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APFNET ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

The Official Newsletter of the APFNet Alumni Network



Sengdeuane Keodoum, NFU student,
joining the AHP7 Conference in Indonesia



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Season's Greetings

Best wishes for a happy holiday season and our sincerest thanks for your support.

APFNet Secretariat

2023 GREETINGS TO ALUMNI

Let's welcome the year of 2023 with enthusiasm and good vibes. Our heartfelt greetings at the start of 2023 go out to every single one of our alumni; hoping that the new year will bring you tremendous success in every possible way. We are taking this opportunity to tell you how much we appreciate all you've been doing to build and maintain valuable relationships for the alumni network. Indeed, what a year full of opportunities it has been.

Thanks to all your efforts, we've broken down barriers, created opportunities, and generated tangible results. Once more, we at the APFNet Alumni Network want to say thank you for supporting us, and we look forward to an exciting new year.

Happy 2023!

APFNet alumni participating in the 7th ASEAN Heritage Parks Conference

Mr. Sengdeuane KEOUDOM from Laos is a Master's student at Nanjing Forestry University enrolled in 2020 and he is currently studying for the HSK3 (a Chinese language proficiency test) examination. He is now also working as the Deputy Director at Nampoui National Protected Area (Nampoui NPA) at the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO) of Sayabury Province in Lao PDR.

The 7th Conference of ASEAN Heritage Parks was held from 30 October to 4 November 2022 at Bogor city in Indonesia. To further strengthen the network of AHPs in the ASEAN region, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), as the AHP Secretariat, organises the AHP Conference every three years. The aim of the conference was to assess the progress of its members in terms of supporting ASEAN Heritage Parks through different seminars, and to exchange knowledge and experience on the administration of conservation areas, national parks, and the protection of biodiversity at large.

"I hope that this conference will assist us in protecting and managing national heritage parks"



**Sengdeuane KEOUDOM,
Master's student, 2020 class,
NFU**

Many ASEAN nations, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Viet Nam, and Lao PDR, have attended this meeting. It featured good practices in sustainable financing, ecotourism, business and biodiversity, the role of youth, women, and local communities in protected area management, and evaluating effectiveness of protected area management.

There were thirteen colleagues from Lao PDR who joined this important conference. They were from the National University of Laos, different PAFOs (Luangnamtha, Sayabury, and Chanpasak), and the Department of Forestry. Mr. Keooudom mentioned that "The lessons from the conference provided me with a wealth of useful information and taught me how to strike a balance between three factors: preserving biodiversity, promoting ecotourism, and fostering local economic growth. Besides, I was also able to learn about the advantages, weakness, challenges, and opportunities in different economies. It is also important for me to update my knowledge regarding these issues in my position."

In the Department of Forestry Framework for Conservation Forests in Laos, Mr. Keooudom's office also cooperated with other relevant conservation authorities at provincial level on tourism, keeping the environment clean, and strengthening biodiversity conservation through local participation. "I hope that this conference will assist us in protecting and managing national heritage parks", Mr. Keooudom said.



*Mr. Sengdeuane Keooudom and other Laos delegates
at the AHP7*



Zin Win Tun , 2020 alumnus, NFU

Zin Win Tun is from Myanmar. He is currently working as a Staff Officer in the Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division of the Myanmar Forest Department.

He received an APFNet scholarship from 2020 to 2022 at Nanjing Forestry University, where he eventually received his Master of Forestry degree in 2022.

“Attending this conference, I had a chance to learn many useful things helping me improve my knowledge of biodiversity conservation. First are the best conservation practices implemented in ASEAN heritage parks, research findings, positive outcomes, and prospects for funding and grants for ASEAN heritage parks in the future. Through the conference, I also learned about the cooperation of Non-Governmental Organizations and local stakeholders in the Biodiversity Conservation Activities of ASEAN Heritage Parks and the way to establish long-term funding for nature-based tourism.

During the participation period, information on the efficient administration of ASEAN Heritage Parks and ASEAN Member States' (AMS') efforts to address biodiversity-related concerns in order to achieve sustainable development were included. Lastly, the conference gave me information on the top priorities for developing nature-based tourism in ASEAN heritage parks and for enhancing the management of ASEAN heritage parks.”

“There is a need for more cooperation among all stakeholders the sustainable protection and management of protected areas and ASEAN Heritage Parks”

To effectively protect and conserve the environment and biodiversity in the long term, Mr. Tun hopes that the meeting will get across the following aims:

- AMS will work together to improve the ability to live in harmony between humans and the environment for long-term sustainability, conservation of biodiversity and the environment at large.
- After COVID-19, it will be possible once more to further the protection and restoration of ecosystems within ASEAN Heritage Parks.
- The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and AMS will be able to collect and pass on best practices to future generations

Zin Win Tun believes that there is a need for more cooperation among all stakeholders such as the government, international and national organizations, and that women and youth need to be better included to achieve a sustainable protection and management of protected areas and ASEAN Heritage Parks. He proposed some specific actions: (1) Integrating biodiversity conservation into national development sectors, beside socio-economic development; (2) More awareness raising to involve key stakeholders; (3) Promoting regional and national cooperation for increasing cross-border cooperation between economies to effectively prevent poaching; (4) Promoting collaboration with private actors to ensure sustainable funding for AHPs; and (5) Gaining more confidence from consumers to sustainably produce the products.



