Eleventh Session of the Assembly
30-31 October 2024, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Agenda Item 11

Updates on Capacity Development Activities and Future Plan

I. Ongoing Capacity Building Activities

A. <u>Updates on education and training programs</u>

1. In the year 2024, a total of 13 programs were/are to be conducted. In response to requests made during the Fifth Session of the Assembly, the Regional Education and Training Center (RETC) undertook an exploration of venues to facilitate in-person training activities in Member Countries. This year, the Secretariat conducted one off-site training session in Thailand and the site inspection in Kazakhstan, in March and August, respectively.

2. In 2024, the AFoCO Regional Education and Training Center (RETC), in collaboration with the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Royal Forest Department of Thailand, conducted a forest fire training program from 18-29 March 2024, under the title of the "AFoCO-France Joint Capacity Building Program on Forest Fire Management for Climate Action", whose concept note was reported at the Ninth Session of the Assembly (A-23-9-11). Following the success of these prototype sessions in 2023 and 2024, a more tailored and comprehensive forest fire training program is scheduled for 2025 in Indonesia, Kazakhstan, and Thailand, taking into account the unique forest types of each member country. The outputs and lessons learned from these sessions will be incorporated into the "Forest Fire Management in Asia Initiative (FFMA)", which is being developed with financial collaboration from the governments of the Republic of Korea and France.

3. Building on the collaborative efforts established through the Science and Technology Exchange Partnership (STEP) program, the Secretariat has developed two STEP programs for 2024. The first, in collaboration with the Baekdu Daegan National Arboretum (BDNA) of the Republic of Korea, specialized training sessions were provided for researchers from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, focusing on climate and ecosystem challenges specific to their regions. This year, the program was operated with integration of the "Keep Eternally Your Seeds for Future (KEYS for Future)" initiative to promote seed deposits to the Baekdudaegan Global Seed Vault (BGSV).

4. Additionally, as part of the feasibility work for the Forest Fire Management in Asia Initiative (FFMA), the RETC developed a STEP program on forest fire management in partnership with relevant agencies in France. In November, four forest fire practitioners from Indonesia,

Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Thailand will participate in a six-week short-term educational course organized by the University of Montpellier, France. In 2025, the FFMA STEP program will be conducted in collaboration with the French government.

5. The summary of training and education programs in 2024 is in **Annex-1**.

B. Update on AFoCO Fellowship Program

6. In the year 2024, the Secretariat extended a warm welcome to a total of seven (7) Fellowship Officials of the following countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, and Thailand. These Fellowship Officials commenced their assignments at the Secretariat Headquarters in February 2024, with a designated service period spanning six to eleven months, concluding in December 2024.

7. The Secretariat has arranged the study visit programs to relevant agencies in the forestry sector of Korea in order to provide the Fellowship Officials with an opportunity to explore and share expertise and knowledge that can be adopted and transferred to improve their practice in relevant fields as follows: 1) Forest Fire Management Training and Drone Education at the Korea Aviation Headquarters; 2) Sustainable Forest Management Training at the Baekdudaegan National Arboretum (BDNA) and Seed Vault, and among others.

8. Pursuant to the Decision 54-IX-23R on the Work Plan and Budget for 2024, adopted by the Ninth Session of the Assembly, the Secretariat has selected the 2025 batch of Fellowship Officials. Taking into account the expected workload and budget availability, the Secretariat selected six (6) Fellowship nominees across two categories for the 2025 batch. In accordance with the Guidelines on the Expanded Fellowship Program, the term of service for Fellowship Officials will remain the same as in 2025: one (1) year for Category I and up to two (2) years for Category II.

   - Category I: Bhutan, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Timor-Leste (5 officials)
   - Category II: Thailand (1st year) and Myanmar (2nd year) (2 officials)

9. The status of the Member Countries participating in the Fellowship Program is in **Annex-2**.

C. Update on the Landmark Scholarship Program

10. The Landmark Scholarship Program has been instrumental in providing support to a total of 10 doctoral and 20 master's degree students since its launch in 2014. By reaching this milestone, the program will have successfully achieved its mission of selecting and sponsoring these students at both the doctoral and master's levels.

11. To further support ongoing students, the Secretariat has convened two (2) Landmark Scholarship Program Colloquiums. These colloquiums offered a structured platform for students to share updates on their academic progress and research areas, while also providing valuable insights and suggestions aimed at enhancing the overall impact and effectiveness of the program.

12. In alignment with its ongoing commitment to advancing the Landmark Scholarship Program, the Secretariat, in 2024, undertook significant efforts to identify potential partners for the next phase

of the program. A round table meeting was convened with the supervisors currently associated with the program, where discussions focused on the critical aspects necessary for the program's progression, including broadening the range of eligible recipients and expanding the scope of applicable research areas. Furthermore, the Secretariat initiated preliminary steps to establish an international exchange system, engaging with a new partner (e.g., Univ. of British Columbia, Canada) to enhance collaborative academic opportunities both domestically and internationally.

13. As part of the FFMA feasibility activities, the RETC will conduct the 1-year master's degree course in collaboration with the French government in 2025. This initiative is expected to complement the Secretariat's ongoing efforts to develop a new scholarship program, providing a strong foundation for advancing expertise in forest fire management across the region.

14. The status of the Member Countries participating in the Landmark Scholarship Program is in **Annex-3.**

II. RETC Operation and Achievements

A. RETC operation and management

15. Currently, the Regional Education and Training Center (RETC) is limited accessible to the general public, and its security measures are supported by the Forest Department (FD) of Myanmar. The RETC's maintenance is overseen by twenty-seconded governmental officials from the FD, along with the contribution of nine local staff members. Following the relaxation of immigration policies in September 2022, the RETC has been conducting training programs aimed at enhancing local livelihoods and addressing educational concerns. These programs include the Eco-school Program, which focuses on increasing environmental awareness among young students, as well as livelihood improvement training for local communities in Myanmar. Additionally, the RETC has tailored programs to meet the needs of forest education experts who express an interest in visiting the center.

16. In order to ensure effective management and sustainable operation, the Secretariat has extended the Memorandum of Understanding for the Landmark Program with the FD of Myanmar for an additional five years, now valid until 31 July 2029. This extension comes in preparation for the finalization of the Host Country Agreement for the RETC.

17. The RETC will continue its operations in 2025. It plans to organize a total of 22 programs categorized into eight distinct categories. These categories encompass short- and long-term training, community development training, the eco-school program, in-house capacity-building programs, workshops and conferences, partnerships and promotional activities. These programs will be conducted at the RETC and in member countries.

B. Establishment of AFoCO experimental forest (119 ha)

18. The RETC has successfully completed the improvement work for the 2.39 km main road and 100-meter access road at the experimental forest site in 2024, with the budget from the Landmark Program. Currently, signboards installment and the infrastructure development (e.g., wooden deck) are under progress.

III.   Finalization of Capacity Building Roadmap 2030

19. In alignment with AFoCO's Strategic Plan and Climate Action Plan, endorsed at the Ninth Session of the Assembly in October 2023, the Secretariat adjusted and finalized the "Capacity Building Roadmap 2030" (*hereinafter referred to as ˝the Roadmap˝*). The Secretariat, in collaboration with the RETC, will lead its implementation, ensuring that activities are tailored to the specific needs and contexts of member countries.

