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# AFoCO Ministerial Meeting



The AFoCO Ministerial Meeting was convened on 30 October 2019 in Seoul, Korea. Ministers and high-level officers responsible for forestry from the 14 Member Countries of AFoCO engaged in discourses on innovative local actions on global targets, exploring opportunities, the future of sustainable capacity development with the [AFoCO Regional Education and Training Center](#) (RETC) in Myanmar, and the way forward for AFoCO Membership.

“The organization has come a long way since its establishment was first proposed at the 2009 ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit. Our new publication, ‘Glimpses of Our Cooperation 2009-2019’, highlights cooperative projects with Member Countries and our various capacity development initiatives,” said Mr. Chencho Norbu, Executive Director of AFoCO.

“Practical and meaningful outcomes have transpired from these programs and projects, and I believe that through AFoCO, Member Countries can forge closer ties to help the region’s forestry sector reach its full potential.”

AFoCO anticipated to play a part in the “Peace Forest Initiative”, a project led by the Korean government which involves the strengthening forest management efforts at cross-border areas. AFoCO also plans to organize a policy forum for high-level forestry officials from Member Countries in the first half of 2020.



A **Project Launching Ceremony** was held as part of the Meeting to celebrate the launch of six new AFoCO projects to be implemented in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, and Viet Nam. Projects aimed at improving local livelihoods and incomes in Bhutan, Kazakhstan, and Timor-Leste were also proposed at the Meeting.

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## 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Assembly of AFoCO



The Third Session of the Assembly of AFoCO was held in Seoul from 28 to 29 October 2019 prior to the Ministerial Meeting. The Assembly welcomed and congratulated Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, and Thailand on joining AFoCO as Parties.

New projects in Indonesia and Viet Nam were also approved. Projects targeted at local livelihoods and incomes in Bhutan, Kazakhstan, and Timor-Leste were also proposed at the Meeting.

Six policy documents developed by the Secretariat were also approved by the

Assembly. The policies are: Policy on Ethics and Conflicts of Interest for Executive Director, Policy on Ethics and Conflicts of Interest for the Assembly of AFoCO, Policy on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism, Policy on Information Disclosure, Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy, and Gender Policy.

The Assembly decided to hold the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the Assembly as a regular session in the last week of October 2020. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, the Republic Democratic of Timor-Leste and the Kingdom of Bhutan were elected as the President and Vice President.



The **Assembly of AFoCO** comprises of Representatives of Parties to AFoCO and functions as the highest decision-making body of AFoCO. The Assembly meets once a year in regular session and may convene special sessions. Assembly decisions and documents can be found on the AFoCO website.

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## AFoCO at the Asia-Pacific Forest Week (APFW2019)

APFW2019 was held from 17-21 June 2019 at Songdo ConvensiA Center in Incheon, the Republic of Korea. Under the theme “Forests for peace and well-being”, the event gathered experts and scholars to discuss and share views on key issues in the region’s forestry sector.

Together with APFNet (Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation) and SPC (Pacific Community), AFoCO led Stream 1: “Restoring Our Forests and Landscapes” of the APFW2019. Close to 20 events and meetings were organized under this thematic stream, which aimed to share insights, explore solutions and innovations, build collaborations, and expand networks in the field of forest restoration.

Forestry officials from Member Countries also attended the closed-door event “Contextualized Regional FLR Strategy to Attain Aspirations for a Greener Asia”, where they shared about national plans and policies related to FLR and identified gaps to be addressed to step up on restoration efforts at the national level.

At the occasion, signed MoUs with the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and Baekdudaegan National Arboretum (BDNA) to expand its scope of work.



## Workshop on Achievements & The Way Forward

On 23 April 2019, AFoCO launched its first International workshop to share about the activities and outputs of AFoCO projects as well as specific achievements in the fields of the forest genetic resources and forest rehabilitation, mangrove rehabilitation, and CBFM. The workshop produced constructive outputs on how to explore regional actions and approaches; converge different actors in forestry within each country; develop measurable outputs; and multiply best practices, among others.





# REACHING OUT TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

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AFoCO's Global Forest Camps & Workshops are a part of its capacity-building efforts targeted at younger generations. Through these forestry education initiatives, we hope to inform young children of the problems faced by forests and nature today and inspire them to take action to protect and manage them in a sustainable manner.

# Global Forest Camps & Workshops

With support from the Korea Green Fund, AFoCO organized a series of forest camps targeted at multicultural youths in Korea. Our forest camps aim to increase environmental awareness by helping children gain a better understanding of forests and the important roles that they play while providing opportunities to learn about international forest cooperation through various activities.

AFoCO worked with the [National Center for Forest Therapy](#) and the [National Center for Forest Activities, Hoengseong](#) to operate five camps for elementary and middle school children in February and August. During the summer camps, participants also embarked on a study tour to the Forest Aviation Headquarters in Wonju and learned firsthand about how forest fires are being monitored, prevented and suppressed through the use of integrated systems and advanced technologies.



In October and November, AFoCO visited schools across the country to organize experiential forest culture workshops. The half-day workshops begin with a talk on forests in Asia and the roles that forests play in today's world while reminding our young audience that everyone has a responsibility to protect forests. The workshop program also included a wood-crafting session which saw children diligently creating various wood products under the guidance of instructors.

