



Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation

APFNet/Board/ENG/2015/03

Executive Director's Report on APFNet's Development (2008-2014)

I. Background

The Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet) was proposed by China and co-sponsored by Australia and the United States at the 15th APEC Economic Leaders Meeting, in Sydney, Australia, in September 2007. The APEC leaders adopted the proposal and included it in the Sydney Declaration on Climate Change, Energy Security and Clean Development to promote and improve sustainable forest management and rehabilitation in the region.

In September 2008, APFNet was formally launched. According to the agreement among China, Australia and the United States, China is responsible for the operation of its Secretariat, which is located in Beijing. The initiative was translated into action.

II. Consultation: cooperating mechanism to a regional organization

At the very beginning of its development, APFNet was just a cooperating mechanism. The strategy of development awaited mapping out. The good consultation among China, Australia and the United States was quite important to shape the development of the cooperation mechanism. The support from China, the host economy, finally led to the registration of APFNet as a regional organization based in China in 2011.

The Strategic Plan 2011-2015 released in 2011 lays out the institutional set up for APFNet as a regional organization in the interim stage and envisages the permanent governance structure in the long-term development stage.

The interim governance arrangement had been gradually identified as follows:

- In 2010, the Working Mechanism of APFNet Focal Points was in place to facilitate the program implementation in the region;
- In 2010, the Project Appraisal Panel composed of forestry related experts was set up to screen and appraise the project concept notes;

- In 2011, the Interim Steering Committee composed smaller group of economies and international organizations was established as the advisory body of APFNet.

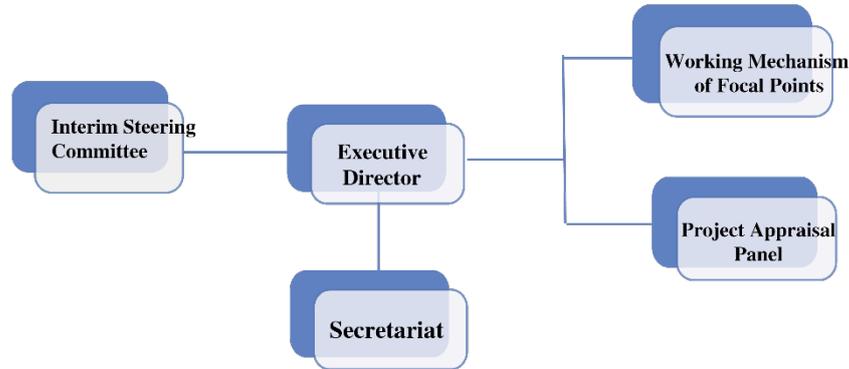


Figure 1: Interim governance structure of APFNet

Meanwhile, the roadmap towards a permanent governance structure is further clarified in the Operational Framework of APFNet, which was finalized in 2012.

