THE APFNET STRATEGIC PLAN
2016-2020

INTERNAL MIDTERM IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW REPORT

March 2019

Executive Summary

APFNet's Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 sets out four objectives: 1) contributing to the APEC 2020 Forest Cover Goal; 2) helping to enhance forest carbon stocks and improve forest quality; 3) helping to reduce forest loss, degradation and related greenhouse gas emissions; and 4) helping to increase the socio-economic benefits of forests. The three priorities of the plan are to 1) rehabilitate degraded forests and increase forest cover; 2) promote sustainable forest management to enhance ecological functions and ecosystem security of forests; and 3) enhance forests' contribution to socio-economic development and to improvement of local livelihoods.

The objectives of the midterm review are to document progress by 2018 against the fulfilment of the Strategic Plan based on the four pillars (capacity building, demonstration projects, policy dialogues and communication and information sharing) and institutional development, assess challenges and gaps and recommend priorities for consideration in the remaining period of the plan.

The biggest limitation identified in this midterm review is that the assessment of performance is heavily relied on internal documentation with weak external cross-verification. The review of project impact was also difficult, given that most of the projects carried out in 2016-2018 are still ongoing and their short implementation duration does not allow a longer observation of the impacts and outcomes of the project. However, this limitation will be addressed in APFNet Ten-year Review that is currently being undertaken by external consultants.

Based on the analysis of the logical framework matrix of the Strategic Plan 2016-2020, it can be clearly concluded that as of 2018, all the planned activities have been well conducted with sound progress. It is estimated that all the indicators listed in the Strategic Plan will be achieved by 2020.

Key recommendations for the remainder of the current Strategic Plan include:
- To enhance the long-term monitoring and evaluation on APFNet projects and activities, which should be integrated into future planning of projects and activities.
- To strengthen the synergy of activities under the four pillars.
- To continue strengthening the capacity building of Secretariat staff through various channels.

- To continue improving institutional arrangements through better defining functions to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency of the current institutional bodies of APFNet.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AP-FECM	Asia-Pacific Forestry Education Coordination Mechanism
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APFNet	Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASP	APFNet Scholarship Program
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FAO-RAP	Food and Agriculture Organization - Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
FPN	Forest Planning Network
FPWM	Focal Point Working Mechanism
GCA	Greater Central Asia
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-region
Ha	hectare(s)
HR	Human Resources
ISC	Interim Steering Committee
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
IUFRO	International Union of Forest Research Organizations
NTFP	Non-timber forest products
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RECOFTC	The Center for People and Forests
SANFRI	Sino-ASEAN Network of Forestry Research Institutes
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
TIF	Trainers in Forestry Network
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
UN	United Nations
USA	The United States of America
USD	Unites States Dollar

1. Introduction

APFNet's Strategic Plan 2016-2020 was adopted at the Second Meeting of APFNet Board of Directors in 2016. It sets out four objectives:

Objective 1. Contribute to the achievement of APEC's aspirational goal of increasing forest cover by at least 20 million hectares of all types of forests by 2020;

Objective 2. Help to enhance forest carbon stocks and improve forest quality and productivity by promoting rehabilitation of existing but degraded forests, and reforestation and afforestation of suitable cleared lands in the region;

Objective 3. Help to reduce forest loss and degradation and the associated greenhouse gas emissions by strengthening sustainable forest management and enhancing biodiversity conservation; and

Objective 4. Help to increase the socio-economic benefits of forests in the region.

The Strategic Plan 2016-2020 identifies the following priorities:

Priority 1. Rehabilitating degraded forests and increasing forest cover;

Priority 2. Promoting sustainable forest management to enhance ecological functions and ecosystem security of forests; and

Priority 3. Enhancing forests' contribution to socio-economic development and improvement of local livelihoods.

The Strategic Plan also seeks to contribute to the achievement of other global forest goals and targets, in particular forest-related UN Sustainable Development Goals (including SDG 6 and 15), Global Objectives on Forests and the Aichi Targets. The full APFNet Strategic Plan 2016-2020 can be accessed on the APFNet official website: http://www.apfnet.cn/en/model3-157.html.

1.1. Strategic Plan Matrix (2016-2020)

Based on the objectives and priorities, the Strategic Plan Matrix below was prepared as part of the Second Strategic Plan, mapping specific targets for activities and projects under each of the four pillars of work against the three priorities. It forms the basis for this midterm review.

