, best practices, policy impacts, forestry impacts, and financial aspects as a means to improve overall program delivery.

2.2 Individual project evaluations and program evaluation

Seven projects were reviewed as a part of AFoCO's program to improve forest management capacity and delivery in Southeast Asia. We examined each project individually, including during each, and then drew summary conclusions at the program level regarding impacts and possible future improvement. The evaluation relied, in part, on the OECD information and methods pertaining to "social impact investment" [2], along with the common methods used by most donor and project implementation agencies as described in the AFoCO guidance document[1]. The latter method relies on an assessment of five key areas for the evaluations: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of the project. Generally, this method also includes a section on lessons learned as a mechanism to indicate any possible changes in the next phase of a program that will result in improvements and efficiencies. Within a suite of projects, such as those reviewed here, some lessons usually are consistent across all projects. In contrast, individual projects may result in specific or idiosyncratic lessons. Nevertheless, all lessons learned can be used to inform future program direction. Standard evaluation criteria (Figure 1): Most agencies use variations of five basic criteria to assess the success of projects in achieving their expected objectives. Project evaluations are made by examining the achievements towards a series of indicators specified in the logical project framework. The five key criteria are illustrated in Figure 1, as follows:

[1] http://afocosec.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Guidelines-for-Project-Monitoring-and-Evaluation-G-2-20R-All.pdf

[2] https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/Social-Impact-Investment-2019.pdf

- Relevance – refers to how significant or useful the project was in terms of delivering useful information, techniques, or information that the recipients could use to improve forest management;

- Effectiveness – this criterion examines the effects of the project in terms of producing the expected results;

- Efficiency – refers to the expenditures made relative to the extent of outputs achieved;

- Sustainability – is the criterion used to assess whether or not the results of the project can be sustained by the recipients over time.

- Impact – impacts can be measured in many ways with respect to the original objectives of the project; for example, on government policy, forest improvements, increased biodiversity, better local livelihoods, etc.

Social impact investment (SII) criteria (Figure 1): As described by the OECD, SII is the provision of finance to address social needs, with the explicit expectation of a measurable social and financial return (to the community). A core characteristic and challenge is measuring and managing social and environmental outcomes alongside the financial returns. Social impact investment starts with the social need being addressed by focusing on specific social and/or environmental outcomes. While returns are key to achieving financial sustainability and attracting new capital flows, the expected social impact remains at the core of investment decisions. The enabling environment is an important factor in advancing the social impact investment market, and a country's regulatory and financial system affects the mix of public and private capital that flows into a given project. As with most projects, it is imperative to build SIIs on measurable theories of change, with clear expected outcomes. The main difference between SII and concessional project financing is the intent to create social change and to derive a local financial return, with a strong emphasis on the social outcomes explicitly expected under the SDGs, largely through innovative solutions to resolve issues.

Under SII, 'impact' Is defined as material effects experienced by people and planet, both positive and negative, which is further determined by four additional dimensions: significance, depth, scale, and duration of the impacts. Impact also needs to reflect the perspective of the beneficiaries' needs, as well as the additionality of the effect. As with any financial performance, the risk of achieving social impacts should be taken into account in measuring and assessment. The goal of international (particularly public) funding should be to facilitate the development of local financial markets and to support the creation of intermediaries to engage local investors. Fostering innovation is a key mechanism of SII through public-private collaboration. Finally, actual performance data and indicators are essential to measuring the impact of a project.

We used a combination of global standard terminal evaluation methodology and SII assessment to evaluate the seven AFoCO projects and the overall program to indicate four outcomes: policy and policy impacts, social impacts, best practices, and lessons learned, all leading to an indication of possible changes that will provide improved future outcomes. The evaluation and validation provide a mechanism to suggest possible future direction for the AFoCO regional forest program. A schematic diagram (Figure 1) indicates the evaluation process used to assess the seven projects and the overall theme.

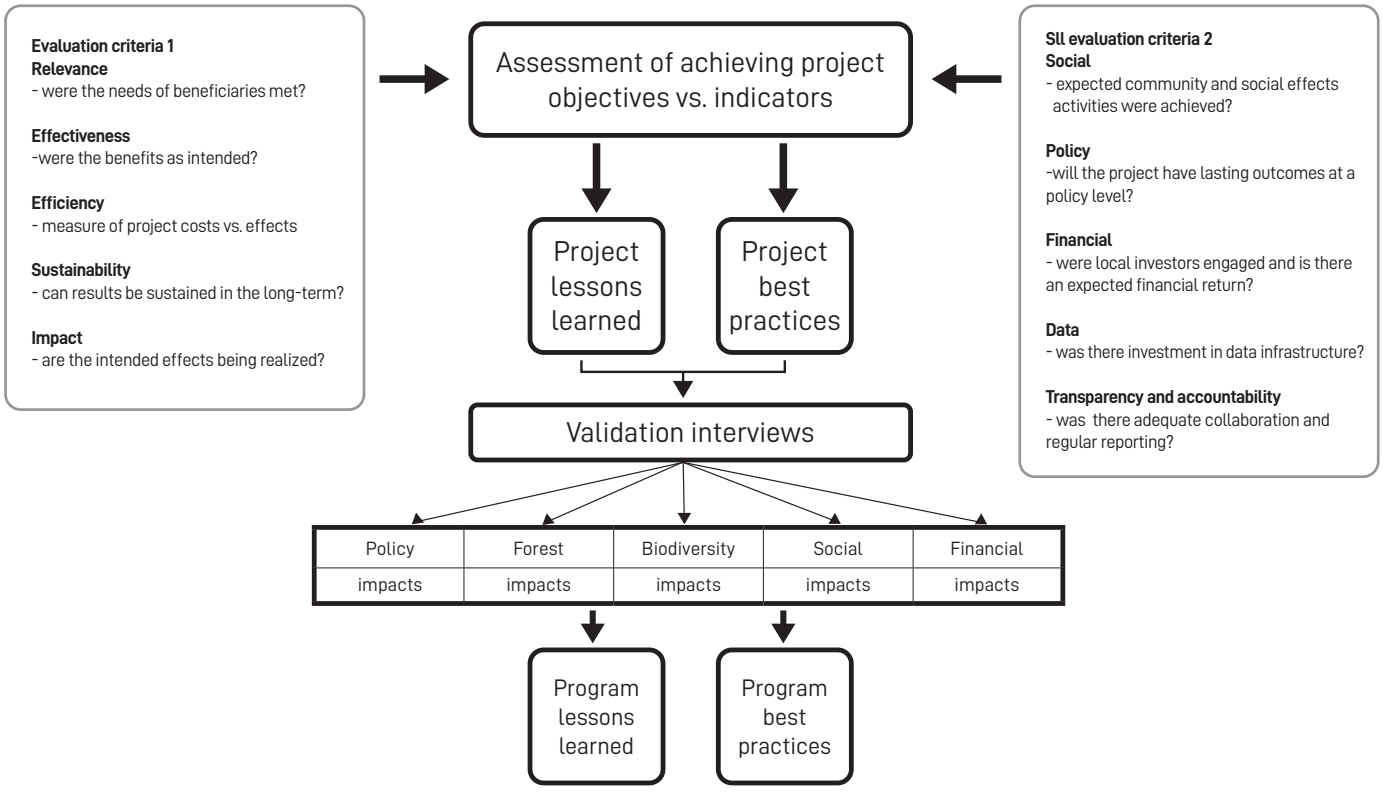

Figure 1. Evaluation criteria and process for projects and the overall program

2.3 Project contributions to UN global processes

The projects were also assessed in terms of their contributions to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, Goals 1 (poverty), 5 (gender equality), 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), 12 (sustainable production and consumption), 13 (climate), 15 (terrestrial environments), and 17 (partnerships for sustainable development), will likely all be implicated under the AFoCO program. The report also examines the contributions of the seven projects to the UN's Global Forest Goals (GFGs).

2.4 Validation

Interviews were conducted with involved stakeholders (partners, regional coordinators, government officers) who were directly implicated in the projects. During each interview, the consultants will briefly present their findings and then seek feedback from the interested parties on the general and specific findings. The "interested stakeholders" interviews were done to assess the level of understanding about the AFoCO Programs in SE Asia.

The following suite of questions was used to discuss projects with the main stakeholders. This list was adjusted as required, depending on the individual project, to cover important project aspects that could not be understood from the final project (see Annex 1):

1. Does the report reflect your understanding of how your particular project was delivered?
2. What could/would you have done differently if you had the opportunity to redo the project?
3. What were the main problems that you encountered, and how did you overcome these problems?
4. Considering the project objectives, was the project budget amount appropriate? Were the costs of each activity suitably allocated?
5. Have there been policy-level impacts, or are there likely to be in the future? Can you describe such policy-level impacts further?
6. Explain how the financial aspects of the project were handled, and do you consider the arrangements to have worked well?
7. Have there been, or will there be, financial returns to the community or country as a result of this project? Are these returns sustainable?
8. Do you believe that the positive impacts of the project will continue now that the AFoCO funding has ended(or will end)?
9. What was innovative about the project – either in terms of delivery or in terms of outcomes?
10. How has the project delivered on its social commitments? In what ways have local communities benefitted during and after the project?

11. What impacts has the project had on forest ecosystems and biodiversity?
12. Were there more appropriate technical, financial, or administrative approaches that might have been used to improve the effectiveness of the project?
13. What are the key lessons that you have learned from this project?

Results from these interviews were used to refine the report, focusing on impacts (policy, social, environmental), best practices, financing, innovation, lessons learned, and sustainability. The report drew on the information collected to formulate an approach and suggestions for the next phase or series of possible projects.

3. Project reviews

In this section, we examine each of the projects in terms of their achievement of outputs, lessons learned, and best practices, as well as their contributions to the AFoCO program objectives of improving forest management in Southeast Asia.

3.1 Overview of the seven projects

All seven projects were located in Southeast Asia, in ASEAN countries, with six completed and one still ongoing (Table 1). Based on the project titles, four primarily dealt with aspects of forest restoration, while three other projects were largely concerned with improving the technological capacity of forest managers to manage forests and report forest information. Six of the seven projects also had alternative livelihood components built-in as a mechanism to either reduce forest dependence or increase values derived from the forest for local communities. All projects were regional, in that each project provided funding for similar activities in at least two countries, with one country assigned overall project responsibility. Projects ranged in total value (including in-kind from the countries) from $610,000 to $5.3 million, with the large majority in cash funding from AFoCO. Countries that implemented projects include Cambodia (3), Lao PDR (2), Thailand (5), Myanmar (2), Viet Nam (3), the Philippines (3), Indonesia (2), Brunei Darussalam (2), Singapore (1), and Malaysia (1).

Based on the current Strategic Plan of AFoCO (which came after the projects were initiated), all projects either dealt with objective 1, to increase forest cover, or objective 4, to assist communities in achieving better livelihoods from forests (see Annex 2). Overall, the selection of projects was well-focused concerning the needs in the region for progressive forest management, both in terms of using advanced technologies and for demonstrating reforestation. Projects were not all designed to have similar focus or impacts among the main criteria of this assessment. Hence, among the projects, there were differences in the impacts on each of five main outcomes: policy, forest management, social aspects, biodiversity, and potential financial return.

Table 1. The seven projects that were evaluated as components of the AFoCO development program to improve forest management in Southeast Asia

AFoCO project number	Project title	Countries	Time period	Budget
001	Reclamation, rehabilitation, and restoration of degraded forest ecosystems in Mekong Basin countries (MBCs) 5 (Sub)-Projects: • Biodiversity Conservation Linked with Ecotourism for Cambodia; • Participatory Forest Management inked with Certification for Lao PDR; • Ecotourism Linked with Watershed Management for Myanmar; • Ecotourism and Payment for Forest Environmental Services Linked to Biodiversity for Viet Nam; and • Ecotourism Linked with Forest Restoration for Thailand	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Myanmar, Viet Nam	2013-2015	AFoCO $500,000 National $302,770
002	Capacity building on improving Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and enhancing involvement of local communities to address the impact of climate change	Brunei Darussalam. Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam	2013-2016	AFoCO $1,847,528 National contribution not provided
003	Promotion of forest rehabilitation in Cambodia and Viet Nam through demonstration models and improvement of seed supply system	Cambodia, Viet Nam	2014-2019	AFoCO $1,000,000 National $200,000
004	Facilitating the participatory planning of community-based forest management using GIS and RS technologies in forest resource management	Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand	2014-2020	AFoCO $1,500,000 National $14,640
009	Developing high value species in Viet Nam and Thailand as a mechanism for SFM and livelihood improvement for local communities	Viet Nam, Thailand	2015-2018	AFoCO $600,000 National $120,000
010	Domestication of endangered endemic and threatened plant species in disturbed terrestrial ecosystems	Malaysia, Thailand	2016-2022 (Ongoing)	AFoCO $1,200,000 National $4,093,919
011	Capacity building for landscape approach to support sustainable natural resources management	Brunei Darussalam. Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore	2015-2019	AFoCO $539,726 National: Philippines: $68,855 Others: not reported

3.2 Assessment of the individual projects

A key issue found in assessing the projects was that, while there were clear objectives for each with proposed outputs, there were only a few projects that pre-assigned activities within outputs for a project, and the projects generally lacked a set of predetermined indicators against which to assess achievement (Table 2; Annex 2). An exception was Project 003, which provided activities and indicators for each of the expected outputs. Project 010 also provided information on activities with some indicators in the project proposal. The general lack of assigned targets and indicators meant that this assessment primarily determined progress made only towards the proposed outputs. In some cases, survey reports and technical documents were produced, according to the annual reports, but either were not seen or were sometimes in the local language and therefore not available for assessment. A second issue observed when examining the project reports was the large number of activities unrelated to the proposed outputs for several projects (e.g., Projects 001, 004). Nevertheless, all projects accomplished a considerable amount of positive work towards improving the capacity of ASEAN countries to manage, restore, and report on their forests. In particular, the projects involving remote sensing and the supply of new equipment for data analysis, storage and analysis (002, 004, 011) were highly successful in advancing forest management and forest reporting among many countries.

3.2.1 Achievement of outputs

Most or all of the proposed outputs were achieved by the projects (Table 2; details in Annex 2); minor exceptions included Project 001, where there were uncertain results for restoration because only the reports from Myanmar were available; Project 009 that worked with three species (one of which was not a tree) instead of the planned four tree species; and project 011, where the planned report on a comparative capability of community management capacity was not seen. The two projects that provided indicators at the proposal stage for the activity level (003 and 10) were fully successful in achieving their goals (minor exceptions were reported in the evaluation report commissioned for Project 003).

Table 2. Summary of expected outputs and achievements for each of the seven projects (see Annex 2 for a detailed description of project achievements and impacts)

Project number	Planned Outputs	Achievements
001	• 5 pilot sites for transboundary cooperation established • Individual country reports on reclamation, rehabilitation and restoration of degraded forest ecosystems • Staff trained and reports prepared	• 5 Pilot sites were delineated in 5 areas • No country reports available for results of reclamation, rehabilitation and restoration of degraded forest ecosystems • Training workshops held in all countries at local and national levels *Note: many activities and results were accomplished and reported, but were not listed as original project outputs nor as activities with indicators (exchange visits, workshops on biodiversity conservation, construction of facilities, travel, etc.). There were biodiversity surveys done, but no outputs were specified and no data were available, except from Myanmar.

002	• Increase technical expertise for satellite image interpretation • Report current capacity for FRA reporting • Develop a long-term framework for forest reporting • Recommendations for phase 2 • Increase local knowledge about climate change and establish alternative livelihoods	• Training provided to all countries on remote sensing interpretation with 3 training modules; some equipment provided. • No reports on FRA capacity but training given and all countries prepared an improved 2015 FRA report as a result of training. • Forest reporting frameworks were established • Lessons learned and recommendations were provided • Most countries succeeded with climate training and livelihoods work, but reporting of effectiveness was limited *Note: Importantly, equipment and software were provided as well as the training
003	**Cambodia:** • Seed production areas established and seed sources in natural forests identified. • A tree seed laboratory established with supporting facilities and three staff trained on seed technology • Tree seeds distribution system in Cambodia established • Demonstration for forest restoration plots established • Support provided to operation and monitoring **Viet Nam:** • Improvement of seed sources, seedling production and management in Hoa Binh Province • Demonstration models of new planting, enrichment, agroforestry, and community-based forest management • Establish a tissue culture laboratory • Pilot study on the impact of forest rehabilitation on the environment and climate change • Support provided to operation and monitoring **Activities and indicators:** An excellent list of quantified indicators was provided in the original project document for each activity. These were subsequently used in an ex-post evaluation report.	Activities and indicators were specified in the proposal document and the 2020 evaluation report found that the project was implemented as planned, that most targets were met, and the review authors considered that there was high impact of the project within each country. The report noted that most indicators were 100% achieved, with a few exceptions.

