

Seventh Session of the Assembly
26-27 October 2022, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Agenda Item 8

Updates on Capacity Development Activities and Future Plan

I. Updates on the progress of Capacity Building Roadmap 2030

1. AFoCO aims to build the capacity of the member countries by implementing research and development (R&D), sharing experiences, transferring technology, and conducting education and exchange programs.
2. As a follow-up action of the Institutional Review of AFoCO and Secretariat reported at the fourth session of the Assembly (A-4-IV-20R), the Secretariat developed a capacity building roadmap 2030 (hereinafter referred to as “the Roadmap”).
3. The Roadmap is expected to form a part of the new capacity-building strategy within defined areas that contribute to the niche of AFoCO, which will contribute to improving the AFoCO Strategic Plan. Particularly it is closely related to revising the Strategic Plan of AFoCO, which is far-reaching and long-term (A-5-IV-20R).
4. The Roadmap identified four strategic target areas and suggested nine expected outcomes. The proposal and suggestions of the Roadmap will be the ingredients for the development of the Strategic Plan 2024-2030 regarding capacity building strategy in due course.

Four strategic target areas

a. Strategic Target Area 1: Enabling Environment

The objective of Strategic Target Area 1 is to improve the context and conditions needed to develop an efficient, competency-based capacity development framework and for the professionalization of forest management in the AFoCO member countries.

b. Strategic Target Area 2: Planning for Capacity Development and Professionalization

The objective of Target Area 2 is to develop the strategic framework for integrated and coordinated capacity development and professionalization for the management of forest areas.

c. Strategic Target Area 3: Organizational Capacity

The objective of Target Area 3 is to establish key organizational policies, procedures, and requirements for forest management entities to provide a working environment that encourages foresters to improve their professional capacity and to support them in utilizing the newly gained or improved competences in their every-day work.

d. Strategic Target Area 4: Individual Capacity Level

The objective of Target Area 4 is to provide national, regional, and local capacity-building opportunities for forest staff and forest communities for the efficient management of forests in AFoCO Member Countries.

Nine expected outcomes

- a. Reversing the loss of forest cover in Asia by managing forests sustainably and healthy, including protection and conservation of forests, reforestation and rehabilitation programs to halt forest degradation and deforestation, restoring Asian drylands, and contributing to mitigating climate change.
- b. Supporting Forest-based small-scale economics and social and environmental benefits, including improving the livelihoods of forest dwellers.
- c. Expanding the protected forest areas and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products and non-wood forest products from sustainably managed forests.
- d. Enhancing cooperation, coordination, coherence, and synergies for solving forest-related issues at all levels across AFoCO member countries and Asia.
- e. Increasing private sector participation in policy discussions, program and project formulation, research and development (R&D), providing incentives, and fostering an enabling environment for public-private partnerships in the role of sustainable forest management.
- f. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, promoting advanced forest technology-based learning opportunities in Asia, and achieving gender equality in all technical skills and advanced technology learning.
- g. Halting land degradation and loss of biodiversity by strengthening international partnerships.
- h. Building the capacity of member countries for monitoring, reporting, and verifying forest carbon, including community-based forest carbon management.
- i. Developing a good understanding of the competency-based approach throughout the protected forest area management sector and with key stakeholders and preparing the legal framework for the future professionalization of protected forest area management, that is, for developing occupational standards that should guide curricula in the formal and vocational education systems

5. The executive summary of the Roadmap is in **Annex-1**.

II. Report on Internal Evaluation of Fellowship Program

A. Background

6. Based on the recommendation by the Republic of Korea at the sixth session of the Assembly, the Secretariat has conducted an evaluation of the fellowship program to share the lessons learned from the AFoCO Fellowship Program with two (2) main objectives as follows: 1) to assess the achievements of the program, and 2) to improve the quality of the program.

7. The evaluation was planned and conducted with its main scope of 1) the operational settings of the fellowship program, 2) the professional achievements of the fellowship officials in the career path, 3) the institutional achievements of its goal and mission, and 4) the perspectives of the Parties toward the long-term benefits of the program to the countries as well as AFoCO. The current and former Fellowship Officials participated in the evaluation process.

8. The evaluation adopted three criteria, namely: relevance, impact, and sustainability, referring to the OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria and Indicators that are also used for the evaluation of AFoCO projects. Based on the criteria, the evaluation was conducted using the three methodologies of a questionnaire survey, online interview, and document review.

9. The evaluation involved nineteen fellowship officials, six National Focal Points (NFP), and six program officers of the Secretariat. The fellowship officials of each batch were also invited to participate in the online interview by providing suggestions and recommendations related to the program, and their comments were categorized and analyzed for the relevant criteria.

