APFNET ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

The Official Newsletter of the APFNet Alumni Network

Nor Halizah Binti Abd Halim, Ph.D. student 2019 class, NFU

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Alumni Spotlight

"My journey has been profoundly enriched by the great opportunities under the APFNet Scholarship Program at BFU"

Mohammad Rahmat Ullah, alumnus 2010, BFU

I am Mohammad Rahmat Ullah, and I had the privilege of being an APFNet scholar, completing my Master's thesis in Forest Management at Beijing Forestry University, China, from 2010 to 2012. During this period, I gained invaluable insights into various forest management techniques, which I later put into practice in diverse professional projects related to land management and conservation.

My experience extends to actively participating in forest fire management, a matter of global ecological and economic importance. Additionally, I collaborated closely with my Chinese colleagues on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and utilized various forest measurement tools. My research endeavors in China culminated in the publication of four peer-reviewed articles in renowned journals.

Following this, I devoted over six years to working in forests and wetlands in Bangladesh, partnering with international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO UN) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Bangladesh Country Office. In recognition of my contributions to forest and environmental conservation, I was honored with the prestigious 'Gregory Award' from the Society of American Foresters (SAF) in 2015.

Alumni Spotlight

Leveraging my academic accomplishments and professional experiences, I secured three PhD scholarships in 2017 from esteemed institutions: The University of Sydney, the University of New South Wales, and Macquarie University, all located in Australia. From 2017 to 2021, I engaged in pioneering research for my PhD, concentrating on drought-related soil systems in Australia. My research findings garnered international recognition, leading to the publication of five research articles in top-tier peer-reviewed journals.

Mohammad Rahmat Ullah achieved his PhD. degree in Australia, 2021

Presently, I hold the position of a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, supported by the prestigious Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. In my role as an environmental researcher, I am committed to investigating the effects of soil warming and deadwood on soil systems within European forests. My research agenda also includes an examination of permafrost peatlands to evaluate climate feedback mechanisms.

To date, I have significantly contributed to the scientific community, publishing a total of 13 research articles in peer-reviewed journals. Furthermore, I serve as a reviewer for more than 10 peer-reviewed journals. Through these endeavors, I aspire to advance the fields of climate change and ecosystem management.

I wholeheartedly endorse the program at Beijing Forestry University and the APFNet network for young forestry and environmental professionals. My journey, marked by academic excellence and professional growth, has been profoundly enriched by these opportunities, and I am confident they can help other alumni achieve their future aspirations.

Alumni Research's Achievement

Mohammad Rahmat Ullah, alumnus 2010, BFU

My research journey across Australia, China, and Bangladesh was inspired by the need to tackle urgent, region-specific environmental issues. In Australia, I examined the interplay between drought and soil biogeochemistry, aiming to better understand how prolonged drought affects soil microbial communities and future soil health. This work has been globally recognized, published in prestigious environmental journals like Soil Biology and Biochemistry and Ecosystems. In China, I delved into the relationship between climate change and forest fires, with a focus on how each influences the other. The goal is to provide actionable insights for disaster management and climate mitigation strategies. Lastly, my research in Bangladesh centers on biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration, pertinent topics given the country's vulnerability to climate change and rising sea levels. This research aims to inform both local conservation efforts and broader climate change mitigation strategies.

Mohammad is taking samples in the field

As a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Bayreuth, supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, my research centers on climate change biology, environmental impact, and ecosystem science. I've been primarily involved in groundbreaking soil-warming experiments in Europe, examining the consequences of elevated soil temperatures on microbial communities and nutrient cycling. This work is vital for understanding how soil ecosystems will respond to global warming, thereby offering insights for sustainable land management practices.

Additionally, my research on the influence of forest deadwood on soil ecosystems sheds light on the interconnectedness between forest health and soil quality. This work aligns with important environmental objectives like carbon storage, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation.

