



Why forests matter in post COVID-19 recovery?

Chandra Silori, Deputy Executive Director, RECOFTC
25 October 2021, Annual Thematic Dialogue, AFoCO





At RECOFTC,
we believe in a
future where
people live
equitably and
sustainably in
and beside
healthy,
resilient forests.

Context and study



The Research
was conducted in
partnership with



With support
from



FLOURISH



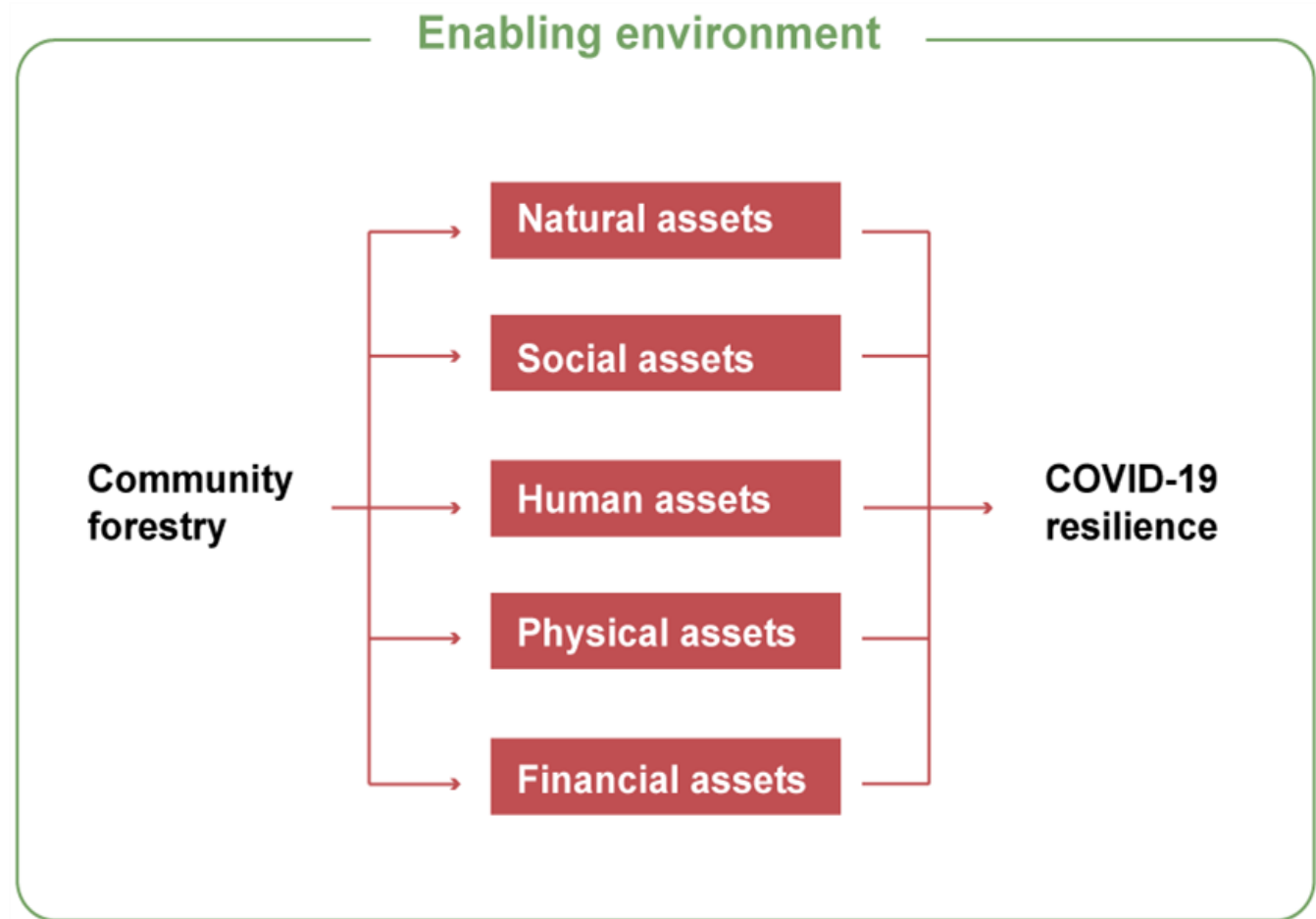
This project is funded by
the European Union



Context and study

- COVID-19 pandemic
- RECOFTC and FAO study
- Seven countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam
- Phase 1 survey: 435 people (July to August 2020)
- Phase 2 survey: 14 community forests (December 2020 to January 2021)
- Widespread impacts of pandemic on livelihoods

Hypothesis



A photograph of a person working in a tomato field. The person is wearing a traditional conical hat, a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, dark pants, and rubber boots. They are bent over, tending to the plants. The field is filled with tomato vines supported by bamboo stakes. Many tomatoes are visible, some green and some red. The background shows more of the field and some trees.

