



Making headway with sustainable forest management to help combat climate change

Phase I of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Program has given impetus to the pursuit of sustainable forest management to help combat climate change in the Asia-Pacific region.

Summary

The \$2.1 million Phase I of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Program comprised 15 projects implemented throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Its aim was to assist countries to increase their forest management expertise and improve the carbon sequestration performance of their forests to help combat climate change. Phase I supported improvements in forest management, forest governance and the understanding of new income-generation opportunities, such as carbon trading, for forest owners and managers. Under Phase I, company managers were assisted to improve their forest management over more than 1 million hectares of natural tropical forest, and about 1600 people received short-term training, attended capacity-building workshops, or participated in regional information exchange and networking. The Program is funded through the Australian Government's International Forest Carbon Initiative, which aims to demonstrate that reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD) can be part of an equitable and effective post-2012 global climate change agreement. Phase II will build on the skills, capacity and partnerships developed or strengthened during Phase I.

Australia has a long history of helping countries in the Asia-Pacific region to improve the management of their forests.

The \$2.1 million Phase I of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Program (APFSCBP), administered by the Australian Government's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), built on that work, establishing a platform for the Program's \$12.1 million Phase II.

Phase I comprised 15 projects (see table on page 11) undertaken since July 2008 in various countries by a range of contracted organisations. Some of the projects had a regional effect and others worked locally. All contributed to the strengthening of regional capacity to implement sustainable forest management (SFM) to help combat climate change.

Recognising the role of forests in combating climate change, the overall goal of Phase I was to assist countries to increase their forest management expertise and improve the carbon sequestration performance of their forests.



To achieve this, the Program set out to:

- support improvements in forest management
- support improvements in governance
- identify new income-generation opportunities for forest owners and managers.

The Program provided field-based instruction for company and government-agency staff in improved forest management practices, supported training in the development of forest policies and approaches to reducing illegal forest activities, promoted the regional exchange of information, and helped generate debate and awareness about the implications for forest-dependent people of a post-2012 global agreement on climate change.

The Program's suite of activities is described in more detail below.

Improvements in forest management

In many countries in the region, forest operators require assistance to develop the skills and processes needed to harvest forest resources while minimising negative environmental impacts, including for climate change. Moreover, many agencies charged with overseeing the management of a country's forests lack sufficient resources, particularly adequately trained staff. Under Phase I of the APFSCBP, several project proponents worked with both field foresters and higher-level managers in companies and government agencies on improving the standards of forest management.

Towards certification

In Indonesia, the Tropical Forest Trust assisted six natural-forest logging concession-holders managing an area of 690,000 hectares to improve their forest management systems. The ultimate aim is forest certification, which is a process whereby the SFM credentials of a forest are investigated and certified by an independent body. Certification is strong evidence that an organisation is managing a forest sustainably, and it can be used to assure customers that the timber they buy is environmentally friendly.

All six concession-holders have taken big steps towards certifying their forests by improving their reduced impact logging technique, high conservation value forest assessment and other aspects of sustainable forest management necessary for certification.

In Sumatra's Andalas Merapi Timber (AMT) concession, for example, progress has been exceptional. This forest lies adjacent to the Kerinci Sebalat National Park and provides important habitat for large mammals such as Sumatran tigers, gibbons, siamang, red and grey Langur monkeys, short-tailed macaques, tapirs, wild dogs and clouded leopards. The forest is also an important water catchment for Sumatra's second-largest river, the Batang Hari, which supplies water to 3.2 million people.



The Tropical Forest Trust expects that AMT and another well-advanced concession-holder, Sumalindo, will commence the formal process to obtain certification in the second half of 2009; other concessions are less advanced but are making progress in establishing systems for demonstrating sustainability. In total, 439 concession workers received training as a result of the project.

Building capacity in the Papua Forestry Department

The Tropical Forest Trust provided Indonesia's Papua Forestry Agency with training in SFM, forest certification, forest monitoring and law enforcement. The training consisted of three workshops:

- a training needs assessment workshop, which was attended by 23 stakeholders from the Papua Forestry Department (both provincial-level and district-level), the Papua People Agency, local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academics, and forest concessionaires, to set out the capacity-building needs of foresters in the province
- a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification training workshop for executives of Papua Forestry Province and heads of Papua forestry districts; this was merged with a regional workshop for Papua officials and had 61 participants
- a four-day FSC certification training workshop for 23 Papua Forestry Department operational staff and others; it included classroom and field training.

Additional certification training

In another component of its project, the Tropical Forest Trust provided training for 28 potential certification trainers on performing a high-conservation-value forest (HCVF) assessment, one of the prerequisites for FSC certification. The project used a 'hands-on' approach, training the participants while simultaneously carrying out a full HCVF assessment in the AMT concession.