004	• Report on assessment and analysis of the status of community-level forest management planning process at the implementing country and regional levels • Enhanced procedures in formulation and development of community-level forest management plans through participatory planning processes, facilitated by the use of GIS and RS in forest resources management • Community-level forest management plans in selected tenured forest areas of each country developed using the enhanced procedures • Capacitated planning team on community-level forest management planning. • Established/developed specific areas in accordance with the CF management plans in selected tenured forest areas of each country	• Completed reports for all three countries (not seen) • Completed in all countries and noted that there is a need for more local expertise owing to a lack of computer training for community members • Accomplished for all CF areas • Planning teams established at each CF • Areas formally established in the three countries *Note: Many other activities were reported including training and workshops, which were not specified as outputs in the project proposal.
009	• Background summary status documents prepared for 4 important tree species, including market information • Technical guidelines for planting tending and harvesting of the 4 species completed. • Provide policy and marketing recommendations for the 4 species. • Establish demonstration areas for planting and tending the four species • Provide training for local communities • Complete technical, financial mid-term and final reports	• 3 species (one of which is not a tree) were used in the project; technical reports were produced • Technical guidelines reported for the 3 species • Policy and marketing guidelines were produced • Demonstration plots established on four 2 ha areas • Training and models provided to the implicated communities • All reports completed as required
010 (ongoing)	• At least 2 to 5 species of endangered or threatened plants domesticated per year through cooperation between Malaysia and Thailand. (total over 8 years: 16-40 species) • 1 project demonstration site in each country • Domestication of germplasm conservation plots established that contain at least 12 to 30 IUCN or National Red-list species • Country reporting of the project is documented and shared through regional workshops. • Capacity building through short-term training courses, internship program, and publications • Establish a website	• A total of 31 species were planted (Malaysia - 18 species; Thailand - 13 species). Two areas were planted in both countries as demonstration areas (this output was exceeded). • Reports completed as required and multiple workshops conducted • Multiple publications completed including journal publications, training courses established; internship program done; website established for Thailand

011	• Establishment of model/demonstration sites for future replication/adoption • Demonstration plots/learning areas in various landscapes within implementing countries properly maintained and protected by the concerned stakeholders • Capacity building activities and its corresponding training modules relative to the application of a landscape approach • Regional workshop and cross-country visits as venue for sharing of experiences between and among implementing countries on Project learning and future directions • Documentation reports relative to the lessons and experiences of the Project that will serve as reference for development of future policy directions by the implementing countries • Comparative assessment of management capabilities across communities/stakeholders and landscapes • Experiential learning modules (focus is on knowledge and skills acquisition within an established/existing learning sites)	• Demonstration areas were established in 3 of the 4 countries • Plots established and were maintained during the project; all plots appear to be significant to governments and so are likely sustainable • Except for Brunei Darussalam, capacity building in- country training (9 sessions in 4 countries) was conducted to share the lessons and application of landscape approach to other implementing countries and domestically • Activities such as a regional workshop, and cross-country visits were completed • Lessons learned and best practices were reported by the project teams and in the project evaluation that followed • This activity was not completed although experience from the project allows such an assessment • Learning modules were produced

A detailed assessment of each project is provided in Annex 2, which illustrates the main accomplishments, as well as individual impacts and prospects for financial return. We found that the following three projects were particularly outstanding in terms of their successes and regional impacts:

- **Project 002**

provided tools, advanced technologies, and training to improve forest reporting to five ASEAN countries. In addition, the project report provided a good assessment of lessons learned, with tutorial presentations made available for best practices. Importantly, and the project resulted in a new government technical division in Brunei Darussalam for forest reporting.

- **Project 003**

secured seed sources, established tree nurseries for forest restoration in two countries, and trained over 300 people in seed production and forest restoration while providing motivation for forest recovery.

- **Project 010**

provided the means to develop techniques to begin recovering endangered plants in two countries, with the information derived in the project published in scientific journals, thereby increasing the regional/global impact. The technical information developed can readily be used regionally by other regional countries that may wish to recover their own endangered species.

As previously noted, the lack of pre-defined activities and targets made a quantitative evaluation of each project difficult, except for projects 002 and 010. Hence the projects were assessed using a qualitative approach following the analysis compiled in Annex 2 and success towards outputs (Table 2). This at least provides AFoCO with some measure of impacts that were derived individually from the seven projects (Figure 2). Apparent from these diagrams was the lack of impact for biodiversity, but high-impact for forest management and social aspects.

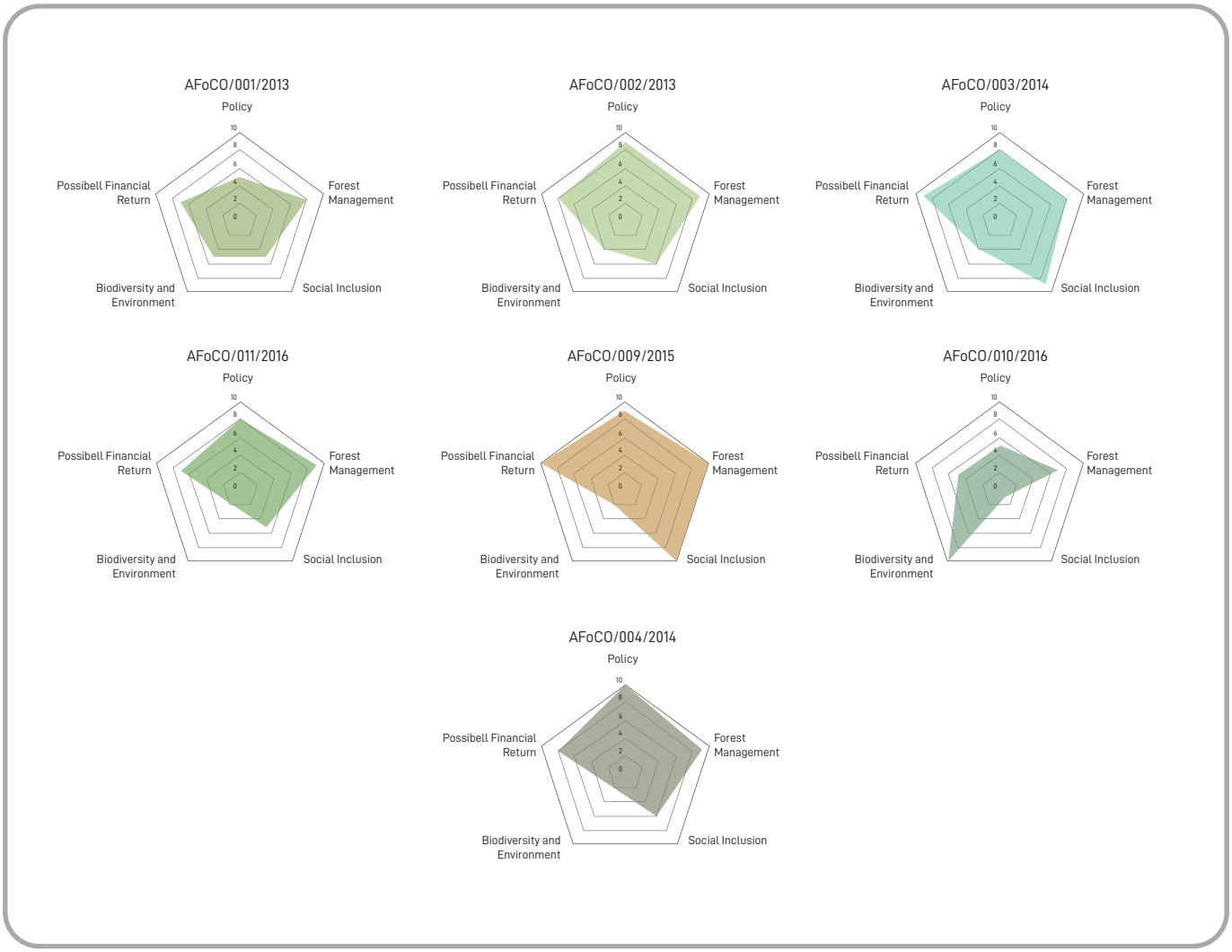

Figure 2. Individual project scores[1] for five impact criteria

[1]**How scoring was done:**

Policy: 0-3 = little or no impact; 4-5 = limited impact; 6-7 = aligned with current policies; 8-9 = may result in policy change; 10 = new policy or law as a result.

Forest management and biodiversity impact : 0-3 = little or no impact; 4-5 = short-term impact only; 6-7 = impact if expanded; 8-9 = immediate long-term impact on large area, or as national demonstration; 10 = very high immediate and large area impact

Social impact: 0-3 = little to no impact; 4-5 = impact during project only; 6-7 = short-term impact only; 8-9 = impact if carried on post-project; 10 = high immediate and sustained impact

Possible financial return: 0-3 = no return likely; 4-5 = return only during project; 6-7 = future impact but will require funding; 8-9 = highly likely long-term impact; 10 = immediate and sustainable impact.

3.3 Summary of lessons learned and best practices from individual projects

The following section summarizes lessons learned and best practices derived from the individual project reports; many of these "lessons" and "practices" were identical among projects. Some best practices were derived by the authors based on observations from reports, and the project reports themselves often also provided a "lessons learned and best practices" combined section. Validation interviews with regional project coordinators also resulted in lessons with respect to project coordination at that level. Frequently, the lessons learned resulted in suggestions for improved practices. Hence, we have also provided a combined "lessons learned and best practices section" here, whereby the best practices were drawn as a conclusion from each lesson. The most important and useful lessons and best practices are summarized separately in Section 5.0, which provides the conclusions to the overall program evaluation. The lessons and practices are organized around themes to assist AFoCO in focusing on lessons relevant to program components, including project coordination, proposal development, on-site operations, and forest management. These best practices should assist AFoCO in developing aspects of their ASEAN forest management program in the future.

3.3.1 Project development

3.3.1.1 Project coordination

Lessons Learned	Best Practices
1. There is a need to provide capacity training for regional project coordinators on aspects such as: coordination, finances, administration, monitoring, and reporting. (Projects: 002, 011)	Provide sufficient training to regional project managers to effectively administer projects.
2. Each national-level project needs a full-time local project coordinator, with sufficient staff to run the project, who has the responsibility of reporting to the regional coordinator. (Projects 001, 004)	Assign a full-time local project coordinator.
3. Regular consultation of local project managers with the regional project leader is important and must be built into project management planning. (Project 002)	Ensure that there is regular effective communication between the regional coordinators and the local project managers.
4. The AFoCO Secretariat should maintain a more visible presence during project implementation, in terms of initiating opportunities for project consultations to discuss issues and concerns that need immediate action, and for interim monitoring. Both mid-term and ex-post evaluations should be conducted for all projects through the AFoCO Secretariat. (Projects 010, 011)	AFoCO should closely monitor projects through regular consultations and all projects should have at least an ex-post evaluation.
5. The continuous enhancement of the AFoCO project manuals and relevant guidelines are imperative to provide appropriate guidance to the regional-level National Focal Points for project development, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. (Projects 002, 010)	Update manuals and guidance documents on a regular basis to ensure relevance.

6. Land tenure continues to be a problem across much of the region, especially concerning community forest (CF) areas. The recognition of local community rights (land tenure/access rights) to use forest resources in sustainable ways plays an important role in raising the sense of ownership of a local community to protect the forests and improve their welfare. (Projects 002, 003, 004)	Projects need to ensure that there is formal land tenure in place prior to implementation. This is also the case for planned forest restoration, where it involves individual or community-owned tree plantations, or natural forests.
7. There needs to be some mechanism in place for survey data (forest, biodiversity, soil, etc.) to be properly entered into databases, compiled into technical reports, and made available to anyone or organization that may wish to make use of the results. (Projects 002, 004, 009, 011)	Projects should ensure that there is a formal data management structure, which includes a long-term data repository. Data should be analyzed and presented in technical reports where feasible.

3.3.1. 2 Proposal development

Lessons Learned	Best Practices
1. Project relevance to the AFoCO Strategic Plan should be the primary consideration in developing project proposals, but also ensure that outcomes and outputs contribute to attaining the country's and global goals and objectives in forests. (Project 001)	Project proposals should clearly state how the project will address the AFoCO program objectives, as well as meets the national government's planning objectives.
2. A pre-project preliminary baseline survey, or feasibility study conducted prior to the formulation of the project was helpful to enable before and after scenarios of the project, and to evaluate possible issues and risks. In the case of livelihood projects, the proposal should include a marketing scheme, for example by consulting the private sector early on. (Projects 001, 002, 004, 009)	AA proposal should include a completed a pre- project feasibility study, including a product marketing scheme where applicable
3. In some cases, there was insufficient available time to complete a project (see: Operations above, as well). (Projects 001, 003, 004, 009)	Possible solution: Revise project timelines to allow an extra 6 months to 1 year depending on complexity.
4. A logical framework for the project is a necessary part of the project formulation. Drafting a logical framework provides a structure in which the stakeholders can understand an overview of the outcomes, activities, and anticipated results of the project. It also identifies measurable results that could be monitored. (Projects 001, 002, 004)	A formal logical framework, which includes the proposed activities and indicators of achievement, must be included in a project proposal.
5. Sustainable forest management has three equal objectives: environmental protection, economic output,	To ensure a holistic and integrated approach in formulating projects for CFs or forest management

and social considerations that were not always considered in some projects. (Projects 002, 004, 010)	generally, communities and the governing authorities should consider environmental, social, and economic improvements as equal bjectives.
6. The best current knowledge available, including local knowledge and skills, increased the success of the project. (Project 002, 011)	It is advisable to make use of local wisdom, indigenous practices, and academic knowledge when formulating project plans.
7. Involving local communities, local businesses and other stakeholders early on in the process of proposal development leads to good cooperation during the project and ownership after the project. Hence, it is important to take a bottom-up approach, especially for CFs, with extensive use of presentations and inclusive discussions within the communities about how a project can best be conducted. (Project s 004, 009, 011)	Consult with local communities and project partners during the project formulation stage to ensure buy-in and relevance and involve local people in decision-making.
8. Some projects found that the knowledge of local people about nature-based tourism and forest management is still limited. (Projects 001, 003, 004, 011)	A project that requires assistance to, and participation of local people should build in a strong training component.
9. Problems with illegal logging and poaching remains an issue that must be considered, along with land-grabbing and development, even in community forests, particularly along the borders between Cambodia and Viet Nam, and Myanmar and China. (Project 001)	Proposals in conflict and high illegal-activity areas must consider these issues as risks and explain how they will be resolved or mitigated.
10. Providing AFoCO training, along with AFoCO Project Manuals and relevant guidelines, is recommended for local project managers. This would assist with implementing responsibilities on the ground. (Project 004)	Project management training should be provided to local project managers, incl. e.g., Selection Guide and Criteria, Agroforestry/Area Development Guide, Database Management System Guide, and Guidelines in Project Proposals for Livelihoods.
11. Lack of electricity in some forest communities makes it impossible to deploy certain equipment such as computers. Generators may have to be included in project costs to enable use and charging of advanced equipment in such communities once sufficient training is provided to at least some individuals to use computing and data storage devices. (Project 004)	Proposals need to recognize logistical difficulties in remote regions and build in plans to overcome these issues.
12. The target stakeholders, in particular where interventions involve advanced technologies, need to be carefully considered. The use of certain technologies (e.g.,GIS and RS) may be most appropriate for government institutions and forestry technicians. Project 004)	Projects need to consider the education status of communities before embarking on highly technically oriented projects.
13. Project activities concerned with alternative livelihoods are more likely to succeed in the long term if they involve a feasibility study, a market study, livelihood trainings, and processing equipment to ensure quality where applicable. (Projects 004, 011)	Proposals need to discuss alternative livelihood projects with communities, assess their feasibility, and develop product marketing strategies.

14. Map with grid indices is an effectively simple tool to gather local information during local consultation. This method also helped create effective participation. (Project 004)	Use high-quality project area gridded maps to enable better quality information from local stakeholders.
15. During the validation interviews and in reports, all projects expressed the value and importance of exchange visits as learning opportunities. (All Projects)	Where warranted, build into proposals sufficient time and funding for exchange visits for project members. Projects intending to impact national policy should consider including policymakers in these exchange visits.

3.3.2 Operations at project sites

3.3.2.1 General operations

Lessons Learned	Best Practices
1. A slow transfer of funds, assignment of personnel, approvals for activities, tendering contracts, and establishing committees was highlighted in most projects as resulting in delays and, in some cases, insufficient time within the planned time horizon to complete projects. Some countries were clearly more problematic than others in this regard. (Projects 002, 003, 004, 009, 010, 011)	i) Revise project timelines to allow an extra initial 6 months for bureaucracies to function. ii) Channel project funds through a third-party agency, brought on as a project partner (e.g.,an NGO) to manage all project finances. iii) Establish an AFoCO project office for each regional project to deal with and track financial issues.
2. Loss of funds as a result of fluctuating exchange rates was raised as a problem by some projects (009, 010) but, on the other hand, Project 011 reported a benefit from the exchange rate. (Projects 009, 010, 011)	Establish US dollar accounts in each country for each project.
3. Projects work best if the project office is close to the project site. (In some cases, project offices remote from worksites resulted in delays in work being done while waiting for decisions to be made.) (Projects 001, 004)	Ensure that the local project manager(s) are physically located close to project sites.
4. Infrastructure development is highly recommended because it is one of the most important factors to ensure the effectiveness of monitoring and surveillance. Infrastructure should be low maintenance to ensure its long-term use. (Projects 002, 003, 010)	Where required, projects should provide proper infrastructure to facilitate project implementation, rather than trying to make do with substandard available assets.
5. Participation in decision-making by local people is important to obtain buy-in for projects. (Projects 001, oo2, 003, 004, 009, 011)	Community meetings must be held, before any activities are planned, to explain the projects, validate the acceptance of planned activities, understand local concerns and needs, and to build trust between communities and participating government institutions.