Table 1. Matrix of APFNet Strategic Plan 2016-2020

Priorities / Implementation Tools	Rehabilitating degraded forests and increasing forest cover	Promoting sustainable forest management to enhance ecological functions and ecosystem security of forests	Enhancing forests' contribution to socio-economic development and improvement of local livelihoods
I. Capacity Building			

1.1 Training workshops	• A need assessment on the priority topics for training workshops conducted • 150+ trained practitioners on different topics as determined by the need assessment
1.2 Scholarships for MS degree and specialized non-degree programs	• 60+ scholarships supported in at least five forestry universities or colleges in the region awarded on topics related to the strategic priorities
1.3 Strengthening regional forestry education	• More forestry deans from the region encouraged to join the FCDMM • Meetings of regional forestry deans supported • Follow-up to the decisions of those meetings supported • Survey on user satisfaction of the online course modules and a new needs assessment conducted • New online course modules prepared, as needed
II. Demonstration Projects	5+ projects on forest restoration 2+ best practice pilots on SFM 5+ projects on forest related livelihoods improvement
III. Supporting Regional Policy Dialogues	• At least one regional policy dialogue relevant to APFNet's Strategic Priority Areas supported each year • Two high-level meetings convened in the region at the ministerial level
IV. Communication & Information sharing	APFNet learning hub established to share lessons and best practices on SFM and rehabilitation from the region and beyond. The hub will contain analytical studies, research findings, key publications from APFNet and other organizations, and relevant training materials, acting as a one-stop shop for latest knowledge on SFM and rehabilitation issues.
	Publication series established to share good practices and information on incentives and management approaches and management and planning tools.
	Newsletters, brochures and other audio-video and social media approaches to raise awareness and public support for SFM and for APFNet.
	20+ study tours or staff exchanges to accelerate information sharing on innovations in forest conservation, management and development.
	5+ study tours and/or panel discussions for high-level policy makers to raise political commitment to SFM (ministers, parliamentarians, corporate CEOs, etc.).
V. Strengthening institutional aspects of APFNet	• Capacity building for APFNet Secretariat staff • Scholarships for MS degree and specialized non-degree programs in forestry provided to 10 Secretariat staff • Governance issues including membership and legal standing of APFNet established • Funding strategy developed and implemented • New partnerships and collaborative activities formed • M&E system developed and adopted

1.2. Midterm review of the strategic plan

The objectives of this midterm review are: to document the status of implementing the Strategic Plan by 2018, including accomplishments, challenges and lessons learned;

to review the accomplishments against the fulfilment of the Strategic Plan's objectives and priorities; and to recommend priorities for the remaining period of the Strategic Plan to better fulfill the plan's objectives and priorities.

This midterm review was conducted in 2018 by the APFNet Secretariat. The Strategic Plan Matrix was used as the review framework. The process involved an extensive document review of APFNet's institutional documents; analysis of program and activity reports and outputs; and financial analysis of funding allocations. The documentation and review of progress were categorized according to the Strategic Plan Matrix.

Limitations
The ability of the review to build a comprehensive picture of detailed achievements across the four pillars was constrained. Assessment of performance is heavily relied on internal documentation without cross-verification through external interviews or stakeholder surveys. However, this limitation will be addressed in APFNet's Ten-Year Review that is currently being undertaken by external consultants.

The review of project impact was also difficult, given that most of the projects carried out in 2016-2018 are still ongoing and their short implementation duration does not allow a longer observation of the impacts and outcomes of the projects.

2. Overall progress

This section provides a summary of overall progress before further detail is given in the next section on progress by programs and activities. Overall, APFNet has seen continued growth in both its financial support and activities work across the region.

Geographic Coverage
APFNet focuses on activities in seven geographical sub-regions – the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS), Southeast Asia (except GMS), South Asia, Great Central Asia, Pacific Islands, North America, and Latin America. APFNet's capacity building programs have supported participants from all sub-regions except North America.