B. Results and Suggestions from the Evaluation Report

Results

10. Through the survey analysis, the Fellowship Officials gave 4.0 out of the total 5.0 for the existing operation of the Fellowship Program, indicating 'very good', wherein the score of relevance was 3.8, that of impact was 4.0, and that of sustainability was 4.2. It was found that the content of the program and some duties and tasks are well given to the Fellowship Officials. The Fellowship Officials recognized that the Program gives a positive impact on skills and experience so they suggest this program be continued.

11. The National Focal Points gave 4.3 out of the total 5.0, indicating 'very good', wherein the score of relevance was 4.3, that of impact was 4.2, and that of sustainability was 4.3. The National Focal Points indicate that the implementation of the Fellowship Program has a positive impact on project development and effective communication with the AFoCO Secretariat. They also suggest this program be continued.

12. The Program Officers of the Secretariat gave 3.7 out of the total 5.0, indicating 'good', the score of relevance was 3.4, that of impact was 3.7, and that of sustainability was 3.7. In terms of relevance, the Program Officers identified that the relevancy of the Fellowship Program is at a moderate level to the AFoCO's goal and missions. The Program Officers recognize the Program's

positive impact on the facilitation of project development, as well as effective communication with the Member Countries. They also suggest this program be continued.

Suggestions

13. To enhance the relevance:
 - a. It would be helpful in providing optional term(s) of duration, conditions, and opportunities to acquire sufficient knowledge of the AFoCO Secretariat, e.g., project management, monitoring, evaluation, and project proposal development.
 - b. It would be effective to assign the Fellowship Officials based on the experience they have.
 - c. It would be better to include more field visits about the reforestation technology and forest structure of Korea in the program.

14. To strengthen the impact:
 - a. It would be considered to provide more opportunities to gain experiences and knowledge in various divisions of the Secretariat.
 - b. It would be helpful having relevant experience in developing projects.
 - c. It would be useful for providing a communication channel to share good experience of the previous batches of the program (e.g., fellowship alumni, home coming days, etc.).

15. To secure the sustainability:
 - a. It needs to create a scale of living allowance based on the number of family members.
 - b. It would be considered to provide an opportunity for extension of duration based on the fellowship officer's performance evaluation.
 - c. The selection criteria should consider the candidate's potential for contribution to AFoCO and spread knowledge in the country of the respective candidate.

C. Observation of the Secretariat

16. In brief, the Member Parties recognize that the Fellowship Program supports their national capacity building in the forestry sector in overall.

17. To the Secretariat, it may need to improve its relevance in the future; the relevance was relatively low compared to other criteria, i.e., impact, and sustainability.

18. The draft evaluation report is in **Annex-2**.

III. Update of RETC operation and achievements

A. RETC Operation and Management

19. Currently, the RETC is not fully open to the public for the COVID-19 restriction in the host country, and its security is covered by the Forest Department of Myanmar (FD). Twenty-seconded governmental officials from the FD and nine local staff are working on the RETC maintenance. Upon the situation is stable, the Program Officer for RETC will be dispatched accordingly.

20. The FD has regularly updated the prevention and control protocol/arrangements for COVID-19 in the host country. The immigration policy of the government of Myanmar allowed people to enter Myanmar from September 2022 according to the rules and regulations of the government. While the courses were conducted online not using the building facilities, the Secretariat conducted a series of defective work for building maintenance, including electricity facilities, water leakage fixation, and so on.

21. The RETC is ready to accommodate training courses from 2023 in cooperation with FD Myanmar accordingly. The RETC will start regular training in the first quarter of next year in cooperation with Myanmar, the host country of the RETC.

22. To secure efficient management and sustainable operation, the Secretariat understood the importance and urgency of concluding the Host Country Agreement for RETC between the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the AFoCO. For that, the Secretariat has continued consultative communication with the FD since 2019. However, the Secretariat observed that it might take more time to conclude the Agreement, for the domestic situation has changed. There are several points to be negotiated further, particularly the provisions on immunities and privileges.

B. Establishment of AFoCO Experimental Forest (119 ha)

23. The RETC has selected the Korea Arboreta and Garden Institute (KOAGI) to conduct the design works for the establishment of AFoCO Experimental Forest in October 2021 through a the competitive bidding process in accordance with the financial regulations of AFoCO. In the 1st semester in 2022, the KOAGI organized an International Workshop on the Establishment of the AFoCO Experimental Forest and explored prospective partners to build up the research network to utilize the experimental forest in the long-term view.

