



## CONCEPT NOTE

### Promoting the Role of Natural Regeneration in Large-scale Forest and Landscape Restoration: Challenges and Opportunities

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### Consultation to operationalize Regional Strategy and Action Plan for Forest and Landscape Restoration in Asia-Pacific

2-4 May 2017

Pingxiang, Guangxi Province, China

#### Introduction

In 2011, the Bonn Challenge was announced with a goal to restore 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded lands by 2020. This ambitious goal was reinforced during the UN Climate Summit 2014 in New York where more than 130 signatories including governments, companies, civil society and indigenous peoples endorsed calls to restore more than 350 million hectares of forests and croplands by 2030. In the Asia-Pacific region, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) has adopted an aspirational goal of increasing forest cover in the region by at least 20 million ha by 2020, and member countries of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) and other organizations are placing increasing emphasis on forest restoration.

In light of these global targets and emerging ambitious national commitments, it is imperative to develop low-cost strategies and techniques for landscape restoration. The most widely used restoration strategies involving planting of native tree seedlings are often costly and their application for restoring vast expanses of degraded forestlands in the region may be limited.

Case studies and experience with natural regeneration from the region has shown that natural regeneration significantly reduces the cost of restoration in areas that meet certain conditions. Native species that are adapted to the prevailing conditions re-establish on their own with some assistance, achieving accelerated growth in accordance with natural succession, leading to the recovery of native ecosystems. Restoration strategies based on natural regeneration also provide low-cost opportunities for conserving biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration and watershed protection. Despite these economic and environmental advantages, natural regeneration is often overlooked when restoration policies and programs are designed for a number of reasons, including: lack of its recognition as a viable restoration option; perverse incentives favoring clearing of young secondary growth for plantation development or other land uses; lack of institutional support by government agencies and other organizations; unclear tenure and property rights; lack of incentives for local communities; and uncertainty over the restoration process and outcomes.



## Objectives

A regional workshop will be organized in Pingxiang, Guangxi Province, China to better understand the challenges and opportunities for natural forest regeneration and to promote its inclusion as a major component of large-scale restoration initiatives. The specific objectives of the workshop are as follows:

- 1) Raise awareness among policymakers and practitioners regarding the potential of natural generation in contributing to the achievement of forest restoration goals.
- 2) Share experience in and scope for using natural regeneration as a tool for forest restoration.
- 3) Discuss key issues related to restoring forestlands through natural regeneration: including the ecology, techniques and monitoring of regeneration; enabling policy, regulatory and institutional framework; and the economic and social dimensions of natural regeneration, and its role in
- 4) Identify barriers, gaps and opportunities for mainstreaming the application of natural regeneration as a viable and effective strategy in forest restoration; and
- 5) Develop recommendations on the way forward to promote the use of natural regeneration in regional and national restoration initiatives.

The result of the workshop will also feed into the consultation on regional strategy and action plan for forest and landscape restoration which will be incorporated into the final session of the workshop.

## Partners

**FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific**, in close coordination with **FAO HQ** particularly the **Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM)**, will be leading the organization of this workshop. FAO has been placing increasing emphasis on promoting forest landscape restoration globally and in the region. FAO launched the FLRM in 2014, helping countries to achieve their commitments towards the Bonn Challenge, the Aichi Targets and related goals. At the regional level, FAO has been engaging with a number of partners in promoting and building capacity in forest restoration.

The following partner organizations will be providing support in organizing the workshop:

- **Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet)** - Established in 2008 with a Secretariat office in Beijing, China, APFNet is a non-profit international organization dedicated to advancing sustainable forest management and rehabilitation in the Asia-Pacific region. APFNet will be a co-organizer and host for the event.
- **Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions (APAFRI)** - APAFRI was established in 1995 to provide a viable institutional framework for research collaboration in the Asia-Pacific region. APAFRI aims to enhance research and technology development capabilities in support of conservation and management of forest resources in the region.
- **Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (APFORGEN)** - APFORGEN is a regional programme and network with a holistic approach to the conservation and management of forest genetic resources in the region. The broad objective of APFORGEN is to promote the management of tropical forest genetic resources more equitably, productively and sustainably.
- **Bioversity International** – Bioversity is a global research-for-development organization with a vision that agricultural biodiversity nourishes people and sustains the planet. Bioversity delivers scientific evidence, management practices and policy options to use and safeguard agricultural and tree biodiversity to attain sustainable global food and nutrition security.

