

# APFNET ALUMNI NETWORK NEWSLETTER

The official APFNet Alumni Network newsletter



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Got news? Received a promotion? Given an award? We'd like to hear from you! Please send us an email to [apfnetalumni@gmail.com](mailto:apfnetalumni@gmail.com)

## Editor message

It's over a year now that we all are facing an unprecedented pandemic like never before. However, there is always a bright side at the end of the tunnel. Now so many economies have vaccine roll-outs plan, and hopefully, we could be back to new normal life soon. Among the APFNet Alumni Network, the students deal with online learning, and most of the alumni work from home.

In the Alumni Spotlight, the Alumni from Bangladesh shared the hardship situation of the pandemic and how he overcomes it. Also, the stories from Mongolia and Laos, PDR. The Research Corner presents two research from Cambodia and Laos PDR. Also, we would like to introduce you to a new student from batch 2020 who came from Myanmar and her challenges with online learning during the pandemic. Last but not least, the feedback from the online survey on ASP has suggested that APFNet should produce the manual for new students as guidance for ASP students. So, we are preparing the ASP manual for future students. Please check it out in APFNet News.

Stay safe and have a healthy life.



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# Learning is a never-ending process.

## Zoljargal Sainbuyan from Mongolia

Zoljargal Sainbuyan got her bachelor's degree from the National University of Mongolia majored in Forestry. At the early beginning of her undergraduate study, she joined the laboratory of Forest Genetics and Ecophysiology. She was an active and hard work student so that she was trusted to participate in several scientific research projects as a research assistant. An investigation that she was engaged with was related to the physiological instigation in the dry steppe zone in the Gobi desert. While, more than 70% of Mongolian land is dry and dry steppe zone, the steppe region.

After completing BSc she was fortunate to receive the APFNet scholarship in 2017. She had the opportunity to study for a master's degree in Soil and Water Conservation and Desertification Control Northwest A&F University (NWAUFU). She mentioned that the course in NWAUFU was well-matched with her previous background and future career plan. In 2019, Zoljargal successfully completed her master's degree at Northwest A&F University in China. Zoljargal describes her study extraordinary life experience. She said "My two years in China were unforgettable lifetime experiences, not only in terms of education but also in terms of personal growth. There is a word saying "A good teacher is like a candle it consumes itself to light the way for others". So, it is important to have a good supervisor during academic study. I am very grateful to have one of the best professors as my supervisor who is Prof. Fenli Zheng. I have learned various things from my supervisor about her professional skill and knowledge."

Zoljargal Sainbuyan noted that, when your parents and teachers tell you all the great reasons to receive education abroad, they focus on benefits such as international experience and financial security. Defiantly, boosting career is vital. She pointed: There is another side to this journey that's just as fundamental for your happiness; making friends. Seeing your friends in class gives you something to look forward to each day. You will help each other study for exams, listen to each other's problems and go out celebrating together when you finally graduate.



**The pandemics brought a significant impact on our lifestyle. So we hope to keep in touch with APFNet alumni and learn from each other in the future.**

During my studies in China, I have met many more beautiful people, friends who are still in touch.

These experiences that Zoljargal has had a profound effect on her career. After graduating from Northwest A&F University, She started her job in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism at a well-reputed position as an agroforestry and forestry projects coordinating officer. In this position, she contributed her gained cutting-edge knowledge and made certain changes in the forest conservation areas. She is enthusiastic about lifelong learning and wants to discover more about environmental concepts. And currently, she has begun studying at the University of Seoul under the Master's Program for Future Global Leaders in Environmental Policy, funded by Korea Environmental Industry & Technology Institute.



## Learning amid the pandemic with passion.

### Sourav Chakma from Bangladesh

One of my friends who live in the countryside convinced his village community head, and he authorized us access to the village where I started my survey. The situation was under control a few days later, and I was able to complete my survey work more efficiently. Without the support of my friends and the local community's tribal chief, I did not overcome the challenges and accomplished the survey on time. Thus far, I'm having a good time with my research.

During the pandemic, I had lived through a crucial period. It's difficult to continue your studies if you're stuck at home for most of the days. On the other hand, online courses are less convenient than conventional classes, and maintaining a schedule is incredibly difficult. I think I was quite lucky as most of my classmates were eager to assist and consult at any time. The valuable lesson I have learned from this pandemic "Nature knows how to build on its own."

My passion is to learn more about different cultures and to make friends. While in China, I had a great time and lots of valuable travel experiences with friends. Although I was only in China for six months, I explored five different provinces (Tianjin, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Nanning, and Beijing). Furthermore, Chinese culture and tradition emphasize the importance of discovering new things and expanding one's perspectives.

The knowledge and skills I have learned from BFU will help me in furthering my career in the forestry sector. I am grateful to all of my friends for the wonderful time I have spent with them and expect to see them again at some point.