From 2016 to 2018, APFNet's Thematic Training Workshops trained 90 participants from 18 economies – five in the Greater Mekong sub-region, four in South Asia, three in Southeast Asia and two each in Greater Central Asia, Pacific Islands and Latin America. The largest number of participants came from the Greater Mekong sub-region (27), followed by South Asia (23), Southeast Asia (20), the Pacific Islands (12), Greater Central Asia (5) and Latin America (3). Training approaches were explored to maximize learning exchange through involving resource persons as participants.
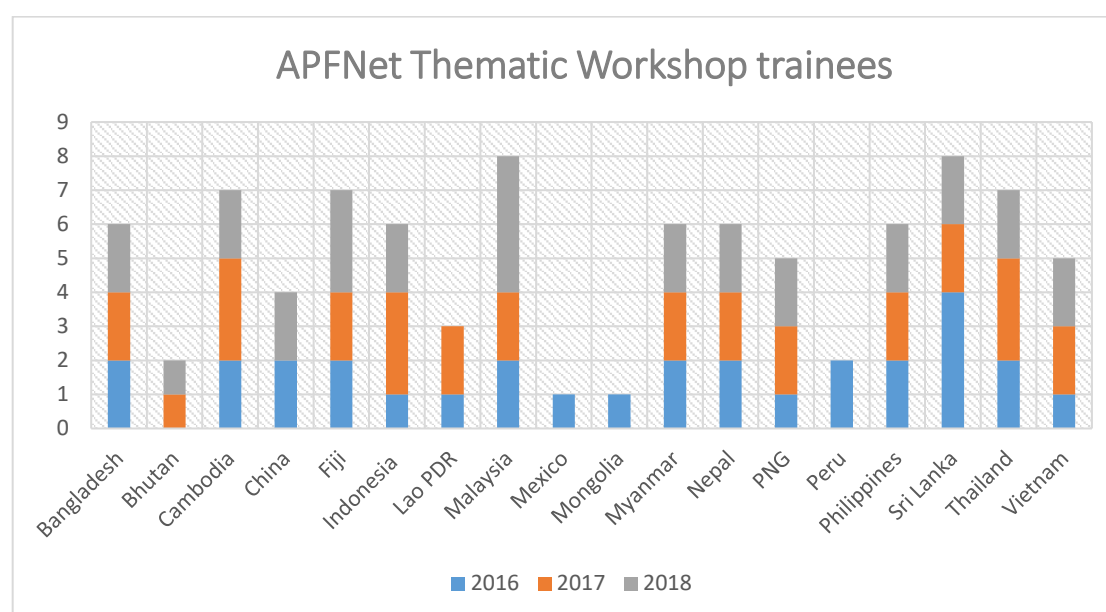

Fig. 1. Geographic distribution of APFNet thematic workshop trainees 2016-2018

Besides, additional 34 trainees from Greater Central Asia were supported in themes on Combating Desertification and Sustainable Management of Drylands targeting the Greater Central Asia (GCA) region.

The APFNet Scholarship Program supported scholarship awardees from a wide range of economies. Over the first three years of the Strategic Plan, 68 students from 16 economies were awarded, including 29 students from the Greater Mekong Sub-region, 21 students from Central Asia, 9 students from South Asia, 4 from Southeast Asia, and 4 from the Pacific Islands and 1 from Latin America.
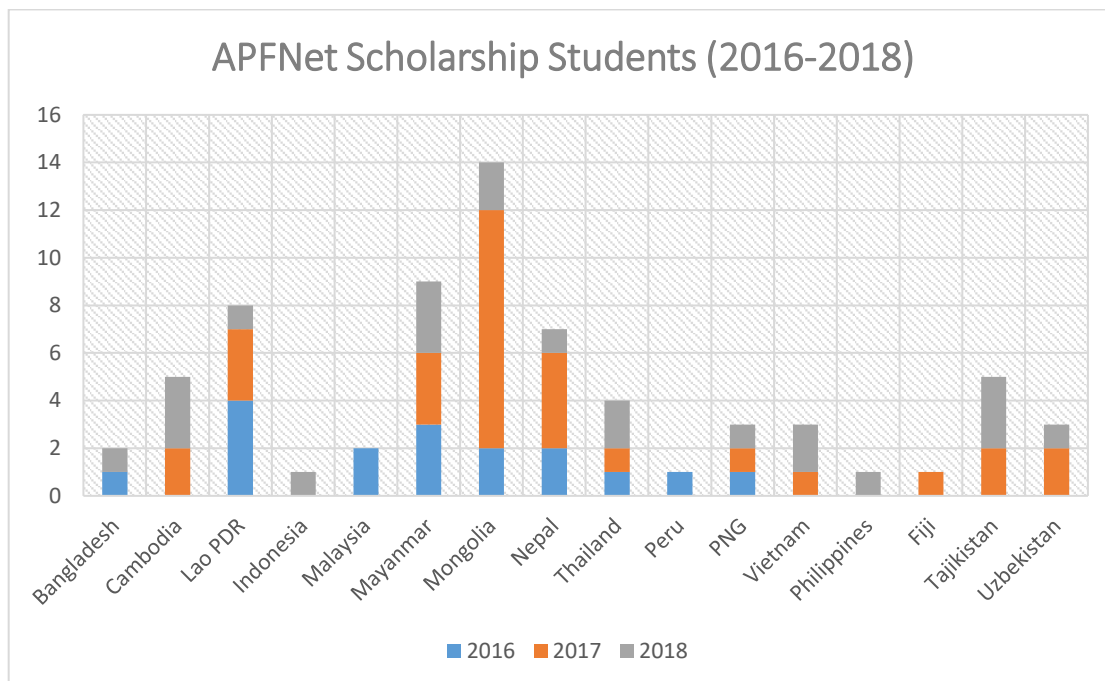
Fig. 2. Geographic distribution of APFNet Scholarship students 2016-2018