6. Livelihood funds should be directly downloaded to the projects through their official bank accounts, disbursed only by designated officers, properly recorded by assigned individuals, and reported to committee members during meetings. Projects 002, 004)	Transparency in all money-related transactions is essential to avert misunderstandings.
7. The use of legal documents in projects for every transaction, project delivery, or donation to the project promotes accountability and transparency. (Project 004)	Ensure that all transactions are conducted in compliance with local laws and are recorded in the project ledger or database.
8. Projects should have monitoring and evaluation systems through project-based committees, which use advanced methodologies, such as database management. These systems should be participatory among stakeholders. (Projects 002, 004)	Projects should have a set of scheduled monitoring activities on clear indicators, with regular reporting to stakeholders.
9. Project committees should be inclusive (including women and youth), transparent, and not dominated by a few individuals. (Project 001)	Ensure that project management committees are inclusive.
10. Projects must a priori establish clear criteria for site selection. Similar sites among project components will ensure comparability when this is an objective. (Projects 003, 004, 011)	Site selection criteria must be clear and adhered to during project location selection.
11. Regularly scheduled meetings should be held involving all key stakeholders (including farmers and forest users), to make collective decisions and for signing of approvals and actions. (Project 010)	The decision-making process within a project should be inclusive and transparent.
12. A fair benefits-sharing from PFES programs to local people (to support their concerned activities) should be included, especially where there is planning for ecotourism linked to biodiversity and forest conservation that requires reduced use of forest resources by those communities. (Projects 001, 002, 004, 011)	Projects should develop, jointly with stakeholders, a clear plan for benefits-sharing where these are likely to be required.
13. Training programs need to consider local needs, local capacity, be clear and concise with simple images, avoid busy times in the community, and be effective but as short as possible. (Project 001, 002, 004)	Carefully design training programs to meet the needs and level of advancement of the audiences.
14. Highlighting the important roles of local communities in forest restoration, and the benefits they will receive from participating, will help to gain support and participation from the local communities and authorities. (Projects 003, 009, 010, 011)	Ensure that stakeholders understand direct and indirect benefits from their contribution to forest restoration.

15. Local governments need to provide guarantees regarding the processing and marketing of non-timber forest products from forest communities, including involving village-owned business agencies, cooperatives, trade and community services. (Projects 002, 004)	Projects have a completed marketing feasibility analysis prior to embarking on an alternative livelihood project.
16. Project technical working groups should be composed of managers and local implementers, so that decision making on concerns related to the project is informed, orderly, and systematic. (Project 004)	Project subject-area technical working groups (e.g.,biodiversity, forest silviculture, livelihoods, etc.) should be established.
17. Provision of equipment to the CF and training mostly of the younger people on database management strengthens people's ownership of data and pride in a project. The benefits of such databases need to be clearly communicated and understood. (Projects 002, 004)	Ensure that some local people are trained for data entry and understand benefits of database management.
18. GIS and RS generated maps are key in biophysical orientation, planning, database management, monitoring and updating, and evaluating area developments. Providing and using GIS maps enables easy participation by local groups. Capacity-building on how to read and use maps may be necessary at the community level. (Projects 002, 004)	Provide high-quality, hard-copy maps for local communities to work with.
19. A pre-defined exit strategy is needed to ensure that achievement of the objectives is not interrupted, and the activities are continued. Projects must find ways to sustain the enthusiasm / momentum of the people in implementing post-project activities after the current funding is completed. (Projects 001, 002, 004)	Proposals must have a pre-defined exit strategy that will enhance project sustainability.
20. Reluctance of local farmers to apply "green" practices requires subsidy as well as training and, where possible, support for alternative marketing opportunities or involvement in ecotourism (guided tours, for example). Importantly, reasons for negative attitudes towards certain practices need to be analyzed beforehand to be able to react to those specifically. (Projects 009, 011)	Training and demonstration areas, as well as subsidies, are often required to encourage new techniques to be implemented by local people.
21. Where alternative livelihood activities are foreseen, an inclusive process is imperative. Where applicable, benefit-sharing echanisms need to be discussed and agreed on within respective communities at the beginning of the project. (Projects 002, 003, 004)	For alternative livelihoods projects, local stakeholders must be involved in all aspects, from selecting the business to profit-sharing.
22. Local government organizations as partners can improve project outcomes. (Projects 002, 004)	Involve local government officials in project meetings.

3.3.2.2 Forestry and silvicultural considerations

Lessons Learned	Best Practices
1. Careful species selection is required to avoid creating high-value feeding areas for wildlife or domestic species, and measures must be put in place to reduce possible damage. (Projects 004, 010, 011)	Projects must be aware of possible losses to planted seedlings and have a mitigation plan in place.
2. Prior to selecting species for planting, proponents need to ensure that sufficient autecological understanding of the species is available to enable a successful outcome. Or, projects should \ indicate that a research component is first required to better understand a species' ecology prior to attempting to restore it in a forest or plantation. (Projects 002, 003, 010, 011)	Species selection for planting should meet the criterion that their autecology is sufficiently well- known to ensure success.
3. The selection of the types of plants to use in a community-based participatory forest management program should consider the suitability of the species with respect to the local social, cultural, and/or economic values as first criteria, and then select the species or varieties that are the most suitable ecologically, not vice versa. (Projects 002, 003, 004, 009)	Planting tree species that are already in the project area, rather than non-local species, will lead to improved success owing to local familiarity with the plants.
4. Establishment of seed sources in community forests can provide additional sources of income for local communities. Marketing channels for seeds should be considered and improved as part of the project. Projects 003, 009)	For reforestation projects, working with or establishing local seed suppliers, nurseries, and local businesses will enhance outcomes.
5. High-density planting of suitable trees can be an option for \ controlling invasive Imperata grass on sites where this species is a problem. (Project 003)	Where grasses might be expected to invade a plantation, use a higher-than-normal planting density for seedlings.
6. Restoration using mixed planting was effective in rehabilitating degraded sites since it increases the chances that species in the group will be able to survive a particular site condition. (Project 002, 003)	Avoid monoculture plantations.
7. Direct seeding provided good results in certain conditions as a method for forest restoration. (Project 003)	Wherever appropriate, consider direct seeding as best practice.
8. There is a need for research into tree domestication to provide species and guidance appropriate for smallholders, especially with respect to newly developed forest management systems and under climate change and other socio-economic challenges. (Project 002)	Development and understanding of what species are most useful to smallholders.

9. In peat forest restoration, water level management, the selection of local tree species, and paludiculture are very important, along with using high-quality seedlings, proper site preparation, and weed control. Paludiculture techniques are a good option for peatland restoration and management other than agroforestry, if it is well designed and developed. (Project 011)	Ensure that there is good background understanding of the local forest type ecology before embarking on a forest restoration project.
10. Fire prevention and control are an important aspect of the success of assisted natural regeneration projects. Awareness-raising and capacity-building are important in this regard. (Project 003, 004, 011)	Have a mitigation plan in place for damage and losses to planted areas.
11. Using high-quality seeds from carefully selected parent trees that are well-growing assures successful forest development and improved quality of forest stands. (Projects 002, 003)	For projects where nurseries of direct seeding are involved, it is essential to obtain high-quality seeds to achieve the highest yields.
12. There is limited documentation of existing seed sources and many nursery managers are collecting seeds from unreliable mother tree/seed sources. (Project 003)	Recognize the need for a regional supply of high- quality seeds rather than relying on uncertain quality providers.
13. Banana is an effective nursing plant that can provide shade, soil moisture, and a cool atmosphere for planted seedlings. (Project 010)	Where applicable, consider the use of rapidly growing species that can provide shade, arrest soil erosion, and protect soil moisture in planted areas. Other techniques to maintain moisture include plastic or cloth shading, the use of mulches, and direct watering.
14. Some projects stated that they could have benefitted from adding a research component to the project to improve long-term results. (Projects 003, 010, 011)	Build in a research component, where applicable, particularly in countries where governments have a research department or where there may be an interested university.

3.3.2.3 Alternative livelihoods

Lessons Learned	Best Practices
1. For alternative livelihood programs, there will be differences among regions and communities, even at a national level, as to what types of activities will be suitable. 9Project 001, 002, 011)	Pre-proposal consultation is required to ascertain the best interventions to develop.
2. Projects operated best when members of enterprise groups, including women, were consulted in developing the project budget at the development stage, including the procurement of various necessary equipment. (Projects 002, 003)	Operate alternative livelihoods projects as cooperative ventures with local representation at all stages.

3. Using rigorous selection and decision-making for enterprises in which to invest worked best, often applied through a process of identifying/matching suitable and feasible enterprises by long-listing and then by short-listing of options. (Project 002)	Ensure that the expertise required to operate an alternative livelihood either exists or can be trained before embarking on such an enterprise. The criteria for livelihood or enterprise are that acommunity must have: a) the skills and interest required to run an enterprise exist; b) members with interest in making the potential products; c) the available (primary or secondary) resources in the locality; and d) an available market for the products before the enterprise has begun.
4. In projects where alternative livelihoods are designed to produce highly perishable crops, it is advisable also to combine them with non-perishable products, or to convert products into non-perishables with added value. The effects of climate change and climate variability on crop harvest and storage should be considered. (Projects 004, 010)	Diversify alternative livelihood projects, especially where seasonal outcomes are expected.
5. Make community forest and enterprise decisions through a formal process that also includes stakeholders, as well as the general assembly and formal board. (Project 002)	All CF decisions should be fully transparent and inclusive.
7. Livelihood projects can be promoters of green or environmentally friendly products. For example, products that come from waste or litter, such as banana stalks and leaves converted to materials for growing mushrooms, or coconut husks made into coco coir slippers, and tiger grass used for soft brooms. (Project 004)	Consider specifically environmentally friendly products for livelihood development activities.
8. Support the use of social media to promote livelihood products more widely, possibly even internationally. (Projects 003, 004)	Develop a social media footprint for all livelihood projects together with communities / producers.
9. For livelihood projects, the use of a system for tracking progress and continuously evaluating product development by the community or enterprise will help secure sustainability of the project. (Project 002)	Product development must be monitored and evaluated continuously.
10. Ensure that ecotourism projects consider clientele, e.g., different origins, ages, and genders, because of their varying abilities, and have an associated marketing strategy for each group. (Project 001)	In developing tourism projects, decide on the clientele before developing the project and develop according to the abilities of that clientele.
11. Training courses on local business opportunities and incentive schemes, and market development provided good results for local communities. (Project 011)	Capacity building through training courses, incentives, and market planning are essential components of successful livelihood projects.

3.4 Multilateral (multi-country) vs. bilateral projects

During the validation interviews, several of the projects (e.g., 001, 010, 011) suggested that perhaps a bilateral approach would be better than a multi-lateral because of difficulties in project management. Others, especially those where just two countries were involved (e.g., 003, 009), felt that the multilateral approach had worked very well. Most often, in two country projects, previous relationships had existed between the forest agencies, which facilitated cooperation. Cases where project managers felt that a multilateral approach was difficult were primarily in situations where there were many countries (i.e., more than three) involved, and so the regional coordination and financial transfers took considerable effort. In assessing the success of these multilateral projects, except for the challenge of the regional manager, it appeared that the level of project complexity may also have influenced outcomes. For example, Project 001, with its complex collection of largely unrelated projects with different objectives under a single regional project name, was less successful as compared to Project 002, for example. The latter project had a clear main objective to improve the capacity of several countries to report to the global forest resources assessment. As a result, the project was highly successful. It appears that, if AFoCO can solve the issue of regional funding transfers and reduce the workload at the regional level and establish a clear uniform set of objectives, then focused, multilateral, regional projects can certainly succeed.

4. Overall program evaluation

We examined the overall program comprised of the seven projects using two sets of criteria which have some overlap in their measures (Figure 1); standard evaluation methodology (noted as 1 in the following section headings) and the SII evaluation methods (noted as 2 in the following section headings). Program impacts (which summarize the project outputs) are addressed with respect to six impact factors: policy, forest management, biodiversity, social, innovation, and financial efficiency and return. These impacts refer to the program results in the region. For many projects, especially the ongoing Project 010, it is too early to assess possible long-term impacts or sustainability. Further ex-post evaluation will be required to determine such outcomes. Nevertheless, there were clear short-term impacts from all of the completed projects (many concerning possible policy changes), as well as results that advanced forest management, including forest restoration.

4.1 Relevance (1)

The entire suite of projects was highly relevant to both the global and regional forest agendas in terms of addressing some of the major contemporary issues in forest management, especially those specifically affecting Southeast Asia. These prominent issues include reforestation and restoration of degraded or deforested areas, recovering endangered forest types, improving the quality of life for forest communities through improved livelihoods, dealing with endangered species, adapting to climate change, improving sustainable forest management, improving forest data, and advancing forest managers' use of technology. Focusing on relevant issues resulted in the high quality of assistance provided. Further, in many cases, the projects assisted countries in meeting their own forest objectives by advancing their technological capacity, understanding of reforestation methods, and improving forest conservation by governments and communities. A particularly useful output from several of the projects was the training manuals and videos that can be used across the region for complementary programs, within governments and at local communities (e.g., from Projects 002 and 011).

4.1.1 Relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs were adopted by UN member states in 2015 as a part of the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" to improve global approaches to sustainable development. The projects together contributed to six of the SDGs (Fig. 3). By definition, all of the projects contributed to SDG 15, with particular emphasis on Targets 15.1, 15.2, 15.5, and 15.9, and most contributed to 12.2, all dealing with forest ecosystems. Due to the nature of an approach to include two or more countries in the project design and implementation, and the focus of several projects on CF, all projects contributing to SDG 10 reduced inequality within and among countries. Many of the projects (6 of 7) also worked to reduce poverty (Target 1.1) by developing alternative livelihoods or working towards longer-term forest improvements. Several projects also contributed to climate change mitigation (SDGs 13 and 15) through avoided deforestation (001), better forest management (001, 003, 004, 009, 011), training (002, 011), and forest restoration (003, 009, 010), or they will contribute in the future as a result of reforestation demonstration (003, 009, 011). Gender equality appeared to have been a consideration in each of the livelihood projects (SDG 5).

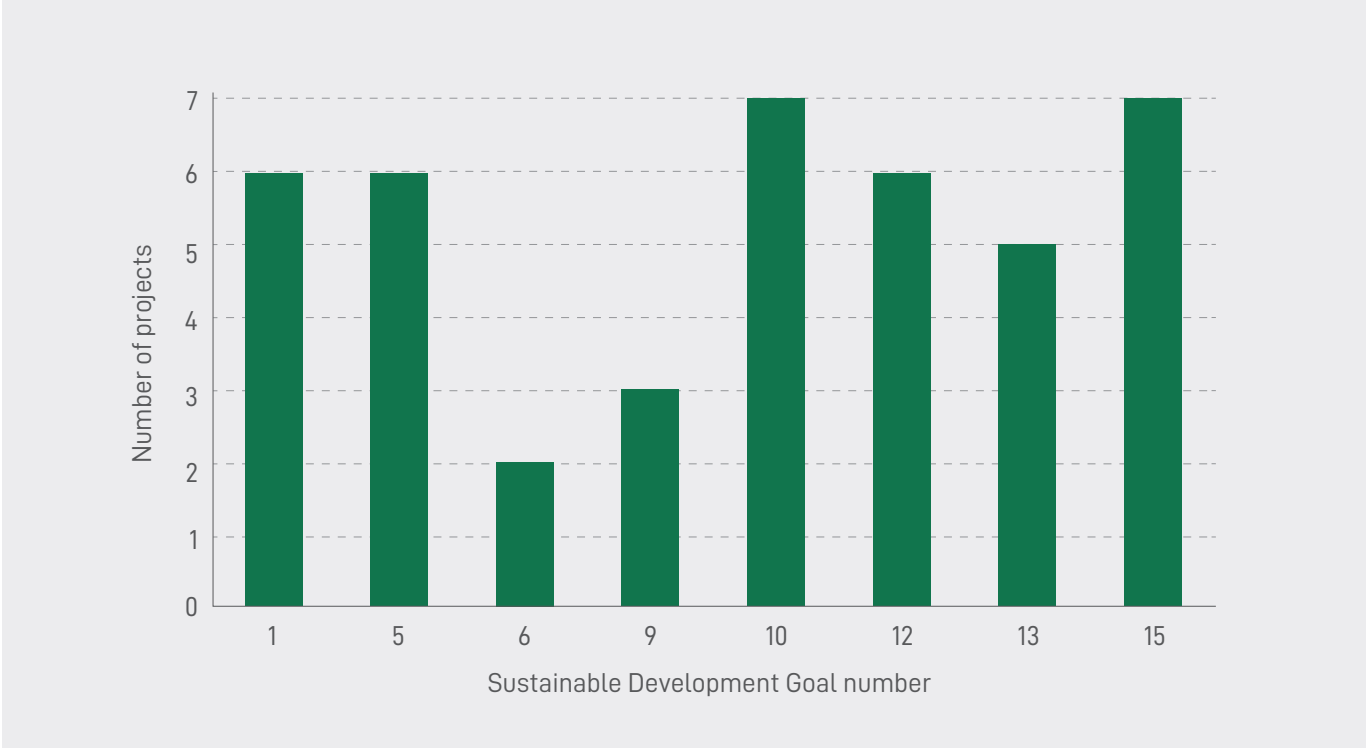

Figure 3. Number of AFoCO projects addressing the UN SDGs

4.1.2 Relevance to the Global Forest Goals (GFGs)

The GFGs were established under the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030, with six goals and 26 targets, most of which mirror the SDGs. As was the case for the GFGs, the seven projects contributed to achieving some of the Global Forest Goals (Figure 4). The closest links across projects were to GFG 1 (Reduce forest loss, 6 of the 7 projects) GFG 2 (enhance benefits from forests, all projects with livelihood components), GFG 6 (increase area under SFM, all projects), and GFG 4 and 6 (increasing resources, technical and scientific support for SFM, all projects). The majority of the projects worked to reverse the loss of forest cover, enhance forest-based economic, social, and environmental benefits from forests for communities, and provide a large amount of infrastructure, technical equipment, and training on advanced technologies (Figure 4).

