



# 2024 AFoCO Annual Report

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**Towards a Greener Asia**

Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO)

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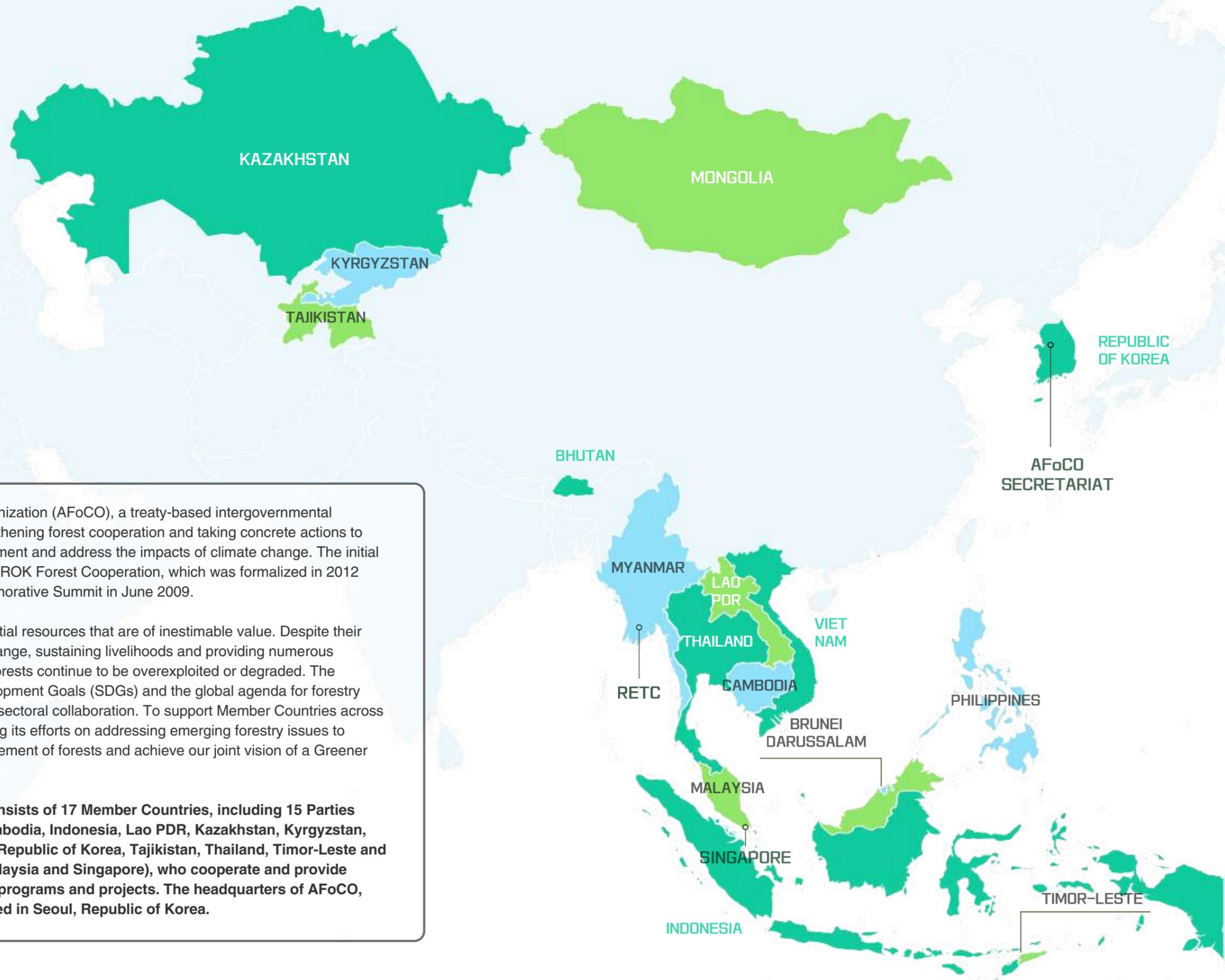
Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO)

\* The cover photo was taken at the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center (NAPWC) in the Philippines as part of project AFoCO/029/2022.

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# About AFoCO



The Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO), a treaty-based intergovernmental organization, is committed to strengthening forest cooperation and taking concrete actions to promote sustainable forest management and address the impacts of climate change. The initial iteration of AFoCO was the ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation, which was formalized in 2012 following the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit in June 2009.

On a global scale, forests are essential resources that are of inestimable value. Despite their importance in combating climate change, sustaining livelihoods and providing numerous ecosystem services, vast areas of forests continue to be overexploited or degraded. The realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the global agenda for forestry requires concerted efforts and inter-sectoral collaboration. To support Member Countries across Asia, AFoCO has been concentrating its efforts on addressing emerging forestry issues to contribute to the sustainable management of forests and achieve our joint vision of a Greener Asia.

**As of January of 2025, AFoCO consists of 17 Member Countries, including 15 Parties (Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam) and two Observers (Malaysia and Singapore), who cooperate and provide support in the implementation of programs and projects. The headquarters of AFoCO, including the Secretariat, is located in Seoul, Republic of Korea.**

# 2024 Snapshots

## I Project Fund (2013–2024)

### TOTAL PROJECT VALUE

234.8 M

#### AFoCO Funding

197.3 M

Funding from the Korea Forest Service

79.1 M

Funding from other donors

118.2 M

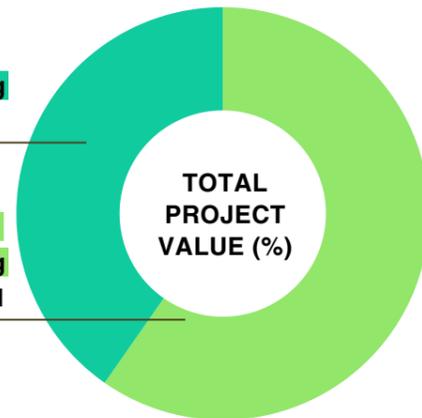
#### National Contributions from Member Countries

37.5 M

\*including cash and in-kind contributions; excluding projects without confirmed national contributions

Public Funding  
\$96.6M

Private Funding  
\$138.2M



## I Building Capacities in Member Countries

AFoCO's flagship capacity-building programs — Fellowship Program, Landmark Scholarship Program, and Science & Technology Exchange Partnership (STEP) Program — have also benefitted young professional forestry stakeholders at national and local levels across Asia.

44

**FELLOWSHIP OFFICIALS**  
(2015-2025)

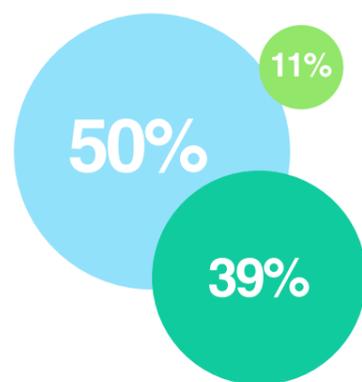
30

**SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS**  
10 PhD, 20 MSc  
(2015-2025)

24

**STEP PROGRAM RESEARCHERS**  
(2019-2025)

• **Training Courses (2014-2025)** 136 times 27,087 participants



15

**CUSTOMIZED COURSES**  
1,392 Researchers & students (5.1%)

68

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COURSES**  
19,549 Members of local communities (72.2%)

53

**REGULAR COURSES**  
6,146 Government officials (22.7%)

The AFoCO Regional Education and Training Center (RETC), a specialized subsidiary organ of AFoCO, was established in Yangon region, Myanmar in 2018 to serve as a platform for capacity development, knowledge transfer and information sharing. The RETC operates diverse training and workshops to address capacity development needs in the forest sector.

## I Carbon Emissions in 2024

AFoCO's commitment to environmental sustainability extends to actively measuring and mitigating our carbon footprint. To achieve this, we employ established methodologies to assess emissions across three key sectors: air travel; office operation; and ground transportation.

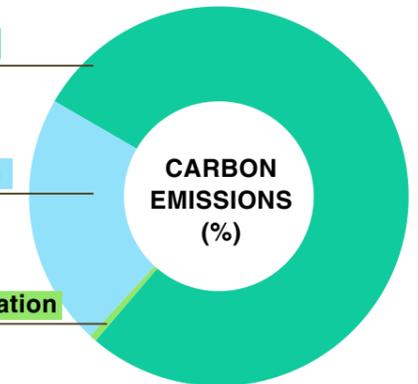
### TOTAL CARBON EMISSIONS 329.9 tCO<sub>2</sub>

Air Travel	257.2 tCO <sub>2</sub>
Office Operation	70.8 tCO <sub>2</sub>
Ground Transportation	1.9 tCO <sub>2</sub>

Air Travel  
78.0 %

Office Operation  
21.4 %

Ground Transportation  
0.6 %



## I Strategic Priorities (2024–2030)

AFoCO works with the forest departments of Member Countries to undertake action-oriented forest programs and projects targeted at rehabilitating degraded forest landscapes and preventing deforestation and forest degradation based on the three Program Priority Areas (PPAs) supported by Cross-Cutting Themes (CCTs).