Geographically, projects were mainly centered in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (13 - 8 new, 5 on-going), followed by Great Central Asia (6 – 4 new, 2 on-going), Southeast Asia (except GMS) (3, 2 new, 1 on-going), South Asia (2 – 1 new, 1 on-going), and the Pacific Islands (2 – 1 new, 1 on-going). Two transboundary projects.

Fig. 3. Geographic distribution of APFNet projects 2016-2018

Growth in Financial Support

From 2016 to 2018, the total programs' expenditure was analyzed from three dimensions. The expenditure was US$ 3,979,821.02 in 2016, US$ 5,688,220.95 in 2017 and US$7,076,493.10 in 2018. The distribution of funding by priority is shown in the table below.

Direct expenditure on priority areas was at least 75% of total programs' expenditure in each year, with US$2.98 million in 2016, US$ 4.42 million in 2017 and US$ 5.56 million in 2018, accounting for 75%, 78%, and 79% of total expenditure respectively. The expenditure of the category "Other" was for APFNet's development research, regional forestry research, project management, publication and dissemination, etc.

Table 2. Expenditure by priorities 2016-2018

Priority	Details	2016 ($)	2017 ($)	2018 ($)
1	Rehabilitating degraded forests and increasing forest cover	920,218.87	1,398,220.21	1,759,274.40
2	Promoting sustainable forest management to enhance ecological functions and ecosystem security of forests	945,862.98	1,395,824.57	2,018,338.90
3	Enhancing forests' contribution to socio-economic development and to improvement of local livelihoods	1,118,161.59	1,624,282.84	1,787,327.58
	Other	995,577.58	1,269,893.33	1,511,552.22
	Total	**3,979,821.02**	**5,688,220.95**	**7,076,493.10**

Activity funding by pillars is summarized as below:

Table 3. Expenditure by pillars 2016-2018

No.	Details	2016($)	2017($)	2018($)
1	Capacity building	448,370.01	839,132.15	945,054.13
2	Demonstration projects	2,699,874.83	3,806,606.85	4,522,189.99
3	Regional policy dialogues	662,382.22	482,503.08	631,664.94
4	Communication and information sharing	169,193.96	559,978.87	977,584.04
	Total	**3,979,821.02**	**5,688,220.95**	**7,076,493.10**

Demonstration project expenditure was the largest in the four pillars, with the ratios being 68% in 2016, 67% in 2017 and 64% in 2018 correspondingly. Capacity building expenses increased from 2017 as a result of new projects and programs such as the Great Central Asia Scholarship. Expenses in communication and information sharing increased in 2018, compared with 2016 and 2017, mainly due to the APFNet's 10th anniversary events.

Activity funding by geographic area is summarized as below:

Table 4. Expenditure by geographic area 2016-2018

No.	Details	2016($)	2017($)	2018($)
1	The Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)	572,180.92	2,356,130.73	2,181,872.71
2	Southeast Asia (except GMS)	1,142,775.79	892,800.74	594,491.99
3	South Asia	343,083.73	234,654.57	135,454.70
4	Great Central Asia	1,339,887.27	1,238,795.88	2,628,393.72
5	Pacific Islands	171,008.20	303,247.37	180,864.95
6	North America	135,522.41	321,125.48	339,187.61
7	Latin America	87,903.88	20,759.45	22,754.46
	Others	187,458.81	320,706.74	993,472.96
	Total	**3,979,821.02**	**5,688,220.95**	**7,076,493.10**

APFNet has funded activities in all sub-regions. However, three sub-regions - the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), Southeast Asia (except GMS) and Great Central Asia - have accounted for the largest proportion of expenditures with almost US$13million, 77% of expenditures over the three years. The enhanced cooperation with North America is reflected in the increase of funding from US$ 135 thousand in 2016 to US$ 339 thousand in 2018, particularly with the active involvement of the University of British Columbia in APFNet's research and capacity building activities. The expenditure of the category "Other" was for APFNet's development research, regional forestry research, project management, publication and dissemination, etc.

