



RECOFTC Main Office,
P.O. Box 1111
Kasetsart University Post Office,
Bangkok 10900, Thailand,
T +66 2 940 5700, F +66 2 561 4880
rmfn-asia@recoftc.org

RMFN–Asia Operating Principles

Updated and approved at the RMFN-Asia Annual Advisory Committee Meeting, Carood Watershed Model Forest, Bohol, Philippines, 25 February 2025

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1998 and 1999, the Government of Japan hosted a series of workshops on Model Forest development in Asia. Through funding provided by Japan, a regional Secretariat was established at FAO in Bangkok. The regional secretariat was supported by Japan for three years and then by the International Model Forest Network Secretariat (IMFNS) for an additional year. Subsequently to that, secretarial duties were provided directly by the IMFNS.

Model Forests were developed in China (1999), India (2005), Indonesia (2000), Japan (2007), the Philippines (2000) and Thailand (2000). Since 2000, the Model Forests and a National Model Forest Focal Point for each country with a Model Forest met regularly as a group for meetings and workshops although a formal governance structure had not been established.

Since the inception of the regional network, the participating countries and the Model Forests have continuously confirmed that they would be better positioned and more effective if they were organized into a structured network. Discussions on creating a formal government structure for the RMFN–Asia began during the September 2004 Regional Model Forest Network workshop held in Lin'an, China and followed up in October 2005 at a meeting of the Regional Model Forest Focal Points that took place in Kodagu, India and again in November 2005 during a meeting of the Asian representatives attending the 2005 IMFN Global Forum in Costa Rica.

In 2006, the development of a Regional Model Forest Network, Asia Strategic Plan was initiated involving a series of country-based consultations. Two regional workshops on the plan were held in Bangkok, Thailand in September 2006 and January 2007. In October 2007, the National Model Forest Focal Points and representatives from the regional Model Forests attended a regional meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand. It was agreed that a RMFN–Asia Advisory Committee be established to provide a more formal governance structure to the regional network.

The purpose of this document is to establish a set of clearly defined operating principles to guide the development and efficient operation of the Regional Model Forest Network–Asia Advisory Committee.

Chapter 2: RMFN–Asia Principles and Purposes

The Model Forest approach is based upon a view that broad-based local participation is a key to achieving the sustainable management of natural resources and forested landscapes. This approach helps the various stakeholders recognize the impact of their activities on the land-base, develop a shared understanding of sustainability and learn what it means in operational situations.

Creating and maintaining an effective partnership poses particular challenges. Among the partnership-building tools available to Model Forest partners is a set of commonly held attributes on which activities can be structured and that form the basis for the International Model Forest Network. Among the attributes that define the Model Forest approach to the sustainable management of natural resources and forested landscapes, the following six are considered fundamental:

1. An inclusive and dynamic **partnership**: those with an interest in their area's natural resources agree on a process for defining sustainability in locally relevant terms, prioritize goals, then work together to achieve those goals
2. A **landscape** large enough to represent an area's diverse forest uses and values
3. A commitment to **sustainable forest management**
4. A **governance structure** that is representative, participative, transparent, and accountable
5. A **program of activities** reflective of partner needs and values
6. A commitment to **knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and networking**, from the local to the international levels

The RMFN–Asia would assist in setting the strategic directions for Model Forest development and network initiatives in the region. It would also help in linking Model Forests with other like-minded regional organizations so that the success of Model Forests can be integrated in mainstream interventions. The Advisory Committee will provide an entry point for working together with key international and regional organizations which may have potential to contribute to the success of the Model Forest approach in the region.

Chapter 3: Network Members

Membership of the Regional Model Forest Network– Asia is composed of Model Forests that have been accepted into the RMFN–Asia. Model Forests, as participants in the Regional Model Forest Network–Asia, must adhere to the IMFN Principles and Attributes of Model Forests as well as the IMFN Charter.

The IMFNS and the RMFN-Asia Secretariat will facilitate a review of prospective model forests within the region who wish to participate in the regional network and the IMFN.

Chapter 4: RMFN–Asia Advisory Committee

4.1 Mandate and Purpose:

a) The Advisory Committee for the Regional Model Forest Network–Asia is responsible for the strategic direction and policy setting for the RMFN–Asia. Its mandate and purpose is, among other things:

- Policy and overall decision-making for regional network
- Strategic program planning including development of a regional strategic plan
- Identification of and liaising with potential donors and stakeholders
- Reviewing progress of regional activities and the RMFN-Aisa Secretariat's administration of Regional Network funds
- Maintaining links to the IMFN
- Facilitate networking including identifying thematic areas for programming / priorities

4.2 Membership:

a) Six categories of members for the RMFN–Asia Advisory Committee have been established:

- **National Model Forest Focal Point:** Each country in the region with a Model Forest can nominate one National Model Forest Focal Point and an alternate to the RMFN–Asia Advisory Committee.
- **Model Forests:** Each Model Forest that is a member of the RMFN–Asia can nominate one representative and an alternate to the RMFN–Asia Advisory Committee.
- **RMFN-Asia Secretariat:** can nominate one representative and an alternate to the RMFN-Asia Advisory Committee.
- **RMFN-Asia Chairperson:** is a non-rotating representative as appointed to the RMFN-Asia Advisory Committee by its members.
- **Institutional Partners:** Partner institutions that contribute to the achievement of Model Forests' objectives through a clear commitment and a concrete regular contribution and that have been granted membership by the RMFN-Asia Advisory committee. Each Institutional Partner member can nominate one representative and an alternate to the RMFN–Asia Advisory Committee.
- **IMFNS** can nominate one representative and an alternate to the RMFN–Asia Advisory Committee.

b) Other strategic organizations can be added as non-voting members unless approved by the RMFN–Asia Advisory Committee.

4.3 Consensus:

a) The Advisory Committee will operate by consensus. “Consensus” means the explicit concurrence of all Advisory Committee members. The purpose of consensus building is to reach inclusive approval.

4.4 RMFN-Asia Chairperson:

a) The Chairperson of the RMFN-Asia will be filled by the the RMFN-Asia Secretariat, or their delegate, until it is otherwise decided or assigned.

4.4 Advisory Committee Meeting Chair:

a) The Chair of the Committee Meeting will be filled on a rotating basis with the host country of a meeting being the Chair, or their delegate.

b) If the meeting is held in a non-member country, the RMFN-Asia Chairperson will be requested to chair the meeting, or their delegate.

4.5 Duties of Members:

a) Review and propose policies and action strategies related to the Network’s operations and management.

b) Promote the Model Forest concept at whichever level(s) is appropriate to the member.

c) Actively participate in the Advisory Committee meetings.

d) Assist in the development, approval and implementation of the Network’s strategic and work plans and monitor the Network’s financial accountability.

e) Take any action necessary, convenient and appropriate to achieve the Network's goals.

f) National Model Forest Focal Point:

- Promote the creation of a national Model Forest program consistent with their country's forest and sustainability strategies.
- Support their country's Model Forests in their management and financial sustainability.
- Ensure that their country's Model Forest interests are represented at Advisory Committee meetings.

g) Model Forests:

- Provide information generated at the Advisory Committee meetings to the stakeholders in their Model Forest.
- Actively explore opportunities for information sharing and collaboration with other Model Forests in the Network.
- Regularly update the National Model Forest Focal Point on the activities of their Model Forest.
- All items as identified under [Article 4 of the IMFN Charter – IMFN Members' responsibilities and obligations](#).

h) Institutional Partner:

- Provide information on relevant institutional supported activities that might be useful for the Network's operation and achievement of goals.
- Identify and support to the extent possible opportunities for the advancement of the Network's goals.

i) RMFN-Asia Secretariat:

- Provide professional, technical, operational, and administrative support to the Advisory Committee and Regional Network.
- Support the Model Forests in their efforts to achieve financial sustainability.
- All items as identified under [Articles 8.4 and 8.6 of the IMFN Charter – Regional Secretariats](#).

j) IMFNS:

- Facilitate the transfer of technology and knowledge between the Regional Network and other Model Forests in the IMFN.
- All items as identified under [Article 6 of the IMFN Charter – IMFN Secretariat](#).

4.6 Meetings:

a) Advisory Committee meetings will take place at least once a year. Meeting locations will be rotated among member countries. Locations other than member countries can be considered if a significant event is taking place at which many members will be participating or at which participation by committee members is viewed as beneficial to the RMFN-Asia. If funds are unavailable to cover a face-to-face meeting, the meeting can be held using an online platform.

- b) Presence of one-half plus one of all RMFN-Asia Advisory Committee members will constitute a quorum.
- c) Face-to-face meetings will be supplemented by online meetings facilitated by the RMFN-Asia Secretariat.
- d) Meeting documentation will be provided to members at least two weeks prior to a meeting.
- e) A summary of the meeting will be provided to members no more than two weeks after the conclusion of a meeting.

4.7 Membership Dues:

- a) No membership dues are required.
- b) Network and Committee members will contribute to the RMFN–Asia as outlined in section 4.5: Duties of Members.

4.8 RMFN-Asia Secretariat Duties:

- a) As of January 1st 2024, RECOFTC will provide secretarial duties for the RMFN–Asia, until it is otherwise decided or is assigned in default to the IMFN Secretariat.
- b) Host countries may be requested to provide local logistical support for meeting organization.