Finally, I am ecstatic about the creation of the APFNet Alumni Network. I believe it is beyond time for alumni and students to participate in discussions about forestry growth and share their experiences and activities.

I want to start by thanking APFNet for providing me the opportunity to study in China. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity provided a Launchpad in pursuing my master's degree in forestry economics and management at Beijing Forestry University (BFU). I am a proud Chakma indigenous native from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh who lives in harmony with nature. However, living in the hilly areas, I am always passionate about the forest livelihood of local people.

Currently, I am finishing my thesis entitled "The forest degradation and deforestation in the CHT and its impacts on the indigenous people in the area." Basically, the indigenous people's culture and way of life are inextricably linked to forest resources. Therefore, I believe that my research will help local people realization how deforestation affects their livelihood and the ecosystem.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, I have encountered many challenges in the survey field for data collection. For example, while I was conducting my survey, the whole city was on lockout, and people maintained a social distance by not moving from one place to another.



### Extraordinary experience from ASP

#### Phonepakay Phongoudome from Laos,PDR

My name is Phonepakay Phongoudome from Laos, PDR. Currently, I am working as a volunteer at the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute or NAFRI; As a part of that, I work with the Australian Center for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR) project and a part-time job with the Anoulak association.

In 2018, I graduated from Nanjing Forestry University (NFU) with a major in Environmental engineering. The motivation to apply for the APFnet scholarship is to study abroad and experiencing self-realization. Establish good networks in the environmental and forestry fields. As well as enjoy the different culture and environment. I was fascinated by Chinese culture and the people in Nanjing city.

The APFNet Scholarship Program (ASP) provided me with financial support for my research and given me a new opportunity to become my new version of myself. There were challenges during my research period, but I learned how to deal with them and come out of my comfort zone. Studying at NFU was one of my precious moments in China. I cannot explain how much that this scholarship gave me. The relationship between all the scholars in my batch was a good friendship and still lasts until now.

I want to recommend ASP or other students or practitioners in the field of forestry. Suppose you are the one who wants to study abroad and have a passion for studying forestry. Don't be hesitate to apply for this scholarship. You will have a good experience for sure, a part of your research this scholarship supports you to have a sightseeing, study tour about Chinese cultures. You will have a chance to explore the wood factory, the wood company, and many places related to forestry.

All the experience is based on while I stayed in china. So for the current student, keep your chin up about your research and stay healthy during the covid 19 pandemics, wash your hand often and stay safe at home. For future students who want to apply for this scholarship, don't be hesitate to apply. You will have good memories and gain much experience from the APFnet Scholarship.



**The creation of the Alumni Network is wonderful because we can catch up on all the news from this group. However, it will be good to have a workshop and forum for alumni to share and exchange the research idea and share more on a short-term scholarship for the young researcher.**



## Commitment and effort are the clues to success in the future.

### San Samnang from Cambodia

Samnang is very positive and has a good attitude toward the internship that APFNet organized at the end of 2019 in Guangxi, southern China. He pointed out that "This internship was priceless for me and for other students who participated in this internship because I have learned about how the Chinese government managing their forest policy to guarantee the utilization of wood products being sustainable, reforest station, watershed management and woody processing other themes. The benefit from this internship was that my insight toward forestry sectors and future career in forest sector strongly relevant".

San Samnang has been doing his thesis related to the research titled "Ethnobotanical survey of medicinally important shrubs and trees," which focuses on medicinal plants. This topic is a hot topic and useful for students and foresters who want to know about medicinal plant species that are straight on trees and shrubs and their utilization from local people to heal the ailments. This research has the main aim focus on recognizing medicinal trees, shrubs and document local acquaintances about their consumption and management in the national park, Cambodia.

"I appreciate my research work since I have to go into the forest to identify the trees or shrubs species being used for traditional medicine in the park. Afterward, I have to finish fieldwork in forest observation and go to the villages around the park to survey the local people about their utilization of wild herbs as the traditional medicine, such as which type of plants between tree and shrub. I have collected all these data and recorded them. Then I started data analysis for thesis writing. However, this research is difficult, but my team and I tried to overcome these challenges and successfully collected the data. I am keen on discovering something new. I hoped my research findings could contribute to the community especially indigenous people who live in the forest that was my research object." Currently, San Samnang is finalizing his thesis. He is planning to defend himself as soon as possible.

San Samnang completed his bachelor's degree from the Royal University of Agriculture (RUA), Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Afterward, he worked in an NGO as a research assistant for one year. In 2017, Samnang got the promotion, and he started to serve in the Provincial Department of Environment, Ministry of Environment of Cambodia. Simultaneously, he always takes the opportunity for applying scholarships to pursue higher education for studying abroad. In 2019 Samnang was selected from APFNet to study at Northwest A&F University (NWAUFU) in China. He is doing a Master's Degree in forest protection at the College of Forestry.