3. Progress of programs and activities

The progress in completing the activities in achieving the objectives set out in the APFNet's Strategic Plan is summarized in table 5, by the four pillars and institutional development. Given the unclear linkage made in the Strategic Plan between indicators and the Strategic Plan's four objectives, objective statements were added during this midterm review to help show how each activity fed into the Strategic Plan's four objectives. The revised matrix was used as an analytical tool for secretariat staff to reflect the progress of respective programmes and activities.

3.1. Capacity Building

By 2018, the capacity building programs have centered on "developing both the technical and managerial competences of forestry professionals and practitioners" as stated in the second Strategic Plan. APFNet Scholarship students have also indicated that the program has had a positive impact on their professional development in forestry. Other details of progress are provided below.

Table 5. Progress of Capacity Building 2016-2018

Objective	Indicator (2020)	Targets achieved during 2016-2018
Training workshops		

Objective	Indicator (2020)	Targets achieved during 2016-2018
To help forestry officials improve their knowledge and skills in SFM, and facilitate information and experience exchange among member economies	Needs Assessment to identify priorities and training needs	The training Needs Assessment was conducted through questionnaires, field visits and interviews, to improve the design and quality of APFNet thematic trainings. The assessment targets trainees, APFNet focal points and relevant forestry officials, to study the hot topics of Asia Pacific forestry development, learn regional forestry capacity building demands and discuss future cooperation area and viable technical assistance.
	150+ trained practitioners on different topics as determined by the needs assessment	124 sponsored practitioners trained to date
Scholarships for masters' degrees and specialized non-degree programs		
To support future-generation forestry officials and researchers in the Asia-Pacific region to pursue higher education in the field of SFM	60+ scholarships supported in at least 5 forestry universities in the region awarded on topics related to the strategy's priorities	68 scholarships supported in 4 forestry universities to date
Strengthening regional forestry education		
To build a platform for exchanging academic information and sharing educational resources between forestry institutions, and to promote innovation and reform in forestry education and the sharing of achievements.	More forestry universities or colleges from the region encouraged to join the AP-FECM	Since 2016, the mechanism has gained 3 new members: Agriculture and Forestry University (Nepal), Michigan Technological University (USA), and Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology (India). This brings the total number of participating universities to 47 in 24 economies.
	Meetings of regional forestry universities supported	3 successful meetings were held
	Follow-up actions to the decisions of those meetings carried out	AP-FECM has finished the publication of Growing Higher Forestry Education in a Changing World. The report received overall positive feedback.
	Survey on user satisfaction of the online course	The Executive Office of AP-FECM has conducted an analysis of student feedback via the Course II survey, the results of which are

Objective	Indicator (2020)	Targets achieved during 2016-2018
	modules conducted	feeding into program improvements, development and expansion. So far, feedback from 33 surveys showed positive results.
	New online course modules prepared, as needed	Experts have been invited to participate in the development of SFM online course phase II in 2018

Through the Thematic Training Workshops and Scholarship Programs, APFNet's capacity building activities have contributed directly to enhancing the knowledge and skills of 192 forest practitioners and policy makers from regional economies in the first three years of the current Strategic Plan. Through the work of the AP-FECM and the Trainers in Forestry Network, APFNet has also helped to define priorities for improved forestry education and technical training in the region. Positive impacts of these programs include:

- Contribution to regional economies' forestry development. Most of the alumni have returned to their original economies and are working in governments or international organizations to contribute to local forestry management and livelihoods improvement.
- International voice for the region: some alumni have been invited to speak in international conferences/workshops, and this is helpful to raise the voice of Asia Pacific region in the sustainable forestry management or environmental field at large.
- Supporting forestry education reform and narrowing regional gaps: supporting forestry reform by developing new educational models such as the Sustainable Forest Management Online Education Program, which received a Canadian National Award for "Excellence and Innovation in the Integration of Technology in Educational Practices/Collaboration".

