

STRENGTHENING NON-STATE ACTOR INVOLVEMENT IN FOREST
GOVERNANCE IN INDONESIA, MALAYSIA, THE PHILIPPINES AND
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

SEPTEMBER 2022

PROJECT IMPACT SUMMARY



This project is funded by the European Union and led by BirdLife International



in partnership with



PROJECT OVERVIEW

CONTEXT

The tropical forests of Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines cover over 154 million hectares and are globally significant hotspots of plant and animal life. Alongside rich biodiversity, these forested sites provide ecosystem services and sustainable livelihoods for local people and store vast amounts of carbon. Many sites are recognised as Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) - globally significant sites for the persistence of biodiversity.

However, as human populations grow rapidly across the Asia-Pacific region, forests face multiple threats. Agricultural expansion, unsustainable harvesting and illegal logging is causing widespread forest loss and degradation, with loss of tree cover estimated at 16% since 2000.

It has never been more essential that nations reduce illegal logging, strengthen sustainable and legal forest management, improve governance, and better account for the value of forests.

The European Union supports this through its Forest Law Enforcement, Governance & Trade (FLEGT) initiative and the bilateral Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the national government concerned to deliver it. Tropical countries are also supported by various agencies through Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) schemes.

CHALLENGES

At present, forest conservation across the region is challenged by problems of weak governance and inadequate policies. Limited enforcement, corruption and a lack of accountability has hampered government efforts to prevent illegal and unsustainable logging.

The current involvement of non-state actors (e.g. local communities, indigenous peoples) – critical stakeholders in forest conservation activities – is constrained by a lack of technical knowledge, experience and political influence.

PROJECT AT A GLANCE	PROJECT TITLE	Strengthening non-state actor involvement in forest governance in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea
	DURATION	Five years (2017-2022)
	PROJECT LEAD	BirdLife International
	PARTNERS	Burung Indonesia, Haribon Foundation, Malaysian Nature Society, Tenkile Conservation Alliance, University of Papua New Guinea, Centre for International Development & Training
	FUNDED BY	European Union
	AIM	To build the capacity of national, provincial and local non-state actors to: monitor forest resource use, forest condition and forest carbon stocks; engage effectively with local authorities and national decision-makers; participate in forest management and land use planning processes; and inform and influence forest policy processes.

OUR STRATEGY

The Asia-Pacific Forest Governance Project's aim is to empower and enhance the involvement of non-state actors in forest monitoring, forest conservation, and forest policy processes, focusing on forest landscapes containing Key Biodiversity Areas in the region, to make a positive impact on nature, climate and people.

A key aspect of this is **increasing the capacity** of local people and community groups to get involved in decision-making processes and provide them with training and skills to increase their knowledge and training on forest monitoring and become more effective agents of forest governance and conservation.

Another area of focus is **access to forest monitoring information** and datasets from remote sensing satellite data to local monitoring. This provides local stakeholders and policy-makers with

greater insight into forest loss trends and enables them to design more effective conservation action on the ground.

Well-informed networks of local, regional and national groups offer the opportunity for the sharing and exchange of effective knowledge, information and practices. The project works to support existing networks and build new alliances with key forest stakeholders.

Policy processes and governance initiatives such as FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ are most effective where non-state actors are engaged and involved. The project facilitates this through training and knowledge sharing.



INCREASED CAPACITY

Increased capacity of local, provincial and national non-state actors to monitor forest resource use, forest condition and forest carbon stocks, and engage in forest policy processes.



TRANSPARENT INFORMATION

Increased transparency, access to information and accountability in relation to the conservation and management of forests, including forest Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs).



INFORMED NETWORKS

Viable, constructive, and sustainable networks of well-informed non-state actors, including cross-border cooperation and information exchanges.



PARTICIPATORY POLICY PROCESSES

Informed, effective participation of non-state actors in national and provincial forest policy processes, including FLEGT-VPA and REDD+.

INCREASED CAPACITY



In **Indonesia**, capacity building activities have taken place at local and national level through various training, facilitation, and assistance programmes. At the national level, an annual work plan has been prepared with support of non-state actors to guide connected forest monitoring activities. At local levels, work is focused on both timber legality training and ecosystem service forest monitoring by local people. Forest plantation nurseries have been established at multiple sites, that engage community actors on sustainable planting schemes and wider FLEGT & REDD+ priorities.

Work in the **Philippines** focuses on two central areas of capacity development: digital forest monitoring and sustainable livelihood development. Training local communities such as the Bantay Cubat on the operation of an smartphone app, has enabled more frequent and accurate monitoring of forest biodiversity and condition. Sustainable livelihood planning has taken the form of workshops and seminars for local groups on developing business plans for sustainable forest activities and conservation actions.