### PPA 1. Forest Land Restoration and Conservation

AFoCO conserves forests vulnerable to climate change and restores degraded forest ecosystems. It supports the restoration of fire-affected areas, tropical forests and mangrove forests while promoting the sustainable use of forest resources. These efforts contribute to ecosystem recovery and the expansion of sustainably managed forest areas.



### PPA 2. Community and Circular Bioeconomy

AFoCO enhances the climate resilience and economic self-reliance of forest-dependent communities. To support sustainable income generation for local residents, it develops projects related to non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and agroforestry while exploring connections with carbon markets.



### PPA 3. Climate-Forest Disaster Risk Management

To effectively manage forest disasters and climate-related risks, AFoCO is establishing risk assessment and response systems. Key efforts include digitizing forest data, modeling forest fire predictions and using drones for fire monitoring. These measures help strengthen the climate adaptability and resilience of forests and forest-dependent communities.



### CCT. Policy, Capacity, Knowledge, Technology

AFoCO strengthens the capacities of its Member Countries through training, scholarship, fellowship programs and policy cooperation. With national governments, efforts are made to analyze the impacts of climate change on forests, develop relevant policies and design field-level demonstration projects.

# 2024 Highlights

## I 1st & 2nd FAAF Forum 6 February 2024 29 October 2024



AFoCO launched the Friends of Asia and Asian Forests (FAAF) to address climate change by engaging the private sector. FAAF is a gathering of corporate and global leaders that is fully aligned with Asia's Net Zero and the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. This collaborative platform for climate action brings together corporations and partner organizations from Korea to discuss climate solutions leveraging nature-based solutions with forests.

At the 1st FAAF Forum held on 6 February 2024, more than 70 distinguished figures and corporate representatives participated, including Mr. Ban Ki-moon, President and Chair of the Global Green Growth Institute and former Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Forum concluded with AFoCO's commitment to facilitate the exchange of policies, trends and practices related to climate change, biodiversity and ESG through regular meetings.



On 29 October 2024, the 2nd FAAF Forum was convened, focusing on strengthening public-private collaboration, promoting innovative financing for forest carbon projects, and advancing climate adaptation efforts in the region.



## I 10th & 11th Assembly 17-18 April 2024 30-31 October 2024

AFoCO and the Forest Service of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Kyrgyzstan co-hosted the 10th Session of the Assembly as a special session on 17-18 April 2024. The Assembly provided an opportunity to reflect on the impacts of climate change in the region and to highlight the fragile ecological balance of Kyrgyzstan.



On 30-31 October 2024, the 11th Session of the Assembly was held at the Secretariat. In the customary spirit of cooperation, the Session reviewed ongoing activities and approved the work plan for 2025.



## I Approval of New Strategy (2024–2030) 27 August 2024



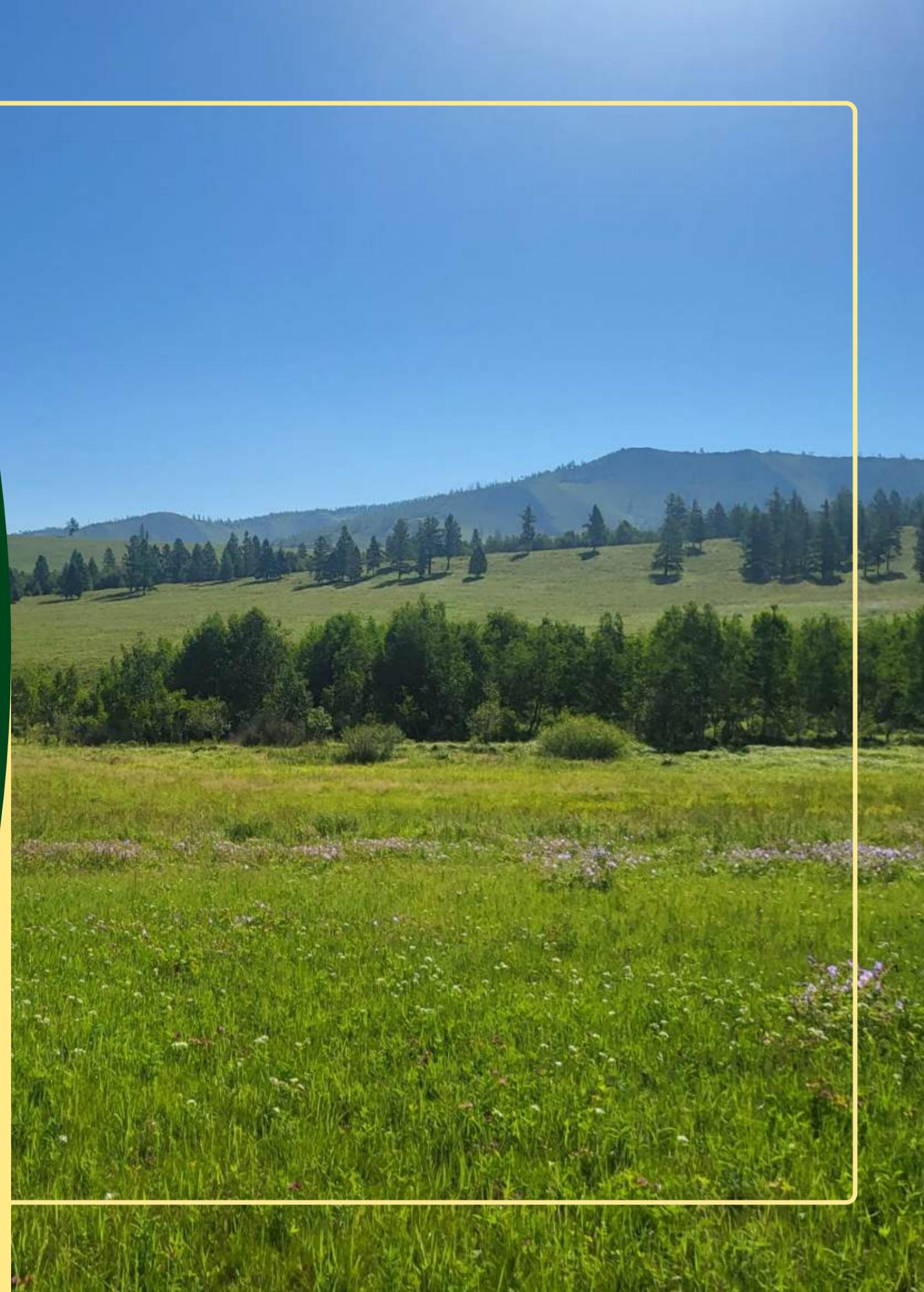
The new organizational strategy (2024-2030) and a 10-year AFoCO Climate Action Plan (2025-2034) were adopted. The new strategy streamlined the organizational priority areas.

- 1) Forest Land Restoration and Conservation
- 2) Community and Circular Bioeconomy
- 3) Climate-Forest Disaster Risk Management
- 4) Policies, Capacity building, Knowledge and Technology

Under the Strategic Plan (2024–2030), AFoCO will address the climate crisis and enhanced governance and capacities in sustainable forest management at various levels, which is expected to contribute to achieving national, regional and global climate, biodiversity and sustainable development goals.

# 01. ENGAGEMENT

AFoCO at Global Events  
Private Sector Engagements  
Other Engagements



## | UNFCCC COP29 15-19 November 2024

AFoCO hosted a side event titled, Advancing Forest Policies for NDC Achievement and Carbon Market Access through International Cooperation, on 15 November 2024 at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 29th Conference of Parties (COP29) Forest Pavilion in Baku, Azerbaijan. During the event, AFoCO emphasized the importance of robust measurement, reporting and verification systems and collaborative projects to enhance forest-based climate action.

AFoCO also actively participated in various discussions at COP29, reaffirming its commitment to sustainable forest management and climate action. It engaged with international partners to explore forest-based solutions for achieving global climate goals and expanding access to carbon markets. Additionally, AFoCO shared insights into its ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening Member Countries' resilience to climate change.



## | 20th Session of UNFF 6-10 May 2024

The 20th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests was held at UN headquarters in New York, USA, 6-10 May 2024. Under the theme, Achieving Globally Agreed Goals on Forests, Climate Change and Biodiversity, Mr. Sunpil Jin, Vice Executive Director of AFoCO, emphasized the importance of public-private collaboration and knowledge sharing among geographically similar countries. He also highlighted how regional organizations can effectively represent their region's voice in forestry and act as catalysts for action by sharing best practices, technical expertise and innovative solutions.



