

Final report on the implementation of the Barangay Forest Protection and Management Scheme (BFPMS) in Lupon, Davao Oriental

I. Introduction

The Upland Development Programme (UDP) has contracted the services of the Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA - Mindanao) to implement its Barangay Forest Protection and Management Scheme in the Municipality of Lupon, Davao Oriental. This scheme is in line with UDP's sustainable development model and is being implemented in its existing provinces. The engagement commenced last July 15, 2006 will end on December, 2006.

The project hopes to provide technical assistance and facilitate capability building activities to the local government officials of the two target barangays and the Municipality of Lupon in Davao Oriental as well.

PhilDHRRA will work within the scope and framework of the UDP. Specifically, it shall capacitate the barangay officials on forest/environmental management and ensure the enactment of a barangay specific protected area ordinance. At the municipal level, PhilDHRRA will work for the establishment of a Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO) or at the least the appointment of a personnel that will look into the environment concerns of the locality.

To ensure this, PhilDHRRA hired the services of its former staff assigned in its upland development projects.

II. The UDPs Barangay Forest Management Scheme (BFPMS)

The programme has come up with Sustainable Upland Development Model after five years of its implementation. This model has various scheme that served as the framework of the UDP in the provision of technical assistance to the barangay and municipal LGUs within its area of coverage. One of which is the so called Barangay Forest Protection and Management Scheme (BFPMS).

The BFPMS aims to protect, rehabilitate and preserve ecologically critical areas within the upland barangays. As a strategy, it aims to empower and assign responsibility to the BLGUs and the communities in jointly managing the natural resources within their barangay. This approach, will work to mobilize the municipal LGUs and the community-based organizations in protecting and managing the remaining forest.

Specific objectives of the BFPMS are as follow:

1. Enhanced awareness of the entire barangay on the importance of protecting the remaining forests and ecologically critical areas;

2. Motivated and trained BLGU officials and local community organizations in protecting and managing the remaining forest and other ecologically critical areas as forest protection zones;
3. Declared barangay forest protection areas through corresponding ordinances adopted by the Municipal LGU, DENR;
4. Installed and operationalized community-based and site specific forest protection and management plan;
5. Forged partnership among the Barangay and Municipal LGU, DENR, NCIP and other local communities in managing forestlands;
6. Established LGU mechanisms for the adoption and replication of the BFPMS to other barangays within the municipality.

To ensure the realization of these objectives, UDP hired a number of service providers. PhilDHRRA, one of the service provider contracted by UDP, was assigned to implement this scheme in the Municipality of Lupon, Davao Oriental. It will cover barangays Calapagan and Marayag.

III. The Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA – Mindanao)

PhilDHRRA traces its roots from a regional workshop in 1974 held in Thailand attended by more than 100 development practitioners in Asia-Pacific. The exchange of ideas on how NGOs and government could play significant roles in countryside development led to the definition of the DHRRA (development of human resources in rural areas) development strategy – *small groups become big groups when linked together by a common purpose and their strong potential is seen within the perspective of small autonomous units pursuing their own development, in their own locality, and among their own people and community.*

The loose group of NGO workers who joined the Thailand workshop met in 1978 and formed PhilDHRRA with a small secretariat. The network was officially registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in 1983. Today, PhilDHRRA continues to be a national network of social development organizations committed to the pursuit and realization of agrarian reform and rural development in the Philippines. It is part of the chain of DHRRA networks throughout the Asian region aspiring for a common vision of rural development in their respective countries.

In Mindanao, PhilDHRRA is involved in a wide range of activities, namely:

1. Resource tenure improvement
2. Protection of ancestral domains and indigenous peoples' rights
3. Upland, lowland and coastal community-based resource management
4. Propagation of sustainable agriculture and appropriate technologies
5. Empowerment of grassroots communities
6. Gender and Primary Health Care
7. Cooperative and Enterprise Development
8. Livelihood and income-generating projects
9. Local Governance and People Participation
10. Policy Advocacy and Networking
11. Watershed Management and Development

PhilDHRRA Mindanao adopted SIAD as its core strategy in developing communities in the rural areas with the following core programs:

1. Multipartite Partnership for Watershed Management and Development
2. Multipartite Partnership for Local Governance and People Participation
3. Multipartite Partnership for Ancestral Domains and Indigenous Peoples
4. Multipartite Partnership for Agrarian Reform

PhilDHRRA Mindanao provides the following services to its members and to other sectors through its members:

1. Organizational Development
2. Training and Education
3. Management Information Services
4. Technical Assistance and Consultancy
5. Project Development and Management

IV. Expected Output

It is expected that PhilDHRRA will be able to deliver the following major output in each of the target barangays: creation of the Barangay Forest Protection and Management Committee (BFPMC) and the appointment of its regular members, the formulation of the barangay forest management plan, drafting and signing of the site management agreement among the stakeholders, conduct of perimeter survey, enactment of the ordinance on forest protection, establishment of signages and the conduct of capability building activities to the members of the Barangay local government units and BFPMC.

