

Landcare Farm Resource Center Concept Paper

Submitted to Upland Development Program by
World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and Catholic Relief Services

This concept paper is presented to UDP in response to its interest in establishing a satellite ICRAF center in southern Mindanao to train UDP staff and farmers in agroforestry, soil and water conservation technologies, and the Landcare extension approach. This paper is also a result of a series of discussions between ICRAF and CRS in recent months about collaborating in ways to scale up the Landcare movement in the Philippines.

The project introduced in this paper is intended to meet the needs of the UDP program by establishing a training center modeled after the Lantapan ICRAF Research Station. It also presents a way that UDP's efforts can have a sustained, long-term improvement on agricultural development in southern Mindanao by filling critical gaps in the agriculture extension system. The project creates an opportunity for UDP to play a key role in seeing Landcare evolve into a regional or nationally recognized movement and it presents a practical use of information technology (IT) and the World-Wide-Web to make agriculture technical resources available to farmers, government technicians, and NGOs.

I. Background

Over the past few years ICRAF has become an increasingly popular technical resource for upland farmers, NGOs, and government projects that support upland farmers. ICRAF's popularity is a result of the quality of technical information and training it offers to technicians and upland farmers. That so many organizations often travel very far to visit ICRAF suggest a few things:

1. Quality Technical Training:

The first obvious point is that ICRAF's resources are very good. Two areas that ICRAF has become particularly popular for are the promotion of Natural Vegetation Filtration Strips (NVS) and the Landcare extension approach. Each of these are demonstrated as effective and replicable in upland landscapes in Mindanao:

NVS and Agroforestry: NVS is a farmer-pioneered soil and water conservation technology. The technology has spread somewhat rapidly over the past several years as a result of support by research and technical assistance by ICRAF and local government technicians in Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental. NVS is popular because of it is effective, simple, and requires relatively little labor compared to establishing hedgerows and other common soil conservation techniques. NVS is considered as a foundation for sustainable upland farming system because it can be enriched with fruit and timber trees, forage grasses, leguminous shrubs, nitrogen-fixing trees, and other annual food crops to evolve into an agroforestry system. As such, NVS is responsive to the conservation and economic needs of farmers.

Landcare: The Landcare approach, which ICRAF has pioneered in the Philippines, is a pragmatic approach toward sustainable land management that recognizes the key role of farmers in managing natural resources. The Landcare approach says that in order for their to be any genuine shift toward resource conservation in the uplands, farmers must voluntarily make this shift based on increased awareness and technical skills and they must be able to earn a reasonable living from their land.

Support systems from government and non-government institutions are critical for this process. Landcare links farmers, farmer organizations, local governments, and technical institutions together to maximize the support to farmers and create a policy environment conducive to promoting conservation farming and NRM. The Landcare group extension method is an important part of this extension and support system.

2. The agriculture extension system in Mindanao is weak and fragmented:

Another reason for the popularity of ICRAF is that farmers and upland development agencies do not have a lot of alternatives for quality technical training. This highlights an important gap in agricultural development. While there is a tremendous wealth of technical information in the Philippines for upland farming, this information is rarely accessible to farmers, particularly resource-poor farmers. The problem is not a glut of information, but a very weak and fragmented extension system that should be making this information accessible to farmers. The fragmented extension system involves gaps in the capacity and coordination of government, NGO, research, and private sectors.

Government extension services: Many research institutions, government agencies, and universities are generating useful information on farming and marketing, but few are mandated to disseminate information to end-users and those who should be disseminating this information often lack the human and financial resources to carry out this role. Many agencies, including local government units, tend to be politically driven and under-funded, so in many places, agriculture extension is degraded to seed and fertilizer handouts timed with local elections. However, within the government agencies, including the DA, DENR and their bureaus, there are many extremely qualified and dedicated technical people who remain as important contributors to agriculture development.