## | 26th IUFRO 23-29 June 2024

The 26th International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) World Congress was held in Stockholm from 23 to 29 June 2024. Under the theme, Forests & Society Towards 2050, approximately 4100 forestry experts explored the role of forests in achieving net-zero emissions and the SDGs. AFoCO actively engaged in pivotal discussions on the future of forestry and sustainability and showcasing at an exhibition booth its major projects and success stories from Asian countries. This participation not only underscored AFoCO's strong commitment to global forestry issues but also expanded its network and provided valuable insights for future collaboration and innovation in sustainable forest management.



## | UNCCD COP16 4 December 2024

The 16th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP16) was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from 2 to 13 December 2024. Under the theme, Our Land. Our Future, the Landscape Partnership Asia (LPA) and Africa's AFR100 co-hosted a side event titled, Land Restoration for and by All: Bringing Together Africa's AFR100 and LPA to Achieve the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and Global Forest Goals by 2030. The event underscored the importance of South-South collaboration, cross-sector partnerships, innovative funding and data-driven monitoring for sustainable restoration.



## I Greening Asia Together: Tree-Planting with Private Sector Actors

In 2024, AFoCO advanced its commitment to forest restoration through impactful collaborations with private sector partners, including Woori Bank, L'OCCITANE, Mapletree corp., IBK, T'way Air, Incheon International Airport Corporation, and Emart.

### L'OCCITANE | 5 April 2024

AFoCO, L'OCCITANE staff and local citizens planted 3,150 trees to restore forest fire-damaged land in Buramsan Mountain, Republic of Korea.

### T'way Air | 20 October 2024

Commemorating its new Incheon-Bishkek flight, T'way Air established a Welcome to Forest Way with 1000 trees planted near Manas International Airport in Bishkek.



Planting tree in Mongolia with Emart

## I Growing Partnership: New MoU Signed in 2024

To strengthen collaboration and promote sustainable forest management in Asia, AFoCO has signed several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), including with KT&G and T'way Air. These partnerships are expected to yield tangible benefits for the region's forests, environment and communities.



1. MoU with Korintiga Hutani Indonesia, 18 January 2024 | 2. MoU with Sustainable Word Network, 22 May 2024  
3. MoU with Glrui, 25 September 2024 | 4. MoU with T'way Air, 22 July 2024 | 5. MoU with KT&G, 10 December 2024

## I First Step to Carbon-Neutral Performance 16 November 2024

AFoCO and SM Entertainment collaborated on a carbon footprint campaign during the 2024 SMile Music Festival to promote carbon-neutral performances. AFoCO measured carbon emissions from attendees' transportation, accommodation and waste at the event. This campaign represents an ongoing commitment by AFoCO and SM Entertainment to sustainable event management and carbon-neutral performances.



### Other Activities for Partners

#### • FAAF Colloquium

On 28 August, AFoCO hosted its first FAAF Colloquium in Seoul, Republic of Korea, bringing together over 40 participants from major organizations. The event focused on advancing forest carbon initiatives within the voluntary carbon market, featuring discussions on high-quality carbon credits, forest carbon project development, and market trends. The colloquium fostered valuable exchanges on feasibility assessments and innovative forest-based solutions, highlighting AFoCO's commitment to strengthening private sector partnerships for climate action.



#### • FAAF Newsletter

The FAAF newsletter is published quarterly to facilitate the sharing of policies, trends and practices related to climate change, biodiversity and ESG and to promote forest sector activities that align corporate interests with the development needs of Asian countries.





21 March

## 2024 International Day of Forests

AFoCO celebrated the 2024 International Day of Forests on March 21 in collaboration with the Korea Forest Service (KFS) and the National Institute of Forest Science (NIFoS). This year's International Day of Forests was celebrated under the theme, Forests and Innovation: New Solutions for a Better World. In line with the theme, the ceremony provided an opportunity to share and introduce the works and efforts of the AFoCO in the region.



Korea's state-of-art forest sector technologies and relevant policies were introduced. Innovative solutions and applications in Korea's forest management were highlighted through demonstration of forest digital wins and exhibitions of the advanced forest fire suppression and response system, timber construction for carbon neutrality, and agroforestry satellites for forest management. The participants reiterated the significance of forests on the national, regional and global levels in socio-economic development and addressing climate challenges.

## I Korea-Brunei 40th Anniversary 29 October 2024

AFoCO coorganized the Korea-Brunei Diplomatic Relations 40th Anniversary Tree Planting Ceremony on October 29, 2024 at the Mullaee Community Garden in Seoul. A Korean Caramel Tree (Gyesunamu) was planted to symbolize the enduring friendship and cooperation between the two nations, reinforcing hopes for continued mutual growth and sustainable development.



## I Strengthening Partnerships



Greening Initiative in Timor-Leste

### • Timor-Leste – Greening Initiatives | 12 January 2024

AFoCO collaborated with the Government of Timor-Leste and the Korea Forest Service to launch a 10-year initiative to plant 10 million trees. The effort aims to restore degraded forests and support sustainable development through knowledge transfer. This cooperation has attracted attention as a model for forest protection and sustainable development in Asia, further strengthening the friendly relations between the two countries.

### • Thailand – Innovation in Forest Conservation | 21 March 2024

AFoCO participated in Thailand's International Day of Forests in Kanchanaburi Province, an event featuring exhibitions, tree planting and discussions on sustainable forestry under the theme, Forests and Innovation: New Solutions for a Better World. AFoCO collaborated with Thailand's Department of National Parks to promote innovative forest conservation and climate action.

### • Mongolia – Gorkhj-Terelj National Park | 10 May 2024

AFoCO established a Public-Private Partnership Forest in Mongolia's Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, fostering reforestation efforts and forest education for visitors and local communities. In collaboration with the National Forest Agency and the Korea-Mongolia Greenbelt Project team, AFoCO is advancing public-private partnerships to restore degraded forests and enhance sustainable forest management.



Group photo of tree-planting event in Public-Private Partnership Forest in Mongolia

## I 2024 Annual Technical Workshop 9-11 September 2024

AFoCO has been organizing an Annual Technical Workshop (ATW) for Project Management and Performance Review since 2020. The purpose of the workshop is to revisit project achievements and progress among implementing agencies. The 5th ATW was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 9 to 11 September 2024 in collaboration with Thailand’s Royal Forest Department as co-host. In total, about 80 participants from 13 different Member Parties of AFoCO attended the ATW in 2024.

The 2024 ATW highlighted the successfully completed and ongoing projects, with a focus on four themes: 1) Customized Restoration and Reforestation Models; 2) Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation; 3) Systematic Management of Forest Resources and Disasters; and 4) Local Livelihood Improvement and Community-Based Enterprises. It also introduced new projects launched in 2024 and carbon projects, followed by a field trip to the Bang Kra Jao community forest.

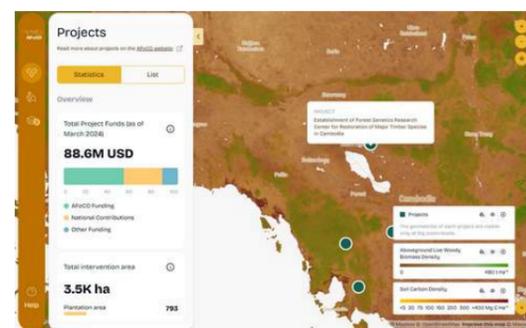
In conjunction with the workshop, the first AFoCO Project Photo Exhibition was held under the theme, Showcasing AFoCO’s Project Sites and Activities. Participants explored projects through photos. The Gold Award was bestowed on a project from Indonesia (AFoCO/023/2021).

Through the ATW, AFoCO project managers and other staff, along with National Focal Points, deepened their understanding of AFoCO’s projects and strengthened connections within Member Parties. ATW provided a valuable platform for open dialogue, contributing to the enhancement of project management. It will also serve a significant step forward in furthering AFoCO’s mission towards a greener Asia.



## I Launch of the AFoCO Open Map-Based IDP

AFoCO has developed an open map-based Information and Data Platform (IDP) for public access. The IDP is intended to visualize the progress of the AFoCO Strategy 2024-2030 as well as the 10-year Climate Action Plan, improving access to, and use of, project data across Member Countries by consolidating all AFoCO project information into a single, easily accessible location. This centralization will ensure that valuable information is easier for stakeholders to find and use. The Platform is now embedded on the AFoCO website.