20. The final draft of the Roadmap is in **Annex-4**.

IV.   Points for Consideration

21. The Assembly may wish to take note of the updates.

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Queries on the content of the document may be addressed to:

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Annex-1 (A-24-11-10, Agenda Item 11)

Summary of Training and Education Programs

Table 1. Status of Training and Education Programs in 2024

No.	Date/Venue	Courses	Number of Trainees* (Male/Female)	Number of Countries*
AFoCO Regular Training (short-term)				
1	Mar/TH	AFoCO-French MOFA Forest Fire Suppression Training	21 (21/0)	10
2	June/ROK	Forest Fire Management and Drone Training for Fellowship Officials at Forest Aviation HQ	6 (4/2)	6
3	June/ROK	Study visits for Fellowship Officials	6 (4/2)	6
AFoCO Regular Training (long-term)				
4	Aug/ROK	AFoCO-BDNA STEP & KEYS Program	4 (4/0)	2
5	Nov/FR	AFoCO-France FFMA STEP Program	4 *(To be updated)*	4
Community Development Training				
6	Jan/RETC	Empower Forest Communities	99 (9/0)	1
7	Aug/KH	Agroforestry Training for Farmers in Cambodia (Rabobank)	440 (303/137)	1
8	Jan/VN	Agroforestry Training for Farmers in Viet Nam (Rabobank)	23 (23/0)	1
9	Sep/KG	Agroforestry Training for Farmers in Kyrgyzstan (Rabobank)	5,000 *(To be updated)*	1
Eco-School Program				
10	Jan-Dec/RETC	Eco-Schools Program	600 *(To be updated)*	1
Partnerships & Promotion				
11	Jun/Sweden	Promoting partnerships at IUFRO Stockholm 2024	n/a	n/a
In-house Capacity-building Program for RETC Staff				
12	Jan-Dec/RETC	Capacity building for RETC staff (6 courses)	47(44/3)	1
Customized Training & Others				
13	TBD/RETC	Cooperative study-visit program with World Bank	*To be updated*	*To be updated*

Table 2. AFoCO RETC Trainees of the Member Countries (2019 ~ 2024)

Country	Number of Certified Trainees*						Total
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Bhutan	14	2	11	12	8	1	47
Brunei Darussalam	6	2	5	11	9	-	33
Cambodia	13	6	22	25	6	3	72
Indonesia	14	8	66	20	18	5	126
Kazakhstan	8	-	13	6	2	6	29
Kyrgyzstan	-	-	-	5	4	5	9
Lao PDR	10	6	9	5	6	-	36
Malaysia	-	-	6	17	25	-	48
Mongolia	6	4	9	8	3	2	30
Myanmar	24	10	14	10	9	4	67
Philippines	8	2	43	16	3	-	72
Republic of Korea				3	4	-	7
Singapore	2	2	5	3	8	-	20
Thailand	15	8	16	11	6	13	56
Timor-Leste	10	6	25	10	6	1	57
Viet Nam	14	8	12	11	8	1	53
Total	144	64	256	173	125	41	762

Note:
*Number of speakers, facilitators, and other countries' participants are not included.

Table 3. AFoCO STEP Researchers of the Member Countries (2019 ~ 2024)

Country	Number of STEP Researchers						Total
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Bhutan	1	-	-	-	-		1
Brunei Darussalam	1	-	1	-	1		3
Cambodia	1	-	1	-	-		2
Indonesia	-	1	-	-	1	1	3
Kazakhstan	-	-	1	-	-	3	4
Kyrgyzstan	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Lao PDR	-	1	-	-	-		1
Mongolia	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Myanmar	1	1	-	-	-		2
Philippines	-	-	-	-	1		1
Thailand	-	-*	1	-	-	1	2
Timor-Leste	-	-	-	-	1		1
Viet Nam	1	-	-	-	-		1
Total	5	3	4	-	4	8	24

Note: *The nominee who did not participate the STEP program was not included.

/end/

AFoCO Fellowship Officials of the Member Countries (2015 ~ 2025)

Country	Number of Fellowship Officials									Total
	2015	2016	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	
Bhutan	n/a	n/a	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	6
Brunei Darussalam	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Cambodia	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	5
Indonesia	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	2 (1*)	-	5 (1*)
Lao PDR	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Kazakhstan	n/a	n/a	-	-	-	1	1	1*	-	3 (1*)
Kyrgyzstan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-	1	-	1
Malaysia	-	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1
Mongolia	n/a	n/a	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	2
Myanmar	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	1	2 (1*)	7 (1*)
Philippines	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Singapore	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-
Tajikistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-	-
Thailand	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	1*	4 (1*)
Timor-Leste	n/a	n/a	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	3
Viet Nam	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	4
Total	3	4	4	3	7	6	4	7	7	45

(*Category II official)

(n/a: not applicable for the duration of non-Party)

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AFoCO Landmark Scholarship Recipients of the Member Countries (2014 ~ 2025)

Country	Number of Scholarship Recipient		Total
	Doctoral	Master's	
Brunei Darussalam	-	-	-
Cambodia	1 (KNU)	2 (YU PSPS)	3
Indonesia	3 (UOS / KNU / SNU)	1 (YU PSPS)	4
Lao PDR	1 (CNU)	2 (KWNU / YU PSPS)	3
Malaysia	-	-	-
Myanmar	1 (SNU)	4 (CBNU / CNU / YU PSPS / UOS)	5
Philippines	1 (CNU)	4 (2 DKU / 1 SNU / 1 YU PSPS)	5
Singapore	-	-	-
Thailand	2 (SNU / YU)	2 (YU PSPS /SNU)	4
Viet Nam	1 (CNU)	5 (YU PSPS / KMU / SNU / KNU / KWNU)	6
Total	10	20	30

Abbreviation
  KNU: Kookmin University
  YU PSPS: Yeungnam University, Park Chung Hee School of Policy and Saemaul
  UOS: University of Seoul
  CNU: Chungnam National University
  KWNU: Kangwon National University
  SNU: Seoul National University
  SNU PC: Seoul National University Pyeongchang Campus
  CBNU: Chungbuk National University
  DKU: Dongguk University
  YU: Yeungnam University
  KMU: Kookmin University

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ASIAN FOREST COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

CAPACITY-BUILDING ROADMAP 2030

AFoCO

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFoCO	Asian Forest Cooperation Organization
CBR	Capacity-Building Roadmap
EE	Enabling Environment
FAAF	Friends of Asia and Asian Forests
IC	Individual-Level Capacity
MOOCs	Massive Online Open Courses
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
OC	Organizational Capacity
PPA	Program Priority Areas
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (with the "+" representing conservation, sustainable forest management, and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks)
RETC	Regional Education and Training Center
STEP	Science and Technology Exchange Partnership
TOWS	Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Strengths,
UN SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

1. Introduction

The **Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO)** is a treaty-based intergovernmental organization dedicated to enhancing forest cooperation in Asia. Its mission is to take concrete steps towards promoting sustainable forest management and addressing the impacts of climate change. As of November 2024, AFoCO comprises **17 member countries**: 15 Parties (Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam) and 2 Observers (Malaysia and Singapore) (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1 Map of the AFoCO Member Countries

Aligned with the **AFoCO Agreement's objectives**, the organization places a strong emphasis on **capacity-building** for its stakeholders through various avenues such as research and development, sharing experiences, technology transfer, and education and exchange programs. To facilitate this, AFoCO established the **Regional Education and Training Center (RETC)** in Yangon, Myanmar, in 2018. In 2020, the Secretariat began developing a **Capacity-Building Roadmap 2030 (CBR 2030)** to strengthen its capacity development efforts.

Capacity development is a core function of AFoCO, essential for achieving its vision. It is a collaborative process led by the actors in the member countries, aligning with both AFoCO's priorities and local contexts. AFoCO's approach is rooted in national systems and expertise while drawing on international cooperation and partnerships to stimulate growth.

The development of the **CBR 2030** is timely, responding to key global forestry agendas and supporting the achievement of healthy forest ecosystems by 2030, in line with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)**. The CBR will be integrated with AFoCO's strategic priorities, ensuring its alignment with the global targets for sustainable development.

The **CBR 2030** will also play a crucial role in supporting the newly established **AFoCO Strategic Plan 2024-2030** [1], serving as a practical guide for implementing capacity development programs and projects. It outlines potential roles for the RETC and offers a framework for stakeholders both within and outside AFoCO to engage in the implementation of capacity-building activities. Additionally, the CBR will contribute to the organization's **resource mobilization strategy**, a key ongoing task of the Secretariat.

