



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Between the
Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific
(RECOFTC)
And the
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

A. OBJECTIVE

1. RECOFTC - the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and Pacific and SACEP the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) intend to cooperate in the areas common to their programmes in South Asia. This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) reflects discussions held between RECOFTC and SACEP and seeks to formalize working arrangements to provide the basis for further cooperation.

B. BACKGROUND

2. RECOFTC is an autonomous, not-for-profit international organization that works closely with partners to design and facilitate learning processes and systems to support community forestry and natural resource management. The institution has the mission to enhance capacities at all levels to assist people of the Asia-Pacific region to develop community forestry and manage forest resources for optimum social, economic and environmental benefits. RECOFTC's scope will cover a range of ecological systems (e.g., mountain, arid and semi-arid areas, coastal zones); landscapes (e.g., all types of forests - natural and planted, watershed areas, protected areas, villages, agricultural land); and tenurial systems (e.g., legal and customary/de facto management and ownership arrangements). forest users and local communities; forestry and other governmental line agency staff; politicians, decision makers and community leaders; forestry industries and other private enterprises; regional and international organizations; non-governmental organizations, advocacy groups and civil society organizations; research community; educational institutions; media, urban population and the general public; and donors and funding agencies.

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3. SACEP is an intergovernmental organization established in 1982, with a mission of promoting and supporting the conservation and management of the environment, both natural and human, in the South Asian Region in a co-operative manner to achieve sustainable development. Eight countries, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have ratified the Articles of Association of SACEP. In SACEP's revised mission statement, development of partnerships is also emphasized as an intrinsic aspect of the organization's mandate. As the regional environmental secretariat for South Asia the organization has close collaboration with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) located in Kathmandu. The organization has mandate to address the environmental related issues as set out by with its Governing Council meeting annually, guiding the programme focus to consider the regional issues of concern. The organization has its keen interest in community forestry and the related to enhance the livelihoods through several forestry related activities.

4. RECOFTC and SACEP, both addressing programme activities in the areas of forest management share the focus on community resource management; forest communities' involvement in forest management; poverty alleviation, poverty and rights with concerns for sustainable development, and guidance to the policy makers. Both the organizations consider programs on improved forest governance and poverty alleviation through community natural resource management. Under this MoU, both the organisations seek to develop their collaboration in South Asia and to develop a programme of cooperative activities at the sub-regional level. This MoU provides a framework for RECOFTC and SACEP cooperation to assure that the resources available to each institution for activities in the areas of their mutual interest are used to best advantage for natural resource conservation and management and sustainable development in South Asia.

C. PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION

5. Complementary and mutual support. RECOFTC and SACEP will support one another in fulfilling their respective missions by building on elements of both organisations' programmes, seeking to enhance effectiveness while avoiding duplication of effort.

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6. Mutual benefit. The activities on which SACEP and RECOFTC will collaborate under this MoU will be selected and developed to bring a clear benefit to both organisations and their constituents. Collaborative activities will be undertaken with a clear and mutual understanding of which organisation does what, and how each activity will be funded.

7. Mutual recognition. Public statements and publications regarding activities undertaken jointly under this MoU will acknowledge this collaboration. Neither RECOFTC nor SACEP shall make any commitments or take any positions on behalf of the other without the other's specific written consent. Each organisation will maintain the right to independent expression on issues related to activities that may be undertaken under this MoU and each will make every effort to notify the other before publicly expressing a position on such issues. Information provided by either partner to the other may be used for any capacity-building or non-commercial purpose. When either SACEP or RECOFTC publishes, in any form, information provided by the other, the provider will be informed in advance and given the chance to edit or check the information that will be acknowledged to it, and the source will be appropriately referenced or acknowledged.

D. PRINCIPAL AREAS OF COLLABORATION

8. RECOFTC and SACEP have identified the thematic areas of rural livelihoods and poverty reduction, forest governance, and productive and sustainable forest² management as areas for proposed collaboration through demonstrating best practices and sharing skills and knowledge.