## I Inception Workshop for Mongolia Green Resilient Landscapes 6 August 2024

AFoCO held an inception workshop for a World Bank technical assistance project, Mongolia Green Resilient Landscapes, on August 6, 2024 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. To facilitate productive discussions among project stakeholders and potential collaborators, the workshop was conducted in two sessions: Session I: Project Inception Meeting; and Session II: Knowledge Sharing Session. As the very first project activity, the workshop played an important role in setting the stage for subsequent activities.



## I Landscape Partnership Asia Webinar Series

In 2024, AFoCO hosted a series of LPA webinars to address environmental challenges in Asia. The first webinar, The State of Biological Diversity in Asian Drylands (31 May), examined the impact of land degradation on biodiversity and the need for policy and restoration measures. The second, Drylands Restoration as Nature-Based Solutions (26 July), highlighted nature-based solutions to mitigate drought risks. The third session, Restoring Land and Livelihoods in the Era of Climate Change (7 November 2024), highlighted successful case studies and underscored the importance of policy alignment and community engagement in achieving sustainable restoration outcomes.

The third LPA Management Team Meeting was held on the margins of the 8th IUCN Asia Regional Conservation Forum (3–5 September), providing an opportunity for strategic coordination among LPA partners.



# 02. Project Highlights

Regional Projects

Projects in Member Countries

Carbon Projects



## I Capacity Building on Enhancing Resilience to Forest Fire and Local Livelihood and Market Linkages

Forests in the ASEAN region are still being converted and degraded to accommodate the demands of increasing human populations. This is coupled with other drivers of deforestation and degradation, including forest fires, which is also a major threat to humans. The project, Capacity Building on Enhancing Resilience to Forest Fire and Local Livelihood and Market Linkages, aims to enhance resilience to forest fires and strengthen local livelihoods across four countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam.

In Cambodia, fire management infrastructure has been bolstered with vehicles, hundreds of pumps, computers, two lookout towers, and electricity lines. Additionally, 40,000 seedlings have been cultivated for reforestation, restoring 27 hectares of land. Livelihood support has included training for five community forest livelihoods groups and six community forest enterprises (CFE) in five provinces along with forming the Forest Harvest Association, which now has 22 members from seven countries.

In Lao PDR, progress included building lookout towers, procuring firefighting equipment and planting on 20 hectares. Two CFE groups focused on bamboo and traditional weaving expanded their market reach, benefiting from exchange visits to Indonesia. Notably, one partner established a souvenir shop to enhance sales.

In Viet Nam, a ground survey began for constructing two fire lookout towers in Ha Long and Ba Che, Quang Ninh Province in northern Viet Nam. Innovative product development, such as Golden Camella Kombucha, has generated revenue, with training in product packaging and marketing strategies provided through collaboration with FPT University.

Myanmar focused on assessing sites for reforestation and promoting agroforestry. Forest inventory surveys were completed and engagement with the Forest Department of Myanmar included participation in learning exchanges and marketing summits.

The project has successfully laid the groundwork for broader regional impacts, emphasizing sustainable environmental management and enhanced market linkages.



Mekong-Korea Forest Fire Symposium in Cambodia

### AFoCO/032/2022

<b>Duration</b>	2022-2027
<b>Budget</b>	US\$ 14,856,055
<b>Site</b>	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam



## I Improving Local Community Livelihoods through Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) Enterprises in Asia



NTFP workshop in Bali, Indonesia

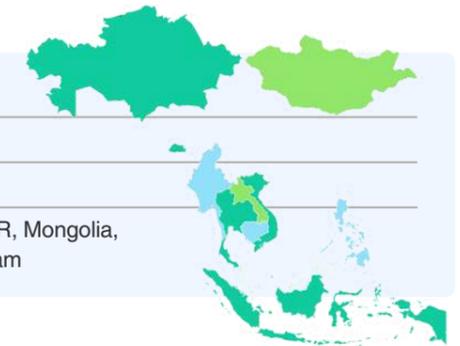
The NTFP Project is a pivotal initiative aimed at harnessing the untapped potential of non-timber forest products in select countries. NTFPs encompass diverse natural resources, such as medicinal plants, wild edibles and handicraft material. The NTFP Project is driven by the conviction that empowering communities to engage in community-based natural enterprise initiatives can promote environmental conservation and enhance livelihoods.

As of 2024, 11 AFoCO Member Countries — Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam — are actively implementing the NTFP Project. Each country's project implementing agency (PIA) has carried out key activities, including resource assessments, market and value-chain analyses and the development of new products and standards to enhance the value of selected NTFP commodities. Since 2024, tailored mentoring programs have been introduced in collaboration with NTFP-EP Asia to strengthen the capacities of PIAs. Additionally, the third regional workshop was convened in Bali, Indonesia with 34 participants from 13 Member Countries to discuss strategies for developing national and regional roadmaps to integrate NTFPs into community livelihood enhancement policies.

Local communities and indigenous peoples will improve their livelihoods and climate resilience through diversified, sustainable, forest-based income sources, particularly via value-added NTFPs. The initiative will also enhance awareness and participation in forest management while strengthening governments' capacities to support community-based natural enterprises.

### AFoCO/035/2022

<b>Duration</b>	2022-2026
<b>Budget</b>	US\$ 4,235,138
<b>Site</b>	Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam



## I Reducing Forest Fire Risks through Integrated Approaches



The Assuring the Future of Forests with Integrated Risk Management (AFFIRM) project addresses known gaps in data needs, information, understanding of forest-related risks and lack of an integrated approach to risk management for forest sustainability.

Funded by the Republic of Korea and led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with AFoCO, the project activities by AFoCO in 2024 included contributing to the development of ‘review and analysis’ reports as foundational data, information and knowledge bases on integrated fire management, with emphasis on the legislative and institutional settings in the four pilot countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam.

AFoCO also organized a workshop to gather high-level insights into the key challenges faced by participating countries and to inform delegates of the AFFIRM project's technical and value-adding features. The workshop gathered four delegates from each participating country along with 10 representatives from FAO and nine from the Korea Forest Service (KFS). Participants engaged in presentations and discussions on various topics, including the Global Fire Management Hub, forest fire management policies and the community-based fire management of participating countries. The sessions were followed by comprehensive discussions, providing a platform for participants to exchange ideas and experience, and a field visit to the Forest Aviation Headquarters in Gangwon Province.

The AFFIRM Project contributed to establishing a foundational knowledge base on integrated fire management and supported policy dialogue through high-level regional workshops. It also enhanced regional cooperation and capacity-building for forest fire risk reduction.

### AFoCO/046/2023

<b>Duration</b>	2024-2025
<b>Budget</b>	US\$ 200,000
<b>Site</b>	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam



## I Strengthening Climate Adaptation through ICT-based Forest Fire Management

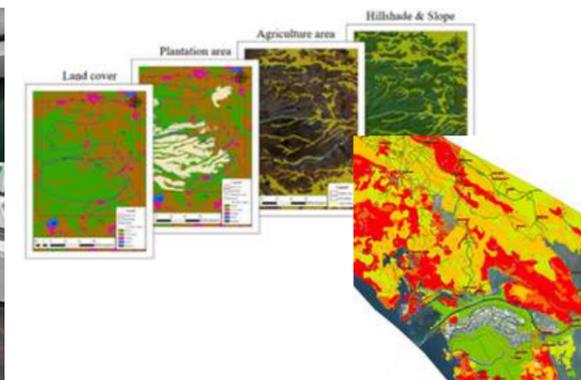
As a result of human activities and climate change, frequent occurrences of wildfires have been recorded over the last decade in both agricultural and forest areas of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), particularly in Cambodia and Viet Nam. GMS countries have less developed economies and scarcer technical and institutional capacities to organize and deploy effective forest fire management systems (FFMS). The project, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Adaptation to Climate Change and Forest Fire Management in the Mekong Region, aims to enhance the capacity of pilot countries in the use of an ICT-based approach to increased forest fire resilience.

For fire prevention, detection, monitoring and management, the project showcases technological innovation in using ICT both in Cambodia and Viet Nam. The ICT system utilizes a GIS-based platform to simulate and predict fire-vulnerable areas for timely preventive interventions and use of control measures through real-time and/or early forest fire detection, foot and drone patrols, real-time reporting and response deployment.

In 2024, the installation of the FFMS, which provides real-time forest fire danger rates, was completed. The system is currently being customized to suit local conditions. Notably, the project facilitated establishing a technical working group dedicated to forest fire management policy, paving the way for its potential development into a specialized department. Additionally, the project supported the formulation of forest protection plans utilizing ICT-based information, which have been adopted as reference material for policy making. Moving forward, training workshops and fire prevention campaigns will be implemented to scale up the project's outcomes. Building on the Republic of Korea's innovative data-driven forest fire management technological innovations, the project is expected to be seen as a pioneering initiative.