Progress Assessment and Identified Gaps for Improvement
APFNet's capacity building programs have been well received by participants. But in a rapidly changing world, continuous needs assessments are required at various levels – the economy level, the thematic level and in some cases at the regional level – to ensure that offerings and partnerships remain relevant.

APFNet now has a potentially powerful alumni network of more than 120 APFNet scholarship holders and over 850 participants from its thematic training workshops, study tours and training of trainer workshops. The impact of all APFNet programs could be substantially enhanced if this alumni network could be mobilized to both feed into ongoing training and to help disseminate lessons learned from APFNet's demonstration projects and other activities.

Sub-conclusion: *APFNet's programs on capacity building through training workshops and education opportunities were highly valued as the critical contribution to forest practitioners in the region. Through consistent activities on capacity building for junior and mid-level forestry professionals, it helped not only in the enhancement of technical competencies of current and future forest managers, but also connecting professionals in the region by providing a platform of continued networking. In the past three years, good progress has been made under capacity building, with all quantitative targets achieved. The expected targets stated in the APFNet Strategic Plan 2016-2020 on this pillar will be fully achieved by 2020.*

3.2. Demonstration Projects

During the period 2016-2018, APFNet supported eight projects to restore forests, with five in Asia, two in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and one in South Asia. Another 12 projects focused on SFM, with ten in the GMS and one each in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. Furthermore, six projects were primarily focused on generating socio-economic benefits for local people with two projects in Southeast Asia and one each in the Greater Mekong, Greater Central Asia, South Asia and the Pacific Islands. The area directly covered by SFM demonstration projects in Southeast Asia was the largest (625ha), followed by South Asia (220 ha), the GMS (211 ha) and Pacific Islands (180ha).

Table 6. Progress of Demonstration Projects 2016-2018

Objective（by Priorities）	Indicator (2020)	Targets achieved during 2016-2018
Rehabilitate degraded forests and increase forest cover	5+ project on forest restoration	8 (6 new, 2 on-going)
Promote SFM to enhance ecological functions and the ecosystem security of forests	2+ best practice pilots on SFM	12 (9 new, 3 on-going)
Enhance the contribution of forests in socio-economic development and local livelihood improvement	5+ projects on forest-related livelihoods improvement	6 (3 new, 3 on-going)

Based on the evaluation conducted on APFNet project officers, almost all projects had components relevant to at least two objectives of the second Strategic Plan. Among the 26 projects, 14 projects, covering a total demonstration area of 1236 hectares, were relevant to objectives 1, 2 or 3. Twelve projects had components relevant to Objective 4.

Most projects were on track and effectively implemented according to their individual goals, objectives and expected outputs. Nevertheless, some problems were noted. Delays in implementation occurred due to the need to harmonize the reporting and approval processes of APFNet and the Executing Agencies. In addition, many projects changed management staff during implementation which led to the loss of personal

knowledge and delays due to the needed time of new staff to familiarize themselves with the project management.

Improvement in the monitoring and evaluation system is also needed. This is particularly the case in terms of assessing the impact of demonstration projects on the broader sustainable forest management and rehabilitation goals of both APFNet and member economies. Development of strategies for better dissemination of results to upscale changes in forest policy and practice should be given high priority.

Sub-conclusion: Overall, APFNet's supported projects are considered highly coherent with the prescribed priorities in the Strategic Plan 2016-2020. The number of on-going projects double the targets set in the Strategic Plan. Demonstration project is taken as an important pillar through which APFNet can translate its priorities into actions on the ground. To better showcase best practices on forest restoration, SFM and other topics with high complexity, APFNet has given high attention to establishing locally accessible demonstration sites where practitioners, stakeholders and policy makers can observe and experience in person. These sites demonstrated practical techniques and good practices relating to forest rehabilitation and SFM, and offered great opportunities for testing new policy prescriptions and innovations in the field. Opportunities were also offered to assist developing economies in increasing their capacity for managing their forest resources sustainably in a long run.

3.3. Policy dialogues

During 2016-2018, APFNet launched the Sino-ASEAN Network of Forestry Research Institutes (SANFRI) and APFNet Trans-boundary Wildlife Conservation Initiative (@Wild), and continued making efforts through the Forestry Planning Network (FPN) and the Greater Central Asia Forestry Cooperation Mechanism (GCA FCM) to strengthen political commitments and fostering collaborative actions in the region. More information is given below.

