



**Forest  
Governance  
Forum**



The Project is funded by  
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**BirdLife  
INTERNATIONAL**



**CIDT**  
UNIVERSITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON



## Daily Round Up

### Thank you for joining us for the final day of the Asia-Pacific Forest Governance Forum.

We hope you enjoyed the sessions and found them as informative as we did. Please find below a summary of some of the key points made. All presentations and recordings will become available [on the CIDT website](#).

#### Highlights, 30th September 2021

Cristi Marie C. Nozawa, Executive Director of Samdhana Institute in Indonesia/Philippines, welcomed participants to today's technical session on **Making a difference for the coming decade – Sustaining change and maintaining the momentum to meet the challenge**, and invited them to reflect on how project gains could be carried forward in coming years.

- Dr Aurelian Mbazain, of CIDT, the University of Wolverhampton presented his and Téodyl Nkuntchua's research into **NGO-State relations in monitoring of illegal logging**. While corruption is often blamed for illegal logging, weak institutions and limited capacities of government to enforce rules are also a source of failure. Through interviews and examination of NGO experiences (CV4C project), they mapped NGO relationships with government, and the tactics they use to provoke government response and influence forest resources. It emerged that complementarity – whereby CSOs and government work together and exchange resources (information, funding) toward common objectives (transparency, accountability) – is the most important relationship type. In Gabon, CSOs share information, but denounce illegality if the government fails to act; indeed, NGOs must go beyond taking a 'reactive' stance and manage relationships with government.
- Bryna Griffin introduced **BirdLife's Forest Landscape Accelerator**. Many small NGOs are not considered 'bankable' for green (or 'less brown') financing by large institutions. BirdLife's Accelerator helps small NGOs by providing funding that is both flexible and tolerant of high-risk, as well as technical assistance that includes exploring financial approaches and testing new strategies, training, and raising the profile needed to attract more finance. For instance, BirdLife supported a community in Paraguay with 'under-canopy' cultivation of traditional yerba mate tea, working with them to obtain organic and fair-trade certification and to find a US buyer. A project in Cambodia with an existing rice company encouraged farmers to commit to conservation standards in exchange for marketing beyond domestic borders at a higher price. She stressed the importance of prioritising equity, of not seeking larger funding before the enterprise is ready, and of technical support tailored to individual NGOs' needs.
- Anna Wong discussed **Multi-scale forest governance, and the Malaysian Nature Society's (MNS) experience**. In Malaysia, efforts to coordinate forest governance policies and initiatives span Federal, state, and local levels; various agencies; and differing classifications of forested areas in Peninsular Malaysia, Sarawak and Sabah. Federal and state levels are involved in assessing REDD+ readiness, developing national REDD+ strategies in which MNS participates in consultative processes; Sabah, for instance, has also developed a REDD+ Roadmap for sub-national REDD+ strategies. Taking a multi-scale approach has helped create wildlife corridors across the Central Forest Spine area of Peninsular Malaysia, and with the Heart of Borneo initiative, beyond national boundaries to Indonesia. MNS organises roundtables and forest governance workshops with CSOs at all levels, and reaches across sectors to work with the Sarawak forestry corporation to reduce illegal deforestation. At the grassroots scale, MNS developed a national forest watch platform to help everyone become 'guardians of the forest'. In future, more effort should be made to bring national policies in line with global commitments, and to remove barriers to coordination.
- Horline Njike and Serge Moukouri, reviewed **Challenges and opportunities facing IFM networks at the regional level** taking the example of *Plateforme Africaine d'Observation Indépendante* (PA-OI), IFM platform. The past 20 years have seen a growth of interest in IFM and in the numbers of organisation carrying out IFM activities. IFM methods, and results, differed wildly, and were harshly criticised. To restore IFM's credibility PA-OI standardised approaches, offering a framework for reflection and training to shape the discipline. Obstacles included reaching a common understanding of IFM, as each organisation already had its own approach; finding long-term financing, and developing synergies. They have created a manual of principles, criteria and indicators that allow evaluation of IFM activities for PA-OI members and non-members alike. Its methods are being adapted to other natural resources, a significant opportunity, and the platform's dynamic helps members face pressures directed at them. The judicial framework remains limiting.
- IFM is an integral part of SVLK. Indonesia's mandatory sustainability and legality assurance rules and, FLEGT licensing. IFM organisations also monitor 'beyond-SVLK issues' such as land tenure disputes, illegal conversion and unwarranted expansion of plantations. Because of very limited financing, monitoring organisations had also to raise funds for their activities. Christian 'Bob' Purba, explained that the **Independent Forest Monitoring Fund (IFM, YPIKI)** was created with short-term financing from donors in 2017 to help monitors carry out their work effectively. The Fund's small-grant mechanisms have expanded in scope from concessions to include downstream industries, and reach beyond local NGOs to community, IP, and women's groups. Focus is now on securing medium- and long-term finance mechanisms, and challenges include establishing clear mechanisms to preserve independence with government funding from /FLEGT licensing and funding from state budgets. They are exploring possible funding from the Environmental Fund Management Agency (*BPDLM*).

