



## **Managing Regional Expert Pools through Regional Knowledge Networks in ASEAN**

Thang Hooi Chiew<sup>1</sup>

### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 Sustainable management of forests is still a topical issue today, not just with resource managers but with people from all walks of life. This is not surprising as forests are among nature's most bountiful and versatile renewable assets, capable of simultaneously providing a variety of economic, social and cultural benefits, as well as environmental services.

1.2 The multiple roles forests play are far reaching and have been recognized and appreciated by society at large. This is truer today than ever before as sustainably managed forests have been identified as being essential to achieve sustainable development. In addition, viably managed forests provide a means to eradicate poverty, reduce the amount of deforestation and loss of biological diversity, arrest land and resource degradation, enhance food security, and increase access to safe drinking water and affordable energy. At the international level, the public goods and services provided by these forests are also increasingly being recognized in terms of climate change mitigation, biological diversity conservation and watershed management.

1.3 Forests in ASEAN Member States (AMS) cover an estimated 203.4 million hectares, or 46.8 percent of the total countries' land area as of 2005, and are of key importance to the economic, ecological and social development of the region. Millions of people in ASEAN depend primarily on forests for their livelihood as they provide food, shelter, income and employment. The region is also endowed with biological diverse hotspots of global importance. Three of the world's 17 mega-diverse countries are located in ASEAN, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

1.4 Unfortunately, the forest ecosystems in ASEAN are under increasing pressure due to a growing population and the rapid conversion of forest land for agricultural development. This is exacerbated by the excessive use of forest resources due to the over-capacities and inefficiency of the forest industries, inadequate forest law enforcement and governance, and the high incidence of poverty.

1.5 The AMS are at different levels of socio-economic development and endowment in forest resources. Their endeavors to adopt and implement advances in sustainable forest management, which will contribute to the sustained provision of forest goods and services, especially in conserving forest biological diversity, mitigating climate change,

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<sup>1</sup> Chair, ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance.

and enhancing water resources, differ as well. It is pertinent for AMS to pool their collective resources and expertise in order to better address the current stress that is being placed on their forests as a result of rapid economic globalization and technological innovations. In the face of this increasing global demand as well as the consumption of the very goods and environmental services which these forests provide, this need becomes increasingly imperative.

1.6 In this regard, out of a formal strategy to enhance regional communication and knowledge management, a decision was made at the Eleventh Meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials on Forestry (ASOF), held in Malaysia from 31 July -1 August 2008, to promote the use of regional knowledge networks to broaden the ASEAN knowledge base in forestry, and to advance dialogues on emerging forest policy issues, concentrating on such matters as forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG) and the deliberation involved in reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD).

## 2.0 ASEAN Regional Knowledge Networks

### *ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance*

2.1 The ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG Network) was established in October 2008 to support a regional pool of experts to facilitate the exchange of good practices of FLEG in AMS, including robust benchmarking and a structured ASOF dialogue. This Network would also promote the mutual understanding and effective implementation of the Work Plan for Strengthening Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) in ASEAN, 2008-2015, contribute to ASEAN-wide knowledge gathering and cross-border learning, and enhance better understanding of each other's FLEG approaches.

2.2 More specifically, the goals and objectives of the FLEG Network are to:

#### *Goals*

- (i) support ASOF and the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) in decision-making and implementation processes by providing specific policy-oriented and focused research and policy analysis;
- (ii) enhance mutual understanding and support effective implementation of the Work Plan for Strengthening Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) in ASEAN, 2008-2015;
- (iii) respond to emerging issues on FLEG as identified in the agenda and work programs of ASOF and AMAF;
- (iv) institutionalize the FLEG Network in one of the organizations in ASEAN in order to better support and work with the ASEAN Secretariat on FLEG implementation; and

- (v) provide effective networking and partnering with other institutions, agencies, instruments and processes working on FLEG issues at both the regional and global levels.

#### *Objectives*

- (i) support the implementation of the strategies and activities identified in the Work Plan for Strengthening Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) in ASEAN, 2008-2015;
- (ii) address any emerging issues on FLEG arising from the work programs of ASOF and AMAF, and from regional and international FLEG processes that are relevant to AMS;
- (iii) create and support a regional pool of expertise/experts in ASEAN to undertake policy analysis and research on FLEG issues from the perspective of AMS;
- (iv) support AMS to better understand and learn from each other's approaches in FLEG implementation and good practices;
- (v) undertake robust benchmarking to determine and promote good FLEG practices;
- (vi) provide a platform for non-official ASEAN stakeholders and the research community to contribute and enhance FLEG processes in the ASEAN region; and
- (vii) enhance policy implementation capacity by mobilizing resources and building partnerships to further strengthen FLEG implementation in AMS.