COVID-19 Impacts

Impacts on local livelihoods

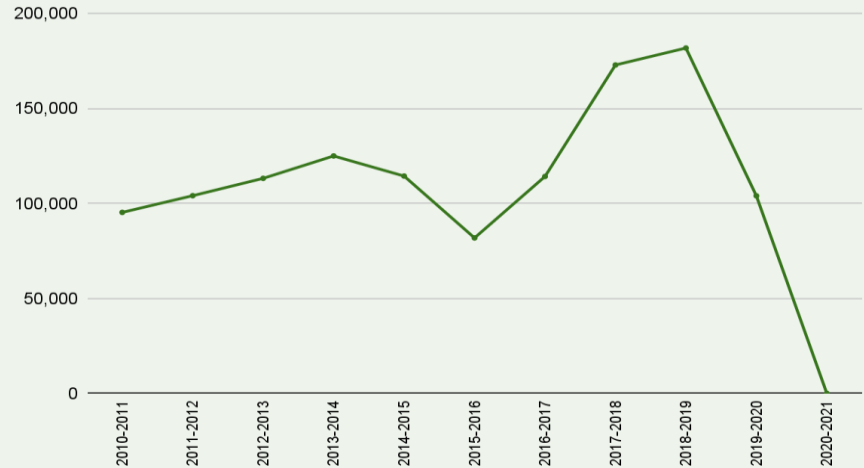
- Negative impact on the livelihoods of local communities
- Forests and forest-based products were critical resources and buffered negative impacts
- Forests filled gaps
 - Food and income
 - Space for refuge and network
- Secured access for people to use forests and collect products due to community forestry



Most impacted forest communities

- Livelihoods of communities in eco-tourism sites such as protected areas, watershed areas, high-mountain areas were significantly affected
 - Sharp decline in number of tourists by 60-95%
- Lack of tourism and trade channels for timber and non-timber forest products were observed
- Informal workers without formal contracts and social protection mechanisms lost jobs and income

Number of tourists in Annapurna Conservation Area, Nepal



An aerial photograph of a dense, lush green forest. A narrow, light-brown dirt road or path winds through the center of the forest, starting from the top and curving slightly towards the bottom. The trees are thick and vibrant green, with some variations in shade suggesting different species or canopy heights. A semi-transparent dark grey rectangular box is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing white text.

**Potential of community forestry to address
vulnerabilities and shocks**

**Community forests
as centres of knowledge,
people power and
networks of support**



Community forests as centres of knowledge, people power and networks of support

- **Community forest committees**
 - Accessing / distributing COVID-19 information and PPE
 - Regulating access to forests
 - Organizing protection patrols
- **Community forest members**
 - Knowledge gained through experience and training
- **External relations**
 - Access to support from government, NGOs
 - Trade networks

Community forests as providers in a time of need



Community forests as providers in a time of need

- **Forest products for subsistence use or sale**
 - Wild food plants
 - Medicines
 - Materials
 - Firewood
 - Agroforestry crops
 - Timber (in some cases)

A person wearing a traditional conical hat and a light-colored shirt is working in a lush green field. They are surrounded by dense vegetation, including bamboo stakes and tomato plants with red and green fruit. The scene is set in a rural area with a dirt path visible in the background.

Community forests as financial safety nets

Community forests as financial safety nets

- Income and savings: 3 million people in the lower Mekong countries
- Community forest funds
- Revolving credit schemes
- Payments for environmental services

Limiting and success factors



Limiting and success factors

- Tenure and rights
- Forest size and quality
- Community forest leadership
- External relations
- Access to training
- Capacity to manage funds

Implications for post- COVID recovery



Implications for post-COVID recovery

- Expand community forestry
- Improve tenure and rights and promote community engagement
- Create and strengthen revolving credit schemes
- Strengthen forest protection patrols
- Provide training on livelihoods including agroforestry
- Include inclusive benefit sharing mechanisms into community forestry models

Implications for post-COVID recovery

- Adopt optimal landuse planning to integrate community forestry with forest landscape restoration
- Strengthen approaches to boost food security and nutrition
- Simplify process for communities' commercial use of forests and forest resources
- Embed social protection and inclusion measures within forest sector policies and planning

Conclusions



Conclusions

- Community forestry can boost resilience to shocks and improve livelihoods in the long term
- But only if the right conditions are in place
- Therefore, expand social, address gaps and replicate success factors

Thank you



recoftc.org



@RECOFTC



Special Report

How community forests boosted pandemic resilience across Asia-Pacific

Research in seven Asian countries reveals how community forests increased people's resilience to the COVID-19-induced restrictions and why recovery plans should strengthen community-based forest management.

June 2021

Read report