This assessment reinforced the ecological and social importance of the forest in the AMT concession, identifying several high-conservation areas and making recommendations, including the exclusion of several sensitive areas from logging. These recommendations provide the basis of a management approach for the area, which, if accepted, will bring the AMT concession closer to certification.



above: an example of tree marking procedures in an AMT concession.



Reduced impact logging

Another organisation, the Tropical Forest Foundation, implemented a project to train concessionaires in reduced impact logging (RIL) and related market-linking activities, also in Indonesia. RIL can be described as timber-harvesting technologies and practices that aim to:

- minimise the environmental and social impact of timber-harvesting
- minimise damage to potential future crop trees
- provide safe working conditions
- improve timber-use efficiency
- improve ecological recovery in the forest.

In East Kalimantan the Tropical Forest Foundation trained 13 forest workers in the 98,000-hectare PT Rata Timber concession, and 25 workers in the 76,000-hectare PT Timberdana concession, in the principles and practice of RIL.



above: Tropical Forest Foundation RIL training materials.

The Foundation also visited PT Sarmiento Parakantja Timber's 217,000-hectare concession in Central Kalimantan to reinforce existing company RIL initiatives there. It engaged 35 staff of the concessionaire PT Graha Sentosa Permai in classroom and field activities to review all aspects of the company's RIL system, identify shortcomings, and discuss corrective actions and strategies.

Support to companies for legality verification

The Tropical Forest Foundation provided assistance to four companies in Indonesia to prepare for legality and chain-of-custody audits. Specifically, four baseline assessments were conducted, and follow-up support was provided to prepare each company for an independent audit.

SFM networking

A project implemented by ForestWorks set out to build professional capacity and provide technical and procedural examples of forest certification and other aspects of forest management in Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Solomon Islands and Indonesia.



In PNG, a two-day stakeholder meeting obtained the commitment of training institutions, employer groups and trade unions to strengthen the training of key stakeholders in SFM. Previously it had not been possible to bring such a wide range of interest groups to the one table. This meeting was followed by a three-day workshop to discuss PNG's certification training needs, and a five-day workshop in which local certification trainers shared their knowledge and experiences with a group of stakeholders.

Similar stakeholder-based approaches were deployed in the Solomon Islands and Indonesia; in the latter country, 56 people received training in forest certification. In total, 277 stakeholders participated in workshops, meetings and training across the three countries.



above: ForestWorks stakeholder consultations.

Invasive species

A project implemented by the Asia-Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions and the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network supported a four-day regional workshop on risk-based surveillance strategies for forest invasive species. Fifty-eight participants from national, regional and global agencies with roles in the management of forest invasive species made a set of six recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of regional cooperation against invasive alien species, including by improving communication between members of the Network.

Forest fire

Forest fire can be a significant threat to SFM and leads to the loss of carbon from forests and into the atmosphere. In Indonesia, for example, large fires are emerging as a major problem, due mainly to changes in land use and vegetation and to climate change. Knowledge about fuel types and fire behaviour can be increased, especially in peat lands, together with improvements in fire suppression capacity.



A project implemented by GHD consultants aimed to strengthen capacity in forest fire and fuels research, including by convening a regional workshop involving fire experts from Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Myanmar. Participants identified existing gaps in forest fuels and fire behaviour research in the region and made recommendations aimed at increasing the coordination of forest fire research and management across the region. They suggested that future projects should be targeted at building the capacity of research institutions in the region to develop research program methodologies and experimental design for specific fuel types and fire threats.

Forest restoration

In a project organised by the SPC/GTZ Regional Forest Programme¹, a four-day regional seminar was held to increase awareness about the potential for restoring degraded forest land. The 30 participants from Fiji, Nauru, New Caledonia, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu valued the opportunity to learn from each other and expressed interest in developing an ongoing network to foster this exchange.

Additional training

A project implemented by the Australian National University set out to address an identified lack of professional skills and capacity relevant to the development of forest certification in the region. In one of its activities the project managers designed and convened a short course for 42 forestry professionals from Australia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, PNG, Thailand and Vietnam.

The course focused on equipping participants with a comprehensive understanding of certification systems, and also provided them with practical skills for engaging in the development, implementation and auditing of forest practices.

As part of the same project, nine emerging forest leaders in the region were provided with assistance to attend a five-day workshop in Japan aimed at strengthening the capacity of the region's forestry sector to respond to climate change. Another two attended a post-graduate training course at the Australian National University and were placed for two weeks in areas of their chosen interest within the Australian forest sector.

Building regional capacity and knowledge

To promote information exchange, Australia partnered with China, the United States and The Nature Conservancy to convene a symposium to launch the Asia-Pacific Network for SFM and Rehabilitation (APFNet).