Table 7. Progress of Policy Dialogues 2016-2018

Objective	Indicator (2020)	Targets achieved during 2016-2018
To promote regional policy dialogue	At least one regional policy dialogue relevant to APFNet's Strategic Priority Areas each year	– June 28-30, 2017, the third Regional Workshop on Strategic Forestry Cooperation in Greater Central Asia was held in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan; – January 18 - 19 2017, the third Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Workshop was in Bangkok; – 28 March 2018, the first Steering Committee meeting of SANFRI was held in Beijing. – 28 March 2018, the fourth Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Workshop was held in Beijing; – 28 March 2018, the first meeting of @Wild was held in Beijing, China.
	Two high-level meetings convened in the	– May 30-31, 2016, the First Ministerial Meeting Responsible for Forestry in Greater Central Asia was held in Astana, capital of Kazakhstan;

region at the ministerial level	– August 16-17, 2018, the 2nd Meeting of ministers Responsible for Forestry in Greater Central Asia was jointly organized by the State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry of the Kyrgyz Republic (SAEPF) and APFNet in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan.	

Through GCA FCM, a stable communication and cooperation channel among the six economies has been established and promoted. FPN has been positively contributing to the establishment of a common knowledge pool in the region and serving as a valuable information source and technical support to regional forestry strategic planning. As newly established cooperation mechanisms, SANFRI will assist in strengthening the professional development of forest researchers in the region, particularly for young and emerging forest researchers; and @Wild will provide a platform for information exchange and policy discussions to support cross-border cooperation in protecting wildlife habitat and integrating wildlife conservation with SFM.

Sub-conclusion: *Activities under Policy Dialogue pillar have been progressing well. The expected targets stated in the APFNet Strategic Plan 2016-2020 will be fully achieved by 2020.*

3.4. Communication and information sharing

Over the period from 2016 to 2018, communication and information sharing efforts have focused on publishing technical reports, disseminating updates of APFNet's work and organizing events and study tours. More information is given below.

Table 8. Progress of Communication and Information Sharing 2016-2018

Objective	Indicator (2020)	Targets achieved during 2016-2018
To develop the appropriate communication tools and materials targeted to different stakeholder groups, including high-level political bodies, general public, private sector and civil society	APFNet learning hub established to share lessons and best practices on SFM and rehabilitation from the region and beyond. The hub will contain analytical studies, research findings, key publications from APFNet and other organizations, and relevant training materials, acting as a one-stop shop for the latest knowledge on SFM and rehabilitation issues.	A section on APFNet website has been built to host the learning hub.
	Publication series established to share good practices and information on incentives and management approaches	The publication series has been established with 7 publications released. Two

	and management and planning tools.	additional publications are underway.
Conduct outreach and visibility activities to promote the image of APFNet and its projects by disseminating written materials, publications and the setting up of exhibitions at international conferences.	Newsletters, brochures and other audio-video and social media approaches to raise awareness and public support for SFM and for APFNet.	Newsletters were disseminated in 2016 and 2017 when the website was unavailable. Numerous brochures have been prepared and disseminated during international conferences.
To accelerate information sharing on forest management and to enhance political commitment on high-level policy makers	20+ study tours or staff exchanges to accelerate information sharing on innovations in forest conservation, management and development.	Ten study tours and staff exchanges have been organized since 2016, including receiving visits from member economies and organizations, organizing field trips for member economy embassies and attending and organizing events at international conferences.
	5+ study tours and/or panel discussions for high-level policy makers to raise political commitment to SFM (ministers, parliamentarians, corporate CEOs, etc.).	Two Greater Central Asia forestry ministerial meetings and one APEC forestry ministerial meeting have been organized.

Sub-conclusion: *For the pillar of communication and information sharing, events and activities have been carried out as planned and well accomplished the tended objectives periodically. Indicators listed in the table above will be completely reached by the year of 2020.*

4. Institutional development

During the review period, the operations of the organization have been notably enhanced through annual Board and Council meetings, where a series of APFNet strategies, policies, procedures and plans have been consulted on and approved and implementation regularly oversighted. The APFNet's operation has been constantly improved with better transparency and higher efficiency.

The Secretariat has diversified its staff by secondment from its member economies. Internal capacity building activities have also been carried out to raise technical knowledge levels and to enhance project management abilities of APFNet staff. Questionnaires survey were made with the four staff members who received international training during 2016-2018. They reported their satisfaction with the training and the positive impact on their work and professional development.

