

The Community Forestry Program

Lessons from Government-NGO Relations

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In January 1990, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) released the Philippine Strategy for Sustainable Development (PSSD). A product of various consultations with different sectors of society, the PSSD aims "to achieve economic growth with adequate protection of the country's biological resources and its diversity, vital ecosystem functions, and over-all environmental quality (DENR, 1990a:4)." Among its guiding principles are to promote citizens' participation in governmental activities and to decentralize the implementation of environmental programs. One way of harnessing citizens' participation is by involving non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in governmental activities. In particular, the DENR seeks to involve NGOs in community organizing, public information campaigns, research, environmental surveillance and monitoring, and science and appropriate technology in the pursuit of sustainable development (DENR, 1990a:12).

To reiterate the importance of NGO participation in environmental projects, the DENR issued Administrative Order (AO) No. 120 (1989) entitled "General Rules and Regulations on the Participation of NGOs in the DENR Programs." This was later amended by AO No. 52 (1992) which states the DENR basic policy of encouraging and promoting the involvement of NGOs in the general development of Philippine natural resources. Its basic objectives are: (1) to provide a system for greater DENR-NGO collaboration; (2) to ensure genuine NGO participation in DENR programs; and (3) to provide a mechanism of accreditation of NGOs which are involved in DENR concerns. The areas of participation open to NGOs are community organizing, training, monitoring and evaluation, program implementation, planning/policy formulation, information and education campaigns, and law enforcement (DENR, 1992:n.p.)

Implemented by the DENR, the Community Forestry Program (CFP) seeks to operationalize the concepts of sustainable development and NGO participation in governmental activities. The CFP seeks, among others, to encourage the participation of NGOs in environmental activities. In particular, the CFP deals with the problems of inequitable utilization of forest products, wide-spread poverty in the uplands, lack of forest conservation activities, and

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the need for training rural communities to manage forest resources (DENR, 1989:80). To deal with these problems, the CFP relies on collaboration among rural communities, NGOs, the DENR, and other governmental organizations (GOs).

Of late, the role of NGOs in attaining national development goals has been given importance by the government. This is manifest in the provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution which mandate the government to include NGOs, people's organizations (POs), and community-based organizations in various governmental projects and programs and to involve them in all levels of the decision-making process (RP, 1987:Art. II, Sec. 23). The Local Government Code of 1991 reiterates the call for NGO participation in governmental activities. The Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (1987-1992) sees NGOs as a means by which the government's developmental goals may be achieved (NEDA, 1986:259). These policies are gradually being translated into reality. Several government organizations have established linkages with NGOs through the creation of NGO desks, the holding of consultations, dialogues, trainings, seminars, and workshops with NGO representatives, and the inclusion of NGOs in projects and programs. Aside from the DENR, the Departments of Agriculture, Labor and Employment, Health, and Trade and Industry also have existing linkages with NGOs (Ocampo, 1990:71).

Despite these developments, collaboration is limited by problems which GOs and NGOs face as they work together. Among these are the absence of guidelines regarding GO-NGO collaboration, the lack of a common definition of NGOs, the absence of a clear delineation of functions, the existence of competition among NGOs (e.g., for funds and representation), and the presence of adversarial attitudes towards NGOs on the part of GOs and vice-versa (Quizon, 1989:31-39).

Almost four years have passed since the CFP was launched. It is now time to take stock of things. This paper will then probe into the actual nature and extent of GO-NGO collaboration in the CFP.

GO-NGO Relations in the Environment Sector

Collaboration between GOs and NGOs is an emerging trend in national and local administration. This is a result of the participatory development thrust of the government and the growing realization among Filipinos that the government cannot — and should not — do everything alone. GO-NGO collaboration has been particularly evident in the environment sector with the implementation of various programs and projects directed at addressing the present environmental crisis in the country.

Philippine NGOs have played a significant and continuously expanding role in the environment sector. As of 1989, there were 527 NGOs involved in various environmental concerns (Ganapin, Jr., 1989:88-89). Of this, 137 or 25% are based in the National Capital Region (NCR). This is to be expected because of access to available resources — financial, educational, and technical.