Moving to Q&A, chair Cristi Nozawa noted that securing funding was a common challenge across organisations, and asked panellists **how funding could be sustained**.

- Horline Njike suggested that each new process, such as a REDD+ or a FLEGT, provide for a fund to execute its objective to be created in parallel, and that funding be more long-term rather tied to short-term projects. Aurélian Mbazain echoed that NGOs cannot develop long-term strategies when limited to short-term funding, and suggested that IFM be considered a public good, as without IFM, no information is forthcoming from government sources, and that a 'basket-form' of financing be developed to support it accordingly.

Ms. Nozawa noted that **Covid-19 would be a presence in coming years** and asked how it affected work on the ground in Malaysia and Indonesia.

- Bob Purba stressed the importance of finding methods that do not interfere with independence, and of first analysing audit summaries and data available through high-technology before venturing out in the field. Anna Wong said that restrictions on going into the field mean that more communities and villagers need to become directly involved: new people "can help us pay attention to illegal logging and abuse", and richer training and awareness-raising must be put online.

Ms. Nozawa asked how to engage with communities to **scale-up financial initiatives**:

- Farmers could be provided with training opportunities and the implications of engaging in new enterprises could be clarified, Bryna Griffin explained, but they must choose for themselves whether to take part – to improve production and obtain higher prices, they are often willing. To scale up, it is important first to make initiatives work at the smaller scale. With REDD, they undertake a process of explaining responsibilities to communities, because the communities must be involved to be effective.

Dr Noelle Kumpel, Head of Policy, BirdLife International, UK, took over to chair the closing high-level panel. Giving a pertinent overview of **Key messages from the Forum** thus far, Dr Kumpel oriented discussions to applying lessons learned at the local level to broader, global goals considering next month's Biodiversity Convention Conference of Parties (COP15) and the UN Climate Convention COP26 in November. She enlisted the assistance of several experts from different sectors to explore the **way forward for the next decade**.

- Maria Beilinda 'Beechy' de la Paz, Chief Operating Officer for Haribon Foundation, noted that we had come a long way in terms of sharing accomplishments and learning from each other, and said that increasing the **technology available to local stakeholders enables a deep reach into the forests**, making it possible to apply local knowledge to decisions and create broader awareness; she was struck by the diversity of roles that civil society undertakes, on the basis of their interest in forest governance, in order to support key mandates of government institutions. Such cooperation is needed to keep forests standing.
- Indah Budiani, Executive Director of the Indonesian Business Council for Sustainable Development, offered a private sector viewpoint, underscoring **opportunities for businesses to improve forest governance**: e.g., certification such as the Forest Stewardship Council, or by using the SPOTT platform to support sustainable commodity production and trade and assess traders' public disclosures, or jurisdictional approaches. The challenge they face is the increasing complexity of forestry practices. Business perceives planted forests as the future of the timber industry, but competition for land, biodiversity challenges, social and tenure issues, and lack of communication lead to conflict. Companies do not see sustainability as the whole approach. Sometimes companies and NGOs partner to help with reputation, innovation and long-term impact, which is beneficial from the company perspective in market-building, and in terms of credibility.
- Josefa 'Sefa' Tauli, a representative for Indigenous and Local Youth in the Global Youth Biodiversity Network in the Philippines, reminded participants that **forest governance is a crucial topic for women and youth. Especially for Indigenous Peoples**, it is a matter of identity and survival, and of life itself. Many barriers exist, such as lack of access to justice, and defending the environment can turn deadly. Despite challenges, youth and IPs are already deeply engaged in influencing decision-making processes, leading campaigns in the Philippines against the Apayao dam's destructive impact on the watershed, for instance, or participating in the Global Youth Biodiversity Network – efforts that should be recognised and supported. Youth can learn from their elders in becoming practitioners of sustainability and join collective movement for equity and justice. A strong voice for youth would lead to more sustainable, creative decisions, but meaningful youth engagement should be respectful, not tokenised.
- Alison Hoare, Senior Research Fellow at Chatham House, noted that a key challenge in coming years will be the increasing uncertainty in the world. Between extreme weather events, forest fires, Covid-19, persuading governments and electorates, not to take the easy route of boosting short-term production and consumption by weakening social and environmental protections will be difficult. Careful deliberation is needed to find equitable land use and forest options, and tackle poverty. The engagement of all stakeholders is needed, but **NSAs, a very diverse group with a spectrum of skills and knowledge, are a fantastic resource for governments**, especially where governments' own resources are constrained, such as with enforcement, or shaping land-use development. Governments should tap the potential of NSAs in creating alternative development and innovative forest governance. NSAs must bring ideas and evidence, and governments must bring openness to working with NSAs.
- Edward Davey, Adviser to the UK COP26 Presidency's Nature Campaign, **previewed COP26's amazing opportunities to accomplish good work in developing synergies**. The UK Government has made it clear that nature's role in mitigating climate change, and in adapting to change that is already underway, will be emphasised. The biggest meeting of world leaders since the pandemic began will start with a three-hour session on nature recovery plans; each country will bring ambitious nature plans and commitments, and strong Nationally Determined Contributions. A statement is foreseen redirecting agricultural policies and subsidies to deliver better outcomes for people, climate and environment, and work will be engaged to secure rights and safeguard tenure for IPs. Statements are expected on what public money and on what global finance can support, but what is happening on the ground, in projects such as those heard in the Forum, is crucial.