Technical Working Group Meeting



Forest Fire Danger Rate Map

### AFoCO/037/2023

<b>Duration</b>	2023-2025
<b>Budget</b>	US\$ 1,566,501
<b>Site</b>	Cambodia, Viet Nam



### I From Seed to Sustainability: Scaling Up Afforestation in Kazakhstan



Preparing the forest nursery area

The project, Technology and Capacity Enhancement for Massive Production of Quality Planting Materials to Support National Forestation Goals in Kazakhstan (AFoCO/044/2024), aims to increase forest cover by introducing modern technologies and enhancing capacity for large-scale production of high-quality planting material.

At the Northern Branch of the Republican Forest Breeding and Seed Production Center in the Akmola region, 2 hectares are being transformed into a high-tech 1,800 m<sup>2</sup> nursery to grow Scots pine seedlings under controlled conditions. With automated climate control, irrigation and precision seeding, the facility will produce 1.5 million seedlings annually, supporting sustainable forest restoration efforts nationwide.

In 2024, all preparatory work was completed: the site was cleared and 7,000 tons of construction soil were backfilled and leveled. The next stage — construction of the foundation for the greenhouse and the building for the automated seed sowing line — was scheduled for April–May 2025. Delivery of equipment was expected in the first quarter of 2025. The project is being implemented in phases: first, delivery of equipment and components; second, construction and installation works.

Special attention has been given to capacity building and knowledge transfer. In 2024, training seminars on forest restoration were held at the Republican Forest Breeding and Seed Production Center in collaboration with the Urumkai Forest Enterprise, the Burabay National Park and the Kazakh Research Institute of Forestry and Agroforestry. These seminars brought together 25 forestry specialists.

Additionally, training sessions were held in August and December 2024 for local communities, focusing on the economic potential of forest and non-timber forest products. A total of 50 residents of the Akmola region participated in the sessions, which helped raise awareness and community involvement in sustainable forest use and nature-based entrepreneurship.

The project combines technology and capacity building to support sustainable afforestation, contributing to national goals for forest expansion and improved management.



Training activities for forestry specialists and local communities

### I Unlocking Hidden Forests: Modernizing Kazakhstan's Forestry Information System

Since March 2022, a pilot project has been implemented to conduct an inventory of unaccounted forests in the Kostanay and North Kazakhstan regions and to automate forestry data collection. This project, Pilot Project on Inventory of Unaccounted Forests in Kostanay and North Kazakhstan Regions and Automation of Information Collection on Forestry (AFoCO/028/2022), is a strategic initiative aimed at expanding coverage and improving the mechanisms of state forest accounting.

According to data from 2019, more than 300,000 hectares of forest areas were not included in the State Forest Fund, which limits their legal protection and reduces their potential to provide critical ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration and water regulation. The project aims to fill existing data gaps and create conditions for the integration of these forests into national management systems.

From the outset, the project has focused on two key directions:

- 1) pilot inventory and mapping of unaccounted forest areas;
- 2) development and implementation of a digital forest data management platform.

By the end of 2024, all key preparatory and fieldwork stages of the project were completed. The inventory and data processing in the Kostanay region were also completed. The fieldwork stage in the North Kazakhstan region was also finalized, with final data analysis planned for 2025.

An effective project team was formed, stakeholder consultations conducted and all necessary equipment and software procured. The development of the digital platform had reached 70% completion, with pilot testing successfully conducted at the regional level through five training seminars.

The digital system automates data collection, processing and storage, significantly reducing reporting time and minimizing the risk of human error. A series of user seminars was held, covering methodology and business processes. Full implementation of the system is scheduled for 2025, with its integration into the national forest management infrastructure planned for 2026.



Conducting field inventory



Consultation workshop

#### AFoCO/028/2022

<b>Duration</b>	2020-2026
<b>Budget</b>	US\$ 1,243,807
<b>Site</b>	Kostanay and North Kazakhstan regions

#### AFoCO/044/2024

<b>Duration</b>	2024-2025
<b>Budget</b>	US\$ 1,228,146
<b>Site</b>	Akmola region



## I Empowering Communities through Wood Value Chains

The project, Promotion of Vertical Integration in Wood Processing through People’s Organizations in Community-Based Forest Management(CBFM) Areas in the Philippines (AFoCO/016/2022), addresses limited value addition and unsustainable timber production in CBFM areas. The project operates under a vertical integration business model encompassing tree plantation establishment, timber utilization and marketing.

As part of the project, capacity-building activities were conducted along with procurement of wood-processing equipment and safety gear to ensure worker safety. The wood-processing plant is under construction with provincial funding and expected to be completed by 2025. Ten hectares of new plantations were established for raw material supply. A market study was also conducted to promote timber products.

The project will contribute significantly to the development of sustainable enterprises and livelihoods, supporting the long-term management of forest resources under the Community-Based Forest Management Program. This ensures the sustainability of community-managed tree plantations while generating income opportunities through timber production and wood processing.



Installation of wood processing plant



Operation of woodworking machine

## I Urban Oasis in the Philippines: Revitalizing Cultural Ecosystem Services at NAPWC

The Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center (NAPWC) is home to 3,936 tree species. Despite the Government of the Philippines’ ongoing efforts to enhance urban well-being and confront pollution in mega-cities like Metro Manila, attracting visitors and raising public awareness for the park’s sustainable management remains a significant challenge. To address this, the project, Ensuring Functioning of Cultural Ecosystem Services in an Urban Setting (AFoCO/029/2022), has developed a tree nursery design, organized a workshop on the establishment of a forest bathing area, and finalized a plan for forest healing.

A material-recovery facility will be relocated to the park’s northern section while the lagoon will be excavated to enhance water capacity and depth. Additional developments include converting the forest healing area into an islet with a waterfall feature and installing a natural perimeter fence to reduce noise. These efforts aim to establish a healing forest for human health and well-being. Department of Environment and Natural Resources personnel will undergo capacity-building activities to serve as nature interpreters and park attendants.

## I Pioneering a Public-Private Partnership to Restore Endemic Species in Albay Province

The Bacon-Manito (Bac-Man) Geothermal Reservation is a core geothermal energy source and is a Key Biodiversity Area that provides habitat for threatened plant and animal species, with potential for eco-tourism. The area is threatened by logging, agriculture and unsustainable practices, which has led to extensive deforestation. To address environmental challenges, the project, Restoring Forests with Native and Endemic Tree Species in Bacon-Manito Geothermal Reservation (AFoCO/040/2023), aims to restore 100 hectares of degraded forest by reintroducing threatened and endemic tree species.



Site preparation

In 2024, training was conducted in forest restoration and nursery management and a forest protection plan developed. A 2-hectare arboretum was officially launched, featuring QR-coded species tags for education and awareness. Comprehensive photo-documentation of Philippine Threatened and Endemic Species (PTES) was developed for restoring the 100 hectares along with species propagation protocols. The database is scheduled for publication both online and in print, with the official launch planned for 2025. Monitoring showed 15 of 20 propagated species had 70–100% survival rates. The project continues to promote science-based restoration, education and community participation.

This project has made significant strides in restoring the Bac-Man forest area while fostering public-private partnerships and community engagement with local farmers’ associations. The integration of scientific approaches, conservation education and policy development ensures the long-term sustainability of the initiative, making it a model for future forest restoration programs in the Philippines.

### AFoCO/016/2022

<b>Duration</b>	2021-2026
<b>Budget</b>	US\$ 1,337,883
<b>Site</b>	Visayas, Negros Oriental province Mindanao, Agusan del Sur province

### AFoCO/029/2022

<b>Duration</b>	2023-2025
<b>Budget</b>	US\$ 1,337,924
<b>Site</b>	Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center, Quezon City

### AFoCO/040/2023

<b>Duration</b>	2023-2026
<b>Budget</b>	US\$ 494,698
<b>Site</b>	Bacon-Manito Geothermal Reservation, Albay province



## I Reviving Community Forests through Agroforestry

Cambodia is dedicated to restoring degraded community forests and promoting sustainable forest management. This commitment aligns with its goal to rehabilitate 50,000 hectares annually while empowering communities and promoting sustainable forest management. To restore forest resources and increase community income for sustainable forest management, the project, Site Restoration and Sustainable Management of Community Forest Using Multiple Use Tree Species and Agroforestry (AFoCO/027/2022), was initiated in Nakta Thmor Pung Community Forest, which was severely degraded due to uncontrolled logging in the 1990s.

As part of the project, community forest management members have implemented various restoration and protection activities. They established a tree nursery capable of producing 15,000 seedlings annually, built a forest patrol tower, and renovated community forest stations. Restoration efforts included 30 hectares of enrichment planting, 12.50 hectares of fruit trees, 30 hectares of high-value *Melaleuca cajuputi*, and 20 hectares of agroforestry species.

