

THE WAY FORWARD

The effective implementation of FLR and REDD+ in the future will require linking REDD+ activities to FLR to support mutual synergies. As the participants agreed, it is observed in many countries that their FLR and REDD+ cover similar activities. In the case of Indonesia, REDD+ is considered one of the approaches under the FLR mechanism.

Partnerships are essential to activate FLR/REDD+ implementation. In terms of future collaborations and directions towards advancing the AFoCO Climate Action Partnership Strategy, the workshop participants raised five expectations to attaining the SDGs, global goals, and national targets to mitigate climate change by reducing deforestation and forest degradation.

Expectations toward the AFoCO Climate Action Partnership Strategy

- Strengthen cooperation among AFoCO member countries, based on relevant Assembly decisions and bilateral agreements
- Provide a platform to initiate REDD+ or share best practices and lessons learned: e.g., connect and collaborate especially between countries who have not implemented REDD+ and with countries who have experience in conducting REDD+
- Better and easier access to funding donors and equal competency, including transparent information & national targets
- Individuals and private sectors in the countries would also have access to the AFoCO partnership through their government, following their national regulations
- Establish a dynamic carbon platform by reaching out to more international markets and donors.

BOX 1. Workshop Summary

“An Intensive Discussion for FLR and REDD+”, a post-session of the 2022 AFoCO-ITTO Joint Capacity Building Workshop on Forest Landscape Restoration in the Asia-Pacific Region: Accessing Climate Change Finance and Carbon Benefits for FLR, was organized at Forest and Wildlife Training Center, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from 5 to 7 October, 2022. The workshop welcomed 15 participants from 9 member countries: Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam.

The workshop aimed to:

- provide an intensive discussion among the member countries for FLR/REDD+ by learning about Cambodia’s experiences
- provide an arena for knowledge sharing in FLR/REDD+ implementation and the way forward
- explore effective implementation of FLR/REDD+ activities with AFoCO Climate Action Partnership Strategy

The workshop began with a summary of the above-mentioned AFoCO-ITTO joint online FLR workshop, followed by country report presentations, an introduction to the AFoCO Climate Action Partnership Strategy, and group discussions. Participants also visited a REDD+ project site in Tumring, one of the successful REDD+ projects in Cambodia, and had discussion with the project team and participating communities.

Forest Landscape Restoration in the Asia-Pacific Region

Exploring synergies for FLR and REDD+

BACKGROUND

The global community has entered an inevitable phase towards improving finance for FLR and forging partnerships to meet climate change mitigation and adaptation goals. The UN-REDD Program promotes FLR-related partnerships by mainstreaming “Investment: Bolstering and spurring further investments into restoration” as one of the key approaches to achieving FLR goals.¹

Acknowledging the critical importance of partnerships in maximizing the financial support for FLR, the roles of REDD+ in the FLR mechanism have been widely explored. The concept of REDD+ has its traditional fame in that it helps the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) of a country and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the implementation of activities that reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Its outputs to enhance forest carbon stocks lead to carbon market development and sustainable finance.

Considering that “integration” and “stakeholder participation” are key to FLR implementation, REDD+ activities in FLR further contribute towards ensuring that forests and their resources are sustainably managed while improving systematic land use, local livelihoods, biodiversity conservation, and ecosystem health. Eventually, forest governance is strengthened through fair and equitable benefit-sharing and inclusive decision-making.

As a post-session of the “AFoCO-ITTO Joint Capacity Building Workshop on Accessing Climate Change Finance and Carbon Benefits” virtually organized from 28 to 30 September 2022, AFoCO RETC organized an intensive discussion for FLR and REDD+ from 5 to 7 October 2022 with 15 participants from 9 AFoCO member countries at the Forest and Wildlife Training Center, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Key Messages

1. FLR and REDD+ activities can mutually support the reduction of carbon emission by enhancing forest carbon stock.
2. Detailed assessment is needed to identify synergizing areas between FLR and REDD+ implementation.
3. AFoCO Climate Action Partnership Strategy is expected to provide a platform that can assist FLR/REDD+ implementers to reach their restoration goals.

The workshop also introduced the AFoCO Climate Partnership Strategy, which is currently under development with the member countries. The strategy is expected to create an arena for interactive discussion among participants about the challenges and opportunities in implementing FLR and REDD+ activities at national and sub-national levels.



AFoCO REDD+ Feasibility Study in Phnom Brachum Mit CF, Cambodia
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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.

www.afocosec.org

¹ UN-REDD, <https://www.un-redd.org/work-areas/forest-landscape-restoration>

BARRIERS TO REDD+

This policy brief presents the knowledge shared by participants and the outputs of the workshop discussions. Four factors have been identified as major barriers and limitations to implementing and gathering international support for REDD+ as well as accessing climate funds in the Asia-Pacific region.

1. Partnerships

Strong partnerships and support from stakeholders are the most important components for the success of REDD+ projects and it was the key observation from the participant’s field visit to the Tumring REDD+ Project site in Cambodia. At the project level, REDD+ projects have shown success in halting forest cover loss through incentive mechanisms such as results-based payments and carbon credits. Yet, there is an absence of permanent commitment and substantial involvement of stakeholders in REDD+ implementation at the national and sub-national levels in the workshop participants’ countries. This could be due to a lack of motivation and awareness of the concept, implementation, and benefits of REDD+. Sociological barriers, such as ineffective information dissemination, cultural difference and capacity gaps between regions or provinces, are weakening cooperation and coordination among stakeholders involved in REDD+ activities. Imbalances in incentive - e.g., ensuring incentives to protect forests are more than incentive from harvesting timber - also weaken effective stakeholder participation in FLR and REDD+ activities.