In **Malaysia**, priority work on building the capacity and skills of non-state actors has been achieved through forest governance training workshops. With a focus on raising awareness of forest certification processes and upskilling forest officials on legality assurance systems, participants share findings with their connected forest network, building new skills and knowledge in this area of forest governance. Elements of this process have involved the training of forest auditors on the High Carbon Stock Assessment (HCSA) process - a key aspect of sustainable land use planning.

Work in **Papua New Guinea** empowers indigenous communities living in remote forested sites in the Torricelli Mountain Range Conservation Area (TMRCA), through training in forest monitoring techniques, app-based tools and land use planning. Remote sensing in the form of GIS training and datasets has enabled regional non-state actors to more effectively monitor forest areas to better plan conservation and forest governance activities.

2249

Number of Individuals that have received training on forest policy, planning, monitoring and licensing processes

50

Organisations receiving capacity development support on effective forest governance practices

61%

Percentage increase in number of staff and volunteers working on forest issues in supported organisations

TRANSPARENT INFORMATION



In **all project** countries, BirdLife International has been working to increase transparency and access to information in relation to the conservation and management of forests by carrying out remote sensing of forest cover change in 690 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs).

Analysing key forested areas in project countries covering >48 million hectares, a digital mapping tool has been created that summarises and visualises **forest loss** by region and over select time periods (see Case Study below). Providing large-scale insights on forest cover change, the tool has enabled partners and actors on the ground to pinpoint and investigate sites further to validate findings or provide updates to datasets, increasing accuracy and reliability of the maps.

Additionally, these data provide insights that inform and shape forest policy and conservation responses at local, regional and national levels.

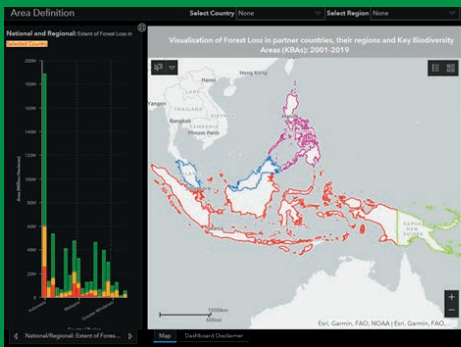
In **Indonesia**, the project has been collaborating with experts from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry to complete an assessment of a carbon stock analysis within key priority sites. Data and findings have been shared with regional non-state actors providing them with insights and access into ecosystem service and forest loss monitoring processes.

In the **Philippines**, the project has hosted focus group discussions with local forest stakeholders sharing information on respective ancestral domains for the development of a historical timeline of their forest lands using the scoring standards from the global framework for monitoring Important Bird Areas (IBAs, a type of KBA).

Papua New Guinea sites have undergone detailed satellite imagery GIS mapping analysis that offers land use planning insights for actors on the ground to more effectively monitor land boundaries, biodiversity, species richness and vegetation cover.

CASE STUDY: FOREST LOSS DASHBOARD

BirdLife is a strategic partner of Global Forest Watch and has been working closely with the World Resources Institute to routinely share its forest related information. From this, the ArcGIS-powered Forest Loss Dashboard has been developed by BirdLife, to enable non-state actors transparent access to large-scale datasets and maps on forest coverage in project countries. This interactive tool gives users the ability to filter data visually by geography, KBA, time period and forest-loss rates. This resource will support advocacy and policy work in project countries and further inform local forest governance action on the ground.



INFORMED NETWORKS



CASE STUDY: MOUNT HILONG-HILONG, PHILIPPINES



Credit: Haribon Foundation

In the Philippines, our project partner Haribon Foundation has been working to establish the crucial link between village leaders, community members, forest wardens and local officials to generate dialogues about sustainable land use activities and monitoring important habitats for conservation action. At Mount Hilong-Hilong, a site hosting rich biodiversity, workshops have been held with indigenous communities about sustainable livelihood development. Offering a means for generating financial income for local people, whilst maintaining ecosystem integrity, new networks have formed to promote knowledge about sustainable business practices. This knowledge combined with environmental datasets on species and forest condition, has enabled the Bantay Gubat - forest watch groups comprised mainly of regional indigenous communities - to produce several proposals that promote environmental protection alongside livelihood approaches.