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## Bidding farewell to our 2019 Fellowship Officials

On 20 December, AFoCO held a Certificate Award Ceremony to extend our appreciation and congratulations to our third batch of Fellowship Officials for completing the 2019 AFoCO Fellowship Program.

(From left to right) Mr. Nguyen Xuan Huu (Vietnamese Academy of Forest Sciences), Ms. Kemly Ouch (Forest Administration, Cambodia), Ms. Kinley Dem (Department of Forests and Park Services, Bhutan), and Ms. Thet Myat Yadanar Aye (Forest Department, Myanmar) have contributed their expertise

through various projects and events over the past six months and forged precious friendships while working together.

During their stint in Korea, they also visited the National Institute of Forest Science (NIFoS), Forest Aviation Headquarters, National Forest Seed Variety Center and Wood Trade Center of the National Forestry Cooperation Federation.

### 2019 AFoCO Fellowship Program

20 December 2019 | AFoCO Secretariat



The AFoCO Fellowship Program welcomes junior government officials of Member Countries who are dispatched to the AFoCO Secretariat to experience working in an international organization. Read more about what our Fellowship Officials have to say about their experiences and life in Korea!

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## Pioneer batch of Science & Technology Exchange Partnership (STEP) Program participants complete program

September 2019 marked the launch of AFoCO's first Science and Technology Partnership (STEP) Program. Beginning on 17 September, the month-long training course targeted at technical-level researchers with at least a year's experience in the field of forest plant biodiversity.

The theme for the 2019 STEP Program training course is "The Role of Arboreta in the Conservation of Forest Plant Biodiversity", and the course is jointly organized with the Baekdudaegan National Arboretum (BDNA), the second largest arboretum in the world.

Located in Bonghwa County in North Gyeongsang Province of Korea, the BDNA is also home to the first underground tunnel-type seed storage facility.

This year's program at the BDNA will aim to share comprehensive knowledge and skills about plant conservation such as the classification of forest plants, seed collection, seed management, tissue culture, seed viability test and propagation; and improve the capacity of officials by providing hands-on experiences related to landscape design, construction and operation of arboreta.

The 2019 STEP Program participants are: Mr. Kencho Rigzin from Bhutan, Mr. Meng Loth from Cambodia, Ms. Nurul Hazlina from Brunei Darussalam, Ms. Swe Swe Win from Myanmar and Ms. Trieu Thi Thu Ha from Viet Nam.

Five officials embarked on one-month research immersion program at the Baekdu-daegan National Arboretum (BDNA) in North Gyeongsang Province of Korea. Hear what the AFoCO STEP Program participants have to say about their experiences!

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# DEVELOPING THE CAPACITIES OF FORESTRY STAKEHOLDERS

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TRAININGS

PARTICIPANTS

AFoCO is committed to building capacity in the region to strengthen efforts in dealing with pressing forestry and environmental issues such as climate change. In addition to regular courses, AFoCO offers customized training courses, community development courses and workshops for policy-makers, technical-level officials, researchers, university students, and the general public. In 2019, 17 training courses were organized at the AFoCO to build the capacities of government officials, members of local communities and students majoring in forestry.

## Capacity Development of Trainers on Community-based Enterprise Development

Experience, knowledge and skills for building up community-based enterprises in the Asia-Pacific region is still limited, and there is little understanding of an entrepreneurial mindset among local governments, NGO officers and facilitators, as well as community leaders and representatives wanting to set up their own community enterprises.

The training on 'Facilitating Community-based Enterprises' was held at the AFoCO Regional Education and Training Center (RETC) in Myanmar on 9-13 December 2019 to provide participants with a conceptual understanding of community livelihood and community forest enterprise (CFE) development as well as the basic skills and knowledge required to guide and support communities in setting up sustainable CFEs. Participants also went on a field trip to practice using the tools and analytical framework learned during the in-class learning sessions.



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### Accelerating Projects through Resource Diversification

In November 2019, 14 high-level officials involved in AFoCO projects and activities from Member Countries gathered at the AFoCO RETC in Myanmar to learn about project funding mechanisms of AFoCO and its partner organizations and discussed challenges, opportunities and new ideas.

### Young Forester Program with Chungnam National University

Ten undergraduate students majoring in forestry at Chungnam National University attended a customized training course at the AFoCO RETC in October 2019. The students were introduced to tropical forestry and mangrove forests in Myanmar and also visited the Central Forestry Development and Training Center and a teak plantation area in Kaw-Li-Ya reserved forest.

# List of 2020 Regular Training Courses



AFoCO RETC  
Hmawbi Township, Yangon, Myanmar

AFoCO's regular training courses are intended to strengthen the capacity of Member Countries by enhancing knowledge and understanding of forest management and providing greater access to advanced technologies.