*Mr. Zin Win Tun and other Myanmar delegates
at the AHP7*

“Mental calm and time management are the most crucial strategy to a successful PhD”

Milon Barmon, NWAUFU alumnus, 2019



Aloha! I am Milon Barmon, an APFNet alumnus of the 2019 batch from Northwest A&F University (NWAUFU), and completed my Master's degree in Soil and Water Conservation and Desertification Control there. After graduation, I enrolled in the Population Biology, Ecology and Evolution PhD Program at Emory University in Atlanta, USA in fall 2022. Studying in the USA was a long-awaited dream that finally has come true. Being an APFNet scholarship student was undoubtedly a great honor and opportunity that eased my way to secure this PhD position in one of the top research schools in the USA. The knowledge and experience acquired during my Master's in China unambiguously boosted my confidence to proceed with the PhD in the US. Fortunately, I obtained more academic skills and furthered my personal development compared to 2019 (when I just started my studies in China) during my doctoral studies here in the USA. Thus, I can easily see now that studying at a Chinese university was key for my initial development as it provided me with a variety of resources, and exposed me to diverse cultures, customs, languages and food even beyond China itself through their international student body. I was thrilled and honoured to represent my economy at the 18th International Cultural Festival at NWAUFU and also in 2019 I did an internship in Guangxi, China, which was arranged by APFNet. All of these experiences enriched my diverse cultural understanding and academic knowledge.

However, my experience was not always pleasant while staying in China as I experienced the difficult times brought forth by the pandemic. During the pandemic, the concern and support provided by NWAUFU (especially by the International College of NWAUFU) were immeasurable. This difficult situation enables me now to manage more challenging situations with mental calm and an adaptive mindset.

Academic life in the USA is very competitive and intense, so you have to pay 100% attention every day to keep pace with your academic and career development. From my experiences in the current fall semester 2022, I learned that mental calm and time management are the most crucial ingredients to be successful in my PhD journey. The vast resources and opportunities of Emory are enriching the PhD journey that also enables me to learn something new every day. Most importantly these lessons are not only restricted to academics, but also include the environment around me, which is a great takeaway from student life here. My message for all the future APFNet alumni is, "All the studying will pay off one day, so keep up the quest for learning every day." Wish me luck. I hope my path with any APFNet alumni will cross again in the future.

My name is Khaing Yi Mon Lin. Currently, I am the Assistant Director of the Environmental Conservation Department under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation in Myanmar. I got a Bachelor's degree from the University of Forestry and Environmental Science in Myanmar and a Master's degree from Nanjing Forestry University in China. The major I graduated with was forestry in both cases.

I want to study abroad to meet new friends, have the experience of living in another economy and improve my knowledge in the field of ecology. Experiences from my studies helped me in my current job and furthered my professional growth in every way. They enhanced my skill and knowledge and I am now better at decision-making. I will always be grateful to APFNet for giving me the chance to complete this Master's degree. After I finished my master's degree, I transferred to the headquarter of our department.

During my time studying at the university under the APFNet Scholarship Program, I made new friends from other economies, learned about Chinese culture, earned a Master's degree and increased my overall professional capacity.

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.” Mahatma Gandhi once said. It is also my advice to current students and future students who want to apply for ASP.

In the future, I want to be an expert in the environmental conservation field, as working on sustainable land use management is very important for all sectors, including environmental, social, and economic sectors.



“Experiences from my study helped my current job and furthered professional growth in every way”

**Khaing Yi Mon Lin,
NFU alumnus, 2016**

A Dream of studying at NFU: A tough journey, but worth it

Zin Myo Htet,
NFU alumnus, 2017 and
NFU PhD student, 2019

2019 was the start of my Ph.D journey as I became an APFNet Scholarship awardee at Nanjing Forestry University. Firstly, I would like to heartily thank APFNet for providing me with the great opportunity of studying in China. Right from the start, it was a great learning experience with a variety of in-depth courses, different field internships, and various seminars and conferences. Importantly, not only the study experience but also making new international friends made me enhance my experience as studying abroad confronted me with different cultures and traditions.



At the end of 2019, I returned to my home economy, Myanmar, as we were on winter break. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic struck, I didn't have any chance to come back to the university until November 2022. It was an incredibly long time to be away from Nanjing Forestry University. As this unexpected situation developed, it significantly impacted my PhD journey as my study plans could not follow the original schedule. During this tough period, the completion of all laboratory work remained just a dream. But, by regularly keeping in touch with my supervisor, I could advance some of the preparations for the research and experiments, and also do intensive literature reviews. In those times, I could have put more effort into my studies but honestly speaking, I lacked that motivation because of so many uncertainties related to the whole COVID-19 situation. Those times impacted me mentally significantly.

In August 2022, student visa applications were finally reopened. As soon as I received the university's return agreement certificate, I applied for a student visa (a so-called X1 visa) at the Chinese Embassy in Yangon, Myanmar and started my journey back to NFU in November 2022. The COVID-19 PCR Test, which had to be conducted within 48 hours before boarding the flight was required before my flight. In line with the entry policies of China in November 2022, I had to quarantine for 8 days at Guangzhou, the city of entry point. When I arrived in Nanjing, I quarantined for 14 more days at a university-arranged-hotel and international students' dormitory. After completing the required quarantine (in total 8+7+7 days), I could be able to re-start again with my on-campus student life at Nanjing Forestry University.

My trip back to Nanjing Forestry University will always be one of my most unforgettable experiences. It had been a long-awaited, difficult journey. Overall though, I had a good time and a great feeling because I knew I would return to my university, breathe the warm air, and meet my lovely friends. The best things are waiting for me to continue my PhD journey in Nanjing.