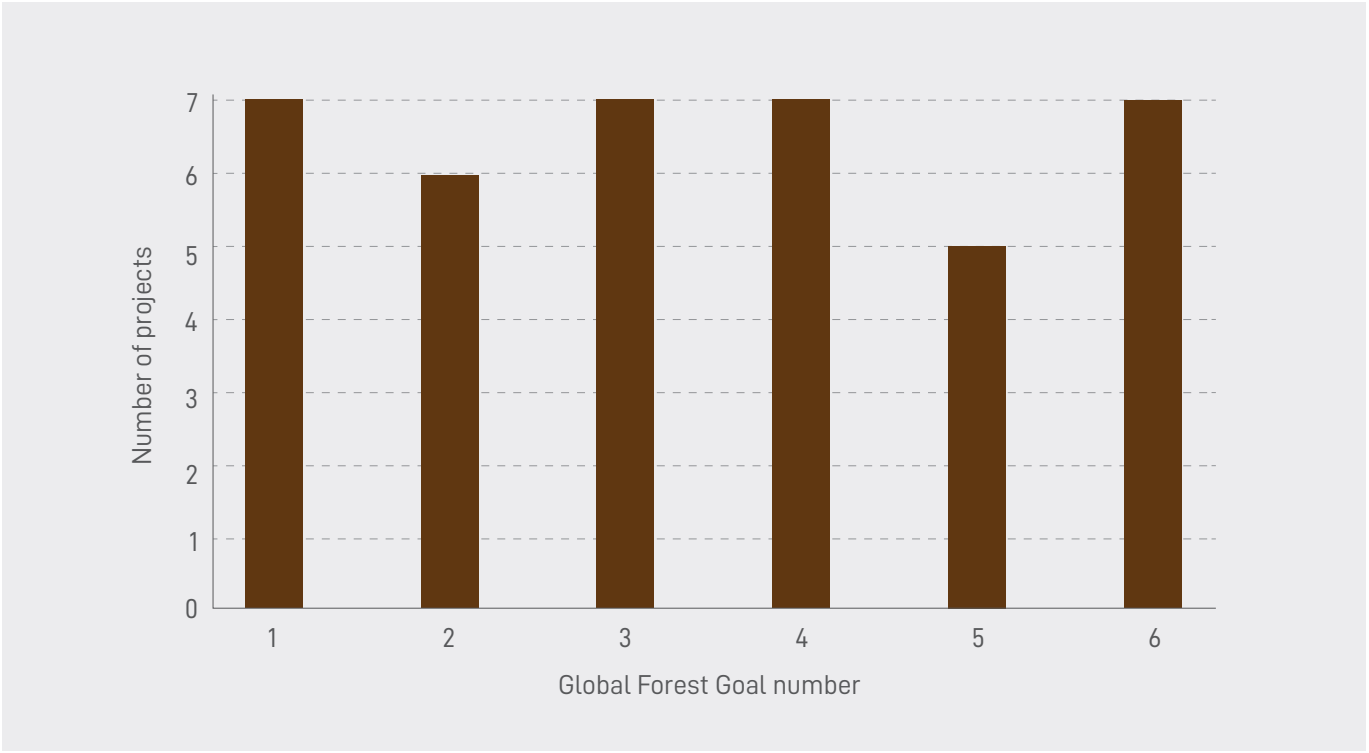

Figure 4. Number of AFoCO projects addressing the UN Global Forest Goals

4.2 Effectiveness (1)

The AFoCO program was highly effective based on the completed outputs, including technical capacity building, forest restoration, training manuals and community capacity building, some technical reporting, planting methodologies achieved, the establishment of demonstration areas, and implementation of alternative livelihood projects. Most of the projects were highly efficient based on limited funding with, in most cases, substantial achievement relative to the funding available. The key reasons for this success were: careful project selection, working with willing and dedicated partners, the ability of countries to work together, and sound project design in most cases.

Each local project (i.e., national-level) was required to submit a detailed annual progress report, including a complete accounting for the year's funding. All projects complied with this obligatory monitoring component that enabled the regional project managers to indicate where problems had occurred, suggest corrective actions, and indicate if any changes, such as re-allocating funds, would be required. The flexibility to re-allocate funds as needed assisted the level of effectiveness achieved by the projects. This was an important aspect of project management.

For some projects, formal monitoring was conducted (projects 003, 009, 010), and ex-post evaluations were done for two of the projects (003, 011). More monitoring would improve efficiency and effectiveness; however, monitoring would be most effective if clear numerical targets were pre-established within a logical framework. Some of these projects had not specified the size of the area on which their activities were applied. For example, only some projects reported how many hectares of forest were planted or the number of trees planted, the area on which there is now improved management, or the number of square kilometers that were surveyed for biodiversity. The lack of clear numerical targets made assessment difficult in these cases. On the other hand, even without a logframe, a good example of target-setting was completed for Project 003 in Cambodia and Viet Nam that illustrated activities with indicators of success.

All the projects involved national or international workshops and project staff visits to exchange ideas and discuss forest issues pertaining to projects. These visits between and among countries were cited repeatedly by report authors, and during the validation interviews, as being highly beneficial to the forest staff and stakeholders involved. Without opportunities to gather, such as those afforded under this program, little would happen in terms of idea- and knowledge-sharing among countries with similar forests and management problems. Such opportunities increased the knowledge of participants, enabled improved transboundary cooperation, created valuable contacts between countries, and facilitated educational opportunities that would otherwise never have happened. These factors resulted in increased project effectiveness through better trained and educated government staff and local stakeholders. In many ways, these visits contributed to peace and better understanding in the region as well.

4.3 Efficiency (1- Efficiency, and 2 - Financial)

Given the funding levels with which these projects worked and the high degree of success in completing projects, the impacts that they all achieved were excellent and hence highly efficient. Overall, the projects were inexpensive, aside from the capital expenditure for equipment, and yet produced some exceptional results. In particular, the results from this program indicated that local communities are willing to work, even with limited funding, to improve their livelihoods, build capacity, and sustain biodiversity when possible. The single area flagged as overly expensive was the high cost of seedlings on Project 010 in Thailand and Malaysia at market cost, although this was apparently offset by the expected high survivorship of the older, more expensive seedlings.

It appeared that efficiency might be improved with better project control by the regional project lead, and reduced bureaucracy required to establish formal agreements and transfer funds. These issues were raised in most of the projects, particularly so in the case of Thailand, which led or co-led three projects. Given that governments are generally highly bureaucratic, the most likely possible solutions may be to channel funds through an NGO, or to allow a sufficient (e.g., 6-month) lead time prior to scheduling on-ground activities to enable the bureaucracies to organize. Similarly, efficiency would likely improve with more formal oversight and management by AFoCO itself on a more regular, semi-regular, or ad hoc basis.

The particular financial aspect of concern under SII evaluation is the capacity of a project to deliver an expected financial return to the project beneficiary. Under this criterion, a project that addresses alternative livelihoods would be expected to be self-sustaining, with the realization of increased cash flows to a forest community. Given that the projects are recent, the determination of the ability of communities to develop sustained financial returns is uncertain and requires longer-term evaluation. Nevertheless, the approach taken under several projects (001, 002, 004, 009, 011) by developing businesses in consultation with the affected communities suggests a strong possibility of long-term financial returns. Long-term monitoring is required over time, however, to assess sustainability (see 4.4 below).

4.4 Sustainability (Prospects for long-term impacts) (1)

In their final reports, all projects claimed to be more or less sustainable, but sustainability can usually only be determined over a sufficient period of time. This is particularly the case for projects with a local livelihood component (see above) and for reforestation where tree survival to maturity is crucial. For livelihood projects, establishing a new value chain has been seen to pose several challenges, as well as time limitations for projects that are often not sufficient to ensure the long-term success of alternative livelihood support. On the other hand, where detailed studies (e.g., Project 002) were carried out ahead of training, it can be assumed that new livelihoods may very well be sustainable. Very often in donor-run projects, the lack of an exit strategy is an issue and follow-up monitoring is never completed, so the results of projects can be lost over time. Seldom do donors return to project areas to assess whether or not the expected long-term impacts have come to pass. Nevertheless, for some of these AFoCO projects, there will clearly be lasting impacts, particularly in cases where demonstration plots have become national demonstration areas (Projects 003 and 011), where infrastructure and equipment were provided along with training (Projects 001, 002, 003, 004), where reforestation was successful, and where effective capacity building was accomplished within communities.

A particularly good example was from Brunei Darussalam where, as a result of AFoCO Project 002, there is now a new division in the forest department that deals with forest inventory and remote sensing. All of these projects are likely to have at least some sustained results because they addressed urgent and high-priority forest management issues, including landscape management, reforestation, improved technological capacity, provided infrastructure, and alternative livelihoods. Long-term effects can also be achieved by addressing key policy questions, as was done in Projects 001, 009, and 011.

Indonesia noted that restoration activities with peatland agroforestry practices could generate income for local communities, especially if the government provides innovative financial mechanisms and seed money to help the farmers. By developing good markets for their products, the financial returns would increase sustainability. For example, the peat restoration project successfully transformed community engagement with the establishment of a Peatland Agroforestry Farmers Group at Kelampangan village. During the project, some local people earned additional income from the project activities, such as through plantation maintenance. After the project, agroforestry practices were improved by using no fire in land preparation and with better agriculture product marketing. Overall, the development of training manuals and videos will assist in sustainability, as these training products remain relevant for future training activities and could be used elsewhere in the ASEAN region.

Enhancing the sustainability of projects can be accomplished, in part, through follow-up activities. In the future, it would be most effective for AFoCO to develop an ex-post monitoring program for most, if not all, projects. This is particularly important where alternative livelihood projects were implemented to ensure that the assistance provided has been successful; and if not, to assess whether or not more assistance (training, funding, equipment, etc.) may be warranted, thus making the original funding consequential and thereby enhancing project sustainability.

4.5 Social impacts (2)

Social Impact Investment (SII) criteria differ from standard evaluation criteria in that they assess the intent of the project to specifically improve social outcomes and/or create social change on the one hand, and to provide actual measurable outcomes in terms of financial benefits to the community or country on the other hand.

In terms of intent, five of the seven projects in this AFoCO program (001, 002, 004, 009, 011) included social aspects in their objectives, and only Project 010 had no social component. Project 002 aimed for actual social change by not only enhancing community involvement in forest-related activities, but also by strengthening community livelihoods and resilience in the long term. Longer-term social impacts, including potential social change, were also anticipated for Project 004, which intended to improve tenure security for community forestry user groups. Other projects that included social objectives (001, 009, 011) referred to capacity-building activities and knowledge exchanges with limited foreseeable long-term character that would induce social change. Nonetheless, building knowledge, technical skills, and communication skills (through new partnerships and exchanges) can be seen as a major step towards social change.

Intent and actual impact are not always congruent. Some projects did not have strong social objectives but nonetheless achieved very good social outcomes (e.g., 003, 009). On the other hand, the intent to induce social change did not entirely transform into reality in Project 004, as implementing advanced technologies proved to be a considerable challenge for communities in remote areas. Project 002 had strong social objectives and achieved a substantive impact, particularly in terms of alternative livelihoods.

Defining measurable impacts at the social level is the most challenging aspect of this evaluation criterion, especially for short-term projects of two years (such as Project 001). A longer project period generally allows for increased impacts of a program. Strong and measurable social impacts were achieved specifically regarding the number of trainings related to forest management and/or alternative livelihoods for most projects (001, 002, 004, 009, 011). Although neither the total number of training sessions nor the number of attendees could always be found in the reports, this is a highly measurable and valuable indicator of impact and success.

4.6 Innovation (2)

Innovation is one of the key aspects of social impact investing. While no individual project was highly innovative in terms of doing something entirely new, the innovations in this AFoCO program came from the careful selection of projects that addressed critical forest issues in regions not previously addressed, and especially through the application of advanced technologies (Projects 002, 011). In particular, the regional approach to project selection is an innovative and interesting aspect that is not usually seen among donor agencies. Further, having individuals in one country responsible for overall multi-country projects has not been attempted previously. The approach worked well in some cases (e.g., 002) and less so in others (e.g., 010); regardless, lessons were learned that could be applied to improve this approach in the future.

Certainly, the attempts to bring GIS mapping and remote sensing capacity to CFs were innovative (Projects 002, 011), and this work will require further training to build greater capacity and to maintain relevance. Improving the capacity of developing countries (governments, communities, foresters, technicians) in the use of advanced technologies was a theme in three of the projects (002, 004, 011), and this is an area where AFoCO excels. As a result, AFoCO was able to contribute substantively to the ASEAN region. As a result of these projects, the use of technology in forest management-

including in community forests--has advanced considerably, thereby raising the quality of information available for Asian forests generally and contributing better information to global forest processes, such as the Global Forest Resources Assessment.

While not entirely innovative, the development of alternative livelihood projects through bottom-up consultation with communities is a technique that is not well-developed as yet among donor projects. Part of the overall strategy in individual project development has been the direct involvement of local communities in proposal development, the selection of tree species, and discussions about business development.

4.7 Data (2)

There are several aspects with respect to data: methods to collect data, storage of data in accessible formats, data entry and management, data analysis, and technical reporting. This is an area in which AFoCO clearly excels with excellent programs, especially involving remote sensing, GIS applications, and data management. As a result of Projects 002, 004, and 011, the capacity of several countries for data collection, management, and reporting was substantially enhanced. However, what was uncertain from several of the other projects was how the data were stored, managed, and maintained for use in other future projects or nationally.

For example, for project 001, only technical reports from Myanmar were seen, although surveys were apparently also conducted in the other countries. Similarly, few data were available under project 011 (except for the report from the Philippines), so it is uncertain if there was a need for improved data management and analysis. Other projects, such as 010 and in Myanmar under Project 001, provided high-quality data with well-analyzed information in reports, indicating considerable attention to data management. The lack of technical reporting and information about data storage suggests a need for more formal requirements for technical reports, which include a description of where data are stored and an analysis of results. During validation, it was learned that data from Project 004 are maintained and under national-level control.

4.8 Transparency and accountability (2)

All projects provided comprehensive annual reports on how the project was being managed locally, how the funding was spent, and issues related to project management. Hence, this SII criterion was well-observed both in terms of involvement of local people in decision making with respect to project development (where warranted), and reporting back to AFoCO as the funding agency. However, there were some comments from projects concerning the need for better training of regional project managers in terms of the ability to transfer funds and expectations with respect to monitoring and reporting (see Section 3.3 "Lessons Learned").

4.9 Program Impacts (1 and 2)

Both sets of evaluation criteria (standard review and SII) lead to conclusions about the impacts of a program (Figure 1) related to the expected outcomes from a series of projects that form the program. Here we address the impacts of this AFoCO Program, based on the seven projects, in terms of the regional impacts on key areas of forest management and governance.

4.9.1 Policy impacts (2)

Most projects were found to have some limited policy impact, especially where national demonstration areas were established and adopted by governments as training centers (Projects 001, 011), and Project 010 was apparently influential in at least one country's new law (Thailand). Guidelines developed under Project 009 in Viet Nam have resulted in national-level technical guidelines for NTFPs. Projects were generally aligned with government policies and potentially have been influential in the application of those policies. Policy impacts are often difficult to determine because any impact often occurs gradually and in concert with results from other local or regional programs and projects, as well as ongoing national objectives. What is certain about these seven projects, and the program overall, is that all were instructive and informative to policymakers with respect to the forest issues on which the projects were focused. Further, all projects aligned well with either existing national policies or impending or recent laws for reforestation and environmental/climate change regulation. For example, the reforestation plots in Indonesia peatlands forests and humid tropical forests in the Philippines (Project 011) will serve as national demonstration areas, indicating clear impact at the national policy level for forest restoration programs.