¹ The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) is a regional intergovernmental organisation. The SPC Forest and Trees Programme promotes the sustainable management of scarce and diminishing forest and tree resources across the Pacific. The German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) is an international cooperation enterprise for sustainable development that has been operating in the Pacific for over 25 years.



Attended by 120 people from around the region, the symposium identified potential areas for further cooperation within the network and reviewed the status of, constraints to, and opportunities for achieving SFM in the region.

In collaboration with the Government of Switzerland, the APFSCBP also sponsored a Region-Led Initiative to support the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). Attended by 49 participants from 31 organisations and countries, the Initiative explored ways to improve the integration of UNFF and other regional forestry processes and identified the key priorities and challenges of regional bodies and how these might relate to the work of the UNFF in helping countries achieve SFM.

The Program also supported the latest assessment of the world's forest resources by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which will be published in 2011.

Improvements in governance

In many countries, improving forest governance requires action at several levels. In some cases forest policies need revision to better reflect realities in the field and to encourage forest practices that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. Improvements in forest monitoring can help reduce illegal forest activities, and the effective tracking of timber from the forest to the market can help cut down on illegal timber trading. All of these issues are important for REDD. Forest monitoring, for example, will be essential to ensure that emissions reductions from forests are credible and genuine.

Phase I of the APFSCBP included several such elements.

Forest policy training

A project implemented by Southern Cross University provided expert inputs into a two-week training course on forest policy development organized by FAO for 19 senior forest professionals from American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, Hawaii, Niue, PNG, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. The course used a range of training methods to improve the capacity of participants to evaluate the economic, environmental and social aspects of forest policies; effectively communicate findings and opportunities; formulate proposals and policy papers; and oversee policy implementation and evaluation processes.

Implementation of logging codes of practice

Under a project implemented by the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, an assessment was made of the implementation of codes of logging practice in PNG, Indonesia and Malaysia. In PNG, project officers visited logging operations and reviewed the implementation of the existing code of logging practice and the system in place to monitor compliance with the code. The project's managers convened a workshop in PNG for 32 participants from the PNG Forest Authority, the Timber Forestry Training Centre, timber companies, and other industry representatives. The workshop participants agreed that the existing code of logging practice needed revision and proposed a range of specific changes. Participants also reviewed a draft protocol for monitoring compliance with the code.



A regional-level workshop involving 30 participants from Cambodia, China, Fiji, Malaysia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, PNG and Vietnam was convened to review current compliance monitoring systems and to identify ways in which these systems might be improved. System transparency, the institutional capacity to conduct field auditing, and a mechanism for independent oversight were identified as key to demonstrating the effectiveness of the codes of forest practice and associated performance monitoring (compliance) systems.

Timber legality verification

Another element that can encourage better forest governance is the verification of the legality of harvested timber. Illegal logging occurs when:

- timber is stolen
- timber is harvested without the required approvals or in breach of a harvesting licence or law
- timber is bought, sold, exported and processed in breach of law and/or
- timber is harvested or trade is authorised through corrupt practices.

Legality verification within this definition can include the verification of legal origin and the verification of legal compliance²; its overall aim is to minimise the risk that a buyer will purchase illegally sourced forest products. Several timber-importing countries, particularly in Europe, have adopted timber legality verification approaches.

A project implemented by URS in consultation with stakeholders from Indonesia and PNG, major timber importers, and industry groups, developed country-specific guidelines to be used by Australian importers to assist their verification of the legal origins of timber products imported into Australia from Indonesia and PNG. Products included in the guidelines are sawn timber, mouldings, flooring, decking, plywood and veneer, doors and joinery, pulp and paper, and wooden furniture.

The guidelines are generic and can be used to assess the risk of the illegal supply of a wide range of timber products or species from Indonesia, PNG and possibly other countries in the future. Details specific to the countries and products in question are provided in the form of notes to the guidelines and a colour-coding system provides guidance on the steps and questions that are most relevant to each of the selected product categories. The project implemented by the Tropical Forest Foundation (described above) promoted the use of timber verification procedures in several forest concessions that would complement the use of these guidelines by timber product importers.

² In some situations, timber legality verification can be a stepping stone to the wider uptake of certification, which, in addition to verifying legality, usually specifies forest management standards that are more stringent than those required by the law.



Catalysing actions

By providing opportunities for capacity building, inter-sectoral cooperation and stakeholder participation, and by offering a way in which producers can maintain access to international markets, the Program-funded activities will help catalyse long-lasting improvements in the governance arrangements for forestry.