The community has also developed a Ten-Year Forest Restoration Plan; a workshop helped members understand the long-term goals for forest management. Through capacity building programs, local people have learned about the benefits of agroforestry in improving their livelihoods. As a result, more farmers are adopting agroforestry and community participation in forest restoration and management has significantly strengthened.



Tree nursery in community forest



Planting fruit trees

## I ASEAN-Korea Gardens



ASEAN-Korea Garden in Cambodia

Launched at the 2019 ASEAN-Korea Commemorative Summit, the ASEAN-Korea Garden represents a lasting symbol of friendship between ASEAN Member States and the Republic of Korea. The project focuses on conserving species, promoting biodiversity education and strengthening eco-tourism and sustainable funding. As part of these efforts, the first ASEAN-Korea Garden in Cambodia is expected to be completed by 2025. As part of the project, an educational handbook has been developed to provide information on key species found in the project area and an international exchange program organized to support garden operations. The ASEAN-Korea Garden projects are also being implemented in Lao PDR and Viet Nam.

## I Rebuilding Cambodia's Agarwood Heritage

Native agarwood species (*Aquilaria crassna* and *Aquilaria malaccensis*) once thrived in the Cardamom Mountains but both species are now classified as endangered on the IUCN Red List and CITES. Due to illegal overharvesting and lack of scientific cultivation techniques, agarwood species have rapidly declined in the region. The project, Advancing Restoration of Native Agarwood - *Aquilaria crassna* and *A. malaccensis* – for Sustainable Use and Management in Southwestern Cambodia, project aims to restore native agarwood species across community forests in four provinces of the Cardamom Mountains. As of July 2025, the project had successfully planted 50,100 seedlings on 35.50 hectares (consisting of 24 hectares of enrichment planting and 11.50 hectares of monoculture plantation) of community forests, private plantations and family-scale plantations.

The project empowered stakeholders with skills in plantation techniques, enrichment planting and sustainable harvesting. A key outcome was improved understanding among community forestry members about agarwood resin development; previously many people felled their trees after seven years whereas now they know that natural resin only forms after at least 15 years. This has led to more sustainable practices, reduced premature harvesting and better conservation of endangered agarwood species, while laying the foundation for future community income through sustainable production.



Community forest members transport agarwood seedlings at the Forest Administration Inspectorate site in Koh Kong province

### AFoCO/027/2022

Duration	2022-3027
Budget	US\$ 988,715
Site	Preah Sihanouk Province, Cambodia

### AFoCO/036/2022

Duration	2023-2025
Budget	US\$ 2,000,000
Site	Siem Reap Province, Cambodia

### AFoCO/038/2023

Duration	2023-2026
Budget	US\$ 713,747
Site	Cardamom Mountain Ranges of Southwestern Cambodia (Koh Kong, Pursat, Battambang and Kampong Speu provinces)



## I Empowering Forest Protection: Advancing Teak Pest and Disease Control in Myanmar

Myanmar has the third largest teak plantation area in the world. Despite the potential for widespread infestations, only occasional outbreaks of pests and diseases have been reported but nevertheless resulted in a decline in the quality of teak while research on appropriate control measures remained limited.

In response to the growing threat of forest pests and diseases, the project titled, Integrated Pest and Disease Management in Teak Plantation in Bago Region, Myanmar (AFoCO/014/2020), has been implemented to support the restoration and enhance the vitality of forests in the western Bago Yoma region. The project covers eight sites across two primary districts — Tharyarwaddy and Pyay — and focuses on identifying pest and disease species, developing effective prevention and control strategies, and strengthening stakeholder capacity through targeted initiatives.

As part of this project, training in pest surveys was conducted at the AFoCO RETC and regular pest monitoring conducted across 40 hectares of teak plantations to inform the development of tailored control measures. A diagnostic laboratory and museum facilities were also upgraded and research was carried out to share findings with the Forest Department and private sector.

The project enhanced pest control strategies and capacities for pest and disease management. Additionally, five demonstration plots were successfully established, supporting practical research and management efforts. A dedicated working group was also formed to manage teak forest pests and diseases in Pyay and Tharyarwaddy districts.



Field survey in teak plantation at Tharyarwaddy



Field survey in nursery



Pest and disease survey training at AFoCO RETC



Establishment of demonstration plots

## I Tackling Deforestation with Community-based Forests

Deforestation and forest degradation in Myanmar are major challenges exacerbated by the heavy reliance on forests for household consumption, fuel for small-scale cottage industries, livelihood income, and the conversion of forest land to agricultural use. The Model Forest for Improvement of Forest Dependent Communities through Development of Community based Enterprise and Forest Conservation (AFoCO/015/2020) project seeks to balance biodiversity conservation with sustainable livelihoods by addressing key gaps in rural development.

The project has successfully developed criteria for Model Forest Villages, designed to enhance local livelihoods, promote forest conservation and support climate-change adaptation and mitigation. To improve sustainable income sources for local communities, the project provided training in agroforestry, organic fertilizer production, mushroom production and bamboo handicrafts. Twenty-three hectares of community forest were enriched and designated as a demonstration area and 5 hectares of agroforestry plantations, home gardens and systematic shifting cultivation were established. To reduce dependence on forest resources, efficient cook stoves were distributed to households. An inventory of forest species composition along with assessments of ecosystem services were conducted, leading to the publication of a report on carbon storage and species diversity. The project also introduced a chemical-free organic fertilizer production method to support sustainable agricultural practices.

The project has made substantial progress in integrating sustainable forest management with rural development, effectively addressing deforestation and degradation in Myanmar. Through Model Forest Villages, it has demonstrated a viable approach to balancing conservation with economic opportunities. The project has created sustainable income sources while reducing pressure on natural forests.



Seedling distribution to local people

### AFoCO/014/2020

Duration	2020-2026
Budget	US\$ 955,360
Site	West Bago Yoma, Pyay and Tharyarwaddy Districts

### AFoCO/015/2020

Duration	2020-2025
Budget	US\$ 952,000
Site	Taunggyi District, Shan State; Pyay District, Bago Region



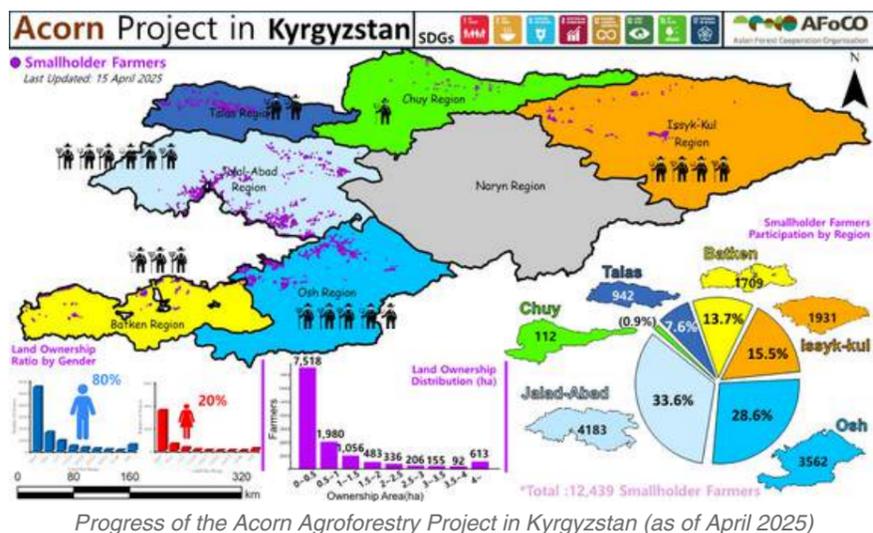
## I Acorn Agroforestry Project in Kyrgyzstan

The Acorn Agroforestry Project in Kyrgyzstan is a collaborative initiative led by AFoCO in partnership with Rabobank and the Government of Kyrgyzstan. The project aims to enhance climate resilience and promote sustainable land management practices by supporting smallholders in adopting agroforestry systems that generate income through voluntary carbon markets. Operating across six provinces, the project is building a foundation for long-term climate-smart agriculture while contributing to rural livelihoods and biodiversity conservation.

In 2024, the project achieved several key milestones. A total of 46 individuals participated in comprehensive data collection training and 20 full-time data collectors were deployed across six provinces to engage farmers using the Acorn Data Collection Tool (DCT). Agroforestry sites were mapped in Issyk-Kul, Chuy, Talas, Batken, Osh and Jalalabad, with Jalalabad accounting for nearly 50% of participating farmers. Two sets of ground-truthing data were collected in 2024 and one more is scheduled for August 2025, together forming the scientific basis for biomass modeling and estimation of the carbon baseline.