Ensuring the coherence and quality of capacity development processes, the **CBR** follows a structured approach, involving the collection, consolidation, and analysis of AFoCO's capacity development practices. This includes conducting baseline surveys and assessing the capacity needs of member countries. An expert group facilitates this process through technical review meetings, validation sessions, and consultations with relevant stakeholders, culminating in the production of the **CBR 2030**.

CBR 2030 is the outcome of a comprehensive capacity assessment study. This analysis assesses existing capacities within AFoCO and identifies the needs of its member countries, providing a clear direction for future capacity development efforts.

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[1] AFoCO Strategic Plan 2024-2030, endorsed at the Ninth Session of Assembly in October 2023 (D51-IX-23) (https://afocosec.org/publication/afoco-strategic-plan-2024-2030/).

2. Objective, Scope and Target Audience

2.1. Objectives

The **AFoCO Capacity-Building Roadmap 2030** aims to direct capacity development initiatives that support the maintenance of healthy forest ecosystems in Asia while contributing to the prevention of deforestation and forest degradation. The primary objective of the roadmap is to strengthen the capacity of AFoCO member countries and their stakeholders to effectively implement the vision of AFoCO, "**A Greener Asia with climate-resilient and sustainable forests, landscapes and communities**." This involves designing and executing context-specific, evidence-based, and cohesive forest policies and actions that promote sustainable forest management across the region.

2.2. Scope

The CBR 2030 has three strategic areas to achieve its objective:

1. **Individual-Level Capacity (IC)**: CBR 2030 will provide comprehensive capacity-building opportunities at the national, regional, and local levels, to ensure effective and efficient forest management in AFoCO member countries.

2. **Organizational Capacity (OC)**: CBR 2030 will support the member countries to establish key organizational policies, procedures, and frameworks for forest management entities, to create a work environment that encourages foresters to enhance their professional capabilities and apply newly acquired or improved skills in their day-to-day operations.

3. **Enabling Environment (EE)**: CBR 2030 will improve the conditions and context necessary to develop a robust, competency-based capacity development framework, so that to promote the professionalization of forest management in AFoCO member countries.

2.3. Target Audience

External

○ **Government decision-makers, advisors, and technical staff**: Key individuals involved in forest policy formulation and implementation at the national level.

○ **Non-government actors**: Stakeholders from private companies, local communities, and civil society organizations involved in sustainable forest management and related activities.

○ **National academia and research/training institutes**: Educational and research institutions that play a role in forest management education, research, and capacity-building.

○ **Other regional and international organizations**: Entities that collaborate with AFoCO on regional and global forest management efforts.

Internal

○ **AFoCO's senior program officers**: Individuals responsible for overseeing and managing AFoCO's projects and initiatives.

○ **Professionals in AFoCO and the RETC**: Experts and professionals working within AFoCO and its RETC.

○ **Staff members of the AFoCO Secretariat and the RETC**: Administrative and operational staff supporting AFoCO's capacity-building and project implementation.

○ **Other professionals in member countries and associated institutes**: Professionals in member countries who are engaged in AFoCO-related activities and projects, contributing to regional collaboration and forest management efforts.

Table 1. External and internal target audiences

Category	External	Internal
Primary	• Government decision-makers, advisors, and technical staff • Non-government actors 　• Private sector 　• Local communities and society	• AFoCO's senior program officers • Professionals in AFoCO and the RETC • Staff members of the AFoCO Secretariat and the RETC
Secondary	• National academia and research/training institutes • Other regional organizations/ international organizations	• Other professionals in the member countries and associated institutes engaged in AFoCO activities

3. Rationale

3.1. AFoCO Strategic Plan 2024-2030

AFoCO aims to contribute to the global goals of increasing forest cover and implementing the Paris Agreement on climate change in the forest sector. The AFoCO Strategic Plan (2024-2030), which is consistent with AFoCO's vision and mission, addresses the climate crisis through two strategic thrusts: sustainable management of forest to secure environmental, social and economic benefits, and contributions to the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs by 2030. AFoCO envisions a greener Asia with resilient forests, landscapes, and communities through enhanced cooperation in climate change adaptation and mitigation, sustainable forest management, and livelihood improvement programs. Cooperation, coordination, and synergies on forest-related issues among all relevant sectors and stakeholders, including regional organizations, are crucial for maximizing impact at the regional level.

- Capacity Development as a Cross-Cutting Theme

AFoCO identifies capacity development as one of its four Cross-Cutting Themes (CCTs), which are essential to achieving success in its three Program Priority Areas (PPAs). Specifically, CCT 2 focuses on enhancing the capacities of Member Countries to contribute to national, regional, and global climate, biodiversity, and sustainability goals. This includes both human and institutional capacity development.

- Tailored Capacity-Building Programs

The Strategic Plan acknowledges the varying needs of Member Countries and aims to provide demand-driven, customized capacity-development programs. This involves: (1) Short, informal training courses, (2) Study tours, (3) Internships and, (4) AFoCO fellowship and graduate education programs. The plan emphasizes that capacity-building is embedded in all AFoCO projects to ensure sustainability and scalability of outcomes.

- Capacity-Building in Key Focus Areas

AFoCO's capacity-building efforts are aimed at several critical areas, including:

> **Forest policy development**: Supporting Member Countries in developing and revising policies, laws, and regulations to create an enabling environment for the forestry sector.

> **Climate–Forest Disaster Risk Management**: Building technical and institutional capacities for early warning systems, disaster risk management, and response strategies.

> **Forest Land Restoration and Conservation**: Developing capacities for sustainable forest management, reforestation, and conservation activities.

- Support for Community Empowerment

Capacity-building also extends to local communities engaged in forest-based enterprises. AFoCO promotes community-based forestry initiatives, empowering local people through education and training to sustainably manage forest resources while benefiting from forest ecosystem services.

Table 2. Program priority areas, outcomes, targets and links to the SDGs

Program Priority Area	Outcome statement	Indicators	SDG
1. Forest land restoration and conservation	**Expanded forest land under sustainable management through reforestation and rehabilitation of degraded forests, forest conservation and sustainable use of forests**		
■ **1A. Reforestation and rehabilitation**	Degraded terrestrial and coastal forest lands, including flooded forest, peat forest and mangroves are reforested or rehabilitated to healthy ecosystems through participatory design, planting, management and monitoring	1. Increase in forest cover in Member Countries 2. Tonne CO_2eq sequestered from AFoCO-supported projects by 2030.	13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development
■ **1B. Conservation of natural forests**	Natural forests and biodiversity conserved and protected through enhanced management, governance, knowledge and skills	1. Increase of natural forests and biodiversity conserved in Member Countries	13, 15, 16, 17

