

PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATION ATTRIBUTES AND INSTITUTIONAL VIABILITY OF SELECTED COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT

PROJECTS IN REGION 2, PHILIPPINES

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INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

The Philippine forestry situation today is in a state of ecological imbalance. There had been continuous deforestation with only 5 million hectares left in 1994 of which 800,000 hectares remained as old growth forests compared to an area of 14 million hectares of forest cover in 1950 (DENR-NRMP II). This problem is caused primarily by the uncontrolled access to forestland, lack of tenure over occupied lands, illegal logging and lack of local authority over forestlands. To resolve these issues, the government, under its programs in the Philippine Strategy for Sustainable Development (PSSD), has mandated the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to implement Administrative Order No. 96-29, the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Executive Order No. 263, otherwise known as the Community Based Forest Management Strategy (CBFMS).

The Community-Based Forest Management Program (CBFMP) was first piloted in the Cagayan Valley Region (Region 02) in 1992-96. The goals of the program include promoting the sustainable management of forest resources, the social justice and improved well-being of local communities, and the strong partnership among local communities through the People's Organizations (POs) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Consequently, as of CY 2002, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the Cagayan Valley Region (Region 2) has converted 108 people-oriented project sites with 59 having been awarded the Community-Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) since 1994.

Therefore, an assessment of the People's Organizations' influence in the institutionalization of the program towards the attainment of the above-mentioned goals will provide insights on its trajectory particularly in its success and sustainability. The discourse and deconstruction of the various quantitative and qualitative information that answered the what, how, when, where, why, for/by whom, and other questions on the POs contributions are useful in formulating various mitigating and/or enhancement measures. Such information is also useful in devising strategies for a more successful and sustainable implementation of CBFM program not only in Region 02 but also in the country in general.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to assess the POs attributes and institutional viability of CBFM in some selected model project sites in the Cagayan Valley Region (Region 02). The specific enabling objectives are:

1. To characterize the people's organizations (POs) involved in the implementation of CBFM;
2. To assess the factors and/or strategies influencing POs attributes in the institutional viability of CBFM;
3. To analyze the influences of PO attributes to the institutional viability of CBFM;
4. To determine the implications of the program implementation policies for a more effective and efficient institutionalization of CBFM.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Locale of the Study Sites

The study was conducted in three CBFMP sites short-listed from among five enlisted CBFM model sites recommended by the DENR-Region 02 CBFM representatives. It includes the VIBANARA Multi-purpose Cooperative, Incorporated (VMPCI) based in Rang-ayan, Ilagan, Isabela; Salingdingan Multi-purpose Cooperative, Incorporated (SMPCI) at Salingdingan, Ilagan, Isabela; and Quibal Multi-purpose Cooperative, Incorporated (QMPCI) at Quibal, Penablanca, Cagayan. The sites were purposively selected based on the following criteria:

- a) The sites are representative of the projects under the old and new concepts of CBFM.
- b) The sites are among the model sites as determined by the DENR guidelines.
- c) The sites are representative of the popular people-oriented upland development projects among the Integrated Social Forestry (ISF), Centers for People's Empowerment in the Uplands (CPEU), Community Forestry Program (CFP).

Data Collection

The primary and secondary data (quantitative and qualitative), were gathered and analyzed under the criticalist research approach. The data were gathered both from key- and case-informants under the triangulation method which includes 1) participant observation 2) structured interviewing, 3) focused group interview and 4) analysis of field records. The guide questions were:

- v For POs' contribution: What have they put to CBFM among what they have? What more can they put? How much, when and why?
- v For CBFM institutionalization: What/who put them (POs)? How far have the POs gone, with what they put, towards CBFM as a goal? How far can they still go? When, how, why?
- v For CBFM institutional viability: What have the PO got in return for what they put?

What more can they get? When, how, how much, and why?

Analysis of Data

Analysis of the data included descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies and percentage, and Spearman-rho for correlation and the enter method of path regression analysis at the F value of 0.05 for entry and 0.10 level of probability with the use of SPSS version 11.0.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The Status, Issues, Problems and Concerns in POs' Implementation of CBFM in Region 02

Many CBFMP sites, represented by the POs as cooperatives, had been cited in various national (DENR, 1998 and 1997) and local publications of their commendable accomplishments in comprehensive site development (CSD), forest protection particularly in the reduction of illegal logging, forest business enterprise (logging and processing), and other livelihood projects.

Despite the early successes of the project, two of the study sites have long been inactive. The other, had just resumed back their harvesting operations together with their management activities after a two-year stand by of their Annual Work Plan (AWP) and Resource Use Plan (RUP).