Traditionally, NGOs have been perceived as vehicles for the delivery of services where government was absent or to fill in gaps in official development programs. This role changed into community development work but NGOs continued to be viewed as contractors for government programs. At present, the role of NGOs has been further transformed with environmental NGOs now being in the forefront of the Philippine environmental movement. From the predominantly relief and welfare service orientation in the 1970s, environmental NGOs have moved on to being project proponents and implementors, articulators of community visions, and facilitators of people empowerment. In the end, the primary role of these NGOs is to empower people and communities to attain the larger vision of self-development and self-government (Kalaw, Jr., 1990:2-5). Hence, NGOs have moved a notch higher from being the implementing arm of the government to being partners of the government.

GO-NGO Collaboration in the Community Forestry Program

As of September 1992, forty-eight (48) projects have been set up throughout the country. Of these, thirty-three (33) are being funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) while the rest are sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The CFP projects examined here are all ADB-funded.

A. The Community Forestry Program (CFP)

Launched in 1989, the CFP:

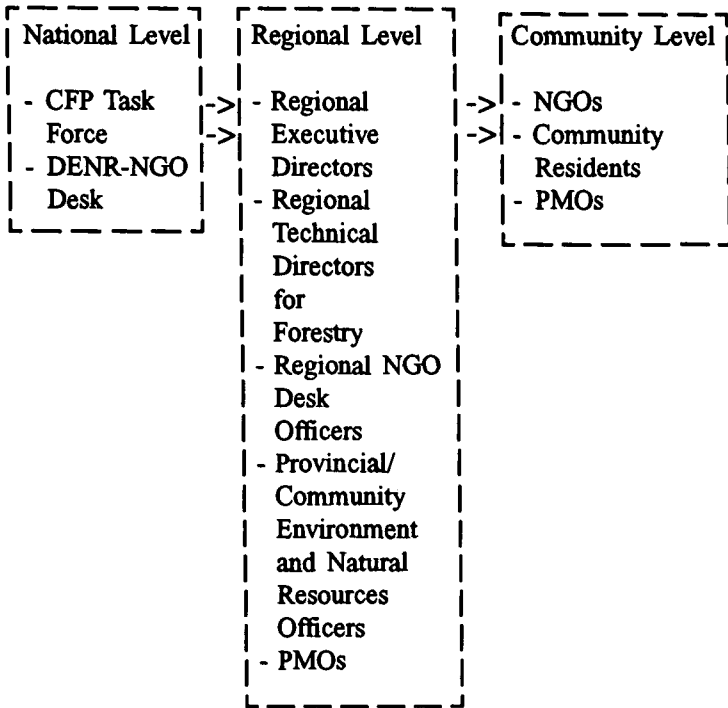
... embodies DENR's commitment to democratize access to forest resources; it champions the principles of social justice and resource sustainability by allowing organized upland communities to benefit from the remaining forest resources of the country (Guiang, 1992:40).

The program was formulated with the following objectives: (1) to equalize access to forest resources; (2) to address the need for forest conservation activities; (3) to train rural communities in managing forest resources; and (4) to arrest the spread of poverty in the uplands (DENR, 1989:80). The CFP was an attempt on the part of the DENR to strengthen the shift from large-scale commercial forestry management to forest management by local communities. This involves the awarding to upland communities of twenty-five year Community Forestry Management Agreements (CFMAs) which are renewable for another twenty-five years. CFMAs give upland communities forest products utilization privileges subject to the submission and approval of a management and development plan, compliance with DENR rules and regulations, and adherence to the principles of sustained-yield management (DENR, 1989:82 and 1991:10). The CFP, then, is the DENR's attempt to attain sustainability in the uplands.

In the implementation of the CFP, the DENR utilizes a sequential strategy. The initial phase involves the social preparation of rural communities with pump-priming activities (e.g., reforestation, timber stand improvement, and assisted natural regeneration). It is during this phase that NGOs will be selected to assist the DENR and the communities. The second phase commences once the communities are organized, registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), adequately trained in forest management and utilization, and are capable of managing and investing their funds. It is only during the second phase that CFMAs are awarded to the rural communities. This is followed by the third phase wherein the DENR will supervise and monitor the harvesting, processing, rehabilitation, and reforestation fund generation of the rural communities (Guiang, 1992:44). This sequential strategy is being implemented through a structure which works at three (3) levels. Figure 1 presents the implementing structure of the CFP.