2. Community and circular bioeconomy	Climate-resilient communities with circular bioeconomic livelihoods		
■ 2A. Green villages and enterprises	Enhanced forest-based value-chains, livelihoods and adaptive capacities of forest-dependent communities	1. No. of community-based forest enterprises in Member Countries 2. No. of green villages operational in Member Countries	8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries 13, 15, 16, 17
■ 2B. Rewards for Forest Ecosystem Services' schemes	Rewards for Forest Ecosystem Services' schemes, including carbon and biodiversity, are received by forest dependent communities	1. No. of schemes developed in Member Countries 2. Tonne CO_2eq sequestered from AFoCO supported projects by 2030	8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17
3. Climate–forest disaster risk management	**Reduced risks from climate–forest disaster for forests and communities**		
■ 3A. Disaster risk reduction technologies	Early warning systems, risk prediction, forecast and models are used by Member Countries to reduce climate–forest disaster risks for forests and communities	1. No. of warning systems and prediction models employed in Member Countries	13, 15, 17
■ 3B. Disaster risk management planning	Disaster response deployed in affected forests and communities	1. No. of forest disaster strategies and tactical responses employed by Member Countries	13, 15, 17
4. Cross-cutting themes: policies, capacity, knowledge, technology	**Enhanced governance and capacities in sustainable forest management at various levels to contribute to achieving national, regional and global climate, biodiversity and sustainable development goals**		
■ CCT 1. Policies	Forest policies, laws, rules, regulations are developed to transform the forestry sector	1. No. of policies enhanced or created	10, 13, 15, 16, 17
■ CCT 2. Capacity development	Member Countries' enhanced capacities lead to achievement of climate, biodiversity and sustainability goals	1. Improvement in human and institutional capacities	10, 13, 15, 16, 17
■ CCT 3. Knowledge	An interactive, integrated forest data	1. Integrated forest data management system	10, 13, 15, 16, 17

management and learning exchange	management system established that captures long-term changes, impacts, issues and achievements of Member Countries with accompanying learning exchange platform	operational 2. Learning exchange platform operational	
■ CCT 4. Technology transfer and application	ICT-based forest and disaster risk management technologies transferred and/or customized to suit the needs and capacities of Member Countries	1. No. of technologies transferred and exchanged 2. No. of technologies customized	10, 13, 15, 16, 17

3.2. Needs and Priorities

Through the expert survey, the following priorities should be considered as current needs for the capacity development of AFoCO and its member countries were identified:

- **Adapt resources to meet user needs:**
  Curating resources and tools to adapt them to users' needs involves offering them in various formats and through diverse delivery channels, such as e-learning, Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs), and professional networks.

- **Build a bottom-up approach to knowledge production:**
  Building a more bottom-up approach to knowledge production is essential.

- **Coordinate regional approaches and facilitate dialogue**:
  Regional approaches are necessary for formulating effective actions, including facilitating sub-regional dialogues to share knowledge and experiences among countries facing similar challenges.

- **Develop connections between global goals and local actions:**
  Bridging the gap between global goals and local actions is essential, especially for achieving international climate targets through NDCs and enhancing readiness for REDD+.

- **Enhance capacity development for SFM implementation:**
  Capacity development plays a role in strategizing, implementing, coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating efforts to translate sustainable forest management (SFM) policies into practical actions.

- **Focus on user needs in capacity development:**
  Capacity development should focus on enhancing knowledge and skills, with an emphasis on responding to the real needs of users to ensure effective uptake.

- **Generate insights from data for decision-making:**
  Consolidating multiple data streams into coherent narratives enables evidence-based decision-making, covering data, publications, knowledge, learning, and motivation to act.

- **Harness mutual partnership:**
  Capacity-building for certain areas is vital in forestry through multilateral partnerships.

- **Initiate coordinated strategies for climate change:**
  Initiating the development of coordinated strategies is key to addressing climate change and development issues through cooperation among local stakeholders.

3.3. Demands from the Member Countries

Targeted the Member Countries, a questionnaire survey was conducted to assess the importance of subjects for future training programs, as shown in the accompanying image. The importance of each subject for future capacity-building programs was evaluated into four categories, considering both importance and urgency as rated by field staff and high-level officials (**Figure 2**):

- **Category I:**
  Topics that received high scores from both field staff and high-level officials, identified as important and urgent.

- **Category II:**
  Topics that received high scores from field staff but not from high-level officials, considered important.

- **Category III:**
  Topics with low scores from both groups, categorized as relatively less important and less urgent.

- **Category IV:**
  Topics that received high scores from high-level officials but not from field-level staff, identified as urgent.
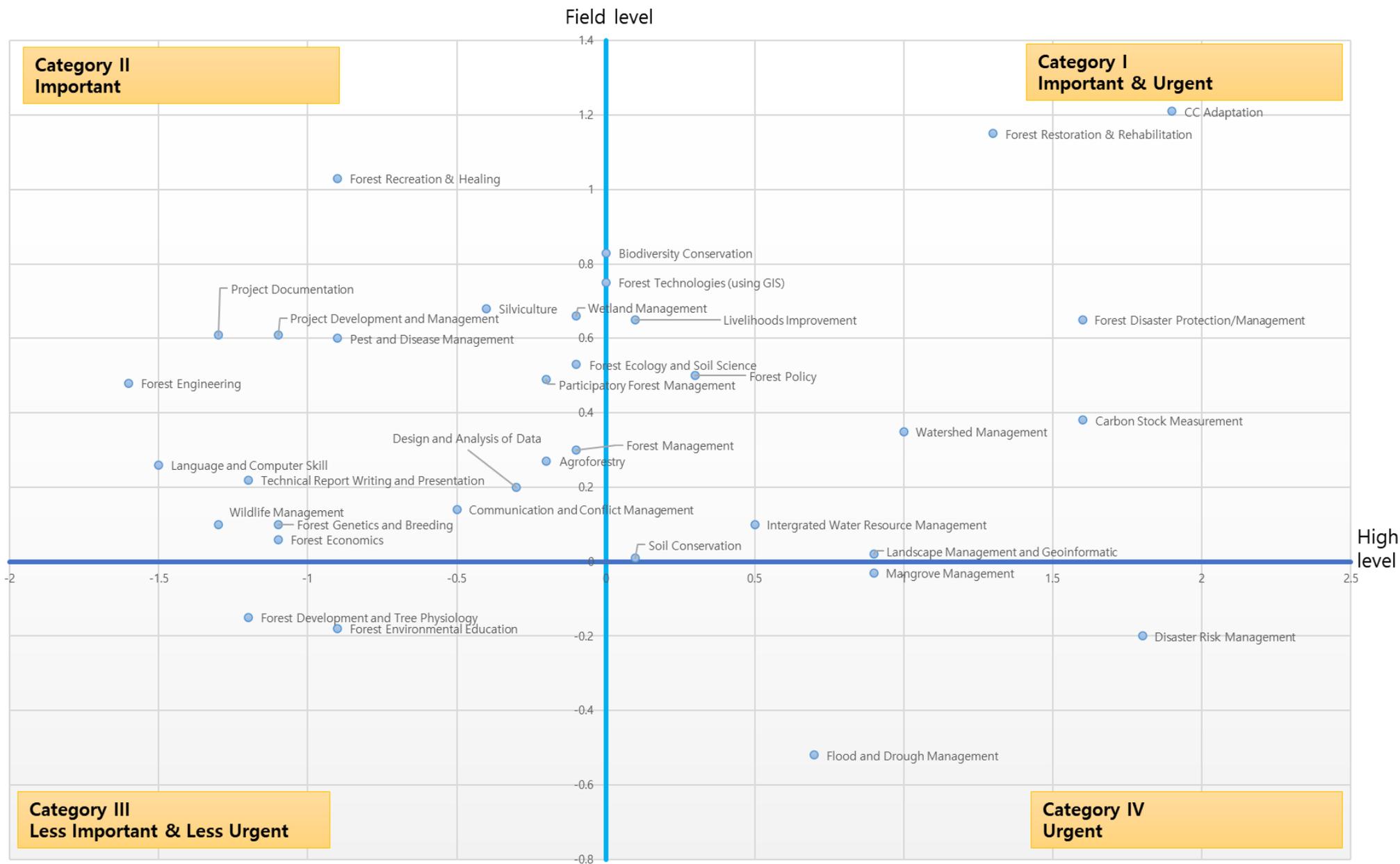
Figure 2. Choice of subjects by high-level officials and field staff

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3.4. Institutional Analysis

The TOWS analysis was carried out targeted AFoCO Secretariat and the RETC, to look beyond just identifying these factors and instead focus on how they can interact to shape planning and decision-making (**Table 3**).