9. Within 6 Months of the signing of this MoU, RECOFTC and SACEP will agree on and prioritize activities to be carried out in the first year of the partnership. This first joint workplan will be attached as an Annex to this MoU. Thereafter, annual plans for collaborative work will be developed as provided in paragraph 14, below. The evolving programmes of each organization will determine issues for future collaboration.

10. RECOFTC and SACEP will keep each other informed of their respective programmes of assistance and activities in Asia through exchange of newsletters, country-specific studies, and other relevant documents. Similarly, SACEP and RECOFTC

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will share information on any projects or studies in which the other has expressed special interest.

11. SACEP and RECOFTC will invite each other to send representatives to meetings, workshops and conferences, convened by them or under their auspices, on topics of mutual interest and application, subject to available budgetary resources within each institution.

E. COORDINATION

12. The Director General, SACEP, and the Executive Director, RECOFTC, or their successors, will have overall responsibility for ensuring that the objectives of this MoU are realized. The officials responsible for implementing this MoU will be the Mr. Hiran Tillekaratne, Programme Officer of SACEP and Mr. John Guernier, Program Manager for RECOFTC in Bangkok.

13. SACEP and RECOFTC staff at the national and regional levels will meet formally and informally, as mutually agreed, to develop concepts and plans for joint work.

14. The working arrangements set forth in this MoU will be reviewed annually by the officials responsible for implementation, who will meet as mutually agreed to assess progress in the agreed areas of cooperation and to discuss future directions for SACEP/RECOFTC collaboration. They will submit to the Director General of SACEP and the Executive Director of RECOFTC a joint written report on progress made, with specific recommendations for implementation for the following year.

15. SACEP and RECOFTC will jointly carry out a comprehensive review of achievements under this MoU within two (2) years of the date of signing and subsequently as may be agreed.

16. SACEP and RECOFTC will make every effort to ensure that women and men participate equally in the planning and implementation of projects and activities and that women and men have equal access to the benefits of derived from those projects and activities.

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Suggested collaborative programme activities for SACEP and RECOFTC

1. Research in community-based natural resource management through the provision of cost-effective capacity building products and services addressing i) conservation, ii) management and iii) equitable sharing.
2. Training in the identified areas (from the above) relating to Forestry Management under i) conservation, ii) management and iii) equitable sharing
3. Regional analysis and synthesis on aspects addressing of i) Poverty reduction and livelihoods, ii) Rural livelihoods and poverty reduction, iii) Forest governance and iv) Productive and sustainable forest management

The above broad areas of combined interest will be developed based on RECOFTC's focus thematic issues in community based natural resource management given below. This will then be used to guide the development of a work plan.

- A. **Rural Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction:** mechanisms to achieve poverty reduction through sustainable, forest related, economic development. This will include activities to develop pro-poor markets and enterprises, integrated development planning to address social development in an integrated way (e.g. across health, education, agriculture, humanitarian assistance); analyzing the impact of Community Forestry on livelihoods and the local environment.
- B. **Forest Governance:** supporting the development and implementation of sound *policies and laws* that support rights of access and use are fundamentals of poverty reducing Community Forestry, as well as robust and supportive local CF institutions that enable equitable sharing of benefits from CF.
- C. **Productive and Sustainable Forest Management:** Community Forestry often occurs in degraded areas rather than high value areas. However, the scope to extend the principles and methods of CF to high value areas needs to be supported if the livelihood needs of communities in such areas are to be secured. Such areas range from conservation areas, where more restricted modes of forest use are in place, to high value timber resources in production forest areas. Fruitful areas to explore include landscape approaches to sustainable forest management, and forest management systems for multiple use including both timber and Non Timber Forest Products.



Ministry of Natural Resources
Director General



Dr. Yam Malla
Executive Director