In line with the implementation of the CFP, the government, through the DENR, performs the following functions: (1) assist rural communities in establishing organizations; (2) conduct on-the-job training in forest management planning and conservation; (3) aid in the development of other livelihood opportunities not necessarily based on the extraction and utilization of forest resources; (4) compensate NGOs for services provided to the community by virtue of the CFP contract; (5) participate with the communities and NGOs in carrying out the inventory/evaluation and in preparing the plan by providing technical assistance, advice, and related expertise to ensure the attainment of accepted professional standards; (6) expedite the processing, evaluation, and approval of the plan and all other documents required to implement the CFP; and (7) cooperate with the communities and NGOs to achieve the objectives of the program (DENR, 1990b:194).

FIGURE 1
Implementing Structure of the CFP



On the other hand the CFP Task Force coordinates all CFP activities at the national level; identifies, recommends, and verifies potential CFP sites; monitors CFP projects; prepares and approves annual work and financial plans; plans, coordinates, and implements relevant workshops for project management officers (PMOs), NGO participants, and CFP staff; chairs NGO selection and evaluation panels; selects CFP-recipient NGOs; prepares and facilitates CFP contracts; and initiates, plans, and implements CFP information and education campaigns (Guiang, 1992:45).

NGOs, a vital force in the CFP structure, perform eight (8) essential functions. First, NGOs facilitate discussions between the DENR and the rural communities to explain and reach an agreement on the terms and conditions for project implementation. Second, they assist communities in organizing themselves into a legal entity. Third, they train communities to take over the administrative work and all other related tasks. The fourth task is to aid the communities in conducting an inventory of forest resources within their respective project sites. Fifth, NGOs assist the communities in preparing a management

and development plan for their project sites. Sixth, they ensure that communities have access to appropriate technical assistance and on-the-job training during the implementation stage. Seventh, they help the communities develop and implement new enterprises and livelihood projects not necessarily related to forest resources. And lastly, they assist communities in marketing forest products and other commodities they grow, harvest or process (DENR, 1990b:193-194). The quantity and significance of the tasks assigned to NGOs reveal how critical the role of these groups are in determining the fate of the CFP. The importance of NGOs in this program is reiterated in Section 5 of the CFP Manual of Operations which states that:

No project shall be approved for implementation unless: (i) a competent and credible NGO has signified its commitment to assist in project implementation ... (DENR, 1990b:173).

This emphasis on NGO and community participation in governmental programs is an adherence to the recommendation of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) that governments recognize the significance of NGOs, along with community groups, as "important and cost-effective partners" in the task of protecting and rehabilitating the national and global environment and in the implementation of national conservation programs. Recognizing the importance of NGO participation in government programs entails that their right to know and to have access to relevant information pertaining to the environment and natural resources be upheld and respected. Moreover, these groups should be consulted and involved in the decision-making process (WCED, 1987:319 & 328). Thus, through the PSSD in general and the CFP in particular, the DENR hopes to realize increased NGO and community participation in environmental programs.

B. Four Case Studies of GO-NGO Collaboration in the CFP

CFP Project No. 1: Adams, Ilocos Norte. Approved on 7 June 1991, this CFP project covers 1,000 hectares of residual forests and has a total of 216 participants (CFP Task Force, 1992:1). Most of the project participants come from households which depend on upland farming and lowland agriculture for their livelihood. Other sources of livelihood include cottage industries and employment in government offices (MAFMS, 1993a:1).

The NGO involved in this project is the Maranatha Agribusiness and Forest Management Systems (MAFMS). Incorporated on 14 October 1985, it was established to implement income-generating projects in forestry, agriculture, and fishery to raise funds to support the organization's primary objective of gospel

proclamation. The organization presently has twenty members with varied backgrounds. There are members who are experts in local christian missions, church growth, discipleship, and evangelism and those whose proficiency lies in community organizing, training, human resource development, cottage industry, agriculture, and forestry. The group operates on a specific project basis. Thus, members are assigned to a particular project based on their respective expertise. This gives the MAFMS a flexible character which helps lessen overhead costs and keeps humanpower count to a minimum (MAFMS, 1993a:1-3 and MAFMS, 1993b:2). Aside from the CFP, the organization has also been involved in reforestation program in cooperation with the DENR.

