



## Synthesis Report

**7<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN**  
**1<sup>st</sup> CSO Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN Thematic Dialogue Seminar**  
 24-25 June 2018, Danang, Vietnam

### Background

The CSO Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN was established in 2012 and is participated in by civil society organizations and community-based organizations, indigenous peoples' networks and membership organizations who are present in ASEAN. These organizations are implementing capacity building, awareness raising, and technical support programs on forest and NTFP livelihood and marketing, forest tenure and access rights, and traditional and indigenous knowledge systems on natural resources, and a few projects in REDD+. It is a platform to distil, consolidate and relay key messages from CSOs and communities to ASEAN member states through the ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry (AWG-SF).

This year's 7<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, with a theme ***"Sustaining Collaborative and Innovative People-centered Actions and Contributions in NDCs and the Sustainable Development Goals,"*** was participated by over 80 participants from an estimated 40 organizations in 8 countries. Following the result of the 2-day meeting, the Forum is pleased to share the synthesis of the Forum which were organized with a working meeting among the CSO Forum participating organizations, 4 skill share sessions and a 1 day Thematic Dialogue Seminar.

### Notable Progress

Following the identified targets until 2020 by the Forum, progress has been made in the areas of policy, practice, and platforms. Policy development, such as groundbreaking laws on biodiversity (Malaysia), forestry (Vietnam), shifting cultivation (Myanmar), ICCAs (Malaysia), and drafts on proposed harmonized bills. Customary forests (such as *hutan adat*, spirit forests, etc.) are being recognized (Indonesia). Government, Civil Society and Community has observed to have improved cooperation. Multi-stakeholder working groups, and committees at different levels are existing and functioning, with sustained discussions on safeguards mechanisms and FPIC practice. Further, communities are gradually being recognized as forest owners and there has been successful innovative platforms, such as the *Panen Raya Nustantara* (PARARA), that promotes the ecological and cultural value of sustainably developed products.

### Challenges

However, despite these progress, Social Forestry still faces critical bottlenecks, gaps and challenges, that the ASEAN Member States and the CSOs can work together, specifically on:

### ***Community Economy and Livelihoods***

- Community Forestry Enterprises (CFEs) operating in isolation;
- Lacking in synergy of the forestry sector into the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC);
- Standards need to be developed;
- Provisions for alternative certification;
- Permitting process is often a disincentive; and
- Equitable partnership between CFEs and larger enterprises

### ***Governance Mechanisms***

- Sustaining social forestry without external funding
- Limited capacity in operationalization of governance mechanisms
- Addressing conflicts
- Shifts in leadership affecting continuity in progress

### ***Safeguards***

- Varying interpretations/ understanding of FPIC
- Lack of clear guidance on the implementation and practice from various stakeholders on FPIC: reporting systems, grievance mechanisms
- Lack of capacity of local communities in communication and negotiation

### ***Forest Tenure and Access Rights***

- Rapid development in community and indigenous forests encroaching on and threatening customary forests and customary rights.
- Tedious process in securing titles
- Overlapping management over land
- No systematic assessment of customary tenure

## **Opportunities**

After looking into the specific challenges, the Forum was also able to identify key opportunities on its four major themes:

### ***Community Economy and Livelihoods***

- Increased appreciation for the creative economy
- Concrete actions on the ground such as initiatives on forest honey, consortium-driven marketing and innovative entrepreneurial channels.
- Marketing and branding efforts could be expanded in terms of scope for Community Forestry Enterprise (CFE) products

- There is room for improving policies to recognize communities as key players in national economic development

### ***Governance Mechanisms***

- Operationalization of multi-stakeholder social forestry groups and expanding roles as capacities are built;
- Existing streams of similar initiatives, projects, and programmes on strengthening social forestry (in REDD+, FLEGT and other programs);
- Increased efficiency in awarding social forestry areas; and
- Policy changes, pushing for harmonization

### ***Safeguards***

- Existence of national and regional multi-stakeholder working groups in social forestry as a good way to monitor FPIC

### ***Forest Tenure and Access Rights***

- International policies and agreements (e.g. Paris Agreement)
- Progress in national policies, expanding discussion spaces for the recognition of tenure
- Regional learning networks and platforms for information and knowledge-sharing (ICCAs, CSO Forum, etc.)

## **Recommendations**

In line with ASEAN Cooperation on Forestry, Key Performance Indicators on Food Agriculture and Forestry, the Strategic Plan of Action of the AWG-SF, and the affirmed CSO Forum on Social Forestry Vision and Thematic Goals, Adopted Strategies and Mechanisms under its 4 key themes, the CSO Forum would like to emphasize the following points that deemed pertinent to support and maintain people-centered actions and contributions to NDCs and the SDGs:

For **Community Economy and Livelihoods**, these were categorized into 3 major areas:

- **ASEAN and National Policy and Program Development** which include National policy development on enabling environment for CFEs; One stop processing center for CFEs registration and support; Sharing technical expertise on NTFPs across ASEAN; Intellectual Property Right (IPR )support for community products; and Acceptance of alternative certification.

- **Capacity Building and Promotions** thru sustained and appropriate capacity building program and assistance in meeting standards, value addition, regional and national marketing and branding; and
- **Connectivity and Continuity** to facilitate equitable partnership between CFEs and larger enterprises; activating the ASEAN Trust Fund for CFEs, exploration of diverse national funding mechanisms

**For Governance Mechanisms:**

- Synergize initiatives, projects, programmes and other strengthening forest governance initiatives to address issues
- Improve documentation and reporting
- Expand function of working groups to include monitoring, reporting, and resolving issues
- Improve governance functioning from national to provincial levels
- Establish regional monitoring system (trans-boundary issues, trade of forest resources, etc.)
- Cross-learning across ASEAN among multistakeholder working groups and production of knowledge and reporting products

**For Safeguards:**

- Establish regional, national, sub-national policy on FPIC
- Develop ASEAN voluntary guidelines on FPIC informed by existing local, national experiences and lessons
- Creation of a legal defense fund at the national, regional level to address human security concerns
- Establish a regional grievance mechanism potentially linked with the national multistakeholder working groups or building upon their experience and functions.

**For Forest Tenure and Access Rights:**

- Capacity-building for local communities on engagement, communication and negotiation
- Linking with other sectors such as the government, and non-state actors such as the academe, private sector on tenure and access rights theme.

**Finally, the CSO Forum agrees to continue to do more, discuss more, and work together in with governments and key stakeholders in keeping the productive interface to advance social**

**forestry in order to contribute to the achievement of national climate and sustainable development goals.**