2.3 The composition of the members of the FLEG Network embodies a fine balance between those nominated officially by the Leaders of ASOF who are involved in FLEG implementation in their respective countries, and those who are invited to join as members of the Network because of their expertise in FLEG, factoring in the need for geographical representation among the Member States.

2.4 All members of the Network must be a national of one of the AMS. They will act in their personal capacity in promoting the goals and achieving the objectives of the Network, while taking into account the perspective of their institutional affiliation. These experts are expected to demonstrate excellent analytical skills and knowledge for assessing the impacts and implications of FLEG implementation in the region.

2.5 Currently, the seven members of the FLEG Network nominated by ASOF are from Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. They are mainly involved in forest resource management and protection, forest legislation and litigation, forest crimes monitoring and investigation, and forest law enforcement. The other six members who were invited to join the Network are currently working with organizations from the civil society, universities and the private sector, namely, TRAFFIC International, the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) in Bangkok, Thailand, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in Hanoi,

Vietnam, the Institute for Environment and Development (LESTARI), University Kebangsaan Malaysia, the College of Forestry and Natural Resources, University of the Philippines Los Banos, and a forest concessionaire in Indonesia.

2.6 The ASEAN Secretariat will play a facilitating role for the Network, providing the interface and managing the communication between ASOF and the Network. In fact, the ASEAN Secretariat will be the institutional hub to ensure ownership by ASOF and AMAF and its future sustainability. Currently, it is supported by the ASEAN-German Regional Forest Program (ReFOP).

2.7 The common references for the Network activities are the ASEAN benchmarks, such as the ASEAN Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests, 2007; the Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting Format for Sustainable Forest Management in ASEAN, 2007; the Work Plan on Strengthening Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) in ASEAN, 2008-2015; and the six elements for legality that were developed by the 'Working Group on a Pan-ASEAN Timber Certification Initiative'. It is envisioned that the Network will produce, among others, policy briefs and policy-oriented papers with policy options on FLEG and FLEG-related matters, such as the synergies between FLEG and the forest and forest-related programs of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and that with REDD. The Network will also assist with FLEG implementation through national forest programs (nfps), including the mainstreaming of FLEG into relevant policy processes at the national level.

2.8 The FLEG Network, being a knowledge-based network, will undertake a comparative assessment of FLEG policies and implementation in AMS as this will permit greater learning among forest policy decision-makers. In addition, this will also further enhance "policy learning" among a wider range of stakeholders in the forest sector within and across countries, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, the forest industry, forest-dependent communities, and action-oriented researchers. This could be undertaken through a number of approaches such as learning to understand behaviors, learning to avoid policy failures, learning to discover existing policy successes, learning to understand disagreements, learning to identify policy innovations, and learning to promote consensus and problem solving (Cashore and McDermott, 2009). Nevertheless, the Network will not provide an overall, single score measure of FLEG in ASEAN nor try to rank or evaluate AMS on the basis of their overall FLEG implementation.

2.9 The FLEG Network will also be working closely with Partners of the Network such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, Thailand, the World Bank, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Jakarta, Indonesia, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), and the European Forest Institute (EFI) which is implementing the EU Asia FLEGT Support Program with the EC in Asia, especially in regard to strengthening the implementation of FLEG activities in ASEAN. Collaborative activities that will be implemented include the development of a 'Format for Assessing FLEG Implementation in ASEAN Member States,' a 'Handbook on Good Practices on FLEG,' and policy briefs on good forest governance practices and impacts of FLEG on sustainable livelihood. A workshop on current FLEG implementation in AMS and another workshop on customs protocol and timber trade statistical discrepancies will also be held. This will enhance the use of the limited resources and expertise available in the region, as well as avoid any duplication and overlaps of FLEG activities in ASEAN.

2.10 The products or outputs of the FLEG Network will be disseminated to the public through the existing ASEAN Regional Forest Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) which is managed by the ASEAN Secretariat. The CHM will be utilized by the Network not only to build synergies through linkages with various websites addressing FLEG and FLEG-related matters, but also as a communication platform among Network members to both coordinate the sharing of experiences and lessons learned on FLEG implementation, and facilitate the exchange of good practices of FLEG among AMS, including the holding of E-discussion on specific topics on FLEG.

*ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network on Forests and Climate Change*

2.11 The ASEAN Regional Knowledge Network on Forests and Climate Change (Climate Change Network) was also established in October 2008. The rationale for establishing this Network is very similar to that of the FLEG Network. The Climate Change Network is envisaged to broaden the ASEAN knowledge base on forestry and climate change and support ASOF's decision-making process on forests and climate change through policy analysis. The Climate Change Network will assist AMS in accessing research findings and transfer and diffuse environmentally clean technologies pertaining to ecosystem services provided by forests in regard to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

2.12 The Climate Change Network will pool together the expertise and knowledge of AMS in addressing forests and climate change. This will work to strengthen ASEAN's role in climate change negotiations, especially during the current negotiations on REDD, expected to be concluded at the Fifteenth Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Fifth Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol that is scheduled to be held in Copenhagen, Denmark from 30 November to 11 December 2009.