The group's participation in the CFP was initiated by the NGO itself. Of the various areas open for NGO participation, the group takes part in project implementation. In particular, its tasks include community organizing, training, and information and education campaigns (MAFMS, 1993a:2-3). As of September 1992, the DENR has released a total of 2,355,310.55 pesos for this project. With the release of such an amount, the following have already been accomplished: reforestation of 29.46 hectares of land; timber stand improvement in 188 hectares of land; assisted natural regeneration in fifty hectares of land; and agroforestry development of 4.55 hectares of land. In addition to these, the NGO has conducted community organizing activities, complemented perimeter survey, and opened trailways (CFP Task Force, 1992:1).

CFP Project No. 2: Kabugao, Kalinga-Apayao. This CFP project was launched on 19 December 1991, covers an area of 1,000 hectares, and has a total of 254 families as target beneficiaries. It is estimated that ninety percent (90%) of the community population practice swidden cultivation. The remaining ten percent (10%) are involved in ride paddy farming. Some sixty percent (60%) of the population are engaged in rattan-gathering, thirty percent (30%) in banana production, and ten percent (10%) in other areas of work like placer mining, carpentry, and government services (FATCFI, 1993a:1-2).

The Federation of Apayao Tribal Communities Foundation, Inc. (FATCFI) is the NGO assigned to this project. Founded on 26 February 1989, it was accredited by the DENR on 14 November 1990. It boasts of 1,369 members who belong to various tribal groups (CFP Task Force, 1992:1). Because most of its members live below the poverty line, one of the objectives of the FATCFI is to alleviate the plight of its members and their families. In addition to this, the organization also aims to: (1) promote, through education, the need for uniting for a common front, ecological preservation of the country's natural resources, and preservation of their natural customs and tradition; (2) mediate and settle intra-tribal and inter-tribal conflicts and differences; and (3) prepare project proposals for identified viable economic ventures for networking and

possible funding from national or foreign funding institutions (FATCFI, 1992:1). Since 1990, the organization has been participating in government programs and projects. In the CFP, it was the DENR which initiated the group's involvement. The FATCFI is involved in the areas of policy formulation, project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. In particular, it participates in community organizing, training, and information and education campaigns (FATCFI, 1993a:2-3).

As of September 1992, thirty hectares of land have been treated through the timber stand improvement component while sixty-three hectares have been developed through the assisted natural regeneration component. The NGO has, for its part, conducted community organizing, held consultations and meetings with target beneficiaries, assisted in the formation of a cooperative, and conducted perimeter surveys (FATCFI, 1993b:2-5 and CFP Task Force, 1992:1).

Organizing the community residents begins by conducting dialogues with the CFP participants. During such dialogues conducted by the FATCFI, problems and issues were raised like unemployment, peace and order, lack of water supply, low land productivity, and lack of capital for livelihood industry. Also done were house-to-house visitations with the FATCFI CFP staff holding personal consultations with community residents. The NGO likewise formed a community monitoring team with tribal leaders as members. The tasks of this team are to monitor and evaluate the performance and outcome of the CFP and to suggest improvements which need to be done. The NGO also assisted in the construction of a potable water system by providing funds from the NGO Services Fund. Community training sessions were conducted in the areas of timber stand improvement, assisted natural regeneration, agroforestry, crop raising and rattan craft. These training workshops enabled the project participants to gain new insights and skills and to learn how these may be applied in the CFP (FATCFI, 1993b:2-4).

CFP Project No. 3: Hinobaan, Negros Occidental. Of the four CFP projects, this is the most recent having been launched only on 2 January 1992. Covering 1,000 hectares of forestlands, the project has 100 participants with the Negros Forest and Ecological Foundation, Inc. (NFEFI) as the participant NGO. Community residents involved in the project practice upland agriculture to earn a living. In addition, an estimated thirty-five percent (35%) of the participating community's population work in sugarcane plantations (CFP Task Force, 1992:2 and NFEFI, 1993:1-2).