1. Forest Fire Management  
*13-17 January, AFoCO RETC*
2. Project Development & Project Proposal Writing  
*3-7 February, AFoCO RETC*
3. Forest Restoration & Restoration  
*24-29 February, AFoCO RETC*
4. Climate Change Adaptation  
*27 April-1 May, AFoCO RETC*
5. Payments for Ecosystem Services  
*8-12 June, AFoCO RETC*
6. Community-based Forest Enterprise Development  
*31 August-4 September, AFoCO RETC*
7. Project Inception Training for New Implementing Agencies  
*14-18 September, AFoCO RETC*
8. Project Management & Performance Review  
*21-25 September, AFoCO RETC*
9. AFoCO Projects & Way Forward (High-level officials)  
*26-30 October, AFoCO RETC*



# Malaysia & Thailand join hands to restore disturbed terrestrial ecosystems



*Domestication of Endangered, Endemic & Threatened Plant Species in Disturbed Terrestrial Ecosystem in Malaysia & Thailand*

Beginning in 2016, the six-year AFoCO Regional Project has focused on establishing and maintaining domestication models for Red List species in degraded ecosystems. Since 2016, Malaysia has domesticated a total of 17 EETS plants and planted a total of 3,160 seedlings. In Thailand, 5,546 trees of 12 different EETS have been planted.

As part of the project, Malaysia and Thailand have been actively involved in the sharing of knowledge and transfer of technologies on the domestication of EETS to other countries in the region. Regional seminars and workshops were organized in 2017 and 2019 to enhance

knowledge and understanding of techniques and know-how related to reclamation, rehabilitation and the conservation of Red List plant species. Project managers from both countries also visited the Republic of Korea in December 2019 to participate in a technical workshop.



*Neobalanocarpus heimii*, a tropical hardwood tree listed as endangered in the IUCN Red List was successfully planted in Mae Moh mine in Thailand.

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# Cambodia & Viet Nam improve seed supply systems to promote reforestation and forest rehabilitation



*Promotion of Forest Rehabilitation in Cambodia & Viet Nam through Demonstration Models & Improvement of Seed Supply System*



Beginning in 2014, the five-year regional project succeeded in initiating a tree seed supply and distribution system to improve tree seed collection and nursery practices and make quality seeds readily accessible to seed users and forest restoration practitioners. Forest rehabilitation models were also established in Siem Reap Province in Cambodia and Hoa Binh Province in Viet Nam.

At the last Project Steering Committee Meeting in 2019, both countries stressed the need to ensure the sustainable mobilization of resources generated by the project. This can be achieved by introducing a certification system for local seed suppliers in Cambodia and upscaling community forest management at the provincial level with the active engagement of local farmers in Viet Nam.

In addition to the establishment of key support facilities such as a tree seed laboratory in Cambodia and a tissue culture laboratory in Viet Nam, the project has also produced several publications on seed sources and demonstration models of forest restoration, seed supply and demand and lessons learnt in both English and Khmer.

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## Life as an intern at the AFoCO RETC in Myanmar

# CHO HYUN MIN

Kangwon National  
University, Korea

The most precious memories that I have are of my friends there. It was hardly possible for us to be able to adapt to the new living environment in Myanmar without any

help. Thankfully, the people at the RETC shared many needed materials with us – usually food and snacks to keep us energized! Also, it was really fun having conversations with the staff and training participants and sharing about our different cultures. When it comes to meeting local people, since I can't speak Myanmar language and they don't speak English, we communicated through gestures and sounds. Communicating in this way was a really fresh and overwhelming experience for me.

The more people I met, the more I felt embarrassed because they have a true passion for improving the forests in their countries. However, this encouraged me to think about how I can contribute to the Korea's forestry sector of my country in the future.

If I could go back to the time when I was in Myanmar, I want to challenge myself by meeting more people and visiting other places in Myanmar. Thank you RETC and Myanmar!



This was the first time I had stayed overseas for an extended period of time and everything felt very new to me. Living in Myanmar for six months made me realize many things. People in Myanmar generally lead carefree lives without worrying excessively about the future. Watching them, I was reminded to enjoy today and forget the the competitive mindset that I had when living in Korea.

My internship was a valuable experience not only because we got to be involved in many aspects of the RETC operation and management but also because of the many other activities we engaged in during our free time. We mostly interacted with



the RETC staff and learned about one another's cultures and languages. Every weekend, Hyunmin and I visited a nearby orphanage to teach Korean and spend time with the children there.

# PARK JINSU

Kyungpook National  
University, Korea

Life in Myanmar wasn't easy but during my internship, I got to experience much more than I had imagined. Here goes my advice to the next batch of RETC interns: Try not to focus on the difficulties you encounter along the way. Instead, open your eyes to what you can do, and meet and interact more with the people around you!



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CHECK OUT THE FULL LIST OF PUBLICATIONS & REPORTS [HERE >](#)

## Publications & Reports

1. Glimpses of Our Cooperation 2009-2019 (photobook compilation of activities)
2. Exploring the Forest with Tory and Sully (comic-based textbook for children)
3. Moving Towards a Greener Asia (project list and summaries)
4. Forest Pathways through National Reforestation Programs & Innovative Public-Private Forest Investments
5. AFoCO Project Volume 2 – Individual Forest Cooperation Projects 2012-2013
6. [Forestry in Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#)