Community forestry (CF) has become a common theme in forest management across Southeast Asia and the Pacifica over the past decade. Nevertheless, many problems remain with respect to its implementation, including lack of capacity (both within government and in the communities), uncertain land tenure, lack of growing stock, community over-reliance on forest goods and services, and the need to develop alternative livelihoods to reduce pressures on forests. The clear focus of several of the AFoCO projects (002, 003, 004), along with other nationally based projects, e.g., through ITTO or funded through various UN agencies, is resulting in both an accumulation of knowledge within communities and a strong understanding in governments that CFs are a valid mechanism for sustainable forest management. In addition, under Project 004, a Regional CFM Policy Framework was developed that may be adopted by ASEAN, AFoCO itself, and regional governments as guidance for CF planning in the region. Hence, AFoCO, in concert with other agencies, is strongly influencing government policies for making CFs a more common tool for forest management[3].

Other areas where there will be long-term policy impact from these projects include forest landscape restoration (Project 011), which is a relatively new concept among government agencies, and also for national forest inventory, which is lacking in most of the countries in the region (e.g., Myanmar, Cambodia). While countries have begun to appreciate the need for forest restoration, the idea that entire landscapes need planning and restoring requires capacity-building, training, and demonstration. Project 011, for example, has raised the awareness of governments of the concept of landscape

[3]At a regional level within ASEAN, the recently conducted evaluation of the ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC), implemented between 2009 and 2021, can give valuable inputs for assessing policy impacts on CF/Social Forestry.

restoration (FLR) and will result in impact at the policy level, in part because FLR has also become a global theme, especially under the climate change agenda, including e.g., REDD+ financing. Similarly, the need for scientific monitoring of forests, including national forest inventories, as forests continue to decline, is highly instructive to policymakers in terms of providing neutral data highlighting the need to restore large areas of forest landscapes in order to work towards sustainability.

Finally, for national climate change policy, two projects (002 and 010) were clearly influential with respect to the coming importance of REDD+ not only to sustain forests, but as a mechanism to mitigate climate change. Demonstration of successfully recovering endangered tree species as a part of REDD+ linked forest restoration mechanism will enable governments to meet both CBD and UNFCCC commitments. In this latter regard, it is likely that more research is needed into species' ecologies to understand reforestation mechanisms better. Here, AFoCO's projects have shown some promising results, such as in Project 010, which aims to recover certain endangered tree species.

4.9.2 Forest management impacts

The main goal of the AFoCO program is to improve forest management and forest conditions in Southeast Asia, thereby contributing to a global increase in forest area. AFoCO has recognized that deforestation and forest degradation are the two key problems related to current unsustainable forest management in Asia. To improve the situation, the program has focused on the following key areas: technological improvement, improved forest management, alternative livelihoods, and forest restoration. Areas of impact for forest management among the seven included: inventory, reporting, community forestry, restoration, and seed and seedling production. The projects elevated capacity within the countries in all these areas through a combination of demonstration, training, provision of infrastructure, development of alternative livelihoods, and policy influence.

An important program component has been the provision of equipment (computers, software, GPS, GIS) and training to improve forest monitoring, reporting, mapping and planning, and the acquisition of imagery to assist the process. Several project countries have, as a result, established full-time divisions within their forest department to conduct forest analyses using GIS and remote sensing (e.g., Cambodia, Philippines, Brunei Darussalam), with a view towards forest landscape planning (e.g., UNDP is now leading a project to plan landscapes of northern Cambodia). The impact of this program from Project 002 has been more accurate forest reporting to global processes (including for the FAO Forest Resources Assessment), higher-quality forest mapping, and the launching of efforts to conduct or improve national forest inventories.

Efforts towards reforestation in Southeast Asia are hampered by the limited availability of suitable seed and seedling stock. This AFoCO program specifically dealt directly with this issue by establishing nurseries and tissue culture laboratories, and by improving the local capacity for seed harvesting in several countries (Projects 003, 009, 010). This work will have a long-lasting and sustainable impact, not only in terms of forest restoration but also for local incomes through the seed producers and nurseries. Closely-related projects dealt with restoring certain heavily-harvested forest types and the recovery planting of some endangered tree species (Projects 009, 010). The impact of these projects is through, first,

improved capacity and understanding of planting techniques and tree survival issues and, second, the establishment of what have become national demonstration areas. The result is a high level of national influence on forest regeneration programs. Linking national demonstration areas into a wider regional network and using them as regional training centers could be an interesting follow-up activity of this important work.

Local communities in poor areas depend highly on forests for multiple uses, including revenue, firewood, food, and medicinal plants. Along with commercial harvesting, the added community pressure has a long-term and continuous degrading effect on forests. Most projects (six of the seven) had activities that focused on alternative livelihoods and increasing the capacity of local communities to manage their forests better. These types of activities are essential in order to reduce forest degradation over the long term while at the same time improving the living standards in local communities. The long-term success of these projects can only be ascertained by monitoring progress over time, and possibly through additional training and funding if required.

4.9.3 Biodiversity impacts

Only one project (010) had an overall biodiversity theme as a focus, but all projects that work towards reducing human impacts in forests, restoring forests, or that specifically deal with endangered species can contribute directly or indirectly to biodiversity and environmental conservation. For example, improving livelihoods can reduce reliance on bushmeat hunting and indirectly conserve certain species. Similarly, projects that foster forest restoration will also provide habitats for wildlife. Biodiversity conservation, however, is an area where greater impact could be achieved by explicitly linking biodiversity objectives to forest management objectives within projects. Rarely among these projects were associated biodiversity objectives considered, despite the well-known links between biodiversity and forest processes, including regeneration. A wealth of knowledge is now available on the importance of biodiversity to forest functions and the provision of forest ecosystem services[4] that can be drawn upon to improve project outputs. Applying this knowledge will not only enhance the possible outcomes of future projects, both for biodiversity and tree restoration, but also for the production of goods and services from the forest. The concept of recognizing endangered trees species and developing planting techniques for these species under Project 010 was especially relevant (and innovative) owing to so few programs recognizing the need to recover highly valuable tree species that have long been in decline. These latter concepts could readily be applied across Southeast Asia in the future. The only other regional/global project assisting with the recovery of endangered trees is the CITES-ITTO Endangered Tree Species Program (https://cites-tsp.org/). Therefore any project

[4]Brockerhoff, E.G., L. Barbaro, B. Castagneyrol, D.I. Forrester, B. Gardiner, J.R. Gonza´lez-Olabarria, P. O'B. Lyver, N. Meurisse, A. Oxbrough, H. Taki, I.D. Thompson, F. van der Plas, and H. Jactel. 2017. Forest biodiversity, ecosystem functioning and the provision of ecosystem services. Biodiversity and Conservation 26: 3005–3035.

Thompson, I.D., K. Okabe, E. Brokerhoff, J. Parrotta, H. Jactel, D. Forrester, and H. Taki. 2014. Biodiversity and ecosystem services: lessons from nature to improve management of planted forests. Biodiversity and Conservation 23: 2613-2635. DOI 10.1007/s10531-014-0736-0

Watson, J.E.M., T. Evans, O. Venter, B. Williams, A. Tulloch, C, Stewart, I. Thompson, J.C. Ray, K. Murray, A. Salazar, C. McAlpine, P. Potapov, J. Walston, J.G. Robinson, M. Painter, D. Wilkie, C. Filardi, W.F. Laurance, R.A. Houghton, S. Maxwell, H. Grantham, C. Samper, S. Wang, L. Laestadius, R.K. Runting, G.A. Silva-Chávez, J. Ervin and D. Lindenmayer. 2018. The exceptional value of intact forest ecosystems. Nature Ecology & Evolution Vol. 2: 599–610. doi:10.1038/s41559-018-0490-x

working in this area is important to the countries and global biodiversity concerns.

4.9.4 Social impacts (2)

With one exception (Project 010), all projects included a livelihoods component or capacity-building activities for local communities. Such activities can enhance capacities at the individual or community level. Several projects (Projects 001, 002, 003, 004, 011) had a particular focus on supporting existing community forestry user groups through demarcation, infrastructure support, nursery establishment, updating management plans, value chain development, ecotourism, and capacity-building on monitoring aspects. This type of support strengthens the effectiveness of collaborative forest management and improves communications within and between communities. In terms of capacity-building, long-term impacts remain to be seen. For alternative livelihood support activities, some seem to have been well-accepted by communities (e.g., Projects 002, 003), while others would require follow-up projects to develop functioning alternatives to forest-based livelihoods (Projects 004, 009). Supporting communities in using advanced technologies (Project 004), on the other hand, had a somewhat limited impact due to low technical capacity, lack of internet access, and other challenges faced by remote stakeholders. However, these projects were most effective within the governments.

A remaining challenge in many countries where AFoCO is working is the lack of trust between communities and governments. Trust-building exercises (e.g., in Project 009) have had a positive impact on these relationships and a mutual understanding between different stakeholders.

It is important to note that besides communities, project beneficiaries often consist of government staff of different levels, including forestry technicians, working within the communities or for governments. Government staff benefit both personally and institutionally from capacity-building, technology support, and exchanges and study tours, which broaden horizons, foster mutual learning, and open up opportunities to establish new partnerships. As such, social impacts in the evaluated projects are often achieved through transboundary cooperation and knowledge-sharing. Finally, enhanced capacities and understanding of different realities by forestry technicians and lower-level government staff will eventually also trickle down to have positive impacts on communities.

4.9.5 Financial impacts and the possibility of financial return (2)

The actual financial impacts of the projects are mainly expected from alternative livelihood training at the level of communities. While six of the seven projects included a livelihood component, two explicitly mention improved and resilient livelihoods as one of their main objectives (Projects 002, 004). The strongest financial impact for local communities is expected from Project 002, which successfully carried out livelihood studies and subsequent training in the Philippines, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Since alternative livelihood training programs in this project were tailor-made to the case study sites and based on a product and market analysis, communities will likely continue these practices and obtain financial returns even after the end of the project.

For product-based livelihoods, sustainable incomes can only be expected where the entire value chain is considered, including processing and marketing. One example (Project 002) indicated that, even with good results for the production and processing of bamboo, the financial impact remains small if the marketing opportunities are limited (e.g., due to transport difficulties or low customer demand). In another case (Project 003), communities established further online marketing channels (Facebook) themselves in order to continue selling their seeds.

Two projects supported the establishment of ecotourism at a very early stage with demarcations, infrastructure, and capacity-building (Projects 001, 002). While ecotourism has a high potential for combined biodiversity conservation and local income generation, the process for its establishment takes a long time and also depends on larger-scale factors (such as an end to the current pandemic). Further, consideration needs to be given to who the expected clientele will be in terms of project design and facilities required. For example, in Cambodia, not many older people are interested in hiking a 20 km round trip through a tropical forest, and so thinking more about a range of possible services for older clients, as well as younger ones, should be a consideration. Finally, to attract clientele, a marketing strategy needs to be one of the main components of any ecotourism project. Expecting financial returns is thus beyond the scope of smaller projects, and actual financial impacts are not yet visible, although these initial interventions form a strong baseline for future projects in terms of lessons learned and mechanisms for implementation.

5. Summary and conclusions

5.1 Overview of lessons learned

Perhaps the strongest aspect of the AFoCO program in Southeast Asia is the intelligent and focused selection of projects, such that each had a clear impact on improving forest management in the region. The project selection shows that AFoCO has clearly understood the main forest and forest management issues facing the region. Following decades of deforestation and forest degradation, projects that result in reforestation and restoration, improve measurement of forest area, work directly with communities, and pay attention to large scales are a necessity.

To help accomplish improved forest management, the introduction and enhancement of advanced technologies for inventory and reporting on forests has previously been widely lacking in the region. In particular, the attention to local communities in terms of providing expertise and alternative livelihoods was recognized under these projects as an important avenue by which more sustainable use of forests can be achieved.

Clearly, as assessed in the projects, the result of appropriate and forward-thinking project selection has been better forest management.

The box to the right provides an overall summary of the most important lessons learned from these seven projects. Some of these lessons refer to project formulation and formatting the proposals, while others are meant to assist in proposal development and implementation. The final lesson (10) suggests the need for a mechanism by which projects end but attempt to ensure that the project's effects are sustainable over time. This might mean, for example, future monitoring of results and new funding to provide improved marketing or equipment to facilitate production in the case of livelihoods projects. One clear lesson from all projects was the need for bottom-up consultation and project development by working directly with communities. Certainly, the ideas need to come from the countries and AFoCO, but the actual development of the project in terms of what will be, and can be, accomplished on the ground requires consultations with local communities. These consultations are especially important where land tenure may be an issue and becomes a resultant pre-condition prior to project implementation.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

1. Projects should have a main focus and provide a logical framework with a series of quantifiable targets for each activity. (001, 002, 004)

2. Communication among AFoCO, the regional manager, and the national managers needs to be frequent and regular. (002)

3. Sustainable forest management projects must ensure that the three legs of SFM – environment, social, and economic are equally considered. (002, 004, 010)

4. Communities need to be pre-consulted prior to project implementation. (001, 002, 003, 004, 009, 011)

5. Training for local people, considering local needs, is a key element of success. (001, 002, 004, 011)

6. On-site decisions should be a collective decision among project stakeholders. (001, 002, 003, 004, 009, 010, 011)

7. Alternative livelihood projects require local consultation, feasibility studies, and market assurance. (001, 002, 003, 004, 009, 011)

8. Due diligence and research for tree species selection are required to limit losses from wildlife damage and poor ecological understanding. (004, 010, 011)

9. Continuous monitoring procedures should be built into projects. (002, 004)

10. A pre-defined exit strategy is needed for each project, and AFoCO should consider a strategy for long-term monitoring of the success of projects, especially livelihood projects, to help ensure their sustainability. (001, 002, 004)

*In brackets: references to the assessed projects.

The seven projects were all well-positioned to create impact at various levels in terms of policy, forest management, local conditions, and/or improved sustainability of forest products. These impacts, depending on the individual project, occurred within governments, but importantly also within communities. The move towards greater local autonomy in forest management can work well but requires training and overall support through government policy, as well as funding from donors to projects. Value was created through the many training manuals and videos that can be used well into the future, as well as made available to other countries rather than re-creating new training modules of their own. Projects implemented through AFoCO contributed to a trend across Asia towards better community management of forests, and this is an area where considerably more work remains to be done. For example, land tenure is an issue that very often needs to be resolved and assured to communities. In addition, much more training needs to be provided to CFs on proper forest management, including assistance for alternative livelihoods to reduce local impacts on forests.

Among the most significant of the impacts under this program was the supply of technological equipment and associated training to several countries and communities. Cambodia (Project 3) specifically noted that large changes can result from a combination of providing equipment and technical training to communities. Advancing the ability of countries and CFs to manage their forests first requires some ability to assess the current state of the forests and landscapes and then to follow changes over time. Absence of that ability to conduct inventory results in a piecemeal approach to management with an area-by-area basis and no overall picture of forest condition within a country. This is a focal area where there is clearly expertise within AFoCO that can be provided/transferred to the region. So, while Projects 002 and 004 provided an excellent start, much more could be accomplished in the area of technological advancement, including, for example, developing and populating forest management models to estimate sustainable harvests. As one local project manager said, during validation: "even small changes as a result of providing some equipment and training can result in large changes within forest communities."

5.2 Lessons for improving future project development under an Improved AFoCO Forest Management Program

The seven projects reviewed were well-implemented, achieved notable results, and provided value for the funding expended within the forest management program. While these projects were well-organized, the development of future projects can be improved generally even further in some ways, other than those indicated by the "lessons learned" above and listed in Section 3

First, as noted already, all project proposals should have a matrix of outcomes, outputs, activities, and quantifiable indicators for each, provided in a "project logical framework" or "logframe." This was also reported in the lessons learned from the projects, but the importance of a log frame cannot be over-emphasized because of the manner in which it forces the proponents to think through how a project will be run in a quantitative manner, through a theory-of- change process, and by what indicators that progress will be assessed. The other importance of a logframe is that it provides a necessary background for project evaluations, either at the mid-term or ex-post stages[5].

[5]It is important to add that AFoCO has developed and implemented a Project Manual that fully includes the logframe concept in the project design.

Secondly, there were some odd mixes of objectives among several of the projects that were not relational. The best example of this peculiarity was Project 002, which provided countries with the tools and skills to improve the quality of reporting to the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA), but also had a component to develop alternative livelihoods in some local communities, including referring to climate change. The first and most important technological objective had no bearing on the livelihoods and climate change components, so it appears that these two objectives should have been accomplished in separate projects. Project designs should have a logical sequence, with objectives flowing well together, resulting in overall outcomes.

Third, some projects (e.g., 001, 002, 004, 011) had activities for which there were no objectives, or objectives that were unrelated to the project title. An example of both is provided by Project 001, where the title referred to forest restoration, but the objectives were for biodiversity surveys and ecotourism. Project titles should accurately reflect what the project is about to avoid confusion in how a project proceeds. Further, the accuracy of the title also ensures that information conveyed to interested people can be readily found through online searches. For example, the lessons learned from Cambodia and Viet Nam about ecotourism, which were very useful, would not be found through a project title search.