New income-generation opportunities—REDD

With Program assistance, the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and several other partners organised ‘Environment Day’ as part of the inaugural Asia-Pacific Forestry Week in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Overall, the week attracted 750 participants; the focus of Environment Day was forests and climate change and, in particular, the opportunities presented by reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD).



above: ‘Environment Day’ was part of the inaugural Asia-Pacific Forestry Week.

The event stimulated considerable discussion on the potential for a REDD mechanism to provide an alternative or new source of income for developing countries, as REDD has the potential to supplement current, or support alternative, livelihoods for forest-dependent indigenous and local communities.

A project implemented by UniQuest aimed to further build awareness in the lower Mekong countries of Vietnam, Cambodia and Lao PDR of the opportunities and challenges presented by REDD. It did this by convening a symposium and a series of workshops that canvassed the role of forests in mitigating climate change, the issues involved in preparing for REDD, and the role of local governance, civil society and forest land users in REDD. Australia’s Ambassador to Vietnam, His Excellency Allaster Cox, attended the opening ceremony and outlined Australia’s support for REDD in developing countries.

In total, 350 people attended the workshops. Attendees generally agreed that a regional approach to REDD would both ensure effective capacity building in the implementation of REDD projects, and help prevent leakage.³

³ Leakage means reduced deforestation in one region results in increased deforestation in another.



The pilot training program for local government, civil society and communities on REDD was developed as part of the UniQuest project and has also been used by a partner organisation in regional workshops conducted in Nepal and Tanzania.

Towards Phase II

Phase I of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Program had some notable achievements.

- It assisted companies to improve their forest management through RIL and to pursue forest certification over more than 1 million hectares of natural tropical forest.
- About 1,000 people received short-term training or attended capacity-building workshops. The use of local trainers, facilitators and coordinators in most projects, and partnerships with local institutions, helped achieve a considerable depth of communication and added to the capacity-building effect through knowledge transfer.
- By bringing together about 600 forest experts and policymakers in seminars and conferences, the Program contributed to regional information exchange and highlighted the potential benefits to be gained from increased networking across the region. It also encouraged further collaboration and the development of relationships between Australian and Asia-Pacific institutions to promote SFM in the region.

By engaging a wide range of actors in the region and supporting a number of regional forestry processes, Phase I of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Program has increased the knowledge and capacity of forest managers with respect to sustainable forest management and improved their understanding of the role of forests in combating climate change.

The scene is now set for Phase II. Phase II will continue to support the objectives and geographical focus — Indonesia and PNG — of the Australian Government's International Forest Carbon Initiative which aims to demonstrate that REDD can be an equitable and effective part of a post-2012 global agreement on climate change. Phase II will strategically support the Initiative by funding a small number of longer term projects that aim to build capacity for delivering sustainable forest management that supports efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.



Projects undertaken in Phase I of the APFSCBP

Implementing organisation	Project title	Location
GHD Pty Ltd	Fire and fuels research monitoring capacity building	Vietnam, Indonesia
Tropical Forest Foundation	Training in reduced impact logging and related forest market linking activities	Indonesia
ForestWorks	Skills training and capacity building in certification	Solomon Islands, PNG, Kalimantan
SPC/GTZ Regional Forest Programme	Capacity building on restoration, management and rehabilitation of degraded, logged-out secondary forests in the Pacific — a regional seminar for improved practices enhancing forest functions	Fiji
FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific	Strengthening implementation of codes of practice for forest harvesting (Indonesia, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea)	Focused on Indonesia and Papua New Guinea
Australian National University (National Forestry Masters Program Partnership)	Leadership for professional education in SFM	A range of participants from Asia-Pacific region
URS Forestry	Verification of legality of tropical timber imports to Australia — development of guidelines and the implementation of training packages	Indonesia, PNG and Vietnam
UniQuest Pty Ltd/University of Queensland	Managing forests in Mekong countries Vietnam, Lao PDR and Cambodia for carbon sequestration and REDD.	Vietnam, Lao and Cambodia
Tropical Forest Trust	Making practice perfect: delivering hands-on SFM training	West Papua, Sumatra, Indonesia
FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Office of the Chief Plant Protection Officer — DAFF, Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network	Organisation of 'Environment Day' at the first FAO Asia-Pacific Forestry Week	Vietnam (Asia-Pacific Forestry Week)
FAO, Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network	Capacity-building to protect against forest invasive and outbreak species in the Asia-Pacific region (Phase 1)	Vietnam (Asia-Pacific Forestry Week)
Southern Cross University	Expert inputs into forest policy short course	Fiji
United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization	FAO Salary contribution to carry out the Global Forest Resource Assessment	Rome
Swiss Foundation for Development and International Cooperation	Australia's contribution to the region-led initiative in support of United Nations Forum on Forests	Switzerland
DAFF, United States, The Nature Conservancy	APFNet Symposium	China, but involving participants from around the region