Founded in October 1986, the organization has, at present, thirty-five active members. These members possess varied educational backgrounds and skills but most of them come from the business sector (e.g., sugarcane planters and plantation owners) and from the academe. What binds these people together

is the general objective of attaining and maintaining ecological balance in Negros Occidental (NFEFI, 1993:1). The NGO's expertise is in community organizing, reforestation, and agroforestry.

This particular project began in 1991 but the NFEFI has been involved in collaborative activities with the government since 1986. The NGO's involvement in the CFP was initiated by the DENR. As part of its CFP contract, the group is involved in policy formulation and project implementation. In particular, it conducts community organizing activities, education campaigns, and survey and mapping (NFEFI, 1993:2-3).

The NFEFI took part in the formulation of the project work plan which serves as the guiding framework of the program. In the area of project implementation, the group has conducted community organizing, information drives, meetings, and consultations with project participants in attendance. Through these activities, the participants were given the chance to learn about new technologies appropriate for the uplands. These have also exposed them to knowledge and skills which can be used in the project. At present, the group has not been able to go beyond community organizing and information campaigns because project operations have been temporarily stopped. As of September 1992, no amount has yet been released by the government because the project site was found to be covered by a mining lease agreement. According to the NFEFI, a new site was identified in January 1993 but as of April 1993, this has not been acted upon by the DENR Central Office (NFEFI, 1993:4).

CFP Project No. 4: Capoocan, Leyte. The contract for this CFP project was approved on 27 June 1991 with fifty-two participants. It covers 1,000 hectares of forest lands situated in two barangays — Manloy and Culasian. Residents of these areas who are participating in the project are mostly upland farmers and agricultural workers (CFP Task Force, 1992:3 and EVRDFI, 1993:1-2). The NGO involved in this project is the Eastern Visayas Rural Development Foundation, Inc. (EVRDFI) which was established on 1 August 1990. It has 150 members who are agriculturalists, foresters, sociologists, accountants, engineers, farm management technologists, and community development organizers. The general objective of the EVRDFI is to assist the government in the economic upliftment of poor Filipino farmers in rural areas. Among the future plans of the group is to coordinate with different agencies involved in rural development to ensure the continuity of assistance to upland farmers. The end goal of such networking is to help farmers increase the productivity of their lands. The group's expertise is in upland farming systems, training and organizing, surveying, reforestation, and management (EVRDFI, 1993:1-2 and 1991:1-2).

The EVRDFI has been involved in government activities for seven years now. Its participation in the CFP started only in 1991 and was initiated by the group itself. The EVRDFI has been involved in policy formulation, project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. In particular, it has conducted organizing, training, information and education campaigns, and law enforcement activities (EVRDFI, 1993:2-3).

A total of 428,850 pesos has been released for this project. The community, on the other hand, raised 5,500 pesos for its capital. With these funds and with the group's and the community's human and technical resources, the following have already been accomplished: (1) completion of perimeter survey; (2) holding of meetings and trainings/workshops with farmer-beneficiaries in attendance; (3) fifty hectares covered through assisted natural regeneration component; (4) fifty hectares planted through rattan component; and (5) ten hectares developed through agroforestry component (EVRDFI, 1992:2-5 and CFP Task Force, 1992:3).

Training sessions designed for the farmer beneficiaries equip the participants with technical knowledge and skills on the different aspects of agroforestry. During such sessions, farmers attended lectures which were supplemented with field practicum and on-the-job training. Field observations were also conducted for the benefit of CFP participants. These visits to other project sites enabled participants to observe diversified farming, vegetable gardening, livestock and goat fattening and breeding, and various agroforestry technology (EVRDFI, 1992:6-8).

The primary impact of these activities is exposing farmers and other project participants to new knowledge, skills, and technology which may be utilized in their respective CFP projects. These also enable them to gain a broader perspective on the project they are involved in as they realize that these different projects are integrated into one whole. They begin to see a clearer picture of how they may be able to contribute to the successful implementation of the CFP. In essence, training workshops develop, or where such already exist, strengthen the technical skills and even leadership abilities of the project participants. As they gain more knowledge and skills, they become more confident about their capabilities and, consequently, develop self-reliance within their community. Moreover, the experiences of the four NGOs give credence to the widely-held notion that the expertise of NGOs lies in community organizing, training, and information dissemination. The DENR taps the resources of these groups particularly to undertake these functions which the Department is not able to perform.