- **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** - IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organizations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organizations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together.
- **RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests** - RECOFTC is an international organization with a vision of local communities actively managing forests in Asia and the Pacific to ensure optimal social, economic, and environmental benefits.
- **World Resources Institute (WRI)** - WRI is a global research organization that spans more than 50 countries. WRI's more than 450 experts and staff work closely with leaders to turn big ideas into action to sustain our natural resources - the foundation of economic opportunity and human well-being.

## Dates

2-4 May 2017

## Venue

Pingxiang, Guangxi Province, China

## Participants

Invitation will be extended to forestry officials in charge of forest restoration from selected countries in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as representatives of key organizations, academia, research institutions programmes and projects working on forest restoration in the region. Countries to be represented may include: Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, etc. (to be further decided).

## Programme

It is envisaged that the workshop will cover the following topics. The programme will be further revised and elaborated in consultation with the partners.

<b>Day 1</b>
<b>Opening remarks</b>
<b>Session 1: The scale of challenge and opportunity for restoration (keynote)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Regional overview on the challenge and potential of natural regeneration</li> </ul>
<b>Session 2: Experiences in forest restoration through natural regeneration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Highlights from FAO regional TCP project on promoting ANR</li> <li>○ Case study of successful forest restoration through natural regeneration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mountain closure in China</li> <li>➤ Assisted natural regeneration (ANR) and rainforestation in the Philippines</li> <li>➤ Reports from country representatives (e.g., Nepal, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Session 2: Ecology of natural regeneration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Conditions that favor natural regeneration - mapping probabilities and prioritizing areas for natural regeneration</li> <li>○ Implications of species biology on regeneration success</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Management tools and guidelines</li> <li>○ Monitoring through spatial tools and field surveys</li> </ul>
<p><b>Session 3: Policies, regulations and institutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Categorization of regenerating forest (e.g., as shrubland, degraded land, fallow) and recognizing it as a viable land use option</li> <li>○ Removing policy disincentives</li> <li>○ Developing legal framework that encourage and enable natural regeneration</li> <li>○ Secure land tenure and clear property rights for land owners/managers</li> <li>○ Strengthening institutional support for natural regeneration as a restoration option</li> </ul>
<b>Day 2</b>
<p><b>Field visit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Experimental Center for Tropical Forestry (ECTF) field site</li> </ul>
<b>Day 3</b>
<p><b>Session 4: Economic and social aspects of natural regeneration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Developing incentives for regenerating forests</li> <li>○ Creating value from secondary forests</li> <li>○ Making it an attractive investment option</li> <li>○ Changing local people's perception of regeneration forest</li> </ul>
<p><b>Session 5: The role of natural regeneration in the context of landscape approach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Low cost, carbon, local biodiversity and biotic interactions, spatial, temporal heterogeneity, genetic adaptation, resilience</li> </ul>
<p><b>Session 6: Identifying constraints, opportunities and next steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Group discussion and reporting back</li> </ul>
<p><b>Session 7: Way forward</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Panel discussion to develop recommendations</li> <li>○ Consultation on the regional FLR strategy and action plan</li> </ul>

## Outputs

It is envisaged that the following outputs will be produced as a result of the workshop:

- Workshop proceedings including a summary of discussion and presented papers; and
- Policy briefs outlining key messages for policy-makers based on the workshop discussions.

## Regional strategy and action plan for FLR in Asia-Pacific

During the Asia-Pacific Forestry Week (APFW) 2016 held in Clark, Philippines, FAO organized a high-level regional consultation to develop an action plan for forest and landscape restoration in the Asia-Pacific. The event was attended by over 100 participants, who concurred on the need for a regional strategy for forest and landscape restoration and recommended that FAO further develop the regional strategy and action plan. Following extensive consultations with member countries of APFC as well as relevant organizations and experts, a preliminary draft of strategy was presented at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO23).

As one of the initial recommended actions of the regional strategy, FAO is seeking to engage partners in a dialogue to discuss operationalization of the strategy and action plan. Taking advantage of the presence of country representatives partner organizations and restoration experts at the workshop, it is proposed

to organize a half-day consultation with the objective of identifying core partners in implementing the regional strategy and agreeing on concrete steps to be taken. Results of the workshop on natural regeneration will also feed into the discussion on the regional strategy and action plan.