Fourth, it appears that AFoCO's work is not particularly well-known regionally or globally, nor sufficiently well-publicized. This is unfortunate because of the very high potential to provide relevant information of regional value and, more generally, knowledge and data of global scientific value. AFoCO could have a much broader impact by formalizing and making available its technical reports, perhaps in an "AFoCO Technical Series"' that provides online glossy publications. For example, the information in the technical reports for silviculture of star anise and cinnamon is excellent and could be useful to other countries or individuals in the region. Indonesia was a notable exception in this regard, with some projects publishing results in scientific journals, thus elevating the value of the project to a global level. Further, there is the strong potential for leveraging additional funding and donors, if AFoCO wishes, by making available better information on past projects and current strategies and planning. A benefit of increasing the awareness of AFoCO programs would likely result in requests for collaborative project development by other agencies (such as World Bank, where a new partnership is now developing) and directly from countries in the region to assist their needs for improving forest management.

5.3 Best practices for future projects

We note that several of these projects began early on, as AFoCO objectives, processes, and operational guidelines were still being developed. Hence, some of the best practices noted here have already been considered in AFoCO's newly adopted manuals and procedures.

Best practices are often derived as an extension of the lessons learned during a set of projects. While, generally, many best practices come from the considerable volume of published literature on a subject, and from critical thinking, new or revised best practices can be determined by what worked well during ongoing and completed projects within a program. All the projects under this AFoCO forest management program provided an assessment of lessons learned, as well as some implications for improving and revising practices for future project implementation. Best practices should be provided to project proponents, along with lessons learned, to assist countries in developing proposals.

The best practices presented here (box to the right) were derived directly from the suggestions in the lessons learned in project reports and represent the common, most important themes presented, as well as general observations of the consultant team. Most of the best practices refer to improving the project proposal procedures and operations at project sites as a mechanism to ultimately improve the capacity of receiver agencies to deliver a project in a manner that improves outcomes of projects by providing a greater level of detail to illustrate more precision around proposed activities. Best practices 10 and 11, along with implementing 6, are meant to improve the on-site operations.

SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICES

1. Proposals must have a main focus, with a logical framework that provides a clear set of quantifiable targets for each activity. (001, 002, 004)

2. AFoCO, the regional project manager, and the national managers establish a regular communication schedule. (002)

3. Sustainable forest management projects ensure that the three legs of SFM – environment, social, and economic are considered equally. (002, 004, 010)

4. During the project development phase, communities are pre-consulted to support trust-building and better ownership by the communities. (001, 002, 003, 004, 009, 011)

5. At the proposal stage, alternative livelihood projects have consulted affected local communities and conducted both feasibility studies and market assessments for possible investments. Training on alternative livelihoods is based on these studies and carried out in a second phase. This improves the adoption rate and long-term social impacts. (001, 002, 003, 004, 009, 011)

6. A schedule for regular monitoring, with procedures, is built into projects. (002, 004)

7. Project proposals include an exit strategy. (001, 002, 004)

8. A manual of operations is used to systematize actions at project sites. (002, 010)

9. Forest restoration projects take into consideration species selection that is appropriate to the sites involved, take measures to increase seedling survivorship, and ensure that sufficient monitoring occurs to determine long-term success. (004, 010, 011)

10. Alternative livelihood projects include a component that describes how they will be sustainable. (002, 004)

11. On-site decisions are a bottom-up collective decision among the main project stakeholders, including women.

*In brackets: references to the assessed projects.

Other best practices, specifically for forest restoration projects that resulted from these seven projects include:

1. For seeding and nursery stock, select only high-quality seeds from healthy trees that are growing well. This process will ensure improved survival and higher-quality trees.

2. Pay attention to problems that can reduce seedling survival, such as invasion by grasses, fire, and wildlife damage, and be prepared to mitigate these issues with early planning.

3. Direct seeding, where it is appropriate, is a highly suitable method of forest restoration.

4. Understand the ecology of the forest ecosystem prior to starting a restoration project in order to ensure that the correct species are selected and that suitable site conditions exist. For example, in peat forests, proper site preparation is essential, along with water level control.

5. In cases where local communities are directly involved, it may be important to select species for which there is community knowledge, local use, and solid understanding by the local people.

6. Establishing local businesses, either as seed suppliers and/or nurseries, can assist forest restoration while providing alternative livelihoods for communities.

The results for best practices and lessons learned from the seven projects have been extensive and provide a valuable framework to improve the already excellent procedures used by AFoCO. Compiling these lessons learned and best practices into a single document for developing future proposals will considerably improve the quality of proposals and the outcomes of future projects.

6. Future considerations for a continued program

For a future program consideration in AFoCO member countries in Southeast Asia, AFoCO may wish to focus future efforts in certain specific areas. Future projects can learn from those projects that provided the most impact and in which focal areas they had the most impact. So, for example, reforestation (a global priority) coupled with alternative livelihoods in the region are two key areas that were a successful focus among some of the projects. The reforestation projects that provided successful demonstration areas were especially effective, not only in terms of planting success, but also by providing important lessons that can be used to formulate future projects (e.g., 003), as well as having probable policy impact at a national level. In this regard, broadening the scope from a strict "reforestation perspective" towards consideration of a wider "forest landscape restoration approach" should be considered. In this field, AFoCO is already recognized in the region as having considerable knowledge and supporting countries in creating capacities. Today, with the new challenges ahead, it is widely understood that an inclusive, "large landscape approach" can help reverse land degradation, increase carbon storage, conserve biodiversity, and create sustainable livelihoods for local communities. The overall aim of forest landscape restoration, which is regaining ecological functionality, restoring biodiversity, and enhancing human wellbeing across degraded and deforested forest landscapes, would ideally fit in such a programmatic approach. This approach was recognized by AFoCO under Project 11 and should perhaps be considered as a major theme of future work.

Similarly, improving the application of advanced technologies in the region is an important requirement that was addressed in three of the projects, all of which achieved remarkable results (002, 004, 011). The seed and nursery projects (003, 009, 010) illustrated the regional need for capacity building for high-quality seed sources and suppliers, including both seed storage and handling and disease screening. Thus, combining the technical expertise that already exists at AFoCO with a landscape-level approach can be an important regional contribution to improving forest landscapes in the region.

Guidance for such an approach can be found in the recently developed "Guidelines for forest landscape restoration in the tropics (ITTO 2020)"[6] to which AFoCO contributed, both technically and financially. Interest in forest landscape restoration (FLR) has grown enormously in recent years, partly because it is an inclusive approach with widespread benefits and partly because of the vast area of degraded land in need of urgent restoration. Importantly, FLR processes and interventions are expected to be integral components of the national climate-change programs of most tropical countries as a means to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon storage and in national plans to adapt forests and agricultural landscapes to changing climatic and environmental conditions. However, there are few landscape restoration projects that have been implemented and the opportunity exists for AFoCO to lead in this important dimension of forest planning.

[6]ITTO 2020. Guidelines for forest landscape restoration in the tropics. ITTO Policy Development Series No. 24. International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Yokohama, Japan. https://www.itto.int/sustainable_forest_management/forest_landscape/

Some projects were worthy of a research component. AFoCO may wish to include a research agenda into some projects, especially where data collection is involved. Good examples came from Malaysia, Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Indonesia (Projects 003, 010, 011), where either good data collection was done and/or publications were completed. A technical report series, for example, is one possible outlet to provide wider coverage of successful results from these projects within the ASEAN and AFoCO member countries. Involving the research arms of forest agencies will also result in more robust monitoring of results over time and likely lend a different perspective to project development.

Finally, AFoCO may also wish to consider linking with other agencies in developing joint programs. FAO Asia-Pacific may be an option, as is the World Bank, both working on regional programs, such as "RESILAND" in Central Asia. There is also an existing MOU with ITTO that does not seem to have resulted in any widespread joint initiatives as of this moment. Cooperative projects with ITTO may be a way of achieving greater impact by pooling both resources and expertise; for example, ITTO's expertise in SFM together with AFoCO's expertise in technological approaches to forest monitoring and reporting. Regionally-based organizations dealing with forest landscape restoration at a scientific and technical level, such as UNDP, CIFOR, RECOFTC, SEARCA and others could well be complementary partners of AFoCO in certain specific working areas.

Annex 1. Interview guide

Specific questions for each project for the validation component of this report:

Project 001:

1. Does this report reflect your understanding of how your particular project was delivered?
2. What could/would you have done differently if you had the opportunity to redo the project?
3. What were the main problems that you encountered, and how did you overcome these problems?
4. Considering the project objectives, was the project budget amount appropriate? Were the costs of each activity suitably allocated?
5. Have there been policy-level impacts, or are there likely to be in the future? Can you describe such policy-level impacts further?
6. Explain how the financial aspects of the project were handled. Do you think the arrangements worked well?
7. Have there been, or will there be, financial returns to the community or country as a result of this project? Are these returns sustainable?
8. Do you believe that the positive impacts of the project will continue now that the AFoCO funding has ended (or will end)?
9. How has the project delivered on its social commitments? In what ways have local communities benefitted during and after the project?
10. What impacts has the project had on forest ecosystems and biodiversity?
11. How are the biodiversity data stored, and will there be any technical reports produced?
12. Trainings were done with ArcGIS: Do participants have access to an ArcGIS license in their work? Has the use of open-source software (e.g. QGIS) been considered?
13. Have activities to support existing ecotourism directly impacted the number of tourists and the local income from tourism?

Project 002:

1. Does this report reflect your understanding of how your particular project was delivered?
2. What could/would you have done differently if you had the opportunity to redo the project?
3. What were the main problems that you encountered, and how did you overcome these problems?
4. Considering the project objectives, was the project budget amount appropriate? Were the costs of each activity suitably allocated?

5. Have there been policy-level impacts, or are there likely to be in the future? Can you describe such policy-level impacts further?
6. Explain how the financial aspects of the project were handled. Do you think the arrangements worked well?
7. Have there been, or will there be, financial returns to the community or country as a result of this project? Are these returns sustainable?
8. Do you believe that the positive impacts of the project will continue now that the AFoCO funding has ended (or will end)?
9. How has the project delivered on its social commitments? In what ways have local communities benefitted during and after the project?
10. Was climate adaptation or mitigation specifically a consideration in the project planning and implementation?
11. Does the project present new challenges or issues that require examination during the design of subsequent interventions?

Project 003:

1. Does this report reflect your understanding of how your particular project was delivered?
2. What could/would you have done differently if you had the opportunity to redo the project?
3. What were the main problems that you encountered, and how did you overcome these problems?
4. Considering the project objectives, was the project budget amount appropriate? Were the costs of each activity suitably allocated?
5. Is the tree seeds distribution system still in place? Are they the same seed suppliers? Who benefits the most?
6. Was climate adaptation or mitigation specifically a consideration in the project planning and implementation?
7. Have there been policy-level impacts, or are there likely to be in the future? Can you describe such policy-level impacts further?
8. Explain how the financial aspects of the project were handled. Do you think the arrangements worked well?
9. Have there been, or will there be, financial returns to the community or country as a result of this project? Are these returns sustainable?
10. Do you believe that the positive impacts of the project will continue now that the AFoCO funding has ended (or will end)
11. What was innovative about the project – either in terms of delivery or in terms of outcomes?

12. How has the project delivered on its social commitments? In what ways have local communities benefitted during and after the project?

13. What impacts has the project had on forest ecosystems and biodiversity?

Project 004:

1. Does this report reflect your understanding of how your particular project was delivered?

2. What could/would you have done differently if you had the opportunity to redo the project?

3. What were the main problems that you encountered, and how did you overcome these problems?

4. Considering the project objectives, was the project budget amount appropriate? Were the costs of each activity suitably allocated?

5. Have there been policy-level impacts, or are there likely to be in the future? Can you describe such policy-level impacts further?

6. Explain how the financial aspects of the project were handled. Do you think the arrangements worked well?

7. Have there been, or will there be, financial returns to the community or country as a result of this project? Are these returns sustainable?

8. Do you believe that the positive impacts of the project will continue now that the AFoCO funding has ended (or will end)?

9. What was innovative about the project – either in terms of delivery or in terms of outcomes?

10. How has the project delivered on its social commitments? In what ways have local communities benefitted during and after the project?

11. What impacts has the project had on forest ecosystems and biodiversity?

12. Were there more appropriate technical, financial, or administrative approaches that might have been used to improve the effectiveness of the project?

13. Does the project present new challenges or issues that require examination during the design of subsequent interventions?

14. How and where are the data being stored?

15. In your opinion, is the training on database management sustainable? Did you find differences between training government officials and forestry technicians versus local communities?

Project 009:

1. Does this report reflect your understanding of how your particular project was delivered?

2. What could/would you have done differently if you had the opportunity to redo the project?

3. What were the main problems that you encountered, and how did you overcome these problems?

4. Considering the project objectives, was the project budget amount appropriate? Were the costs of each activity suitably allocated?

5. Have there been policy-level impacts, or are there likely to be in the future? Can you describe such policy-level impacts further?

6. Explain how the financial aspects of the project were handled. Do you think the arrangements worked well?

7. Have there been, or will there be, financial returns to the community or country as a result of this project? Are these returns sustainable?

8. Do you believe that the positive impacts of the project will continue now that the AFoCO funding has ended (or will end)?

9. What was innovative about the project – either in terms of delivery or in terms of outcomes?

10. How has the project delivered on its social commitments? In what ways have local communities benefitted during and after the project?

11. Was climate adaptation or mitigation specifically a consideration in the project planning and implementation?

12. Does the project present new challenges or issues that require examination during the design of subsequent interventions?

13. Are there data for the results of the planting work, and how/where are these data being stored?

14. Given the difficulties encountered with local communities in Thailand, is a project like this even feasible in the future?

15. If you could start the project again, would you select different high-value species in Viet Nam that are more suitable for smallholder conditions?

16. Are plantations still managed? By whom?

17. Did more people uptake the selected high-value species after the project ended?

Project 010:

1. Does this report reflect your understanding of how your particular project was delivered?
2. What could/would you have done differently if you had the opportunity to redo the project?
3. What were the main problems that you encountered, and how did you overcome these problems?
4. Considering the project objectives, was the project budget amount appropriate? Were the costs of each activity suitably allocated?
5. Have there been policy-level impacts, or are there likely to be in the future? Can you describe such policy-level impacts further?
6. Explain how the financial aspects of the project were handled. Do you think the arrangements worked well?
7. What was innovative about the project – either in terms of delivery or in terms of outcomes?
8. Were any local communities included in capacity-building exercises?
9. What impacts has the project had on forest ecosystems and biodiversity? Can the plots be scaled up to the forest level?
10. Was climate adaptation or mitigation specifically a consideration in the project planning and implementation?
11. Were there more appropriate technical, financial, or administrative approaches that might have been used to improve the effectiveness of the project?
12. Does the project present new challenges or issues that require examination during the design of subsequent interventions?

Project 011:

1. Does this report reflect your understanding of how your particular project was delivered?
2. What could/would you have done differently if you had the opportunity to redo the project?
3. What were the main problems that you encountered, and how did you overcome these problems?
4. Considering the project objectives, was the project budget amount appropriate? Were the costs of each activity suitably allocated?
5. Have there been policy-level impacts, or are there likely to be in the future? Can you describe such policy-level impacts further?

6. Explain how the financial aspects of the project were handled. Do you think the arrangements worked well?

7. Have there been, or will there be, financial returns to the community or country as a result of this project? Are these returns sustainable?

8. Do you believe that the positive impacts of the project will continue now that the AFoCO funding has ended (or will end)?

9. What was innovative about the project – either in terms of delivery or in terms of outcomes?

10. How has the project delivered on its social commitments? In what ways have local communities benefitted during and after the project?

11. What impacts has the project had on forest ecosystems and biodiversity?

12. Was climate adaptation or mitigation specifically a consideration in the project planning and implementation?

13. Were there more appropriate technical, financial, or administrative approaches that might have been used to improve the effectiveness of the project?

14. What are the key lessons that you have learned from this project?

15. Does the project present new challenges or issues that require examination during the design of subsequent interventions?

16. Reporting was not very quantitative – who has the data and how is it being stored? Can data be made available?

17. What happened to the agroforestry trials in Indonesia? Are there better options for peatland forest areas other than agroforestry?