Table 3. TOWS Analysis on RETC

		Threat	Opportunity
Weakness		**WT Strategies:** 'How can we minimize the AFoCO's weaknesses to avoid the threats identified in capacity development?' Strengthening the education and training capacity of the organization • Securing education and training instructors • Supply and expansion of high-quality educational facilities • Expansion of online facilities and educational programs • An initial platform to develop a regional-level programme Strengthening the human resources of the organization • Expansion of the organization's team/division in charge of capacity-building both at the HQ and the RETC • Expansion of the local staff for education at RETC • RETC fellowship program • RETC research fellow programs with other research organizations	**WO Strategies:** 'What actions can we take to minimize the AFoCO's weaknesses using the opportunities identified in capacity development?' Building a practical cooperation network • Expansion of partnership with education and training centers in member countries • Increase of long-term research capacity (e.g., Experimental Forest Network with member countries) • Networking with member countries and other regional research players Expansion of educational opportunities • Technical-level officials • High-level decision maker
Strength		**ST Strategies:** 'How can we use the AFoCO's strengths to minimize the threats identified in capacity development?' Foster the next generation of leaders • Expansion of scholarship targets • Fostering forest entrepreneurs • Expansion of academic exchanges with advanced forest faculties Dissemination of advanced technology • Dissemination of field technology • Equipment supply	**SO Strategies:** 'Which of AFoCO's strengths can be used to maximize the opportunities identified in capacity development?' Funding Expands its role as a fundraising institution • Private sector • Existing funding sources • Expected roles as representing forest education in Asia

4. Core Activities and Priority Topics

The proposed topics and activities are aimed at meeting key capacity gaps of AFoCO member countries. They timely respond to capacity challenges identified in the survey and aim to strengthen the foundation of key capacity areas. The suggested plan may address various issues, including governance, funding, monitoring and evaluation, communication, and coordination within the AFoCO member countries, which play a central role in initiating and building support and momentum for future capacity development activities.

The capacity development topics and activities are broken down into short-term, medium-term, and long-term targets (**Table 4**). They approach capacity development at three scopes – individual, organizational, and enabling environment – with reference to the gaps identified in the capacity-baseline survey.

Topics for capacity development have been identified through the baseline survey. Those topics are divided into high and low-priority areas, high-level (policymaker), field staff (or manager), and local communities. This is also based on the reference to the gaps identified in the capacity development baseline survey.

The baseline surveys were conducted to assess the current level of functional capacities in an enabling environment and organizations of the AFoCO member countries. These surveys aimed to identify capacity gaps and needs and diagnose key priority areas. Also, based on the existing capacity of AFoCO member countries, both short-term and long-term capacity development goals can be established.

The importance of subject choices for future capacity-building programs is estimated by re-calculating the scores of each topic in terms of importance and urgency given by not only field staff but also high-level officials (**Table 5**).

Table 4. Core activities

Scope	Shor-term (Y1~Y2)	Medium-term (Y3~Y4)	Long-term (Y5~)
Individual-level Capacity (IC)	Training courses - Practical - Regional-specific contents - Online program Fellowship program	Joint degree scholarship program (1+1 or 2+2) Master: A university (2) + Research Institute or Field experience (1) Ph.D.: A university (3) + Research Institute (2)	Technology transfer through e.g., universities and research institutions to integrate peer-to-peer learning programs within AFoCO member countries
Organizational Capacity (OC)	Facilitate the member countries to work alongside on key topics with potential donor(s) Country- and sub-regional-based capacity building consultations	Create AFoCO's capacity-building policy and procedure templates Create informal horizontal peer-to-peer mentoring networks of senior management within AFoCO member countries	
Enabling Environment (EE)	Strategic partnership between universities, research institutions, and international organizations* within/beyond AFoCO region	RETC experimental forest Establish the RETC satellite campuses Utilization of the project sites as living labs	Establishment of an e-learning platform -AFoCO e-learning center (ICT, AI, AR/VR, etc.) -Web-based learning solution

*The partnership can be extended through the coordination of topics, cooperation with member countries, international organizations, and private sectors.

Table 5. Priority topics

	High-Level	Field-Level	Community-Level
High priority	① Forest policy/governance ② Climate change adaptation ③ Forest disaster protection/management ④ Livelihoods improvement ⑤ Biodiversity conservation ⑥ Watershed management ⑦ Integrated water resource management ⑧ Wetland management ⑨ Mangrove management ⑩ Disaster risk management ⑪ Flood and drought management	① Climate change adaptation ② Forest restoration and rehabilitation ③ Forest disaster protection/management ④ Forest technology (e.g., GIS, remote sensing, drone) ⑤ Forest management ⑥ Watershed management ⑦ Soil conservation ⑧ Integrated water resource management ⑨ Wetland management ⑩ Carbon stock measurement	① Climate change adaptation ② Livelihood improvement ③ Forest management ④ Conservation/protection ⑤ Forest environment education
Low priority	① Landscape management ② Forest recreation and healing ③ Forest economics ④ Participatory forest management ⑤ Project documentation ⑥ Project development and management ⑦ Language and	① Landscape management and Geoinformatics ② Forest recreation and healing ③ Forest ecology and soil science ④ Silviculture/Forest genetics and breeding/Forest engineering ⑤ Pest and disease management ⑥ Participatory forest	① Forest recreation and healing ② Silviculture (practice) ③ Agroforestry (practice) ④ Participatory forest management ⑤ Pest and disease management

	computer skills ⑧ Communication and conflict management ⑨ Design and analysis of data	management ⑦ Language and computer skills ⑧ Technical report writing and presentation ⑨ Design and analysis of data ⑩ Forest development and tree physiology	

5. Capacity Building Roadmap Pillars

The roadmap will be implemented through actions at both national and regional levels, with the support of member countries, partners, and other relevant stakeholders. The AFoCO Secretariat will lead the efforts and provide both technical and financial support.

The implementation of the roadmap will be guided by four key pillars: Training, Academic education, Research and Development, and Partnerting (**Figure 3**, **Table 6, and Table 7**).
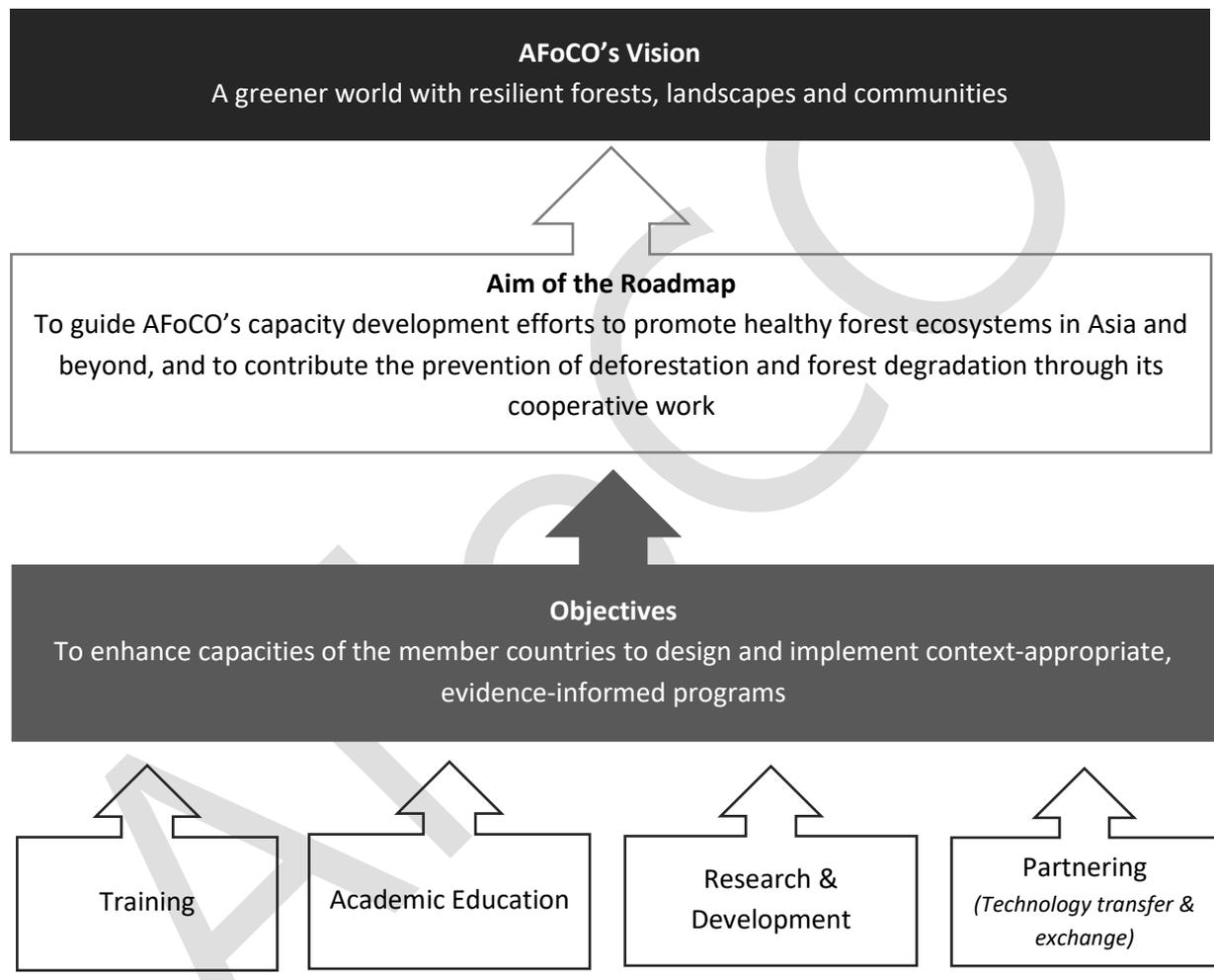