2.13 The Network members will aim to improve the use of research and evidence in ASEAN forest and climate change policy and practice through research and debate, as well as enhance the impact of regional research institutions on ASEAN policy-making through effective communication, information sharing and knowledge management.

2.14 At its Inaugural Workshop held in Jakarta, Indonesia in October 2008 the Climate Change Network also adopted an ASEAN Collaborative Research Agenda that covers the development of a payment distribution system and the integration of carbon payments into Payment for Environmental Services (PES). Also within the scope of this Agenda are databases to document all good practices and lessons learned from demonstration activities involving REDD, and gap analysis on capacity building needs for technical and policy research, including the strengthening of institutional frameworks in ASEAN (Fika, 2008).

2.15 The Climate Change Network will become the information clearing house on forests and climate change issues in ASEAN through the CHM, along with the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions (APAFRI) to establish, as a first step, effective databases for the sharing and exchange of information, including information on forest resources. In the long term, the Network will focus on products such as the synthesis of reports and databases for policy-makers, the identification of

research topics that address emerging issues on forests and climate change, the development of research projects, and the establishment of a Network research panel.

### **3.0 Expected Benefits of the Networks**

3.1 It is envisioned that the FLEG Network will play a catalytic role in supporting the efforts of ASEAN to better address FLEG implementation in AMS. It is also envisioned that the FLEG Network will provide a coherent approach to achieve the strategies, objectives and activities of the Work Plan for Strengthening Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) in ASEAN, 2008-2015, in the overall context of sustainable forest management. The Climate Change Network will provide the avenue to fill the gaps in research expertise in order to strengthen ASEAN's capacity to negotiate in the international fora, especially in the on-going negotiations for a post-Kyoto regime on climate change.

3.2 The pool of experts in both the FLEG and Climate Change Networks will be the agents of change and the champions in their respective countries that will further promote the capacity of AMS to address emerging issues and new approaches in enhancing FLEG processes and the inter-linkages between forests and climate change. This group of experts will facilitate in the development of a common understanding on specific issues and synchronize joint actions on regional issues of common concern. They will contribute to the development of policies and strategies from the perspective of AMS and thus enabling ASEAN to more independent of international 'consultants' and external advice.

3.3 As both Networks are addressing forest issues that are closely intertwined and complement each other, the strengthening of a common working mechanism among the experts of both the FLEG and Climate Change Networks will further enhance ASEAN ability to address forest and forest-related matters in a more integrated, holistic and balanced manner. A case in point is the production of the policy brief on the synergies between FLEG and REDD where experts from both Networks will be involved.

3.4 The experts of both the FLEG and Climate Change Networks will also assist policy and decision-makers to communicate the status of FLEG implementation and forest and forest-related matters on climate change more effectively to the public, focus research efforts where knowledge is still lacking and deficient, and identify those areas which are in special need of international assistance and cooperation.

3.5 The learning process provided by the FLEG and Climate Change Networks, especially learning across AMS, will help nurture a more clear and collective understanding and foster ideas that work. The learning process will promote strategic, problem focused interventions; and may very well help to foster greater sustained progress in developing enduring governance institutions across ASEAN.

### **4.0 Conclusions**

4.1 The challenges ahead for the FLEG and Climate Change Networks are to evolve efficient internal governance systems, nurture ownership including commitment and participation of interested stakeholders in ASEAN, secure a predictable means of

funding to ensure future sustainability, and produce quality products in a timely fashion that meet the needs of decision-makers.

4.2 Notwithstanding this, the work of the FLEG and Climate Change Networks will greatly contribute to the “ASEAN Declaration on Environmental Sustainability” wherein the Leaders of ASEAN in 2007 declared to strengthen law enforcement, promote environmentally sustainable practices, and combat illegal logging and its associated illegal trade, and to achieve a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010, as envisaged at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 and by the CBD. It will also consider biodiversity in the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and collectively work towards increasing the cumulative forest cover in ASEAN by at least 10 million hectares by 2020. The ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint, 2007 has, in addition underscored the need to “strengthen efforts to combat illegal logging and its associated trade, forest fire and its resultant effects.”

4.3 Furthermore, both Networks will contribute positively to the realization of the "Singapore Declaration on Climate Change, Energy and the Environment" signed by the Leaders of ASEAN plus the other six East Asian Countries, namely, Japan, Korea, China, India, Australia, and New Zealand, on the occasion of the Third East Asia Summit (EAS) held in Singapore on 21 November 2007, which calls for “strengthening forest law enforcement and governance to combat illegal logging and other harmful practices” and to “participate actively in the process of developing an effective, comprehensive, and equitable post-2012 international climate change arrangement under the UNFCCC process.”

## References

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