Annex 2. Overview and assessment of the seven individual AFoCO projects

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
001	**Reclamation, rehabilitation, and restoration of degraded forest ecosystems in Mekong Basin countries (MBCs)** AFoCO $500,000 National $302,770 5 (Sub)-Projects: • Biodiversity Conservation Linked with Ecotourism for Cambodia; • Participatory Forest Management inked with Certification for Lao PDR; • Ecotourism Linked with Watershed Management for Myanmar; • Ecotourism and Payment for Forest Environmental Services Linked to Biodiversity for Viet Nam; and • Ecotourism Linked with Forest Restoration for Thailand	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Myanmar, Viet Nam 2013-2015	Intermediate: (2 years) 1. To investigate present status of biodiversity use and forest management. 2. To strengthen trans-boundary cooperation among the MBCs on conservation of landscape biodiversity and ecotourism. 3. To exchange knowledge and lessons learned on best practices of sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation. Long-term: (5 years) 1. To enhance the capacity of MBCs in reclamation, rehabilitation, and restoration of degraded forest ecosystems through pilot testing, exchange of expertise and capacity development Activities from final report: 1. Site demarcation for pilot work and mapping. 2. Documentation of biodiversity use. 3. Local workshop on ecotourism and biodiversity.	Program objectives addressed[1]: 1, 2, 3, and 4. Outcomes/achievements: **Cambodia (ecotourism and biodiversity)** - 2 tourism sites established (needs monitoring to determine success) with maps but very few tourists in this area - survey of biodiversity uses completed in study area - local and national workshops done on ecotourism - 1 training course on GPS and data collection - exchange visits to Viet Nam and Cambodia to discuss practices - efforts to reduce illegal activities **Lao PDR (forest management and certification)** - area mapped for rattan and enrichment tree planting - nursery established - workshops on rattan planting, mushroom cultivation, and RIL were held at project site - exchange visit to Myanmar and Viet Nam **Myanmar (ecotourism and watershed management)** - area selected and mapped, then ecotourism plan developed, but seems not very successful - 3 CFs established with user groups - nursery established - sediment dams constructed, and water reservoirs improved

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
001			4. National workshop on ecotourism. 5. Technical training on GPS, various livelihood types, forest and/or watershed management. 6. Facilities construction. 7. Information sharing and country visits. (Note: project activities varied among countries.)	- training center constructed, and training given on watershed management and ecotourism - national workshop held on watersheds and ecotourism - exchange visits to Lao and Viet Nam - technical reports provided Viet Nam (Ecotourism and PFES) - plot mapping - national workshop on ecotourism completed - PFES developed as potential mechanism for conservation - exchange visits with Cambodia Thailand (ecotourism and forest restoration mostly for watershed rehabilitation) - ecotourism site selected and mapped - check dam built to reduce erosion - plantation techniques demonstrated **Impacts:** *Policy* – likely a general contribution among this and other donor projects to improve a country's forest management policy towards considering multiple values, but no direct evidence of influence. *Forestry/biodiversity* – biodiversity surveys done, but no results reported except for Myanmar; ecotourism and NTFPs developed as an alternate theme for non-destructive forest uses; nursery in Lao PDR and Thailand for continued forest restoration. *Social/economic* – contributions to livelihood activities (ecotourism, rattan seedling production, mushroom cultivation) and support to existing community forests; impact probably limited due to the short time (2 years) of the project

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
001				Innovation: - Focus on ecotourism as a forest-use reduction mechanism to reduce forest degradation. Finance: - uncertain about return on investment without future monitoring of results from ecotourism, but project resulted in potential for local income. Comments: This was an early AFoCO project and so was a learning experience. Issues: - Objectives do not reflect the title - Limited documents for assessment – e.g., no country reports, few technical reports - Forest restoration was not a universal objective among countries - report noted unrealistic objectives in some cases (e.g., Myanmar as a tourist destination) - Uncertain (lack of explanation) about many of the methods and approaches to doing the work (e.g., how were biodiversity surveys done?) - With only one technical report, it is uncertain if there are data repositories from forest surveys (e.g., for biodiversity) and for numbers of trees planted - no logframe developed for the project; a post-facto list of activities in final report

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
002	**Capacity building on improving Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and enhancing involvement of local communities to address the impact of climate change** AFoCO **$1,847,528** National – not provided	Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam 2013-2016	**Objectives from the Project document:** 1. Capacity building of the implementing countries on forest resources inventory /assessment. 2. Enhancing the involvement of the local communities in forest-related activities to address climate change. 3. Strengthening community resilience through alternative livelihoods. 4. Exchange of expertise and experiences among the Implementing Countries and Republic of Korea. **Activities from the final report:** 1). Regional and country workshops on forest resources assessment and identify the gap among implementing countries; 2). Capacity building programs study tours and trainings, exchange of expertise, information sharing on recent technologies including the use of satellite imagery in forest resources assessment; 3). Supporting high-resolution satellite images and inventory equipment for the areas under consideration of climate change related REDD+ projects in Implementing Countries; and 4) Awareness raising program and engagement of local communities in forest-related activities to address climate change, including the study on alternative livelihood for local communities.	**Program objectives addressed [1]:** 1 and 4. **Outcomes/achievements:** - Excellent technical documents for training. - Very clear results from training and equipment supply to improve FRA reporting and reflecting in FRA 2020 country reports. - strong section on lessons learned for future REDD+ projects and policy and for community involvement - improved technical expertise for interpreting satellite imagery and GIS in forest inventory and assessment (FRA) with the development of an improved framework for forest inventory - capacity of countries improved for FRA reporting - improved awareness of the local communities about climate change issues and alternative livelihoods to cope with climate change that do not degrade forests - there was a regional seminar and workshop held as well as within country training and another seminar in Korea on comparative methods in FRA and remote sensing - regional study tour on REDD+ and communities was conducted to discuss REDD implementation - a regional workshop on benefits sharing under REDD+ was held, and to discuss best practices; summary results provided - regional workshop on alternative livelihoods to share best practices and for discussing possible types of livelihoods **Brunei Darussalam:** - established a new well-equipped FRA unit that uses remotesensing **Cambodia:** - improved FRA capability and use of GIS/ remote sensing - increased efforts on community forestry - training provided to a community forest on forest management, REDD+ concepts, forest monitoring, and alternative livelihoods

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
002				**Indonesia:** - very comprehensive training on remote sensing and GIS for FRA - full study on alternative livelihoods completed with recommendations on CFs Lao PDR: - training session on GIS and remote sensing in FRA - some livelihood training but not well-described Myanmar - training session on FRA reporting well-attended and trainers trained for regional application - survey of 47 villages for alternative livelihood possibilities - training session held on alternative livelihoods Philippines: - workshop on FRA and trainers on remote sensing trained - excellent study done on alternative livelihoods and relationship to climate change - provided list of lessons to apply to projects on alternative livelihoods in community forests Thailand: - training session on remote sensing and FRA reporting as well as trained trainers - alternative livelihoods study for 7 villages - National seminar conducted on alternative livelihoods Viet Nam: - workshop on FRA reporting and trained trainers on remote sensing for FRA - alternative livelihood study in a national park and its buffer zones, provided good lessons and summary of possibilities - national seminar on alternative livelihoods.

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
002				Impacts: *Policy:* - Project enabled better global reporting, which is a policy in all countries; Project demonstrated the value of a forest inventory which could become national policy requirement; Several statements and lessons were made available to policymakers on REDD+ and forests; well-aligned with national policies and therefore supportive *Forestry/biodiversity:* - Possible longer-term impact from the work on alternative livelihoods leading to improved forest management; Improved reporting of forest will allow better AAC estimation at a national level. No biodiversity objectives in project. *Social/economic*: - country-tailored studies and subsequent trainings for alternative livelihoods (e.g., bamboo handicraft, mushroom cultivation, bee keeping, mat weaving, ...) with possibly high impact for rural communities; co-learning between forestry personnel across countries due to exchanges and study trips Innovation: The project introduced advanced techniques and technologies in several developing countries and supplied the necessary equipment. Finance: In the long term, the purchase of advanced technology equipment reduces government burden where budgets are limited and has high impact at the global level for reporting. - There is a strong possibility that there will be local financial returns from training provided on alternative livelihoods, however, this requires monitoring over time.

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
002				Issues: - there were very professionally formatted reports, but the English in all these reports needs improvement, many acronyms made reading difficult, and there are errors and incomplete sentences (e.g., p. 28). - title and objectives/activities do not match well and appeared as if they were from at least two different projects. - little reporting from some countries on alternative livelihood aspects and unequal pursuit of climate objectives among countries (e.g., Philippines and Viet Nam had long reports, while Thailand and Lao PDR provided very little information, perhaps as a result of little emphasis). - limited work on climate change as an objective overall and uncertain why the training on technology and CC were linked. - overall – mix of objectives resulted in a lack of general regional focus except for the FRA training. Comments: - Provided some quantitative indicators of project success. - Very comprehensive and well-managed project. - Provision of equipment and technology very positive for the recipient countries.

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
003	**Promotion of forest rehabilitation in Cambodia and Viet Nam through demonstration models and improvement of seed supply system** AFoCO **$1,000,000** National **$200,000**	Cambodia, Viet Nam 2014-2019	Objectives: 1. To initiate a seed distribution system in Cambodia with identified seed sources and seed distributors; 2. To establish a tree seed laboratory with supporting facilities and trained staffing in Cambodia; 3. To improve seed sources and seedling production and management in Viet Nam; 4. To establish demonstration models of forest rehabilitation in Cambodia and Viet Nam; 5. To assess the impact of forest rehabilitation on the environment and climate change in Viet Nam. Activities: A long and derailed list of activities was provided for this project, following thoroughly the objectives	Program objectives addressed[1]: a and d Outcomes/achievements: - Well-run project on both sides of border with objectives mostly achieved. - model rehabilitation forests in Viet Nam were achieved. - many individuals trained in various aspects of seed production Cambodia: - tree seed and tissue culture laboratories established - seed suppliers found and production areas established - seed distribution system established - demonstration forest restoration plots established Viet Nam: - training of over 300 people on seed and seedling production, and forest restoration and protection - seed production areas established - tree seed and tissue culture laboratories established - enrichment planting, agro-forest, and CF models areas established Impacts: *Policy:* - Training on forest restoration and SFM reinforces the importance of CFs as a mechanism to protect national forests; May impact policies on forest regeneration with native listed species. *Forestry/biodiversity:* - In Viet Nam, the project apparently demonstrated positive effects of forest restoration on soil biodiversity (no technical reports were seen, however); aim of both projects was to enrich forests with depleted species and improve SFM by restoring over-harvested species. *Social/economic:* - 10 active grassroots seed suppliers (including community forestry user groups) are integrated in the established tree seeds distribution system in Cambodia with the potential of long-term improvement of livelihoods, as they have already started their own marketing of seeds. One farmer has been particularly effective.

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
003				Similarly, in Viet Nam, lasting impacts will result from seed collection, harvesting of NTFPs and agroforest plots. Innovation: The project recognized a need for improved forest regeneration and filled the gap in two countries by providing nursery and tissue culture laboratories, training, and effective seed source procurement mechanisms. Finance: - Seed sales have become an important source of local income as a result of the project, resulting in more money in rural communities. - with domestic seed production, costs of importing seeds dropped substantially in Cambodia. - tissue culture labs can provide training for local people who wish to establish businesses, resulting in alternative livelihoods for some families. Issues: - Some planned meetings and individual trainings were not achieved. - lack of local awareness of methods and need for better regulation in Viet Nam - no formal logframe but a table with outputs and indicators - some technical documents were provided including some publications from Indonesia. Much material, however, is in the Indonesian language and so could not be reviewed. Comments: - Excellent proposal with quantitative output indicators - Had an ex-post evaluation done in 2020; found most objectives achieved; that ex-post evaluation rated the project as "good."

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
004	**Facilitating the participatory planning of community-based forest management using GIS and RS technologies in forest resource management** AFoCO **$1,500,000** National **$14,640**	Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand 2014-2020	Short term (3-5 years) 1. To streamline existing planning guidelines and procedures (with the aid of GIS and RS) in the preparation of community-level forest management plan; 2. To improve the planning capacities of target beneficiaries; 3. To improve the certainty of tenured forests with workable community-level forest management plans; 4. To support the successful implementation of community-level forest management plans; 5. To increase the number of forest technicians with the capabilities to assist with the preparation of community-level forest management plan. Long-term (6-10 years) 1. To maintain and/or increase in area developed within established tenured forests; 2. To improve financial capability of target beneficiaries to implement forest development activities;	Program objectives addressed[1]: a, b, and c Outcomes/achievements: - improved management at selected CFs with planning and training provided; training documents available - facilities, equipment, and software provided - national workshops on CF lessons learned - all countries met objectives Indonesia: - review of CF policies and implementation - site selection (3 forests) and GIS training and workshops on CF planning - training on alternative livelihoods (coffee, rattan) - established nurseries and plantations - long list of data and information products including scientific publications, many in the Indonesian language; excellent review of CFs in Indonesia. Philippines: - review of CF policies and planning completed - regional workshop on CF planning held - sites selected and training/mapping on GIS provided - participatory CF planning was completed and a regional CFM Planning Template was produced - established nurseries and plantations - training and assistance provided for alternative livelihoods (cacao, handicrafts, mushrooms) - database established

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
004			3. To increase the number of target beneficiaries with improved forest management planning capabilities; and 4. To apply the improved participatory planning guidelines through the aid of GIS and RS in community-based forest management projects. Activities: 1. Report on the assessment and analysis of the status of community-level forest management planning process at the implementing country/ AMS and regional levels; 2. Enhance procedures in the formulation and development of community-level forest management plan through participatory planning processes as facilitated by the use of GIS and RS in forest resources management; 3. Community-level forest management plans in selected tenured forest areas of each implementing country developed using the enhanced procedures; 4. Capacitate planning team on com- munity-level forest management planning. 5. Establish/develop specific areas in accordance with the CFM plans inselected tenured forest areas of each implementing country. 6. Selected CFM plans in each implementing country will be implemented, monitored, and evaluated.	Thailand: - review of CFs completed - Sites selected and CF training and planning workshops - nurseries and plantations established to restore CF forests - community enterprises developed and trained - CF GIS databases completed Impacts: *Policy:* Likely strong influence on existing CF policies in all countries and influenced 2019 new law CF law in Thailand. The Regional CFM Policy Framework may be adopted by ASEAN and regional governments as guidance for CF planning in the region. *Forestry/biodiversity:* No biodiversity objectives in this project. Excellent work with selected CFs on planning and establishing plantations. *Social/economic:* - it can be assumed that GIS and RS trainings at community-level had little impact due to several limitations (internet, infrastructure, technical skills, etc.), so certainly more training is required. Some livelihood improvements are possible from alternative livelihoods training and provision of tree seedlings (e.g., rubber) but not sure if sustainable. Indonesia considers the livelihood results to be sustainable. Innovation: Incorporating GIS training into CFs is innovative, but still requires follow up as little previous expertise existed. Finance: As a result of training, plans, and improved local enterprises the return on investment is highly likely. An important aspect was the work on establishing markets for goods produced by forest enterprises. Monitoring and support are needed.

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
004				Issues: - objectives do not reflect several activities: plantation establishment, livelihood projects, and management plan implementation. - interim review found sustainability, technical capacity in CFs, and governmental processes were issues - lacks a logframe and expected indicators - technical documents provided but are there data repositories? - projects differed among countries. Comments: - Excellent original objectives based on clear needs of the countries. - All countries basically followed the same plan and activities but work was uneven with apparent most work in Indonesia - Country reports are thorough and provide lessons learned summaries. - Very detailed activity reports (as appendices) but these do not contain quantitative information – numbers for outputs (e.g.,number of people trained, number of ha planted, etc.) - good training documents available from project - Provision of technology and hardware to countries very useful.