Figure 3. AFoCO Capacity-building Roadmap Pillars

Table 6. Four pillars of implementation for the AFoCO CBR

Pillars	Explications
Training	- Practice-based field courses - Regional, context-based training program - Regular courses offered in online, offline, and hybrid formats - Customized training programs tailored to specific needs - Community courses
Academic Education	- Joint degree programs in collaboration with multiple universities - Post-master's and post-doctoral programs
Research & Development	- Demand-driven technology: application of advanced technologies for capacity development - Transform project sites into Living Labs - Identify and establish RETC satellite campuses
Partnering *(Technology transfer & exchange)*	- Enhance awareness and commitment through coordinated capacity-building programs and projects - Develop innovative tools and communication channels - Integrate online education technologies and platforms (e.g., AR/VR, MOOCs) - Partner with diverse sectors to strengthen integrated capacity-building approaches for member countries (e.g., Science and Technology Exchange Partnership (STEP) program expansion)

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Table 7. Core activities by the respective pillar

Scope		Shor-term (Y1~Y2)	Medium-term (Y3~Y4)	Long-term (Y5~)
Training	IC	Conduct practice-based field courses, hybrid training programs, and customized courses for member countries	Expand regional training programs and scale-up community-level training	Establish Living Labs integrating advanced technologies for hands-on training
	OC	Scale up the Fellowship program	Create informal peer-to-peer mentoring networks for senior management	Institutionalize continuous professional development for forest professionals
	EE	Partner with universities and research institutions to create strategic capacity-building initiatives	Develop regional partnerships with key forestry institutions	Establish ongoing partnerships for technology and policy transfer at the regional level
Academic Education	IC	Launch joint degree programs with multiple universities and initiate post-master's and post-doctoral programs)	Expand degree programs to include field research and international exchanges	Expand degree programs to include field research and international exchanges
	OC	Develop policies and procedures for academic cooperation with international institutions	Expand partnerships with top universities and forestry institutes	Institutionalize academic collaboration frameworks across AFoCO member countries
	EE	Create networks between universities, research institutions, and international organizations	Strengthen regional academic cooperation for forestry-related research and innovation	Establish a regional academic research platform focused on sustainable forest management
Research & Development	IC	Develop technology transfer programs and create Living Labs for real-time research and innovation	Expand R&D collaboration with universities and member countries	Lead regional forestry research through operational Living Labs in strategic project sites

Scope		Shor-term (Y1~Y2)	Medium-term (Y3~Y4)	Long-term (Y5~)
Partnering *(Technology transfer & exchange)*	OC	Create AFoCO's capacity-building policy and procedure templates	Develop institutional partnerships for forestry technology transfer and innovation	Establish AFoCO as a key regional player in forestry research and innovation
	EE	Establish RETC satellite campuses and experimental forests	Integrate RETC campuses as regional research hubs for technology and policy transfer	Establish RETC as a leading forestry research center in Asia, contributing to global forestry goals
	IC	Establish an e-learning platform integrating ICT, AI, and AR/VR technologies	Expand e-learning systems with advanced forestry-related modules and contents	Establish a robust online education and training ecosystem for member countries
	OC	Enhance AFoCO's role as a regional hub for forestry technology transfer and innovation	Build a platform for cross-sectoral partnerships in forestry management	Lead the development of a regional technology transfer platform for sustainable forest management
	EE	Form strategic partnerships with private sector and academic institutions for technology transfer initiatives	Expand partnerships to include public and private stakeholders across Asia	Institutionalize partnerships for cross-sectoral collaboration on forestry and climate change

*The partnership can be extended through the coordination of topics, cooperation with member countries, international organizations, and private sectors.

6. Regional Education and Training Center (RETC)

The RETC's vision is to "train leaders to ensure good governance for a greener Asia." Its objectives include "building capacity and developing experts in forestry across AFoCO member countries through education and training programs, while promoting the sharing of knowledge and experiences." The expected outcome is an improved capacity for AFoCO members and stakeholders to effectively implement AFoCO's vision.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the role and scope of the RETC evolved significantly. Training, which was traditionally conducted in person, expanded to include online and hybrid formats. Consequently, the learning objectives extended from hands-on forestry skills to in-depth discussions on global trends, local actions, and planning. Current issues and challenges faced by member countries were also communicated through the AFoCO Policy Brief[2] series.

As pandemic-related restrictions eased, RETC responded to the demand from member countries for on-site training by initiating localized capacity-building activities not only in the RETC but also member countries. The first step involved establishing a satellite campus by renovating existing training infrastructure in Cambodia (**Figure 4**). This initiative facilitated direct technical training in advanced forestry practices, such as forest carbon management and REDD+, while simultaneously supporting the country to revitalize domestic training programs by leveraging upgraded facilities. Additionally, progress in human resource development was made toward building regional capacity in the Central Asian Region, marked by a consultation workshop held in 2022 (**Figure 5**).

Since 2022, RETC has embarked on the development of a 119-hectare experimental forest. A master plan was finalized in 2022, and the main access road was upgraded in 2023. Branded as the AFoCO Study Forest, the site will serve the following purposes: providing a practical training ground for RETC trainers and establishing experimental research plots. The long-term development of the Study Forest will follow the design illustrated in **Figure 7.**

Figure 4. RETC's satellite campus in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, renovated the country's existing forest training center