Studying abroad has been Samnang's childhood dream. "I have imagined I would fly such a bird. It just the kids dreaming at that time but didn't know what the purpose for flying was. My dream comes true, not just a normal journey, but pursuing high education for the future. It is a fantastic journey. I love environmental China, especially the Northwest A&F University campus. "

"I came to China to study forestry because I would like to know about diverse forests and varieties of species present in the forest of China. It is a part of starting up with my purpose, which has been setting up in my mindset as the forester."



# Research is my passion.

### Anousone Sengthong from Laos,PDR

My name is Anousone Sengthong. I am a Lecturer of the Faculty of Forest Science, National University of Laos, Laos, PDR, and currently studying Master's degree in Forestry at Nanjing Forestry University. My master's research focuses on *Eriocaulon* L. in the Eld's Deer sanctuary Savannakhet Province. The study of data collection was surveyed by conduct a sampling plot in the different types of areas. For conduct sampling, have 3 repetitions for each type of tropical area. Collected the soil sample and all plant species in the sampling plot. The result will describe the flora of the study area, including trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants, the structure of the community, including canopy layer, understory layer, and forest floor, the soil condition of the study area. That will be the data of *Eriocaulon* in the study area to complete the *Eriocaulon* in Laos, including the key to species based on the morphological characters of *Eriocaulon*.



Photo of collecting data at the field and the *Eriocaulon* of Southern Laos, PDR.

The reasons that I choose to study this topic because the Eld's Deer sanctuary Savannakhet Province the area is important for conserving the Eld's Deer the last conservation report about biodiversity in this area only focus on the tree and the shrub, for herb was not identical to the species only identify to the family of plant. Though, the main of this area is Dry Dipterocarp Forest and also, have grassland and water (wetland), as the type of *Eriocaulon* ecological that be the main point for this research after this researching cloud is competing for the study of diversity in the area and be the database information for the flora of Laos in long-term aim is to provide a complete account of *Eriocaulaceae* in Laos.

After graduating master's degree in 2021, I want to continue the research of *Eriocaulon* in other areas to complete the flora of *Eriocaulaceae* in Laos, research the taxonomy of plants, and study plant tissue culture and plant breeding.

### Mi Mi Ko from Myanmar



**The current COVID-19 pandemic situation change many things, especially the teaching and learning system. It is never the same. We need to adjust it.**

I'm Mi Mi Ko from Myanmar. I'm a government staff serving as Senior Timber Ranger at the Extraction Department of Myanmar Timber Enterprise under Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation. The extraction Department contributes to the national income by systematic harvesting of timber from the precious natural forests. In addition, it initiates the restoration and rehabilitation of depleted logged-over forest areas with the ultimate goal of sustainable production of marketable timber. I plan to work and practice my profession as a resource person for Myanmar's natural forest conservation. On the other hand, I was so eager to pursue postgraduate studies in China. I'm very thankful to APFNet Scholarship Program and Nanjing Forestry University for extending my educational background.

I'm currently attending first-year master courses (Forestry major) of Nanjing Forestry University online from my home country. The pandemic has changed many things, including teaching and learning systems. However, some students can face some struggles with e-learning platforms, i.e., different time zones and internet connection weaknesses. On the other hand, online learning can create a safe condition for health. When I feel overwhelmed by uncertainty and worry, I thought that I'm not alone from the optimistic side. Many of us all over the world are in the same boat at this time. Health is the most important thing for our living, and only when we are in good health, we can do whatever we want. For me, I'm convenient with an online learning system. I can catch up on the screen recording of the lectures and relearn the missing points. However, there still have challenges in interaction with classmates, professors, and supervisors, and we only have to connect through Social media.

I hope to share my knowledge and international experiences from master courses with the next generations in my country. I wish the nightmare of Covid-19 will pass soon so I could visit China.

# Crafting the ASP Manual

APFNet has been implementing its scholarship program since 2010. Currently, the program has supported a total of 190 scholarships to the forestry professionals from 21 different economies in the Asia-Pacific region. Just last year, an assessment was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the program and identify gaps for improving its services.

The lacking of central point where good information about ASP is available is one of the identified gaps. Although, there is an existing website but it needs to be maintained and updated regularly. Hence, it was recommended for the crafting of a comprehensive ASP manual that contains relevant and necessary information about the scholarship program.

To realize this, the APFNet with the assistance from its alumni relations assistants and coordinators from host universities are working hand in hand in drafting the manual for the last two months. The first working draft of the ASP manual has already been sent to APFNet for critiquing. The document is equipped with information on the benefits from the program, detailed application procedures, available majors, and the underlying policies of host universities that students are expected to adhere to. Once finalized, the manual will be posted and available in all social media platforms and online portal of the alumni network to guide current ASP students and encourage future potential applicants.