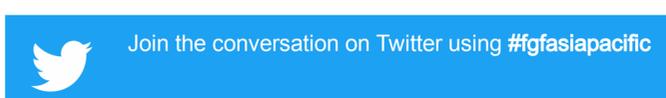
Asked what message they wished to deliver to policymakers, governments, and donors regarding the role of forest governance in securing a carbon-neutral future, panellists responded that

- **Strong policies cannot be put off** to next generation; big commitments are needed *now*.
- All products coming from forests must **ensure the sustainability of raw materials, soil and water management**, without which the business will collapse; businesses must join the action to meet the tremendous challenge lying ahead.
- The central role of local communities and Indigenous Peoples must be recognised and respected; **expansion of areas under protection must include safeguards** against unjust evictions and uphold human rights. Youth, the ones who will be living with these decisions, must have funding available to support youth-led initiatives.
- **Policymakers must go beyond a focus on targets**; the challenge lies in making these become reality, and to do so need to be more open and transparent not just with data but in sharing decision-making. Donors must use finance to make this happen.
- COP26 would be a good opportunity to move hearts of government officials, but **other influential voices – company heads, celebrities, unions – have a role in building broader momentum for change**; while this movement builds, partnerships and networks advancing goals on the ground are what matters.

Dr Kumpel took the floor again to sum up the ingredients of an equitable, carbon-neutral future, pointing out that high-level policies and international commitment often seem out of reach on the ground. Summarising the various topics the Forum explored, she insisted on the fundamental importance of sharing lessons amongst ourselves, but then also of **taking lessons forward to governments and donors**.

She passed the proceedings to Dr Hum Gurung, Regional Project Manager of BirdLife International in Malaysia/Singapore, who offered deep thanks to all involved in the conference, and especially the expert contributors for creating the dialogue that will help inform strong outcomes for us all to support, and whose **various voices offer us all a better chance of obtaining a truly sustainable approach**.

Mr Oswald Braken Tisen, Deputy CEO, Management and Conservation, Sarawak Forestry Corporation, Malaysia, spoke also on behalf of the Malaysian Government to close the proceedings. He thanked presenters and reminded all that the Asia Pacific region holds 18 per cent of global forests – tropical forests that are the lifeline of millions, contribute to national wealth and livelihoods, and are a stronghold of biodiversity. **Sarawak aims to manage forest area** to maintain half as communal forest and totally protect 10 per cent. It subscribes to Convention on Biological Diversity's goals and examines OECM (other effective conservation measures) to achieve global targets and protect Sarawak's unique plants and animals, big and small, from the orangutan and the largest flower in the world to the recently discovered tiny land crab. Failure to protect these could result in unknowing loss of species. They work closely with the MNS and BL, for example, to create a programme where public and NGOs could contribute to conservation, training volunteer wildlife rangers as 'ambassadors for nature'. People who once were hunters of Dugong, now actively support protection of marine mammals. For any progress, accountability is important; if what governments do is transparent, people will trust its actions to support sustainability. He encouraged transparency and collaboration, thanked conference organisers and participants, and encouraged all to stay safe, well and happy.



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