Alumni Research's Achievement

Mohammad Rahmat Ullah, alumnus 2010, BFU

My upcoming research in Norway's permafrost peatlands aims to quantify CO_2 emissions from thawing permafrost - a global issue that directly impacts climate regulation and carbon storage strategies. Collectively, my work provides a nuanced understanding of soil and forest ecosystems under climate change, contributing both to academic knowledge and to practical applications in forestry and environmental management.

In the future, I plan to develop comprehensive research projects that investigate the effects of climatic stress on various land types, particularly in countries most vulnerable to climate change. I'll focus on ecosystems like forests and wetlands that are increasingly disturbed and polluted.

Recognizing the dependency of nearby communities on these ecosystems, my research will also encompass resource governance systems and livelihood improvement strategies. Ultimately, I intend to publish my findings, achievements, and challenges across multiple international platforms to both contribute to scientific understanding and influence practical policy change.

Mohammad is doing an experiment

Alumni Stories

Hetti Hewage Suranjith Ariyasena, student 2021 class, NWAFU

I am Hetti Hewage Suranjith Ariyasena from Sri Lanka, currently pursuing a Master's degree at Northwest A&F University in China under the APFNet Scholarship program. Although I officially registered for the program in 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic delayed my commencement until January 2023. My area of specialization is soil and water conservation and desertification control. My research focus on the development of machine learning AI models to predict soil moisture levels and pre-determine drought conditions, specifically for the purpose of precision agriculture. I am deeply committed to this research field, as I believe it will pave the way for a promising future career.

I haven't yet taken part in a research proposal defense, but I'm now making plans to start experiments to gather soil samples in Chunhua County, Shaanxi Province. This presents a remarkable opportunity to connect with the local community and immerse myself in Chinese culture. Chunhua County primarily relies on agricultural products such as maize, wheat, and Apples. Some of my fellow research group students are conducting experiments in Chunhua County, and I am grateful to my supervisor for permitting me to collaborate with them and contribute to their experiments as a means of enhancing my learning experience.

"The university's serene and attractive environment provides an ideal setting for focused academic pursuits"

Participating experimental works with Chinese fellows at Chunhua county

Alumni Stories

Hetti Hewage Suranjith Ariyasena, student 2021 class, NWAFU

I consider my decision to pursue a Master's degree in China and this university as a significant turning point in my life, and I am immensely grateful for this opportunity. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the APFNet scholarship council for selecting me as a recipient of their program.

In Chinese Culture class

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Northwest A&F University's Chinese study program for imparting valuable insights into Chinese culture and facilitating my participation in various cultural activities within the university. The university's serene and attractive environment provides an ideal setting for focused academic pursuits.

At the University's Sport meeting festival of the Opening Ceremony

Alumni Stories

Nor Halizah Binti Abd Halim, Ph.D. student 2019 class, NFU

Nor Halizah Binti Abd Halim is from Malaysia. She is currently taking her Ph.D. journey, majoring in Forestry management at Nanjing Forestry University. "The APFNet Scholarship enables me to advance my education, build connections with industry experts, gain new insights, and support sustainability", shared Halizah.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult for many people to reconcile their academic and personal obligations. Balancing studies with financial obligations is also a struggle for her. Besides, her Ph.D. studies in the new norm online are also difficult and limit studies in communication with the supervisor. Although some research methods can be implemented online, the joint presence of supervisors, willingness, and atmosphere of study at the university in particular and in the lab also play a very important role in ensuring success data survey.

