

## WORKSHOP REPORT

# Governance Research & Practice: Building Bridges through Capacity Building and Training

Singapore  
February 16-18, 2012

### A workshop sponsored by:

International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) International Forest Governance Task Force  
Yale Program on Forest Policy and Governance (YPPG)  
Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI)  
National University of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (NUS-LKYSPP)

**Background:** Southeast Asia is experiencing ongoing deforestation and forest degradation, which has placed its ecosystems and the people whose livelihoods depend on them, under acute stress. The proximate cause of this problem includes land use change for agriculture, mining, and infrastructure development, as well as historically poor logging practices. These activities in turn increase the vulnerability of remaining forests to fire and other natural phenomena, which, through feedback loops, further compromise the forests' ecological integrity. Without careful and sustained attention, these impacts will continue to occur because they are the result of powerful, underlying forces: extractive industries' quest for profit and smallholders' attempts to secure their livelihoods in the face of population growth, changing patterns of consumption, and decreasing access to, and control over, customary resources.

Deforestation and forest degradation first gained international prominence in the 1980s, which led to the International Tropical Timber Agreement and establishment of the International Tropical Timber Organization. This was soon followed by a concerted, but ultimately failed effort to achieve a binding Global Forest Convention during the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Recognizing that these early international efforts, and domestic regulations, were insufficient to address the drivers of forest loss, a variety of international and regional institutions and mechanisms have been introduced over time including National Forest Programs, Criteria and Indicator Processes, and forest certification/eco-labeling of forest products. While each of these has been important, they have proven unable to address the ultimate causes of forest destruction.

Despite this historical record, recent global efforts to address global forest challenges have coalesced around two fairly new policy instruments: legality verification, which aims to provide global markets with assurances that traded wood products come from forests that were not illegally harvested; and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+), a





financial mechanism aimed at supporting tropical forest countries to conserve their forests as a way to mitigate climate change. Both of these efforts rely upon, and have been heralded as ways to promote, “good forest governance.”

The question, remains, however, can legality verification and REDD+ succeed in ways that previous efforts have been unable. To answer this question, the research community has put these forest policy

and governance mechanisms under close scrutiny. Important issues being examined include the relationship between these forest policy initiatives and developments in other sectors (e.g., agriculture and climate change), as well as the interaction of international forest governance with the myriad of existing customary and state institutions, regulations and incentives operating at the national and sub-national scales. While these studies have developed useful insights into the formation, evolution, and impact of international forest governance, a key challenge remains in determining how to translate these scholarly insights into durable and effective action that can unite an array of disparate interests.

In order to begin addressing this challenge, the IUFRO International Forest Governance Task Force, YPFG, ELTI, and NUS-LKYSPP designed a two and a half day workshop. The purpose of this event was to explore the junctures between scholarly research on forest policy and governance and on-the-ground actions, and identify opportunities by which training and capacity building can create spaces for practical and lasting learning and problem solving.

#### **Course Objectives:**

- Examine scholarly research and literature on forest governance for practical implications (and knowledge gaps) for developing and designing efforts to improve legality verification and REDD+;
- Determine how to effectively translate, disseminate, and apply good practices resulting from the analysis through training and capacity building;
- Gain practical feedback from a diverse group of stakeholders on how these suggestions for problem-focused learning compare to existing initiatives and articulate with the stakeholder’s self-identified training and capacity-building needs.

**Participants:** The workshop was attended by a total of 24 people, representing the IUFRO International Task Force for International Force Governance, ELTI, YFGP, NUS-LKYSPP, and a focus group of six representatives from national and international NGOs working on forest governance issues in Indonesia. The focus group members only attended the second day of the workshop.

**Workshop Format:** The workshop took place over three days. During the first day, workshop participants discussed how forests governance research can contribute to policy learning and lead to effective action. The group had a rich discussion on the conceptual foundations of policy learning, and brainstormed potential

pathways, and pedagogical and capacity-development strategies that could lead to improved forest governance practice. The group also explored options for making this highly fragmented institutional and policy arena accessible through capacity building to those who are confronted with making on-the-ground decisions.

During the second day of the workshop, the focus group members joined the discussion, bringing to table valuable, real-world perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for employing capacity building and research to improve forest governance. Utilizing the themes of legality verification and REDD+, the group highlighted some of the key problems affecting Indonesian forest governance, including land tenure and institutional complexity. Based on this, they identified a variety of training themes and target audiences that could contribute toward addressing, and eventually overcoming these problems. The practitioners also identified a list of potential questions that the research community could address, the results of which could lead to improved forest governance in Indonesia.

On the third day of the workshop, participants from the first day –i.e. without the focus group members – discussed a variety of proposals on how to improve interactions between academia, practitioners and other stakeholders to strengthen the research agenda on forest governance, and better incorporate knowledge generated into training and broader capacity-building efforts. A variety of options for enhancing research efforts that are based on existing and potential future informational needs of those working on the ground, were explored. The group also discussed the development of practitioner relevant “living” policy briefs and delivery of regular trainings that meets the needs of the practitioners and also generate questions for further research.

**Outcome:** By facilitating discussions among and between researchers and practitioners, the workshop succeeded in generating a number of ideas for building the bridge between researchers and practitioners as a way to make existing and/or future forest policy instruments more effective and durable. The IUFRO Task Force, in collaboration with YPGF, ELTI, and other Task Force member’s institutions, will work over the following months to refine these ideas, identify funding sources, and develop the aforementioned products and activities.



*This event was possible thanks to Arcadia Fund, whose Environmental Conservation grants support programmes that protect and enhance biodiversity, and provide field training and academic research.*