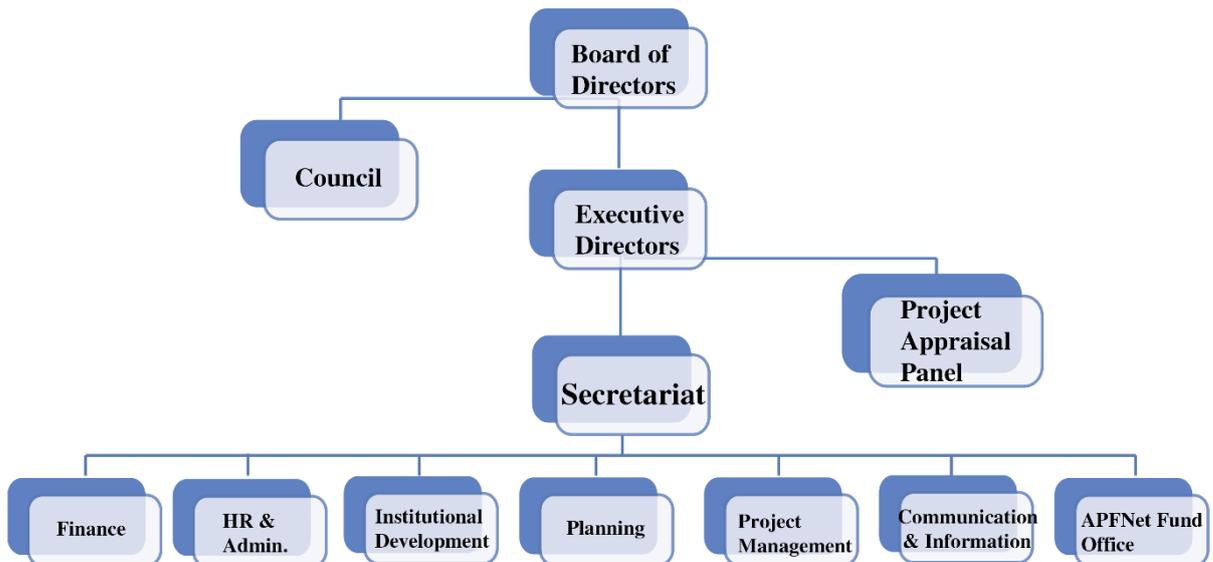


Figure 2: Permanent governance structure of APFNet

Efforts were made to translate this roadmap into reality since 2013. The establishment of Board started in 2012 and the discussion of the plan of setting up the Council started in 2013. With the Board and Council in place, a complete governance structure will be set up.

III. Effects: action-oriented program and activities

The institutional arrangement and the program development and implementation have gone hand in hand.

When APFNet was launched in 2008, in the Framework Document agreed by China, Australia and the United States, four pillars are identified, i.e. policy dialogues, capacity building, demonstration projects and information sharing.

From 2008-2010, several attempts were made to carry out capacity building activities and pilot projects on the ground. Four training workshops were held and three pilot projects were launched, which helped APFNet to gain initial experience and paved the way for APFNet to develop a sound strategy for development.

With gradually increasing involvement of regional economies and international organizations, APFNet started formulating its Strategic Plan 2011-2015 in 2010 with wide range of consultation. The Plan was finalized and released at the end of 2011, with activities under the four pillars carried out in a larger scale and better quality.

- **Policy dialogues: promoting communication and cooperation**

APFNet maintained an active presence in the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), and the Greater Mekong Sub-regional Cooperation Mechanisms to encourage stronger political commitment to sustainable forest management and to uplift forestry's profile in the region.

APEC Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry

APFNet brought up this initiative and cooperated with the Chinese government to organize the first meeting during 6-8 September 2011 in Beijing, China. Recognizing the roles of resource and energy constraints, climate change, loss of biological diversity, poverty and food insecurity, the meeting adopted the Beijing Statement on Forests and Forestry.

Cooperating with the Peruvian government, APFNet co-organized the second APEC Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry during 14–16 August 2013 in Cusco, Peru. Mr. Qu Guilin, the executive director of the APFNet Secretariat chaired a session of the meeting entitled “Dialogue between Ministers and the private sector”. The meeting adopted the Cusco Statement, in which APFNet's role in the APEC region was deemed “very important and active in sustainable forest management.”

Leveraging the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Platform

At the 8th and 9th ASEM Summit of Heads of States, Wen Jiabao, the former Prime Minister of China, proposed two forestry related initiatives: to host a Symposium on Sustainable Forest Management to Address Climate Change, and, secondly, to launch a ASEM forestry cooperation project. Working closely with the State Forestry Administration of China (SFA), APFNet undertook the two initiatives through its well-established network of partners. The ASEM Symposium on Sustainable Forest Management to Address Climate Change was held in Lin'an, China in 2011. The ASEM Forestry Demonstration Project was launched in early

2014.

Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)

The GMS has been identified as a key focus area to explore cooperation, carry out project activities, and promote sustainable forest management. Facilitating the interaction among forestry stakeholders in the sub-region is facilitative to shape more informed policies for addressing common challenges. Workshops targeting senior forestry officials were designed and one was held in 2013. The workshop helped to improve understanding and strengthen collaboration among economies of current forestry focus issues, e.g. Payment of Ecological Services (PES), Forest Law Enforcement and Government (FLEG), REDD+, and community forestry and livelihood development.

Platform for Regional Dialogue on Forestry Strategic Planning

Aware of the needs of strengthening policy and experience exchange in make strategic plan, APFNet initiated the Platform for Regional Dialogue on Forestry Strategic Planning for regional economies to discuss the incorporation of emerging and major forestry issues into national strategic plans and policies.

Promote cooperation in Greater Central Asia region

Realizing the fragile ecosystem in the central Asian region and the similarities among economies in the region, APFNet proposed to strengthen communication and policy understanding among those economies and identify pragmatic cooperation fields.