IV. Activities Conducted

The deployment of staff familiar with and honed through the years on forest management and PhilDHRRA's commitment on local governance and people's participation on rural development paved the way for the conduct of quality interventions in the area. The staff were deployed as a team taking collective responsibility for the implementation of all agreed activities and output as required in the contract of service. A focal person though was assigned in each barangay and LGU. Ruel Maitem was the pointperson assisted by Rovelito Zulueta and Elmer Mailwas for the two barangays.

The team chose Barangay Marayag as their base where staff tactic sessions and assessments are conducted. During preparation phase of the implementation the following activities were conducted;

- Courtesy call to the Municipal Mayor with the UDP personnel and MAGRO staff
- Courtesy calls to the Barangay Captain of the two covered barangays
- Courtesy call to the DENR-CENRO and MPDO
- Set a schedule for stakeholders forum
- Stakeholders Forum

Major activities during the first month was the creation of the Barangay Forest Protection and Management Committee (BFPMC) through a resolution of the Barangay Development Councils (BDCs) of Brgy Calapagan and Marayag. (please see attached BDC and Brgy. Council resolutions).

Another major activity was the conduct of the pulong-pulong at the different puroks and sitios of the covered barangays. The pulong-pulong were conducted to inform the people on the UDP, BFPMS, the need to protect their environment and their possible roles to effectively manage the remaining forest and the resources therein. The members of the newly formed BFPMC were also introduced and its functions explained to the residents.

To raise the level of knowledge of the people especially the barangay officials to continue with their commitment on environmental protection, the staff regularly conducted person-to-person and/or group discussion with them through house visitation and through formal and informal occasions.

The situation at the barangay and the impressions and thoughts of the people are also relayed to the MENRO and the Implementing Team so that they will be informed on the activities of the staff and sentiments of the residents in the barangay. This way, we were able to know also their reactions and opinion regarding the issue at hand. Most often, the MENRO and the MPDC however are really keen on defending the environment.

To fortify the commitment of the people, a training on forest management was launched last August, 2006. The participants to the training were the members of the UBA, the BFPMC, BDC members, Barangay Council, purok leaders, staff of the Municipal Agriculture Office and the MENRO.

After the training, the people all the more appreciated what they were doing in protecting their remaining forest and saw the need for collective action among the different affected barangays.

It was also during the months of August and September that the survey of the forest pockets were conducted. The team was composed of the MAO staff, MPDC staff, Barangay Council representative and the MENRO.

By October, the PhilDHRRA staff conducted the management planning workshop. In attendance to the said workshop were the members of the BFPMC, Barangay Council, UBA representatives, purok leaders, MAO staff and the MENRO.

The Management Plan were formulated during the workshop and were presented and discussed during the pulong-pulong undertaken at the different puroks and sitios of each covered barangay. The result was the drafting of the Site Management Agreement which will be signed by different stakeholders and the forest occupants as major stakeholders and the first line of defense for an effective forest protection and management.

The month of September marked another milestone on the life of the BFPMC, members of the Barangay Council and the residents of the two barangays. Barangay Marayag and Calapagan passed an ordinance protecting the remaining forest cover as protected areas. The ordinances were then submitted to the Municipal Council for adoption and confirmation

To enhance the awareness of the people on the powers and authority of the Barangay LGU, a seminar on local governance was conducted. This was attended by the BFPMC and the members of the Barangay Development Council of each of the covered barangay.

After the seminar, the residents of Barangays Marayag and Calapagan signed their respective site management agreement. The agreement incorporates the tasks and obligations of the BFPMC, the Barangay Council and the people in the barangay together with the UBA as an association in protecting their forest and other important resources within their area.

The confirmation of the barangay ordinances submitted by the two UDP-covered barangays went smooth sailing at the Sangguniang Bayan, although there were some minor corrections and additional required documents. Finally the two barangay Ordinances were adopted/confirmed last November 29, 2006 by the Municipal Council of the Municipality of Lupon, Davao Oriental.

V. Other Accomplishment

PhilDHRRA staff acted as mentor/coach to the MAGRO and MENRO staff for the whole process of BFPMS framework and were tapped to facilitate all the trainings conducted at barangay Don Mariano as their replication area. As a result, the barangay Don Mariano can join the two Barangays serviced by PhilDHRRA (Marayag and Calapagan) for the project assessment to be conducted on the second week of December 2006.

VI. Issues and Concerns

The illegal logging operation in the area is still the biggest threat on the remaining forest cover of Barangays Marayag and Calapagan.

Another threat to the environment in these areas is the sporadic mining operations. All three barangays have pending applications for mining before the DENR. There are some already illegally operating in Barangay Marayag and Calapagan in disguise of exploration.

Recommendations

To ensure the effective protection and appropriate management of the protected area, the Barangay LGU together with the residents in the area should stay vigilant. It is recommended that they learn from the experiences of the people surrounding Mt. Canlaon in Negros Occidental.

For the Municipal LGU, it is highly recommended that they will enact their Municipal Environmental Code, Allocate funds in support for the implementation of Barangay Forest Protection and Management Committee's plans. The MLGU can also mobilize/access external resources for environmental protection purposes.

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