An Ecosystem Restoration Working Group has been established in **Indonesia** that brings together non-state actors from timber, agricultural, commercial, political and local spheres. A space for discussion and debate, the group has provided revisions and recommendations to local forestry laws alongside generating dialogue with politicians on the need for ecosystem restoration to be better represented in the policy decisions.

In the **Philippines**, alongside establishing similar forest stakeholder working groups convening regular webinars, and drawing attention toward stakeholder engagement as a vital aspect of forest governance, work has been focused on developing a network of forest community monitors that promote cooperation, information exchange and collective advocacy. These networks have enabled proposed changes to land use in forested areas to be challenged based on their biodiversity value.

Malaysian efforts to build informed networks of non-state actors have placed a strong focus on public and private virtual dialogues, fora, talks and webinars. Addressing audiences from conservation, commercial, government and civil society organisations, the approach of engagement, education, knowledge sharing and discussion has helped establish new cross-sectoral partnerships, such as Malaysian climate and biodiversity groups that raise awareness of effective forest governance principles.

In **Papua New Guinea**, informed networks of non-state actors are particularly critical given the majority of forest ownership lies with indigenous communities and local landowners. To improve knowledge of forest governance strategies amongst communities and government, collaboration has taken place with the Conservation Environment Protection Authority (CEPA), Sandaun Provincial Government, alongside targeted advocacy.

EFFECTIVE POLICY PROCESSES



In **Indonesia**, building resilient and effective policy processes has been focused on collaborating with community-based organisations to influence and inform amendments to forest land use plans and landscape management plans. One such example is within the Mbeliling landscape, where a landscape strategic management plan is in development to put sustainable forestry and governance practices at the heart of local land use. This approach has involved desk studies, mapping, discussions and meetings with key stakeholders in multiple project locations.

Work in the **Philippines** has promoted effective participation by community forest wardens in forest law enforcement planning. Haribon has been able to influence the emerging Sustainable Forest Management Bill to harmonise law and policy, mainstream biodiversity issues and empower indigenous peoples and local communities.

Promoting and supporting FLEGT-VPA execution and implementation with national and provincial policy-makers has been a key task in **Malaysia**. There have been challenges with this due to cross-scalar politics and power dynamics between national and sub-national government. Further work is required in this area, but resilient networks continue to be established to highlight and promote this sustainable policy direction.

In **Papua New Guinea**, REDD+ is central to achieving national environmental, social and economic development goals and objectives. Project work in this area has been focused intensively on land use planning. Activities have combined scientific GIS mapping, dialogue with local communities, landowners and policy officials, and developing a strong network of informed stakeholders. This has translated into continued pressure and advocacy for updates to guidelines for forest plans, binding REDD+ targets and amendments to environmental legislation.

CASE STUDY: REDD+ IN MALAYSIA

UN-REDD+ (United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) is an international framework through which countries, the private sector, other non-state actors can financially compensate countries to not deforest forested landscapes. In Malaysia the project has supported the preparation of the National REDD+ Strategy. Attending and contributing to high-level panels, meetings and workshops, the project has been able to influence REDD+ commitments, implementation timelines and acknowledge the role of REDD+ alongside other sustainable land use policies for effective forest governance in the region.



Credit: BirdLife International

PROJECT PARTNERS

Funded by:



The European Union. The European Union is made up of 27 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

Lead partner:



BirdLife International. The world's largest nature conservation partnership, consisting of 118 independent, national, non-governmental nature conservation organisations. Through our unique local-to-global approach, we deliver high impact and long-term conservation for the benefit of nature and people. www.birdlife.org

National partners:



Burung Indonesia. Burung Indonesia (BirdLife in Indonesia) is a guardian of Indonesia's wild birds and their habitats, working with people for sustainable development. www.burung.org



Malaysian Nature Society. MNS (BirdLife in Malaysia) promotes the conservation of Malaysia's natural heritage, and is Malaysia's oldest, membership-based environmental non-profit organisation. www.mns.my



Haribon Foundation. The Haribon Foundation (BirdLife in the Philippines) is the Philippines' pioneer environmental organization, with over 40 years of committed biodiversity conservation and community work. www.haribon.org.ph



Tenkile Conservation Alliance. TCA works with local communities in Papua New Guinea to protect biodiversity for future generations, focusing on research, development, education and sustainable livelihoods. www.tenkile.com

Technical partners:



University of Papua New Guinea. A leading teaching and research University in Papua New Guinea, based in Port Moresby, founded on 50 years of experience. www.upng.ac.pg



Centre for International Development & Training. As part of the University of Wolverhampton, CIDT provides capacity strengthening for development. www.cidt.org.uk

KEY SITES AND SPECIES

