



Community voices shaping collective action

Southeast Asia Fire Dialogue 2025

Southeast Asia faces increasing challenges from wildfires, smoke and haze, which have far-reaching environmental, social and economic impacts. Most wildfires in the region are caused by human activities.

As climate change accelerates, fire seasons are becoming longer and more intense, leading to increased greenhouse gas emissions and widespread

haze that crosses national borders. This transboundary haze poses serious risks to public health and the environment.

Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who are both among the most affected and the most capable of reducing wildfire risks, **play an important role in addressing these challenges**.

Sharing knowledge across borders

In response to these urgent issues, APFNet, RECOFTC and Tropenbos International co-organized the Southeast Asia Fire Dialogue **in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, from 20 to 23 May 2025**.

The event brought together around **80 participants, representing Indigenous and local communities, government agencies, research institutions, international organizations and funding bodies**.

Its primary aim was to strengthen community-based fire management (CBFiM) in Southeast Asia by promoting cross-learning, collaborative planning and inclusive, multi-stakeholder dialogue.

The dialogue facilitated **knowledge exchange among communities from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam**.

Participants presented case studies from their communities, sharing experiences through stories, roundtable discussions, field demonstrations and marketplace exhibitions.

Community representatives highlighted their **fire cultures and traditional practices**, the tools and technologies they use to monitor and respond to fires and the policy and governance systems that shape their fire management efforts.

“Fire is a friend or an enemy, depending on how it is used. Fire is a way of life and a tool for managing land. It is a part of the culture
- Community Representative from Bakun-Kankanaey tribe, Philippines

Formulating solutions together

Building on this inclusive approach, participants developed actionable recommendations:

1 Capacity-building and knowledge exchange

Develop **context-specific, community-oriented training** curricula that incorporate visual tools and storytelling.

Integrate traditional knowledge with modern technologies to enhance learning and practical application.

Organize **cross-learning and experience-sharing events** at community, national and regional levels.

Identify, train and **support local CBFiM champions** to lead and inspire within their communities.

2 Tools, technology and data systems

Complement existing **community-based monitoring systems** for effective risk monitoring and rapid action and response.

Provide **training on emerging tools and technologies**, including the use of drones.

Ensure communities have basic equipment for preparation, response and recovery.

Improve accessibility for available tools and tailored to the needs and capacities of local communities (i.e. mobile device application for communication channels or early detection).

Establish **accessible and reliable information systems** to support decision-making at different levels.



3 Role of women and youth

Actively engage women and youth in fire prevention activities, recognizing their **valuable roles and unique perspectives**.

Foster **intergenerational knowledge exchange** to preserve and enhance fire management practices.

Strengthen **peer learning** and networking opportunities for women and youth.

4 Local governance and policy coherence

Facilitate meaningful dialogue between Indigenous Peoples, local communities and government institutions and other landscape stakeholders.

Recognize and **institutionalize the fire management practices** and customary approaches of local communities.

Promote the integration of fire management practices into broader land use and development policies.

Develop and **strengthen engagement across sectors** and agencies to ensure coordinated planning and action, including collaboration between disaster risk reduction, land use planning and environmental management.

5 Accessibility of resources and finance

Design and implement **locally tailored fire management plans**, ensuring appropriate financial support at the village level.

Build the case for CBFiM by **showcasing evidence of its benefits** for air quality, public health and key social sectors such as tourism and education.

Ensure a **shift in finance** from emergency response to fire prevention.



Sustaining a regional collaboration

There is a shared aspiration for the Southeast Asia Fire Dialogue to **become an annual event under the Southeast Asia Fire Management Mechanism (SEA-FiMM)**.

Co-initiated by APFNet and RECOFTC, and joined by Tropenbos International, SEA-FiMM provides a collaborative regional framework to strengthen cooperation, build fire management capacity and advance effective, inclusive solutions.

This ongoing dialogue will continue to **serve as a vital platform where community members, policymakers, technical experts and donors can come together** to share experiences, exchange knowledge and develop practical strategies.



Placing community voices at the center, the Southeast Asia Fire Dialogue aims to **inspire meaningful action** and lasting progress toward a safer, healthier and more resilient region. This approach encourages ongoing collaboration and ensures that solutions are grounded in the experiences and needs of those most affected.

“ The goal is not to tell communities what to do, but to hear from them what they need
- Tropenbos International, Amazon Fire Dialogue



For more information about the Dialogue or the Southeast Asia Fire Management Mechanism (SEA-FiMM), please contact: cbfim@recoftc.org



SEA-FiMM



APFNet



RECOFTC



Tropenbos International