NGOs: When CRS re-formed its agriculture program in 2001, it conducted an assessment on the agriculture development situation in Mindanao. One of the conclusions of the CRS assessment was the notable lack of technical capacity of many agriculture NGOs. The report provides several examples where NGOs are introducing and pushing agriculture technology that is neither appropriate nor responsive to the requirements of farmers. A classic example is the promotion of NFT hedgerows by nearly every upland project in Mindanao. It seems that most project officers lack knowledge in agronomy or forestry and rely on a very shallow set of tools to assist farmers. Therefore, when a farmer is having a problem with mango pollination, NGOs tell her to plant hedgerows and to grow organic. NGO's efforts also tend to be small, short-term projects, often lacking sustainable results. However, there are several NGOs that have focused a great deal on technical expertise and stand out as excellent resources. CRS has partnered with some of these NGOs to build on what they are already doing.

Industry: Seed and fertilizer producers, agrochemical companies, and their traders play a role in providing technical information to farmers. Unfortunately, the technical training component of the agriculture industry in the Philippines is not very well developed. Traders often provide farm inputs on credit, giving them huge incentives to overstate the benefits of their chemicals and to over-prescribe their use. In many cases, traders are selling products they know little about. As a result, many farmers are in debt to the industry. The prevalence of unscrupulous traders has created an atmosphere of mistrust. However, there are exceptions and a few companies have made great leaps to invest in free technical training when farmers request it.

Fragmentation of technical resources:

A symptom of the weak extension infrastructure in the Philippines, and what this project is design to address, is that the information that farmers want and require in order to improve the viability of their farms is extremely fragmented. Research institutions and government bureaus tend to be very

specialized, with expertise on only a few crops. For example, if a farmer or NGO technician wants information on mango pollination, she needs to go to the Bureau of Plant Industry, and if she wants information on disease on *acacia-Mangum*, she needs to go an expert in the DENR forestry bureau. The problem with this is that upland farmers are almost always growing a variety of crops and species on their fields, so the fragmentation of information makes it prohibitively expensive or time-consuming for them to access this information. In an important sense, this fragmentation discourages farm diversity because it is difficult to manage more than a few crops with limited information. Generally, farmers know what they don't know, but they don't know where to go to get the knowledge they need.

II. Proposal: Landcare Farm Resource Center

When ICRAF and CRS met to discuss the potential of a training center in southern Mindanao, we considered three points:

- How to establish and manage a training center that would meet the needs of the UDP program;
- How to sustain the efforts of UDP beyond the life of the current program; and
- How to tie this into a broader objective of scaling up Landcare as an upland development approach in the Philippines.

Through this process, we looked at the gaps in the agriculture sector in Mindanao, including the lack of quality extension services and the difficulty in accessing information, which were discussed above. We also considered UDP's unique position to make a significant impact on agriculture development in Mindanao given the size of the program and its direct links with LGUs and the DA.

What we have proposed below is designed to take advantage of the combined resources of ICRAF, CRS, and UDP to set up a regional information center in southern Mindanao that serves as a one-stop, reliable source of technical and marketing information for UDP staff, government extensionists, NGOs and farmers. We are calling this the Landcare Farm Resource Center.

Landcare Farm Resource Center:

The Landcare Center provides training and information services to UDP (including its staff, government technicians, and farmers, as well as independent NGOs working in agriculture development in southern Mindanao). The center would specifically train people in NVS and Landcare, and conduct action research with farmers to demonstrate NVS. It would also serve as a hub of information for agriculture technical resources.

The strategy takes advantage of information technology to access information and make it available to end-users. It would link up with various government bureaus, research institutions, universities, and others by phone, through the World Wide Web, and by email to provide accurate technical information in response to the queries people bring to the center.

We propose that the center be a part of a provincial or municipal agriculture office, but to manage it as an autonomous organization. The center would be managed by a board of directors consisting of representatives from UDP, the local government, ICRAF, and CRS.

Funding would initially come from UDP with staff support from ICRAF and CRS. Additional funding would be sought from external funding agencies. Eventually, the center would be partially self-funding as it evolves into a client-based service that charges for some of the services it provides.

Project Design:

Landcare Farm Resource Center:

A responsive technical and information service provider for upland farmers in southern Mindanao

Goal: Sustainable management of upland landscapes in southern Mindanao involving economically viable small-scale farms where conservation farming is practiced.

