



Industrial logging can have a dramatic impact on forests, East Kalimantan, Indonesia.

Photo: Agung Prasetyo

A flourishing partnership

When the Asian Forest Partnership (AFP) was established at the 2002 Earth Summit in Johannesburg, its founders – the governments of Indonesia and Japan, together with CIFOR and The Nature Conservancy – hoped that they would create something useful and durable. Judging from the outcomes of its 6th meeting, which was held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in September 2006, they clearly have.

“The partnership has been growing continually,” explains Petrus Gunarso, a forester seconded to CIFOR by the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry, and coordinator of the AFP Secretariat. “When AFP was set up the governments of Indonesia and Japan provided all the funding. Now Australia, the USA, Tropenbos International Indonesia Programme, CIFOR and WWF Indonesia are among those providing financial support.”

The partnership’s main aim is to promote sustainable forest management in Asia, with its main focus being on combating illegal logging and forest fires, and promoting good forest rehabilitation. The partnership acts as an information-sharing network by holding regular meetings and creating channels of communication between its many partners. By the time of the Yogyakarta meeting,

21 governments, 6 civil society organisations, 2 universities and 9 inter-governmental organisations had joined AFP.

It is difficult to measure precisely what impact AFP has had, but Gunarso believes that it has helped to create an open debate about forest problems in Asia and their underlying causes. “I think countries like Indonesia are now much more open about the problems they face with illegal logging than they were in the past,” says Gunarso. He also believes that AFP has played an important role in disseminating information about the issues with which it is concerned.

At the Yogyakarta meeting, CIFOR policy scientist Chris Barr gave a presentation on China’s growing demand for paper, and its possible impact on the forests of south-east Asia, and his colleague Krystof Obidzinski discussed his research on timber smuggling in Indonesia. Doris Capistrano, director of CIFOR’s Governance Programme and a member of the AFP steering committee, chaired a decentralisation workshop. The 140 participants at the meeting – drawn from over 20 countries – also discussed the future of AFP, whose first phase was about to come to an end. It was universally agreed that AFP should continue into phase II.

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