C. The Nature of GO-NGO Collaboration in the CFP

In general, the nature of the relations between the government and NGOs may be classified into three models. The first is the partnership model which postulates that: (1) the government and the NGOs involved in cooperative ventures offer distinct competencies to the development process; (2) both serve a common public; and (3) one's competencies and resources complement and do not duplicate or contradict the other's. Such a model is guided by the following principles — autonomy of NGOs, primacy of basic sectors, involvement in decision-making, wide representation of NGOs, and observance of democratic processes (Ocampo, 1990:72-73).

The conduit model, on the other hand, perceives NGOs as working around programs which are designated by the government. This model posits that the programs of NGOs should reflect as much as possible the government's own priorities. The shortcoming of this model is that:

... it limits the autonomy and capacity of NGOs, particularly the sectoral people's organizations, to play an essential role in policy-making, and in designing programs and projects. NGOs must not be made to serve as mere sounding boards for policy consultations ... (Ocampo, 1990:74).

The third model is the self-organization model which involves the transfer of governmental powers to NGOs. This entails divesting the government of particular functions which the NGOs can perform more adequately. Hence, this leads to an expanded role for NGOs in program formulation, planning, and implementation (Ocampo, 1990:74-75).

The nature of GO-NGO collaboration in the four CFP projects can be categorized under the partnership model. First, the DENR and the NGOs participating in the CFP projects perform different roles. The Department, through its National and Regional NGO Desks and its CFP Task Force, are responsible for the administrative work. This involves, among other things, coordinating all CFP activities at the national level, monitoring CFP projects, preparing and approving annual work and financial plans, coordinating and implementing workshops and trainings for CFP participants, preparing and facilitating CFP contracts, chairing NGO selection and evaluation panels, clearing of all CFP contracts, identifying and verifying potential CFP sites, and disseminating information. On the other hand, the NGOs perform the roles of community organizers and trainers, educators, information disseminators, and law enforcers. In addition, the NGOs conduct pump-priming activities and manage funds

generated from such activities. The NGOs likewise conduct resource inventories with the rural communities and prepare forest management plans (Guiang, 1992:45).

Second, the DENR and the NGO participants have the same target clients — upland communities. The members of these communities belong to the so-called poorest of the poor with majority, if not all, of them living below the poverty line. With the CFP, the DENR hopes to contribute to the alleviation of the upland communities' economic well-being. On the part of the NGOs, among their objectives are to assist these communities by forming them into organizations with legal identities and to develop them into self-reliant entities. Because some NGO members belong to these upland communities and since these NGOs are located within or near such communities, it is but natural that their immediate goals are to uplift the welfare of their own communities. Therefore, within the context of the CFP, both the government and the NGOs are working for the interest of upland communities.

Third, the roles performed by the DENR and the NGOs complement each other. While the DENR is responsible for the national concerns with regard to the program, the NGOs deal with the regional or provincial ones. The DENR takes on the role of overall coordinator and provider of resources — financial, technical, and/or human. Meanwhile, the NGOs conduct community organizing and training activities. Therefore, both parties perform the functions in which they have a comparative advantage. One area where there is a duplication of function is in information dissemination and education. But rather than view this as a problem, this should, on the contrary, be seen in a positive light. Even as there is a duplication of function, the two parties operate at different levels — the DENR at the national level and the NGOs at the provincial and community levels.