2. Funding

REDD+ projects can be considered a successful mechanism that provides sustainable finance to ensure SFM and conservation of forest and biodiversity leading to achieving Sustainable Development Goals. However, it was highlighted by participants that financial support for REDD+ projects is unsustainable. Most of the funds for REDD+ projects depends on international donors, which are also uncertain, and still lack domestic funding support such as the government budget. Although the existence of strong regulations and experts, funding limitations occur at the initial stage, where baseline data collection and research need to be conducted. At the end of the project, there are no funds for continuation of the activities for the project to maintain effectiveness and sustainability. Accessing various climate funds is required by the national entities, for which the funds need to cut their complicated processes and red tape.

3. Resource, capacity, and expertise

Limitations in resources such as manpower and expertise are interconnected with funding requirements. Capacity needs described are “use of technology” and “proposal development.” Although some REDD+ activities could be implemented by the responsible institutions, technical support from local and international experts is still needed. Countries in REDD+ implementation phases should focus their capacity building programs on application of relevant methodologies - such as specific approaches for IPCC Guidance and different voluntary carbon standards - for National REDD+ and REDD+ projects. Nesting mechanisms of REDD+ projects into national REDD+ are still in progress while those projects are often applied in different methodologies. Although regulations were developed, clear directions and scope of REDD+ are lacking in several countries, such as Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, and Timor-Leste, where expertise, and baseline data are also absent. Internet capacity is one of the critical limitations for effective knowledge transfer between the government institutions and other stakeholders, such as local communities, and reporting to international conventions such as UNFCCC. Furthermore, limited access to information and quality data is also challenging the development of REDD+ widely.

4. Policy & Governance

Through REDD+, countries can establish new policies that could be integrated and further support climate change policies and planning. Strong support from the government is needed for sustainable funding and the establishment of REDD+ policies and regulations. Government administrative procedures should be flexible to attract more investors and access various funding sources. Lack of harmonization of policies, weakness in administration and planning, and complicated procedures may hinder the full participation of relevant stakeholders and the achievement of effective outputs. Workshop participants agreed that formation of relevant mechanisms such as AFoCO Climate Partnership Strategy would assist them in achieving FLR and REDD+ targets and create easier access to funding sources by promoting enabling environment for the REDD+ cooperation with reduced search and information costs and policing and enforcement costs. An overview of national policies, strategies, and plans can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of the development of REDD+ Related Policy, Strategy & Plans in the AFoCO member countries

Country	REDD+ related Policies, Strategies & Plans
Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan• National REDD+ Strategy & Action Plan• Bhutan’s Proposed National Forest Reference Emission Level and National Forest Reference Level (2020)
Brunei Darussalam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 2020• Aspiration 4- Sustainable Environment
Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National REDD+ Strategy 2017-2025 Forest Reference Emission Level 2017• Safeguard Information System• National Forest Monitoring System• Cambodia’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)• Action & Investment Plan for the implementation of the National REDD+ Strategy of Cambodia• Biennial Update Report (2022)
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indonesia’s FOLU (Forest and Other Land Use) Net Sink 2030• Nationally Determined Contribution (2021)• Indonesia REDD+ National Strategy 2021-2030• National Forest Reference Emission Level and National Forest Reference Level (2022)• National Forest Monitoring System (2021)• Biennial Update Report (2021)• Safeguard Information System (2016, 2018)
Mongolia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Vision-2050” Long-term Development Policy• New Revival Policy• Environmental Target Program• Action Plan of the Government of Mongolia (2020-2024)• Mongolia’s Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)• National Strategy and Action Plan of REDD+ National Program• Sub-National Action Plan in six mostly forested aimags• National Strategy Plan to implement the “Billion Tree” National Campaign• Biennial Update Report (2017)
Myanmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forest Policy (1995)• Environmental Policy (2019)• National Environmental Policy (2019)• National Land Use Policy (2016)• Myanmar Climate Change Policy (2019)• National Wetland Policy and Action Plans• Environmental Conservation Law (2012) and Rules (2014)• Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Law (2018) and Rules (2002)• Forest Law (2018) and Forest Rules (to be enacted)• National REDD+ Strategy• Myanmar’s Nationally-Determined Contribution (NDC)• National Forest Reference Emission Level and National Forest Reference Level (2018)• Safeguard Information System (2019)
Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Forest Policy• Thailand’s Nationally-Determined Contribution (NDC)• Thailand’s Long-Term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategy• National Forest Reference Emission Level and National Forest Reference Level (2021)• Biennial Update Report (2020)
Timor-Leste	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No response during the workshop
Viet Nam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Action Program on the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions through the reduction of Deforestation and Forest Degradation, Sustainable Management of Forest Resources, and Conservation and Enhancement of Forest Carbon Stocks (REDD+) by 2030• Forest Development Strategy (2021-2030), vision to 2050• National REDD+ Action Program