Among the problems/issues affecting the management of the project activities identified and presented during the Isabela Stakeholders' Convergence Workshop on CBFM and NIPAS (Acay, 2002) which were also corroborated by the study are as follows:

1. The POs lack stable socio-economic base for social services and diverse source of subsistence and income within their communities.
2. Delays in the implementation of the project activities due to voluminous and lengthy processing of requirements for the issuance of RUP and AWP. It entails additional financial burden in making "follow-ups".
3. The lack of transparency and accountability within the Board of Directors (BOD) of the PO created distrust between the officers and the General Assembly which lead to management conflicts and to some extent, non-cooperation of some members.
4. The PO has no complete control of decisions in the implementation of the CBFM plan and activities. Decision still reside in the hands of its NGO, DENR and donor agency.
5. Most of the PO members lost their interest to participate in project activities because of the non-sustainability of social and economic incentives to meet their immediate needs such as health, nutrition, water and money.

6. Poor support from other government law enforcement agencies like the DENR, military, LGU, because of the belief that forest protection is the PO's sole responsibility.
7. The need for further training/education in technical and social skills of the POs in implementing CBFM projects despite the trainings and seminars already attended through the DENR and NGO.
8. There is no clear leveling-off in the interface of DENR-PO forest management roles. Most of the DENR personnel in the Staff Bureau have not made simple and clear procedures to permit smooth implementation of the program, thus causing delay in the operation of the POs such as issuance of the Resource Use Permit (RUP) and the approval of Annual Work Plan (AWP).
9. Lack of equitable benefit-sharing scheme in all CBFM sites. Respondents from the two sites felt that access and control are still under the control of the DENR e.g. processing of CRMF, RUP and AWP.

POs' Attributes, Degree of Institutionalization and the Institutional Viability of CBFM

CBFM institutional viability was indeed influenced by the PO's attributes through the mediation of the degree of institutionalization.

POs' behavioral attributes in terms of leadership was generally very good and highly democratic, while fair in commitment and managerial capability. Their interaction and participation were good while the level of linkages was only moderate.

The degree of institutionalization which the POs perceived institutionalized CBFM in Region 02 was generally high in terms of shared goal, internalization, expediency, habitualization, and typification. They were also high in terms of their territoriality, size of resources and time involved in the project.

The PO perceived that their contribution to CBFM institutional viability was highly achieved as reflected in their perceptions in terms of the enhancement of managerial capability, improvement of standard of living and environmental impacts.

The hypothesis that the PO's leadership, commitment, interaction and participation affect or contribute significantly to the institutionalization of CBFM at various degree or level which subsequently influence the institutional viability of the CBFM was accepted.

The enhanced CBFM capability was directly positively and significantly influenced by leadership. On the other hand, the improved standard of living and overall institutional viability of the CBFM project were directly positively and significantly influenced by interaction of the members/officers of the PO.

Regarding the interrelationship of the intervening variables degree of institutionalization and the dependent variable institutional viability, the degree of expediency and overall

institutionalization were positively and significantly related to the enhancement of the POs' community-based forest resource management capability. Habitualization and typification and overall institutionalization were positively significant related to environmental impacts. Expediency, habitualization, typification and overall institutionalization were positively and significantly related to overall institutional viability of the CBFM program.

Results of path regression analysis further showed the direct and indirect relationships among the POs' attributes and CBFM institutional viability through the various levels of institutionalization. CBFM institutional viability in terms of enhanced CBFM capability was attained under the influence of the PO's leadership and participation through the mediation of expediency and overall institutionalization.

PO's improved standard of living was attained with the influence of interaction through the intervening degree of habitualization. On the other hand, it was negatively influenced by participation through the intervening degree of typification. It is further affected negatively by leadership and commitment through the intervening degree of habitualization. Standard of living was also attained under reverse relation with commitment through the intervening habitualization.

The positive environmental impacts of the project was attained by PO's participation through the intervening degree of shared goal, habitualization, typification and overall institutionalization. It was also attained under the influence of leadership through the overall institutionalization. It was further attained together with the overall institutional viability, under the influence of participation through the intervening expediency; or under leadership, commitment and interaction through habitualization; under participation through typification; and under leadership and participation through overall institutionalization.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Indeed, the attainment of CBFM institutional viability measured with the POs' goals of enhanced CBFM capability, improved standard of living and positive environmental impacts were attained under the influences of the POs' attributes in terms of leadership, interaction, commitment, and participation, through the intervening levels of institutionalization shared goal, expediency, habitualization and typification take singly or combined. Participation was found the most prominent determinant factor. This is true to all the sites wherein the PO actively participated CSD.