- **Capacity building:**

Thematic training

Thematic workshops were initiated in 2009 under APFNet's pillar of Capacity Building and aim to improve the capability of regional policymakers and practitioners through sharing knowledge and practical experiences of sustainable forest management. Two hundred forestry officials from 18 economies in the Asia-Pacific region have benefitted from APFNet's training workshops since 2009.

Scholarship program

Initiated in March 2010, the APFNet scholarship program (ASP) aims to strengthen the expertise of forestry officials, foresters, and scholars from developing economies in the Asia and Pacific region while promoting sustainable management of forests. By now, a total of 46 students have been admitted into the program, and 24 have graduated. Most of the graduates work in various specialist positions in governmental agencies, international organizations and research institutions. Several of them are pursuing the PhD degree in, for example the United Kingdom, Japan and China.

Forestry college deans meeting mechanism

This Mechanism was initiated by APFNet, in collaboration with several regional

partners, regional forest universities and colleges to develop concrete activities in support of the reform and innovation in forestry education. Three meetings have been held so far and a project of developing on-line learning system among the member universities of the Mechanism was launched in the end of 2013. If completed, it will be quite an innovative way of applying online learning into forestry education region wide.

Dialogue on forestry human resource development in the Asia-Pacific region

Bearing in mind the importance of the human resource as a strategic resource for forestry development and a myriad of constraints of individual economy, APFNet proposed to establish a Dialogue on Forestry Human Resources Development in the region. The dialogue will build on the existing training activities of APFNet and focuses on the networking and exchange of experience among training institutions in the region.

Demonstration projects

APFNet pilot projects identify and promote best practices of ecosystem-based approaches and forest landscape restoration. By the end of 2014, APFNet, working collaboratively with research /education institutes, government agencies and regional/international organizations, has granted about 12 million US dollars to 20 projects in Asia and the Pacific. Nine of the projects are regional in scope, covering issues of forest resource monitoring, trans-boundary ecological security, forestry education, forestry policy analysis, forest restoration, and capacity building on forest management.

At the same time, project coordination and supervision has also been strengthened. An APFNet Manual for Project Identification, Implementation and Management (PIIM) and standardized reporting / disbursement procedures have been utilized among project partners to raise efficiency of communication and project implementation.

Information sharing

Since 2009, APFNet has promoted effective policies and highlighted the most practical models of sustainable forest management in the Asia-Pacific region through its website and publications.

Publications play an important role in promoting sustainable forest management and in reflecting the outcomes of demonstration projects and international conferences. Since 2009, APFNet has edited and published more than 30 publications, such as research reports and annual reports which significantly reflect the vision and practice of APFNet in regional forestry development.

Meanwhile, APFNet started experimenting the documentation of best practices of sustainable forest management in the region to share experience and lessons learnt.

IV. Strength partnership and diversify funding sources

Partnership is an important channel for APFNet to form synergy by mobilizing more resources and complement to the effort of contributing to the forestry development in the region. Now APFNet has signed formal MoU with Peruvian Ministry of Agriculture, FAO, ITTO, TNC, APAFRI and RECOFTC and conducted joint activities. Meanwhile, APFNet also keeps good relations with more than 20 international organizations and institutes.

At the same time, APFNet has been exploring to diversify its funding resources. In 2013, APFNet Fund was registered under Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs and by the end of 2014 raised 1.84 million yuan. And APFNet will also establish a platform for mid and small forestry enterprises to serve the forestry development in the region.

V. Reflections

Values:

Action-oriented

APFNet's development doesn't follow the conventional way of institutional arrangement first and then starting operation on the ground. Those two aspects have gone parallel in the process of APFNet's development, which highlights its "action oriented" principle.

Respect differences: practice and experiment

Models of sustainable forest management need to adjust when experimenting on the ground in different places. APFNet respects differences and experiment models and summarizes experiences for wider dissemination.

Open and transparent

From the very beginning, APFNet insists being open to the whole region and welcomes inputs and participation from all stakeholders in the region. This has enabled APFNet to maintain its vitality and attraction to participating economies.

The way forward:

Sustainability

The sustainability of APFNet itself requires further attention. It is important to diversify the funding resources and the staff composition (nationality) at the next step of development. Exploration of having staff in the Secretariat seconded by member economies can be a good start.