> *The APFNet Scholarship enables me to advance my education, build connections with industry experts, gain new insights, and support sustainability.*
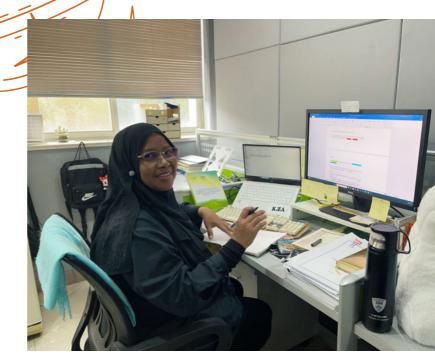
Alumni Stories

Nor Halizah Binti Abd Halim, Ph.D. student 2019 class, NFU

Facing these harsh conditions, Halizah received much support for her study suspension, given by the APFNet, and NFU with weekly meetings arranged by her supervisor. This not only helps her adapt to a new setup at Nanjing but also encourages her to study and conduct research.

Weekly meeting with supervisor

Halizah would like to have a chance to meet and work with other ASP students after the difficult time coming back to China. That will be a great occasion where gathers professionals and labors working in the forestry sector from other economies to enhance and broaden their knowledge of sustainable forest development.

Working in the lab

APFNet alumni received a certificate of honor from the Shaanxi Education Department.

Fayzmamad Davlatbekov, Ph.D. student 2019 class, NWAFU

In early September 2023, a group of educational delegations from the Shaanxi province of the People's Republic of China visited Central Asian countries. On the 12th and 13th of September, the delegation conducted the China (Shaanxi) – Tajikistan higher education exhibition in Dushanbe -Tajikistan. At the education expo "China (Shaanxi) – Tajikistan higher education exhibition" the presidents and vice presidents of Chinese and Tajik universities participated and expressed their interest in enhancing cooperation in education and science fields. The ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Tajikistan Ji Shumin gave a speech and highlighted the past and current good relationship of these two neighboring countries.

One of the sections of the "China (Shaanxi) – Tajikistan higher education exhibition" was honoring the best alumni from Tajikistan. It is great that APFNet alumni received a certificate of honor from the Shaanxi Education Department.

Fayzmamad (in the middle) with his professors

Fayzmamad Davlatbekov was a Master's student of Northwest A&F University batch 2019, under the APFNet scholarship program (ASP). Fayzmamad completed his Master's degree majoring in Soil and Water Conservation and Desertification Control. He was enrolled in NWAFU as a Ph.D. student under the ASP.

Regarding the received certificate of honor, Fayzmamad mentioned that: "It is an honor to receive this Distinguished Alumni Award. I would like to thank NWAFU professors, College of International Education teacher's management staffs, and especially the APFNet scholarship team.

"I remember my days in university, having experienced a mixture of exhilaration and a sense of exploration. As a graduate student on a scholarship from APFNet, I was fascinated by the environment and characters surrounding me. The memory that comes to mind often is the friendly and lovely attitude of the professors at NWAFU. I believe that my experience and gained knowledge at NWAFU equipped me to understand both of my worlds and prepared me for the global challenges we have been facing".

Our alumnus participated in the "Training program in Biodiversity Monitoring and Conservation in Nature Reserves"

Zayar Phyo, alumnus 2018, NFU

Zayar Phyo (on the right) was so impressed getting the Training certificate

"This course brightened me to learn more about biodiversity from microorganisms to mega animals in Myanmar. In the future, I will create new projects about biodiversity monitoring and conservation in Myanmar with multifunctional approach to develop sustainable development goals(SDGs) for future generations".

From September 4th to 23th, the "Training program in Biodiversity Monitoring and Conservation in Nature Reserves" was held in in Wuhan, China. Honorably participating was Zayar Phyo, a 2018 NFU alumni who is presently enrolled in the Ph.D. program at the Chinese Academy of Science.

- The APFNet Alumni Network was officially launched during the 1st Asia-Pacific Forestry Forum held on December 8-12, 2019 at Beijing Forestry University, China which was attended by APFNet Alumni and students.

- The network aims to further enhance knowledge and experience sharing, and also strengthen contacts and coordination between APFNet alumni across the Asia-Pacific region to promote regional forestry development and collaboration.

- More details about the APFNet Alumni Network please refer to:
    https://www.alumniapfnet.com/home.dz