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
009	**Developing high-value species in Viet Nam and Thailand as a mechanism for SFM and livelihood improvement for local communities** AFoCO $600,000 National $120,000	Viet Nam, Thailand 2015-2018	Objectives: 1. To assess and select the most suitable and high-value species in the study provinces; 2. To develop appropriate techniques, marketing and policy recommendation for the development, processing and trade of the study species; 3. To improve knowledge, techniques and skills of local people and relevant stakeholders through trainings, visiting and dissemination. 4. To develop demonstration models for the development of the study species. Activities: 1. Selection of study sites and species. 2. Develop technical guidelines, policy and marketing recommendations for high-value species. 3. Survey and report on status of the selected species. 4. Provide technical training on silviculture and sustainable use of the selected species. 5. Establish demonstration areas.	Program objectives addressed[1]: a, b and c Outcomes/achievements: - successful establishment of demonstration areas and raising awareness of local people in the selected communities of the possibility of managing some species for economic benefits. - training of local people in managing and using selected species. - value-added products illustrated as income sources with training provided - excellent technical reports on selected species silviculture Thailand: - technical guidelines for selected species (bamboo) completed - report on policy and marketing completed - Two 2 ha model plantations established - model and training for processing completed Viet Nam: - two species selected: Illicium verum (star anise) and Cinnamomum cassia (cinnamon) for cultivation - technical, marketing, and policy guidelines completed - species surveys completed for hoi (star anise) - technical training on silviculture provided - demonstration areas established Impacts: *Policy:* Policy guidelines written, but there is no evidence of influence at decision-making levels for either country. However, technical guidelines for developing NTFP in Viet Nam may result in policy changes. *Forestry/biodiversity:* Project is designed to reduce pressure on local forests and protected areas. Requires monitoring to ensure the results are sustained. Impact would be much improved if the technical guidelines for species were made available in widely disseminated formal reports

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
009				*Social/economic:* - in Viet Nam, increased knowledge of communities to plant star anise and cinnamon; in Thailand support of processing machinery for bamboo products; but lasting impacts remain limited due to limited market access and potentials (Thailand) or limited (tenured) land availability for perennial crops and preference of annual crops for short-term income; further marketing strategies probably necessary. Bamboo products in Thailand are providing increased income, so the project produced sustainable impacts. In Viet Nam, training has resulted in much better seed quality selection as well as eventual reduced forest degradation. Innovation: The innovative aspects include working with local communities to select species with which they could work and are familiar, ratherthan using a top-down approach. Finance: Projects are meant to supplement local incomes with consequent reduction in pressure and use of natural forests; follow-up monitoring is needed. If successful over time, the project will have resulted in a good return on investment Issues: - No log frame - lack of capacity in local communities and poverty - slow Thai bureaucracy is an issue for project implementation Comments: - Viet Nam project very well-run with excellent outcomes. - Success in Viet Nam seems high, but uptake in Thailand may be a problem because of severe poverty in the study sites, slow start and bureaucratic approach. - Excellent technical documents - No results reported for success of planting

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
010	**Domestication of endangered endemic and threatened plant species in disturbed terrestrial ecosystems** AFoCO **$1,200,000** National **$4,093,919**	Malaysia, Thailand 2016-2022 (Ongoing)	Intermediate objectives (6 years) 1. To domesticate national red-list species in both countries; 2. To strengthen cooperation between Malaysia-Thailand on conservation of biodiversity, domestication techniques, and technology transfer; 3. To exchange knowledge and lessons learned on best practices of rehabilitation and biodiversity conservation. Long-term objective (10 years) 1. To enhance the capacity of Malaysia- Thailand in reclamation, rehabilitation, and restoration of degraded forest ecosystems through domestication of EETS, exchange of expertise and capacity development.	Program objectives addressed[1]: a and b Outcomes/achievements: - plots selected and out-planting done with follow-up monitoring - excellent scientific contribution to region Malaysia: - successful planting of 18 listed species (target was only 6) - good research results with publication of results as a result of technical issues to overcome Thailand: - planting of some species successful (others – lessons learned about site matching to species); total spp. was 13 Impacts: *Policy:* - project has high scientific value and results should strongly influence future REDD+ projects. In Thailand, the results might influence mining to reforest areas used and abandoned. *Forestry/biodiversity*: - journal publications provide scientific advancement in afforestation, contribute to conservation and to REDD+ (from Malaysia); knowledge gained by foresters and conservation scientists in both countries through seminars and at international meetings *Social/economic:* no impact

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
010			Activities: 1. Site and species selection. 2. Workshops on techniques and progress. 3. Research and out-planting with establishment of model plots. 4. Monitoring and assessment. 5. Reporting and publications.	Innovation: innovative research to develop methods to cultivate listed species. Finance: - Project review noted the very high cost for seedlings. - no estimates of cost-effectiveness provided as a management technique (perhaps at project end?) - uncertain long-term effect unless further implemented by countries Issues: - Thai bureaucracy resulted in slow start . government procurement policies did not result in best suppliers - Malaysian component better delivered than Thai component Comments: - project has high regional scientific and conservation value - Selection of disturbed sites was important for forest recovery(afforestation) and possibly for future REDD and conservation of species. - Extraordinary (excessive) large land cost estimate for "in-kind"contribution from both countries (ca. US$ 4 M total). - Project sites (Thailand total 9.6 ha; Malaysia 3 ha, 3 ha, and 1 ha to be added) adequate for demonstration – but can these be scaled up? - No social or financial return components. - large number of publications, especially from Malaysia, reported but not provided (journal publications found online) - Only direct biodiversity AFoCO project

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
011	**Capacity building for landscape approach to support sustainable natural resources management** AFoCO $539,726 National - Philippines: $68,855 - others not reported	Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore 2015-2019	Objectives: 1. To recognize and contribute in addressing wide range of natural resources management issues and concerns across different ecosystems in the implementing countries as follows: • Erosion and forest fires in established forest reserve (beach forest); • Conversion of peatland forest in favor of the establishment of oil palm and pulpwood plantations; • Impending loss of selected commercially important tree species within natural forests; • Varying interests on the management of natural forest; and • The reduction of natural forest for rapid housing, infrastructure, economic and industrial development. 2. To assess the management compatibilities of communities/stakeholders within a specific landscape and its interrelation ships (pros and cons) between and among landscapes in a Ridge to Reef horizon. 3. To capacitate respective forestry sector technicians through formal and experiential learning on RRR- DFE following the landscape approach.	Program objectives addressed[1]: a, b, and c. Outcomes/achievements: - demonstration plots established in 3 countries for forest type restoration - regional workshops and visits with good \ opportunity to share experiences and learn methods - training manuals developed that could be used elsewhere in SE Asia for landscape restoration and livelihoods development - results may affect national efforts on assisted natural regeneration Indonesia: - 4 ha peat plot established with vegetation survey completed - report completed on forest landscape restoration - training completed on agroforestry and developing businesses Philippines: - 60 ha study area established with vegetation survey (30 ha control, 30 ha restoration) - training module on vegetation assessment -training completed Brunei Darussalam: - 0.5 ha demonstration plot established for restoration of degraded coastal forest Singapore: - workshop on urban forests and conservation completed

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
011			Outputs: 1. Establish model/demonstration sites for future replication/ adoption; 2. Demonstration plots/areas in landscapes maintained and protected by the concerned stakeholders; 3. Capacity building activities with training modules on the application of landscape approach delivered to forest technicians in all project countries; 4. Conduct regional workshops and cross-country visits to share experiences between and among implementing countries on Project learning; 5. Prepare reports on the lessons and experiences of the Project that will serve as reference in the development of future policy direction; 6. Assessment of communities/ stakeholders and landscapes; and 7. Experiential learning modules developed with a focus on knowledge and skills.	Impacts: *Policy:* - there are no existing policies on forest landscape restoration – so the project elevated the concept within governments; influential in terms of country policies on forest type restoration as a result of the information material created because it fit well with the national forest types in need of restoration thereby reinforcing the urgent need to address certain forest types; multiple land uses lead to involvement of multiple stakeholders; raised awareness about global forest issues such as GFGs, Bonn Challenge, etc.; Philippines project site became official national/regional demonstration area; Indonesian site will be a demonstration area for their national program of peat forest restoration and for graduate students – high impact. *Forestry/biodiversity:* - very positive results for demonstrating forest restoration for certain forest types by country; areas used were not large enough to have significant biodiversity results but are providing a training opportunity *Social/economic:* - trainings led to increased skills of forestry technicians; communities in Indonesia and Philippines benefited from trainings on sustainable natural resources management; livelihood impacts are low as the agroforestry model does not work well on the peatlands of Indonesia's case study Innovation: Project attempted to demonstrate forest restoration for key forest types of concern and provided governments with important demonstration areas Finance: Requires future monitoring to ascertain longer-term financial effects of forest restoration as a result of the demonstration areas, and from the livelihoods training. This could lead to a long-term high financial gain for each country and the local communities.

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
011				Issues: - long list of deliverables but no corresponding logframe targets or indicators, so unclear if these were planned or just resulted as project progressed. - the time to make agreements between Philippines (lead) and others took longer than expected. - planting of some species, for which insufficient silviculture knowledge exists, resulted in low success for those spp., e.g., Notaphoebe coriaceae - there was reluctance of local farmers to apply eco-friendly agroforestry practices - reports are not well quantified – some numbers in PowerPoint slides, but not summarized in final reports, so it was difficult to determine the amount of work done. - time issues of forestry staff and insufficient labor available - often numbers are not provided (e.g., workshops, etc.) except in monitoring reports - monitoring report found that on-ground activities were generally disconnected from a landscape approach (this consultant agrees). - country objectives differed from project objectives in some cases; objective 2, for example, was not a focus of any of the countries. - reports are unclear about quantitative results (but data in appendix for Philippines) and unclear about project successes. For example, \ in the 2018 Indonesia annual report, they reported 87% survival for Shorea balangeran, but no data are presented on numbers of stems alive vs. planted. - very small plots in Brunei (0.5 ha) and Indonesia (4 ha) – so demonstration only but not landscapes

AFoCO Project no.	Project Title	Countries and years	Objectives	Summary assessment at project level
				Comments: - unequal participation among countries (e.g., Singapore only did training of foresters, and Brunei Darussalam only developed a small demonstration reforestation plot); most work done was in Philippines and Indonesia - equipment, facilities, and training were provided (an important outcome) - plots require follow-up monitoring (after project end) to ascertain results over time

[1] AFoCO Program objectives for Projects 001 and 002:

(1) Mitigation of climate change effects through rehabilitation/restoration of degraded forest and ecosystem, environmental service, community forestry, and REDD+ activities;

(2) Conservation of biodiversity and eco-tourism

(3) NTFP development and renewable biomass energy; and

(4) Human capacity development (scholarship and training programs).

AFoCO Program objectives for all other reviewed projects:

a. Promoting sustainable forest management;

b. Addressing deforestation forest degradation in the framework of the adaptation and mitigation of climate change, combating desertification, restoring and rehabilitating degraded land, promoting community-based forestry activities, and preventing forest disasters;

c. Strengthening capacity-building, public awareness, and research and development in the forestry sector, including through technology transfers and technical information sharing in the forestry sector, including, inter alia, wood-based and forest products;

d. Enhancing forest carbon stocks and supporting initiatives, including mitigation and adaptation of the impacts of climate change in forestry;

e. Undertaking dialogue towards the establishment of AFoCO;

f. Enhancing and mobilizing existing and future financial resources in the forestry sector; and

g. Any other areas of forestry cooperation to be mutually agreed from time to time by the Parties

Annex 3 Notes from validation interviews

Overall results:

- The evaluation report was assessed as fair and correct; there were a few minor issues with some activities, which had not been well understood by the consultants and that were corrected
- Countries found that funding provided by AFoCO and counterparts was adequate
- There were differing opinions about multilateral vs. bilateral project organization (some found merits in the multilateral approach, others thought that bilateral would be better)
- Regional coordinators felt they needed better training in project management and oversight, more lead time, and found that financial transfers from their country to project countries, as organized, were difficult to implement.
- Generally, government bureaucracies worked slowly in all the countries and projects (with particular mention of difficult implementation arrangements in Thailand)
- Note also that some countries did not attend the interviews, nor did they answer email requests in some cases, and so full validation was not possible for all the projects.

Individual projects:

Project 001

Reclamation, rehabilitation, and restoration of degraded forest ecosystems in Mekong Basin countries

Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Myanmar,
Viet Nam 2013-2015

- Project changed focus after the title was established, but new results achieved
- The changed focus was on increasing tourism for most, except in Lao PDR where the interest was in NTFPs
- The Myanmar component was successful for infrastructure but not for achieving the goals for nature-based tourism
- All parties assessed that inter-country visits were useful and helped their own projects
- Thailand noted that the exchange rates caused a loss in funds
- Sub-projects were mostly implemented by government staff; there were not enough funds available to hire outside people
- RECOFTC was involved in organizing a project workshop in Thailand which was useful

- Note also that some countries did not attend the interviews, nor did they answer email requests in some cases, and so full validation was not possible for all the projects.
- For future learning, emulate the Thai & Viet Nam components as these worked out well
- The regional coordinator felt that bilateral (sub)projects would likely have been better than the multilateral approach
- General assessment that effective policy impacts were not achieved in the countries
- Overall, the implementation of the project was assessed as being difficult

Project 002

Capacity building on improving Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and enhancing the involvement of local communities to address the impact of climate change

Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam 2013-2016

- The regional level embarked on a learning experience to coordinate the project across many countries
- The project management was complicated because all countries \ have their own financial arrangements
- In this project, the ASEAN secretariat helped with communication
- Some training on how to coordinate and implement activities for the regional staff would have been beneficial
- Compiling reports with two very different objectives, as well as compiling the financial information, was a challenge
- Also, it was difficult to coordinate activities across a project in many countries
- The budget was adequate, although the livelihoods work could have used more funding
- Not a policy-oriented project – it was more about strengthening capacity
- The Thai project provided a showcase area for agroforestry, which is rather special considering the type of project
- Project implementers found that they could have used high-resolution imagery for better reporting
- Found important for livelihoods projects to have a marketing plan in place that involves the private sector
- Overall, monitoring of forest degradation remains a challenge
- If the knowledge could be transferred down to the local level within countries, the results would be better. For that, though, they would need equipment at that level

Project 003

Promotion of forest rehabilitation in Cambodia and Viet Nam through demonstration models and improvement of seed supply system

Cambodia,
Viet Nam 2014-2019

- Some issues on the project evaluation document, including a missing objective that needed correcting
- Because Cambodia and Viet Nam share a common border and have many common issues, it was easy to work together
- Both countries were very highly satisfied with the results of the project
- A high learning curve in Cambodia; they thought that grafting might produce seeds earlier than from planting seedlings
- It was suggested, considering the type of applied research work, that a longer project duration would be better (note: this one was already five years)
- Project followed existing policies and supported and supplemented those policies from an applied research angle
- The project is likely to have produced sustainable results in communities and for some farmers
- Project implementers found that CFs and communities were very willing to participate, but there is a need to have a clear, up-front agreement among stakeholders
- Overall, it was found that small inputs and training can make a big change in people's lives
- Follow-up of the results after the project's end would be recommended for a good learning process

Project 004

Facilitating the participatory planning of community-based forest management using GIS and RS technologies in forest resource management

Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand
2014-2020

- Based on the information received from project implementers, the project resulted in some new CF policies
- Providing equipment at the community level was important. Such support, in addition to the training provided, will likely result in long-term sustainability

- It was observed that improved management in the CFs will have a positive impact on biodiversity in those forests
- Clearly, technical support is very important, so reaching the community level is key
- It was found that the regional workshops were very informative
- Thai and Indonesian stakeholders were already ahead in the use of GIS, so the training was good for advancing their capacity
- The regional coordination was time-consuming, and funding transfers were a problem
- Thai stakeholders felt that, if they had understood the costs and benefits early on, the analysis results would have been better
- The project provided advantages to communities, but it was expressed that a follow-up project is needed to sustain these
- For the Philippines, a more detailed implementation plan would have been an advantage
- It was observed that there is a lower uptake from training in communities than for government staff
- Many community members had never operated a computer and so needed to start at the very beginning. However, the process of making such a technological step is considered important.

Project 009

Developing high-value species in Viet Nam and Thailand as a mechanism for SFM and livelihood improvement for local communities

Viet Nam, Thailand

2015-2018

- It took time to get permission from the financial department in Viet Nam to spend the project funds
- Similarly, in Thai, procurement and disbursement were issues that slowed the implementation
- Despite such problems, Viet Nam's representative did not think that hiring a 3rd party to handle finances would help
- The two countries worked together because they had connected via the AFoCO network and, in the past, the two countries have worked well together; they think that they can establish good complementary approaches
- The two countries used different species because of individual local and national interests
- Policy impact in Thailand was with respect to the value of bamboo as a local crop species; it provides very early supplemental income and so is sustainable and provides a good model to work with
- In Viet Nam, the policy impact is on the reduction of forest degradation and improving local livelihoods
- Both countries mentioned that a longer time for this project would have been better, especially for training local people
- In Viet Nam, the areas where the project was implemented consisted of protected areas under a landowner agreement, so long-term security of the assets could be granted
- The Thai component was assessed as having been highly successful and that the project achieved sustainable results

Project 010

Domestication of endangered endemic and threatened plant species in disturbed terrestrial ecosystems

Malaysia, Thailand

2016-2022

- This project is ongoing until 2022
- In both countries, government procurement processes were slow and delayed project implementation
- In Malaysia – plots were established, and funds are now used for plot upkeep
- Malaysia found many technical issues in the planting of individual species and was able to learn a lot
- In Thailand, funds are also now going to plot upkeep
- In Malaysia, the research arm is involved, so the plots will be maintained as seed (as production and demonstration areas)
- The southern Thai site is near a research station, so it will be maintained; the northern site will be maintained by the mining area owners (which is somehow special); the government intends to use the area as a demonstration of revegetated mine sites
- Tree spp. selected were for commercial value and availability of stock
- The cost of seedlings, though, is market-driven and thus very high
- Good technical outcome; a surprise result was the good off-site growth of some species
- In Thailand, they felt that better site matching would have improved their results
- The two countries worked well together and in a very complementary way
- Both countries pointed out that they should have also built a more in-depth research component
- The project could influence policy for requirements to reforest mine areas (Thailand)
- There was no community involvement in this project
- Both countries found that their international workshop provided excellent information

Project 011

Capacity building for landscape approach to support sustainable natural resources management

Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore

2015-2019

- Regional project management was a concern, and there was a general thought that it would be better if AFoCO either managed the project directly, hired a 3rd party manager, or created several administrative projects; it was mainly difficult to move funds
- Nevertheless, countries felt that the regional coordination was well done, and technically, the idea of regional collaboration is good
- In the Philippines, the project resulted in updated national guidelines and resulted in an executive order for landscape management. Thus, it had a policy impact
- All project implementers found that exchange visits were very useful as learning exercises
- Demonstration sites in the Philippines in the CFs are now used by universities, which is an asset and creates sustainability
- Engagement with the LCs was very important, especially when doing budgeting
- For all implementers, it was a challenge to think at the landscape scale. Here more learning is needed

Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO)
AFoCO is a treaty-based intergovernmental organization that is committed to strengthening forest cooperation and taking concrete actions to promote sustainable forest management and address the impacts of climate change.

This report is based on a third-party assessment conducted by a review team from Bern University of Applied Sciences. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the decision-making bodies of AFoCO or Member Countries.

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