The findings about the significance of leadership, commitment and interaction also strengthens the concept that such factor is effective in achieving common goals development programs (Metin, 1990; Castillo, 1083; and Loomis and Loomis, 1961).

It was found that enhanced CBFM capability was directly influenced by leadership, while the improved standard of living and the overall institutional viability were directly influenced by interaction. This indicated that attained measures of institutional viability were more limited under the direct influence of PO attributes. Thus, the need for the

intervening influence of the various degree of institutionalization.

Regarding the influence of the degree of institutionalization, each level of institutionalization had intervened in its own way in the attainment of CBFM goals singly or in combination. These results indicated that the four POs' attributes namely leadership, commitment, interaction and participation were the necessary conditions while the various levels of institutionalization were the enabling conditions that enhanced the success of the POs' implementation of CBFM. All the CBFM goals, taken singly or combined, were most influenced by expediency and habitualization. This implies that the POs pursued and participated in the project mainly for economic reasons even if they have not fully accepted nor appreciated the importance, norms, values and goals of the project. Moreover, negative correlation of commitment means that it was weak as evidenced in two study sites (Quibal and Salingdingan) where the sense of community-ness in all project activities had totally ceased and the lukewarmness of the other site (VIBANARA) wherein only the set of officers were left active when the funded activities were phased out.

Meanwhile, despite the result of the path analysis showing the insignificance of managerial capability and linkage, they are perceived to be attributes built-in or embodied within the POs' participation. In fact, what the members participated in mostly was their meaningful services that involved the application of their indigenous and technical management skills/knowledge. Apparently it was insignificant since the member-respondents considered themselves weak on this aspect that they rated their contribution not that satisfactory and significant since the kind of management skills and knowledge they had could have been inappropriate for the kind of interventions introduced or vice versa.

The negative correlation values of the POs' leadership, commitment and the improvement of their standard of living does not necessarily mean a negative influence but must rather be understood as something wanting the fact that the POs had not yet reached the participatory type of leadership, overall commitment only fair improvement of standard of living not fully achieved. Thus, those attributes should rather be considered as assets that need to be enhanced for successful implementation of CBFM.

Results also show that, directly, POs attributes contributed the most in CBFM capability in terms of their leadership and interaction. It was further shown that there were more measures of institutional viability attained through the various levels of institutionalization. Environmental impact was the most attained while improved standard of living was the least. This finding corroborates the issues raised by Castillo (1983) in Integrated Rural Development, of which CBFM is a variant, that its multiple objectives is not easy to operationalize and make the project difficult to implement requiring firm and explicit commitment at the highest political level. Thus, for CBFM to be fully embraced as a new form of institution, such proposition must go abreast with the other PO's attributes through the ideal five levels of institutionalization covered in this study.

All the facts and phenomena articulated above hold true to the posited theoretical grounding of the study re-the systems theory since the POs were like biological organisms that need to live, grow and develop. They were made of constituent parts, which perform, specific but interrelated functions (which, in the case of this study were

leadership, commitment, interaction, managerial capability and participation) towards the systems goals (i.e. CBFM capability, etc.) for survival. The POs exist as part of the larger system (i.e. the CBFM program) as the de facto managers in partnership with other

CBFM stakeholders (DENR, NGO, LGU, etc.). Accordingly, the performance of functions and achievement of goals were not confined to their own selves as isolated self-contained entities but rather they took and performed diverse roles especially the comprehensive site development and forest protection for their internal differentiation. For their external adaptation, they established linkages with DENR, NGO, LGU, private sector and other government organizations from where they acquired technical, financial and material assistance and marketing.

A review of the CBFM implementation framework (Figure 1) showed the critical areas, limiting processes and mechanisms which affect the institutional viability of the CBFM. These are the processes of affirmation of the Resource Use Plan (RUP) and the Annual Work Plan (AWP) and technical operations in comprehensive site development, harvesting, individual property rights, education and training, and enterprise development.

In summary, the PO attributes directly affect CBFM institutional viability and indirectly related to the degree of institutionalization of CBFM. It could be concluded that the institutionalization of the community-based forest management program hinges on the POs' attributes particularly their leadership, commitment, interaction and participation. These variables, singly or in combination indirectly influence the degree of institutionalization of the POs that in turn directly contribute to the CBFM institutional viability, singly or in combination.