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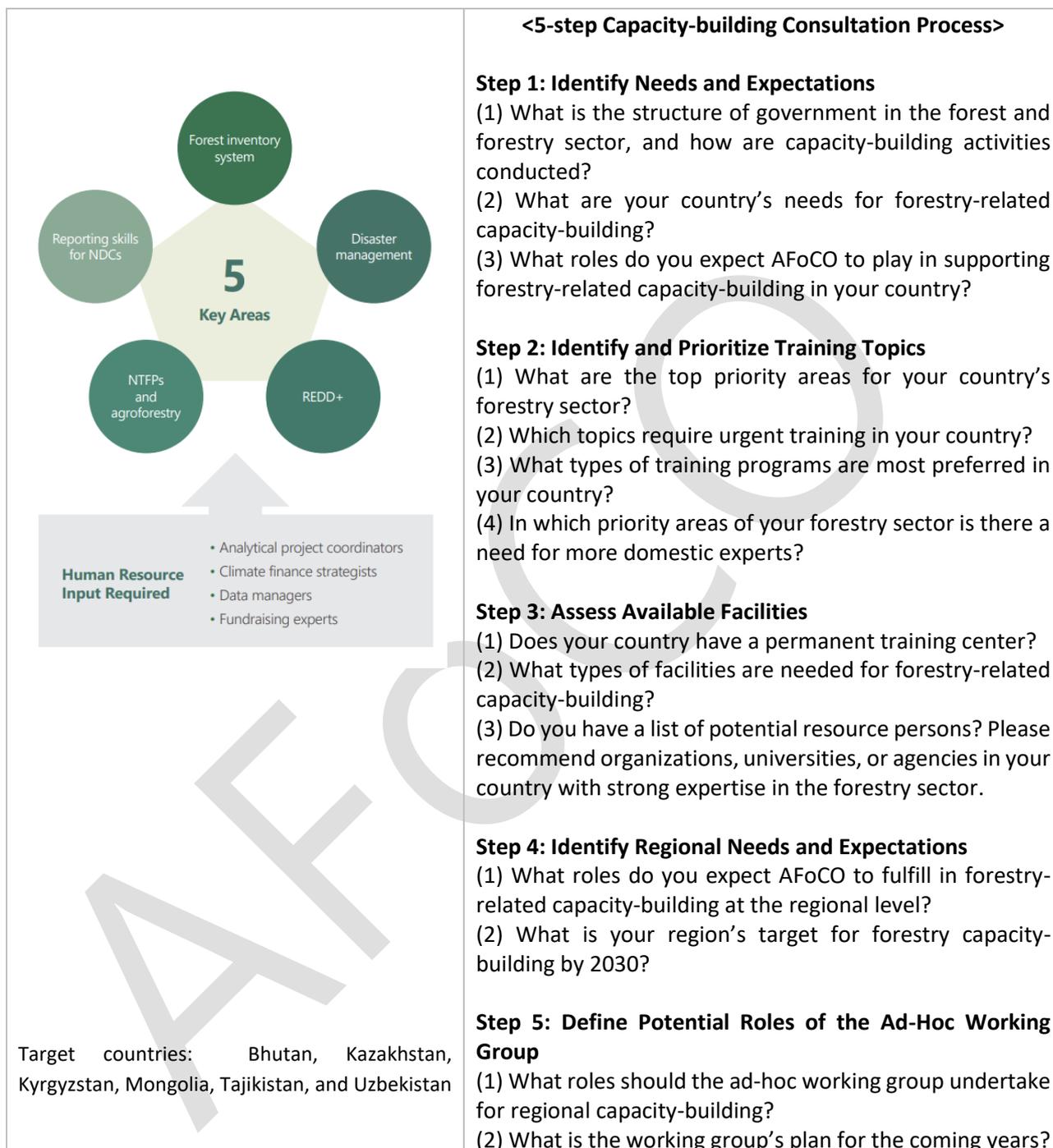|	
Target countries: Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan	**<5-step Capacity-building Consultation Process>** **Step 1: Identify Needs and Expectations** (1) What is the structure of government in the forest and forestry sector, and how are capacity-building activities conducted? (2) What are your country's needs for forestry-related capacity-building? (3) What roles do you expect AFoCO to play in supporting forestry-related capacity-building in your country? **Step 2: Identify and Prioritize Training Topics** (1) What are the top priority areas for your country's forestry sector? (2) Which topics require urgent training in your country? (3) What types of training programs are most preferred in your country? (4) In which priority areas of your forestry sector is there a need for more domestic experts? **Step 3: Assess Available Facilities** (1) Does your country have a permanent training center? (2) What types of facilities are needed for forestry-related capacity-building? (3) Do you have a list of potential resource persons? Please recommend organizations, universities, or agencies in your country with strong expertise in the forestry sector. **Step 4: Identify Regional Needs and Expectations** (1) What roles do you expect AFoCO to fulfill in forestry-related capacity-building at the regional level? (2) What is your region's target for forestry capacity-building by 2030? **Step 5: Define Potential Roles of the Ad-Hoc Working Group** (1) What roles should the ad-hoc working group undertake for regional capacity-building? (2) What is the working group's plan for the coming years?

Figure 5. Key areas and human resources needed for regional capacity-building in the forest and forestry sector in Central Asian region and the five-step consultation process for the situational analysis[3]

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[3] Source: AFoCO Policy Brief No. 10 https://afocosec.org/publication/policy-brief-10-capacity-building-in-forest-and-forestry-for-the-central-asian-region/

In AFoCO's Strategic Plan 2024-2030, the RETC is positioned as a central hub for capacity development, delivering a range of training programs for policymakers, technical staff, researchers, and local community leaders. RETC's mandate aligns with AFoCO's commitment to continuous learning and regional knowledge-sharing among member countries.

In the light of it, the role of the RETC needs to be enhanced, as the regional knowledge hub to strengthening regional forest cooperation by transforming proven technologies and policies into concrete actions in the context of sustainable forest management to address the impact of climate change.

Given the evolving role of RETC, its capacity as a regional knowledge hub must be further strengthened. The center will play a pivotal role in promoting regional forestry cooperation by translating proven technologies and policy frameworks into actionable strategies for sustainable forest management and climate change mitigation. Considering that capacity-building is jointly administered by the AFoCO Secretariat and RETC, an institutional framework outlining their respective roles and responsibilities in facilitating learning, innovation, and implementation is proposed (**Figure 6**).