24. Through a series of on-site surveys and validation, the KOAGI developed the design work of the Experimental Forest in September 2022. Within the budget availability of the Landmark Program, the RETC will start the procurement for construction of the main access road based on the design work within 2022 and will continue other works in due course.

25. The RETC will conduct an international conference tentatively entitled "Synergizing Experimental Forest on Forest Landscape Restoration" inviting the Member Countries in 2023.

IV. Update of ongoing activities regarding capacity building

A. Updates on Education and Training Programs

26. As of September 2022, the RETC conducted six training courses online and in hybrid. Following the requests at the fifth Session of the Assembly, RETC explored venues to organize in-person training in Member Countries that the COVID-19 travel restrictions had lifted. Accordingly, the Secretariat organized two off-site training in Cambodia and the Philippines.

27. The RETC invited five countries to participate in in-country community development training and received two country proposals from Cambodia and the Philippines. For the RETC online campus, the RETC collaborated with Seoul National University to develop online modules in the name of 'AFoCOxSNU Forestry 101.' Throughout a year, nine e-modules for three forestry topics covering forest restoration, climate change, and forest-related disaster management were developed and will be released in December 2022.

28. For the in-person training at the center, RETC focused on conducting in-house capacity-building programs for RETC staff (e.g., fire-drills, electricity, hospitality, language, etc.). In addition, one community development training is completed at the RETC. Currently, RETC is planning to organize the remaining courses, particularly community development training and eco-school programs.

29. Outputs and deliverables from the RETC's capacity-building programs are intended to establish a baseline for the development of regional initiatives, accelerate the regional and country-level implementation, improve community livelihood and participation, and promote the regional efforts in the forestry sector of member countries through various topics.

30. With regard to the High-Level Workshop on Forest-related Disaster Management and Impacts of Climate Change, the RETC developed a concept note as reported at the fifth Session of Assembly. Following up of its brief introduction during the Annual Thematic Dialogue organized on 25 October 2022, Almaty, Kazakhstan, the Secretariat will plan for organizing the workshop in 2023.

31. The summary of training and education programs in 2022 is in **Annex-3**

B. Science and Technology Exchange Partnership (STEP) Program in 2022

32. For 2022, a total of seven (7) technical-level government officials and researchers in the field of forest plant biodiversity from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Thailand completed the program successfully at Baekdu Daegan National Arboretum and Baekdu Daegan Global Seed Vault (BGSV) in the Republic of Korea from 19 September to 14 October. The status of the Member Countries that participate in the STEP Program appears in **Annex-4**.

33. Considering capacity building in genetic resource management, the BGSV proposed a seed conservation promotion program entitled “Keep Eternally Your Seeds for Future (KEYS for Future)”. The concept note proposed by the BGSV is in **Annex-5**.

C. Update on the Landmark Scholarship Program in 2022

34. The Landmark Scholarship supported two doctoral and two master’s students in 2022, including one (1) new scholarship recipient from Viet Nam for a master’s course.

35. For 2023, four scholarship candidates, three for doctoral and one for master’s degree, are expected to get admission to start their courses at universities in Korea from March 2023.

36. Responding to higher demands on the expansion of the scholarship program, including all Member Parties, the Secretariat will identify potential donors for the next phase of the Landmark Scholarship Program from 2023. The Secretariat will closely consult with the Korea Forest Service at the upcoming Donors Meeting, to maximize the impacts of the AFoCO’s scholarship program, including further fund source, before completion of the current Landmark Program in due course.

37. The status of the Member Countries participating in the Landmark Scholarship Program is in **Annex-6**.

D. Update on AFoCO Fellowship Program in 2022

38. Pursuant to the Decision 33-III-19R adopted by the Third Session of the Assembly held on 28-29 October 2019, the AFoCO Fellowship Program has been running into two (2) batches each with a term of six (6) months from January each year. In 2022, the Secretariat welcomed five (5) Fellowship Officials from Bhutan, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Myanmar, and Timor-Leste for the 1st half of the year and five (5) Fellowship Officials from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Myanmar for the latter half of 2022.

39. In accordance with the Decision 43-V-21R and the Guidelines on the Expanded Fellowship Program newly endorsed at the 6th Session of the Assembly (G-5-22S), the Secretariat completed the nomination of the Fellowship Officials for Category-I for 2023. For Category-II, the Secretariat will announce the call with specific TOR starting from 2023 in due course as the internal process is completed.

40. The status of the Member Countries participating in the Fellowship Program is in **Annex-7**.

V. Points for consideration

41. The Assembly may wish to take note of the updates.