To ensure project transparency and effectiveness, AFoCO conducted monitoring of 1,500 farmers randomly selected from the project's beneficiary group. These participants were among 500 farmers who received boundary seedlings as part of agroforestry implementation. The first Farmer Council Meeting was held in March 2024, offering a platform for direct dialogue and feedback. However, challenges remain, notably the limited awareness among farmers about carbon projects and logistical difficulties in remote regions. In response, the project plans to intensify community engagement, including hosting workshops and mobilizing local leaders as project ambassadors.

Looking ahead, the project will continue scaling its outreach and technical support. Capacity-building training and the project's incentive payment ceremony were conducted in April 2023 and May 2025 for nearly 500 farmers, to be followed by a second Project Council Meeting scheduled in September 2025. The project seeks to establish a national roadmap for voluntary carbon market mechanisms in Kyrgyzstan, contributing to climate change adaptation and socio-economic development.



Progress of the Acorn Agroforestry Project in Kyrgyzstan (as of April 2025)

<b>Duration</b>	2024-2050
<b>Site</b>	Issyk-Kul, Chuy, Talas, Batken, Osh, and Jalalabad Provinces, Kyrgyzstan



## I Mekong REDD+ Project Phase I with Woori Bank

The Mekong REDD+ Project Phase I is a collaborative initiative between the Forestry Administration of Cambodia, AFoCO and Woori Bank, aimed at reducing deforestation, enhancing forest carbon stocks and promoting sustainable livelihoods in forest-dependent communities. The project is being implemented across 14 Community Forestry (CF) areas in Stung Treng Province, covering 30,301 hectares. In 2024, significant progress was achieved: CF boundary assessments and demarcation were completed for all 14 CFs, with two CFs advancing in the land titling process. Two CF outposts were established to support community monitoring efforts. The project strengthened community-based livelihoods by supporting three CF savings groups and initiated development of two non-timber forest product enterprises focused on resin and wild honey, with ongoing support for enterprise structure and market linkages. Additionally, a solar-powered water pump was installed in Choampich CF, improving access to water for over 270 families.

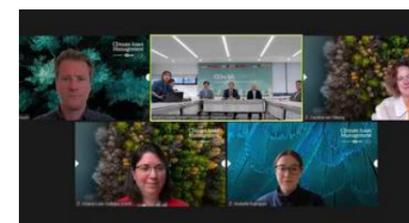
The project also delivered strong results in forest governance and capacity building. Law enforcement actions led to 51 recorded cases of illegal activities, seizure of wildlife traps, firearms and illegal timber, supported by regular joint patrols conducted by CF Committees and Forestry Administration officers. A new nursery with a capacity of 20,000 seedlings was established to support future reforestation efforts. Community awareness and capacity-building activities were conducted throughout the year, including training in climate change, legal practices, patrolling techniques and GPS usage. Through close collaboration with Woori Bank, AFoCO and local stakeholders, the project is building a strong foundation for Verra (VCS + CCB) validation and long-term participation in carbon markets while contributing to Cambodia's nationally determined contribution and delivering tangible benefits to local communities.



<b>Duration</b>	2022-2026
<b>Site</b>	Steung Treng Province, Cambodia



### From Finance to Forests: MoU with CAM



AFoCO signed an MoU with Climate Asset Management (CAM), a joint venture established in 2020 by HSBC Asset Management and Pollination. Through this partnership, CAM will invest USD 20 million over five years to support afforestation and reforestation projects across AFoCO Member Countries. This collaboration will mobilize private climate finance and scale up forest restoration efforts in the region.

# List of Ongoing Projects

No.	Project Code	Title	Period	Country	Budget (USD)
1	AFoCO/005/2014	Establishment of Forest Genetics Research Center for Restoration of Major Timber Species in Cambodia	2016-2025	Cambodia	2,068,900
2	AFoCO/008/2014	Village-based Forest Rehabilitation in Lao PDR	2016-2025	Lao PDR	1,865,830
3	AFoCO/013/2020	Improving <i>Pinus caribaea</i> Morelet for Plantation on Degraded Land in Viet Nam's Northern Mountainous Region	2020-2023	Viet Nam	576,200
4	AFoCO/014/2020	Integrated Pest and Disease Management in Teak Plantations in Bago Region, Myanmar	2020-2026	Myanmar	955,360
5	AFoCO/015/2020	Model Forest for Livelihood Improvement of Forest Dependent Communities through Development of Community-Based Enterprise and Forest Conservation	2020-2025	Myanmar	952,000
6	AFoCO/016/2021	Promotion of Vertical Integration in Wood Processing through People's Organizations in Community Based Forest Management Areas in the Philippines	2021-2026	Philippines	1,337,883
7	AFoCO/017/2020	Sustainable Community-Based Enterprise Development for Improved Rural Livelihood in Bhutan	2020-2025	Bhutan	1,400,000
8	AFoCO/018/2020	Development of Agroforestry Models for Promotion of Reforestation in the Different Zones in Timor-Leste	2021-2024	Timor-Leste	605,580
9	AFoCO/023/2021	Innovative Solution for Climate Change and Biodiversity Landscape Strategy to Support SDGs in Indonesia	2021-2024	Indonesia	800,000
10	AFoCO/024/2021	Conservation and Development of Forest Ecosystems Biodiversity Resources at Cat Tien National Park	2021-2025	Viet Nam	1,232,000
11	AFoCO/025/2021	Integrated Village-driven Forest Rehabilitation and Livelihood Improvement in Viengthong District, Bolikhamxay Province, Lao PDR	2021-2026	Lao PDR	1,193,960
12	AFoCO/026/2021	Re-greening the Bare Lands through Promotion of Locally Customized Restoration Models in Timor-Leste	2021-2026	Timor-Leste	1,050,000
13	AFoCO/027/2022	Site Restoration and Sustainable Management of Community Forest Using Multiple Use Tree Species and Agroforestry	2022-2027	Cambodia	988,715
14	AFoCO/028/2022	Pilot Project on Inventory of Unaccounted Forests in Kostanay and North Kazakhstan Regions and Automation of the Collection of Information on Forestry	2022-2026	Kazakhstan	1,243,807
15	AFoCO/029/2022	Ensuring Functioning of Cultural Ecosystem Services in an Urban Setting: Assimilating Nature for Forest Healing and Experiential Learning in Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center	2022-2025	Philippines	1,377,924

No.	Project Code	Title	Period	Country	Budget (USD)
16	AFoCO/030/2022	Improving Local Community's Livelihoods and Engagement in Sustainable Forest and Land Management in Thailand through Forest Landscape Restoration	2022-2025	Thailand	453,921
17	AFoCO/031/2022	Rehabilitation of Degraded and Potentially Deserted Forest Land in the Northwest Region of Viet Nam through Application of Integrated Technical Measures	2022-2026	Viet Nam	919,680
18	AFoCO/032/2022	Capacity Building on Enhancing Resilience to Forest Fire and Local Livelihood in CLMV Countries	2022-2027	Cambodia Lao PDR Myanmar Viet Nam	14,856,055
19	AFoCO/035/2022	Improved Local Community Livelihoods through Increased Income from Non-timber Forest Products (NTFP): Modeling Scalable Community-Based Enterprises in Asia	2022-2026	11 Member Parties	4,235,137
20	AFoCO/036/2022	Establishment of ASEAN-KOREA Garden in Cambodia	2023-2026	Cambodia	2,000,000
21	AFoCO/038/2023	Advancing Restoration of Native Agarwood – <i>Aquilaria crassna</i> and <i>A. Malaccensis</i> – for Sustainable Use and Management in Southwestern Cambodia	2023-2025	Cambodia	713,747
22	AFoCO/039/2023	Forest Restoration Demonstration through High Capacity Tree Nursery and Capacity Building in Support of "Billion Trees" National Campaign in Mongolia	2024-2025	Mongolia	999,656
23	AFoCO/040/2023	Forest Restoration using Philippine Threatened and Endemic Tree Species (PTES) in Bacon Manito Geothermal Reservation in Support to the Philippines' Forestry Sector's National Greening Program	2023-2025	Philippines	494,698
24	AFoCO/041/2023	Sustaining an Abundance of Forest Ecosystems (SAFE)	2023-2024	Cambodia Lao PDR Viet Nam	311,000
25	AFoCO/042/2024	Establishment of ASEAN-Korea Garden in Viet Nam	2023-2024	Viet Nam	1,253,759
26	AFoCO/043/2024	Establishment of ASEAN-Korea Garden in Lao PDR	2024-2025	Lao PDR	1,223,759
27	AFoCO/044/2024	Technology and Capacity Enhancement for Massive Production of Quality Planting Materials to Support National Forestation Goals in Kazakhstan	2024-2025	Kazakhstan	1,228,146
28	AFoCO/045/2024	Conservation of Useful and Rare Tree Species in Kyrgyzstan through Establishment of a Seed Storage in order to Retain Significant Resource	2024-2025	Kyrgyzstan	1,228,146
29	AFoCO/046/2023	Assuring the Future of Forests with Integrated Risk Management (AFFIRM)	2024-2025	Cambodia Lao PDR Thailand Viet Nam	200,000

# 03. Capacity Building Initiatives

AFoCO RETC  
Training Activities  
AFoCO Fellowship Program



18

Training Courses

...