These collaborative arrangements emphasize the roles of AFoCO Secretariat and the RETC, including anticipated new satellite campuses. They will act as mediators to match the country's needs with AFoCO's technical assistance and the normative work of the Secretariat. The country hosting a campus must assess baseline capacities and needs, both nationally and among member countries, to optimize support. A solid implementation structure would be further necessary for these efforts, including the establishment of a capacity development task force composed of members from the Secretariat and the host country. This task force will manage and monitor the pillars supporting the CBR.
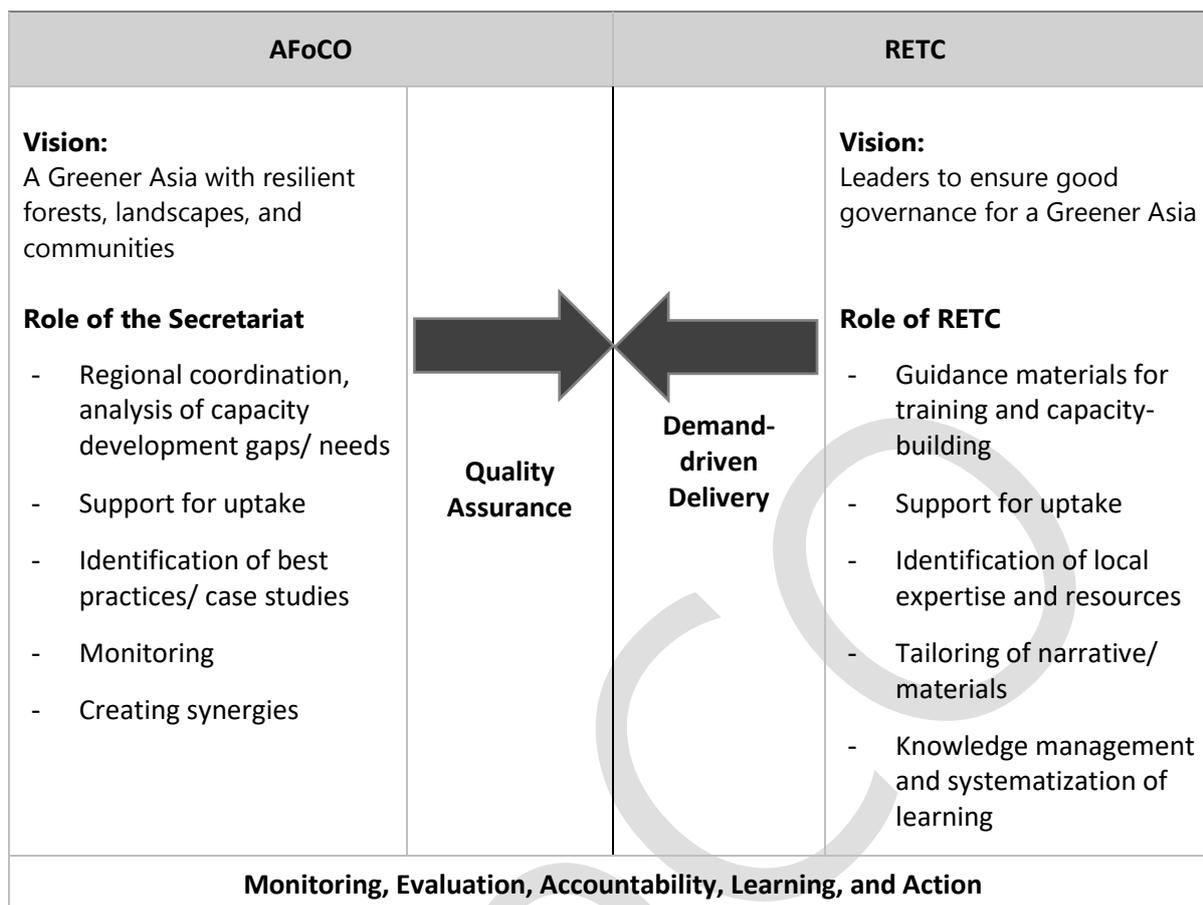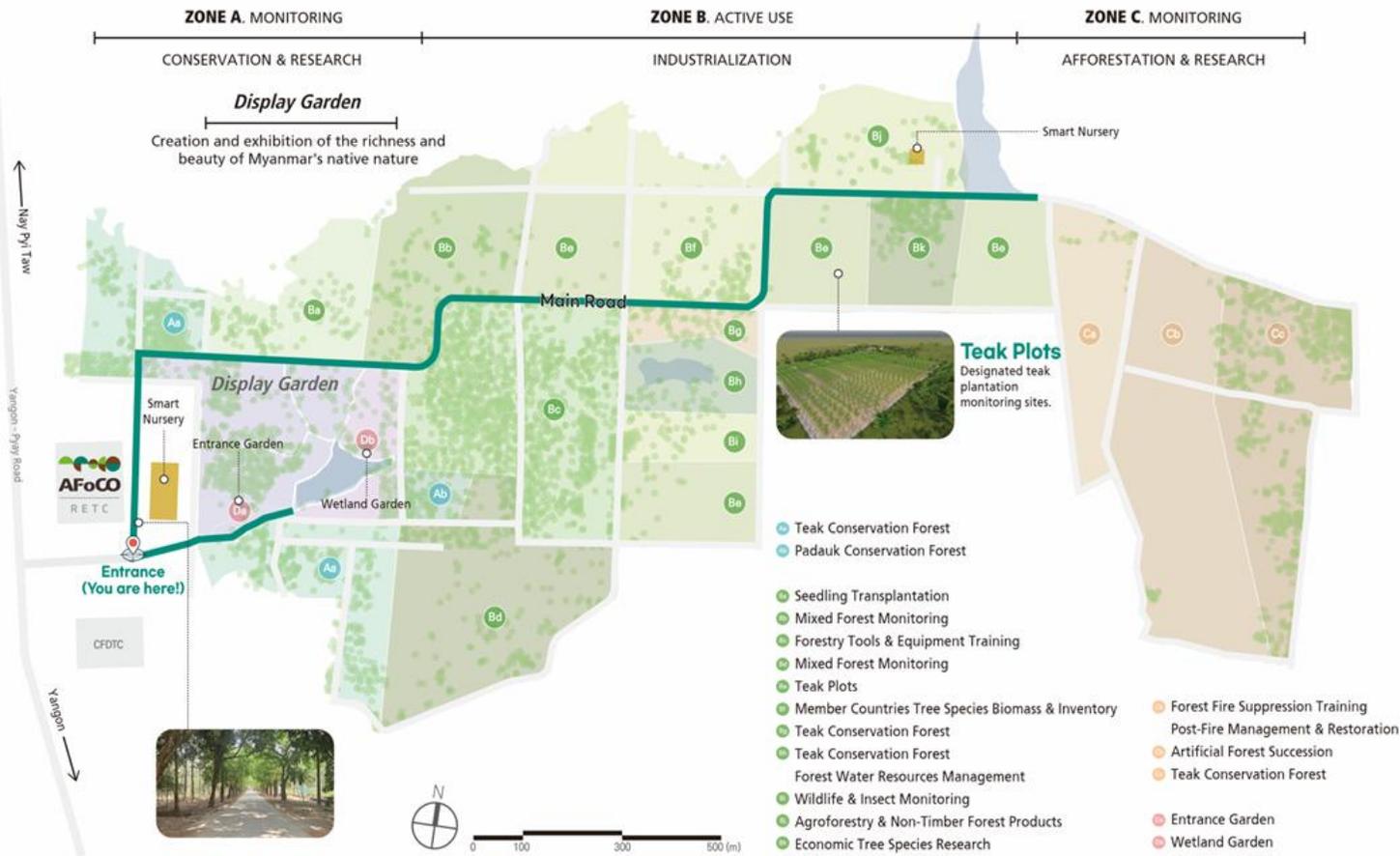
AFoCO			RETC
Vision: A Greener Asia with resilient forests, landscapes, and communities **Role of the Secretariat** - Regional coordination, analysis of capacity development gaps/ needs - Support for uptake - Identification of best practices/ case studies - Monitoring - Creating synergies	**Quality Assurance**	**Demand-driven Delivery**	**Vision:** Leaders to ensure good governance for a Greener Asia **Role of RETC** - Guidance materials for training and capacity-building - Support for uptake - Identification of local expertise and resources - Tailoring of narrative/ materials - Knowledge management and systematization of learning
Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Learning, and Action			

Figure 6. Institutional arrangement for implementation of the Roadmap

Figure 7. AFoCO Study Forest at RETC

7. Long-Term Impacts Beyond 2030

AFoCO is committed to fostering collaboration with countries and entities both within and beyond Asia. To ensure long-term impacts beyond 2030, the **Capacity-Building Roadmap 2030** will play a key role in supporting efforts to strengthen resource mobilization as AFoCO develops a comprehensive strategy in this area. A major focus of the roadmap's implementation is the continued engagement of the private sector through initiatives such as:

1. AFoCO-led initiatives, such as **Climate Action Plan 2025-2034**[4], where AFoCO pursues blended financing by developing projects and programs in collaboration with the private sector.

2. Private sector-assisted activities, such as **Friends of Asia and Asian Forests (FAAF)**[5], where AFoCO and private sector partners work together to identify challenges and co-create solutions.

This strategy is essential for defining the sustainable functions of the RETC as a key subsidiary body of the Secretariat, ensuring that capacity-building initiatives are seamlessly integrated into AFoCO's broader strategic framework. This enhanced role will also strengthen AFoCO's resource mobilization efforts, enabling the organization to more effectively support its member countries in achieving their forest and climate goals.

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[4] The Climate Action Plan 2025-2034, endorsed (D-52-1) at the Ninth Session of the AFoCO Assembly, is the organization's 10-year program that aims to help member countries reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to the goals of the Paris Agreement through blended financing.

[5] The Friends of Asia and Asian Forests (FAAF) is AFoCO's private sector engagement initiative that brings together international organizations and private sector partners to explore climate solutions and sustainable development through Asian forests.