APFNet members have been more connected over the Strategic Plan period. However, it was identified that the membership management strategy could be refined to further improve balance and enhance communication and cooperation with current members, and raise the efficiency of resource allocation. The support of members should also be enhanced to identify future priorities, strategies and actions in line with regional needs.

It should be noted that, in accordance with institutional strengthening targets in the Strategic Plan, review of the M&E framework for APFNet projects was initiated in 2018 and an external assessment of lessons learned from APFNet's Ten-Year Review is currently underway. Both of these activities should provide insights into the development of a more comprehensive M&E framework of the next APFNet Strategic Plan.

Table 9. Progress of Institutional Development 2016-2018

Objective	Indicator (2020)	Targets achieved during 2016-2018
Taking accelerated actions to cement the status of the organization and its Secretariat as an effective and efficient international organization	Capacity building for APFNet Secretariat staff; Scholarships for MS degree and specialized non-degree programs in forestry provided to 10 Secretariat staff	The Secretariat organized study tours and regular trainings, including academic lectures, policy interpretation, development of office skills such as computer skills, writing abilities, photography skills, etc., and back-to-office report presentations aiming to improve presentation and communication skills. Scholarships for MS degree and specialized non-degree programs in forestry were provided to 7 Secretariat staff
	Governance issues including membership and legal standing of APFNet established	APFNet and the host economy has been in communication on signing a Memorandum of Understanding, to reaffirm continued support from Chinese side to APFNet, in terms of office premises, human and financial resources.
	Funding strategy developed and implemented	APFNet has been making efforts to diversify its funding streams by operating the APFNet Fund to engage the private sector, member economies, as well as by strengthening collaboration with other regional and international organizations to make effective use of financial resources
	New partnerships and collaborative activities formed	Current APFNet membership remains the same since 2015. The organization has enhanced its presence in and liaison with South America and Great Central Asia. Observer status has been granted to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan

		Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in 2017, to ensure their constant connection to APFNet through annual Council meetings, and Ecuador submitted a membership application in 2018.
	M&E system developed and adopted	Improvement of guidelines for project M&E has been initiated in 2018, and expected to be finalized in 2019; The launch of the APFNet Ten-Year Review in 2018 represents a key step on the way for M&E improvement

Sub-conclusion: The institutional development has been well improved during 2016-2018, ranging from the finance supports from the host economy, capacity building enhancement of the Secretariat, better collaboration among Board, Council and the Secretariat and the initiative of the M&E system.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the analysis of the logical framework matrix of the Strategic Plan 2016-2020, it can be clearly concluded that as of 2018, all the planned activities, have been well conducted with sound progress. It is estimated that all the indicators listed in the Strategic Plan can be achieved by 2020.

Although the internal midterm review provide a positive outlook for the implementation of the Strategic Plan in its second half period, several gaps are summarized as below and followed by recommendations.

Gap 1: The need to scale up project demonstration and impact
Most projects lack plans for long-term post-project monitoring, thus make it difficult to evaluate project impact in a long-term.

Recommendation: Enhance the long-term monitoring and evaluation on APFNet projects and activities, which should be integrated into future planning of projects and activities.

Gap 2: Synergy among the four pillars
Various programs and activities have been implemented under the four pillars during 2016-18. Larger impacts could be achieved if the synergy of the four pillars is further enhanced.

Recommendation: Plan projects and activities of any individual pillar in a holistic manner to maximize their potential impact through synergizing with other pillars' activities.

Gap 3: Challenges on the institutional development
The competence of the Secretariat staff is still a challenge for the efficient operation of the Secretariat, planning and coordination skills should be further strengthened.

The current institutional arrangements of APFNet is still in the growing process, and should be further optimized according to the new development of APFNet.

Recommendations:
- *Continue strengthening the capacity building of Secretariat staff through various channels.*
- *Continue improving institutional arrangements through better defined functions of institutional bodies of APFNet, and to enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of the institutions.*

References

1. Strategic Plan 2016-2020

2. A Decade of Achievements: APFNet 10 Year Anniversary

3. Rules & Regulations on APFNet Secretariat Operation

4. APFNet's work plan 2016-2018

5. Implementation progress reports (2016-2018)

6. Annual reports (2016-2018)

7. APFNet financial status (2016-2018)

8. Minutes and decisions (BM1-4)

9. Report of the meeting of the APFNet Council (CM1-4)