1,410

Participants

AFoCO is committed to offering quality training courses that develop the capacities of Member Countries to deal with pressing forestry and environmental issues, such as deforestation, forest degradation and climate change. The AFoCO Regional Education and Training Center (RETC) was established as a subsidiary organ of AFoCO to develop the capacities of Member Countries to deal with forestry and related environmental issues. The RETC also represents the project outcome of Component 1 of the Landmark Program. Training courses and workshops are conducted regularly for Government officials from Member Countries, university students and members of local communities.



As the capacity-building arm of AFoCO, RETC aims to

- educate and develop leaders to practice good governance in the forestry sector;
- provide practical and problem-solving-oriented education programs to improve and promote sustainable forest management;
- enhance knowledge and practices to promote sustainable livelihoods for forest-dependent communities, and;
- serve as a hub for meaningful discourses and the implementation of customized forest restoration and rehabilitation models in Asia

## I AFoCO RETC and Royal Forest Department of Thailand 2nd Training of Trainers for Forest Fire Suppression – supported by the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs

RETC, the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the Royal Forest Department (RFD) of Thailand jointly organized the second, Training of Trainers for Forest Fire Suppression, in Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand. The training course gathered 21 participants from 10 AFoCO Member Countries, including Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam.

Designed to strengthen the capacity of national trainers in forest fire management, the training combined classroom lectures and field-based exercises on fire behavior analysis, fire break construction, prescribed burning, and the use of drones and thermal cameras for fire monitoring. With growing forest fire risks in the region, the course aimed to equip participants with the knowledge and practical skills necessary to develop and deliver domestic training programs on forest fire suppression.

The course featured expert contributions from forest fire professionals from France, Australia, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand. Notable sessions included a lecture on Korea’s forest fire response system by the Korea Forest Service, a fire behavior analysis workshop by French and Australian specialists, and practical demonstrations by Thai experts. The training also included innovative sand-table simulations and hands-on prescribed burning exercises.

Supported by France’s MOFA, the training contributed to AFoCO’s broader efforts to promote regional cooperation and preparedness in forest fire management.



*Trainees participating in prescribed burning practice as part of forest fire suppression management*



*Trainers and trainees pose for a group photo during a forest fire suppression field practice session*

## I AFoCO and Baekdudaegan National Arboretum Science and Technology Exchange Partnership Program – The Role of Forest Plant Biodiversity Conservation



*Opening ceremony of the STEP Program held at the AFoCO Secretariat*

The AFoCO RETC, in collaboration with the Baekdudaegan National Arboretum (BDNA), implemented the 2024 Science and Technology Exchange Partnership (STEP) program under the theme, The Role of Forest Plant Biodiversity Conservation. Held in the Republic of Korea, the two-week program aimed to strengthen technical capacity in forest genetic resource conservation, particularly in seed collection, viability testing and long-term storage.

The program was part of AFoCO’s regional initiative, KEYS for Future, which seeks to promote long-term seed conservation efforts through the Baekdudaegan Global Seed Vault (BGSV). Four researchers from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, representing national institutions responsible for biodiversity and forestry, participated in this year’s program. Combining theory with practice, the training covered a wide range of topics, including seed search and collection, seed management, plant propagation, vitality testing, storage techniques and voucher specimen production. Participants also visited the BDNA Exhibition Garden and the Nakdonggang National Institute of Biological Resources to enhance their practical understanding of plant biodiversity conservation.

Importantly, the program focused on introducing the BGSV system and encouraging participating countries to explore opportunities for future seed deposits. It served as a platform to foster long-term collaboration in safeguarding the genetic diversity of vulnerable forest plant species. On the final day, each participant presented an action plan outlining national strategies for improving seed conservation and restoration in their respective countries.

By linking seed science with practical conservation strategies, the STEP program served as a cross-border platform for knowledge sharing and cooperation, reinforcing the collective mission of preserving forest plant biodiversity in the Asia region.



*Plant specimen collection conducted in collaboration with BDNA researchers*

## I AFoCO and French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs' Science and Technology Exchange Partnership Program – Forest Fire Risk and Management

The AFoCO RETC, in collaboration with the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MOFA), successfully implemented the 2024 STEP Program under the theme, Forest Fire Risk and Management. The 5-week advanced training course was conducted in several locations in France, including the University of Montpellier, the Valabre National Forest Fires Education and Research Centre, and the Salles Regional Forestry and Silviculture Education Centre.

The program aimed to strengthen participants' capacities in forest fire prevention, suppression and post-fire ecosystem restoration. Four experienced participants from Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Thailand engaged in a comprehensive curriculum combining theoretical lectures with immersive field-based training. Key topics included fire behavior modeling, risk forecasting, fuel management and ecological restoration techniques. Field exercises included firebreak construction, prescribed burning and simulations of large-scale wildfire scenarios. Participants also visited key sites, such as the French National Air Base, regional fire command centers, and fire-prone forested areas in the Pyrenees and Gascony, gaining hands-on exposure to coordinated fire management strategies and technologies.

Through close collaboration with French institutions and experts, the program served as a valuable platform for international knowledge exchange and future cooperation in forest fire management. Participants developed action plans tailored to their national contexts, reflecting lessons learned throughout the training. A post-program survey indicated a high level of satisfaction. The combination of practical field experience and expert-led sessions was particularly appreciated.

Overall, the program contributed to the formation of a regional network of trainers and reinforced the importance of adaptive, science-based approaches in addressing the growing threat of wildfires in the context of climate change.



Site visit to French forest fire-related institutions and training activities at Valabre

## I AFoCO, French MOFA and Korea Forest Service Sign MoU on Forest Fire Management in Asia



Group photo with signatories and representatives of the AFoCO Assembly

On October 30, 2024, AFoCO signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Korea Forest Service (KFS) and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to launch a new regional initiative on forest fire management in Asia. The signing ceremony was held at the AFoCO Secretariat in Seoul, Republic of Korea and marked a significant step toward establishing a long-term collaboration framework to address the growing risks of wildfires in the region.

The MoU laid the foundation for the Forest Fire Management in Asia Initiative, which aims to strengthen the capacities of AFoCO Member Countries in wildfire prevention, suppression and restoration. The initiative will begin with pilot activities in 2024–2025, followed by full-scale implementation from 2026 to 2030. The collaboration draws on the combined strengths of the three parties: Korea brings operational expertise in aerial firefighting and motorized suppression systems; France contributes practical field-based knowledge and training capacity in fire control and post-fire recovery; and AFoCO coordinates regional training and cooperation efforts.

Through this partnership, the three parties plan to deliver tailored training programs for forest fire practitioners across AFoCO Member Countries, promote the adoption of advanced technologies such as remote sensing and fire simulation tools, and support technical exchanges to enhance governance and policy frameworks related to forest fire management. The initiative is expected to contribute to the development of skilled national trainers, the deployment and utilization of fire monitoring systems in high-risk areas, and the promotion of science-based decision-making at all levels.

Through the MoU, AFoCO, KFS and MOFA reaffirmed their joint commitment to enhancing climate resilience and protecting forest ecosystems in Asia through coordinated and innovative approaches to forest fire management.

AFoCO regularly offers opportunities for Government officials from Parties to gain experience in working at the Secretariat through the Fellowship Program. The Program serves as a valuable platform for effective communication and deeper mutual understanding between the Secretariat and the Parties, contributing to the successful realization of AFoCO's goals. It is a mutually beneficial arrangement wherein Fellowship officials gain hands-on experience in an intergovernmental setting and broaden their professional networks while the Secretariat benefits from their expertise and contributions. The 2024 Fellowship welcomed six officials from Member Countries.

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**Tluang Hmung Thang**

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The Forest Aviation Headquarters of the Republic of Korea conducted a three-day training program in Advanced Forest Fire Management for AFoCO Fellowship officials from 19 to 21 June 2023. The program provided participants with insights into Korea's aerial firefighting strategies and institutional framework for forest fire response.

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On 8 March 2024, the Baekdudaegan National Arboretum Seed Vault Center in the Republic of Korea hosted a study visit on Advanced Seed Management and Preservation. The visit offered Fellowship officials an opportunity to observe Korea's national infrastructure and technical practices for forest genetic resource conservation.