Implications and Recommendations

The experience of the POs studied provided vital information that would help bridge gaps in policy, theory and practice, and research in promoting the roles of the POs to ensure the institutional viability of CBFM. Along these context the following are recommended:

Towards Theory and Practice

The CBFM aphorism "put people first and sustainable forestry will follow" does not reflect in reality. It was apparent that the second goal of CBFM focused on CSD which reflect positive environmental impacts as the most prominent measure of CBFM institutional viability in all the sites showing impressive ecological and environmental legacy. However, POs' participation did not reflect community-based, nor sustained nor participatory. As biological organisms the POs were slow in growth and development that they must be nurtured carefully to be strong and capable to meet the challenges as steward of environmental development. Their internal (leadership, commitment, interaction, managerial capability, and participation) and external (linkage) environments has yet to be developed. The POs' profile should serve as a guide to implementors, field practitioners and field managers to undertake actions on the following:

1. To put first human welfare in the attainment of CBFM goals by devising a sustained and timely served incentive mechanisms to enhance the POs' CBFM capability and improve in standard of living. Possible forms of incentives for the are the adoption of agroforestry for their daily food, wood, water and cash needs; micro-finance for enterprise development and livelihood projects, recognition of individual property rights, pump priming for activities/projects for capital build-up. For DENR field staff, representation allowances shared from POs' funded projects for closer supervision and for immediate attention on the requirements needed so that it will be completed in due time.
2. To conduct in situ trainings to POs in organizational dynamics and management; norms/values-based management, participatory planning, assessment, implementation, monitoring and evaluation approaches; conflict management, forest resources development, conservation and utilization under the co-management scheme; enterprise development, simple business and finance management, computer-based management information system, and global positioning system (GPS).
3. To conduct retooling of other CBFM stakeholders, i.e. the DENR, LGU, NGO, private sector, and OGA, from the old paradigm of development characterized by traditional/ conventional values and practices, and "technocratic mindset" into a more participatory and people-oriented development.
4. To encourage strong partnership of the POs with other stakeholders under a more harmonious, transparent and equitable sharing scheme of working relationship through collaborative undertakings and leadership trainings.
5. To strengthen the institutionalization of CBFM in the context of sustainable forest development to the public via extension efforts.

Towards Policy Advocacy

A sound policy advocacy is needed to orchestrate the various desired and usually conflicting interests of the CBFM stakeholders by guiding their actions on the following aspects:

1. Rationalized and timely technical, financial, physical and material support and genuine services to POs, from among the various responsible support agencies. DENR should reduce the volume of requirements and time of processing and affirmation of AWP/RUP and increasing their effective period of one-year to bi-annual or even longer to give the POs more time and less cost.
2. Emphasis on the participatory planning and implementation of CBFM, as a sustainable development strategy carried out along the context of social, economic and ecological objectives as the enabling conditions. The POs' must be made conscious of their responsibilities as the de facto managers of the forests entrusted to them.
3. Sustained and regular participatory monitoring, assessment and evaluation of all activities strictly anchored from the projects under the CRMF, AWP, RUP and/or TOR.

4. Interfacing and leveling off of DENR-PO of forest management roles through more explicit definition of boundaries of power and control of resources and activities such as the issuance of special permits to outsiders and those inside the CBFMA areas, confiscation of chainsaws and illegally harvested logs/lumber, etc.
5. Review of the Operational Framework for Sustainable Development to establish a functional criteria to be used for project M&E focusing on indicators of empowerment and self-reliance/self-sufficiency putting the PO as the linchpin of CBFM.
6. Emphasis on eco-governance highlighting the role of LGU in partnership with the POs to sustain the ecological balance. Public awareness and local participation on environmental protection and conservation through efficient and effective IEC strategies are needed.

Towards Research Concerns

Community immersion was indeed very effective tool in the conduct of the study. It develops critical awareness and provide great opportunity in understanding the phenomena of institution development. Rapport was found important in the immersion process as most of the people were xenophobic of strangers in the study area. It may then be possible to combine progressive contextualization methodology with some quantitative social research.

Metin (1996) cited the limitations of the path analysis which was circuitous, time consuming and necessitates competence and skills that such process could be one possible reason of some variables thought to be significant could be eliminated by the test. This may have also occurred which suggests for other methodological techniques.

The number of respondents were limited to a total of twenty-seven which limited representativeness in terms of statistical analysis. Such limitation was due to the bias in the selection of respondents identified as active participants the number of which was limited in the field. Thus, similar studies should be conducted but the number of study sites should be increased. It is further suggested that similar studies be conducted using other variables not included in this study like membership factors, kind of trainings and many others.

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