The Landcare Center is designed to:

- 1) Respond to the technical training and market information requirements of the Upland Development Program, agriculture technical officers, and upland farmers in the Provinces of Davao del Sur, Sarangani, and South Cotabato.
- 2) Strengthen the agricultural extension services in southern Mindanao by combining resources of government agencies, NGOs, international research institutions, and the international donor community.
- 3) Replicate the Landcare sustainable land management model in southern Mindanao.

The Landcare Center provides the following services:

- Conduct on-farm action research and training in Natural Vegetative Filter Strips (NVS) and agroforestry systems;
- Connect agriculture technicians and farmers to technical information. The center serves as a hub of information for sustainable upland farming and marketing, using information technology, including the Web, to access information and make it available to end-users.
- Provide extension services and training to technical staff of UDP, agriculture technical officers, upland NGOs, and upland farmers to 1) improve the management of land and crops, and 2) improve marketing of farm products; and
- Promote the Landcare approach for sustainable land management with LGUs and NGOs.

Key Summary Points of the Proposal:

- The Landcare Center would provide training and information services to UDP (including its staff, government technicians, and farmers). The center would specifically train in NVS, agroforestry and Landcare.
- The center would provide technical training primarily for UDP and the groups it works with, including farmers and farmer associations and LGUs. It would also be a resource for NGOs working in the same region.
- The strategy takes advantage of information technology to access information and make it available to end-users. It would link up with various government bureaus, research institutions, universities, and others by phone, through the World Wide Web, and by email to provide accurate technical information in response to the queries people bring to the center.
- The proposal is to establish the center as part of a provincial or municipal agriculture office, but to manage it as an autonomous organization. The center would be managed by board of directors consisting of representatives from UDP, the local government, ICRAF, and CRS.
- Funding would initially come from UDP. Additional funding would be sought from external funding agencies. Eventually, the center would be partially self-funding as it evolves into a client-based service that charges for some of the services it provides.

Budget:

Item	Budget Year 1	Operating Expenses Yr 2	Operating Expenses Yr 3	Total
Staff	Php2,520,000	Php2,520,000	Php2,520,000	Php7,560,000
Per Diem	500,000	500,000	500,000	1500000
Capital Equipment				
Vehicles	1,700,000	0	0	1700000
Computers	350,000	0	0	350000
Photocopier	120,000	0	0	120000
Communications	300,000	280,000	280,000	860000
Training	900,000	900,000	900,000	2700000
Materials	100,000	100,000	100,000	300000
Transportation	150,000	150,000	150,000	450000
Administration	150,000	150,000	150,000	450000
Project Supervision	190,000	190,000	190,000	570000
Total Pesos	6,980,000	4,790,000	4,790,000	Php16,560,000
<i>Total USD</i>	<i>\$131,698</i>	<i>\$90,377</i>	<i>\$90,377</i>	<i>\$312,453</i>

Management (Please see attached organigram):

Board of Directors: The Landcare Center is managed by a board of directors represented by the Upland Development Program, ICRAF, CRS, the Provincial Government, and a local academic institution, each of which is represented on the Board.

Center Coordinator: The Center Coordinator is hired and managed by the board. He or she is an extremely well qualified person with technical and management abilities and solid understanding of information technology, specifically the World Wide Web and databases.

Agriculture Facilitators: All staff would all have high technical skills in upland development with several years experience. They would have highly developed extension skills and good networking skills within the government, NGOs, and the agriculture industry. Some of the staff would be directly linked to the DA.

Information Resource Facilitators: The Center would employ at least two highly skilled computer operators who are responsible for managing information and accessing information from the web and packaging it appropriately for field technicians. They would have a basic understanding of agriculture technology.

Finance and Administrative Assistant: UDP may detail a qualified staff to establish finance and administrative systems and procedures for the Center. Eventually, the Center shall hire its own Finance and Administrative Officer.

Proposed Organizational Diagram of the Landcare Farm Resource Center