Although GO-NGO collaboration in the four CFP projects may be classified as falling under the partnership model, an argument can be made that there can be gleaned a movement toward the self-organization model. The reason is that under the CFP the NGOs perform more roles than they traditionally have. In fact, NGOs used to be the government's implementing arm where it is unable to provide basic services to the people (Kalaw, Jr., 1990:2). Now, as participants in the CFP, these NGOs are involved in almost all phases of the program process. Moreover, the DENR has divested itself of powers and functions which it used to monopolize. These include policy and decision-making and control of finances. However, the transfer of such powers and functions have been limited. In the first instance, national policies are still decided by the DENR central office. The NGOs are involved in policy and decision-making only with respect to their particular projects. In the second instance, the NGOs manage and disburse the

financial resources they are able to generate from the pump-priming activities they conduct within their respective project sites. But still, it is the DENR which handles and releases the operating funds for the projects. Hence, it is still the national government which controls the purse strings. Despite these realities, the positive developments should not be disregarded. They should be viewed as steps, however small they may be, toward the realization of the self-organization model. This, after all, is the model which speaks of genuine NGO participation in particular and empowerment in general.

D. The Extent of GO-NGO Relations in the CFP

The extent of GO-NGO collaboration in the CFP is a function of the level/s at which collaboration between the DENR and the NGOs participating in the CFP takes place. Theoretically, there are four level in the program process. Policy formulation is characterized as organized and analytically-oriented staff work the purpose of which is to explicate policy issues and alternatives, determine the costs and consequences of policy alternatives, and identify the ambiguities and uncertainties present in a particular situation. Program implementation, on the other hand, refers to the execution of a program which begins with the performance of tasks or operations. This is the stage during which a series of steps necessary in the execution of a plan is initiated. The third stage is monitoring which involves the continuous observation of the implementation procedures and results of a program. During this stage, the program is observed with the aim of determining whether or not project implementation is achieving the desired goals or results. Evaluation is the fourth stage of the program process. Constant assessment of what has been observed throughout the program process is conducted at this stage. The primary objective of evaluation is to determine whether to continue or discontinue a program and whether there is a need to re-examine the goals or the program design itself (Lynn, Jr., 1987:46-47; Acosta *et al.*, 1991:74 & 107-108; Ripley, 1985:53). These four stages taken together comprise what is broadly termed as the program process.

In two of the four CFP projects, NGO participation was initiated by the DENR while in the other two, it was the NGOs which volunteered. Of the four phases of the program process, it is in the implementation part wherein all of the NGOs participated. Three of the four NGOs were involved in policy formulation while only two of the four were taking part in monitoring and evaluation. The overall picture reveals that only two NGOs participated in the entire program process — FATCFI and EVRDFI.

The NGOs performed different functions and participated in varying stages of the program process primarily because of their different organizational expertise. According to Ms. Tita de Quiros, Director of the DENR National NGO Desk, the NGOs which participate in the various projects of the DENR are selected based on their track record, organizational expertise, and the capabilities of their individual members (De Quiros, 1993:interview). These are the criteria which determine the functions performed by the NGOs and the levels of the program process wherein they participate.

The implementation phase is further subdivided into four areas. All four NGOs conducted community organizing activities and information and education campaigns. Three were involved in training upland communities while only a single NGO took part in law enforcement. The one hundred percent (100%) participation in community organizing and information campaigns reflects the fact that the expertise of the NGOs lies in these activities. This is also a manifestation of the government's recognition of the specific strengths of NGOs involved in the CFP.

The tasks performed by the NGOs involved is a manifestation of the more extensive areas of participation open to them than was traditionally practiced. Although one of the NGOs was involved only in the implementation phase, all of the others took part in the program planning. This is a reflection of the government's act of dispersing some of its powers, particularly decision-making, to LGUs and NGOs. The benefits incurred by the NGOs as they participate in decision-making is best expressed by the president of the NFEFI:

Participation in planning session enable us to air our views on how to implement the project effectively and deliver services efficiently. It opens up avenues for NGOs to influence government on the present trend of development (NFEFI, 1993:6).

In addition to policy formulation, another important task undertaken by the NGOs is program evaluation which serves as a feedback mechanism by means of which results are analyzed and lessons are learned later to be applied to other programs (Acosta *et al.*, 1991:108). If government is the only actor involved in program evaluation, then the inputs to the feedback mechanism will reflect only the views and opinions of government officials. Therefore, including NGOs at this stage of the program process will, hopefully, lead to improvements. Members of these NGOs possess different opinions and see things from another angle — points of views which vary from that of government policymakers. The government may miss out on certain points which NGOs think are relevant and

vice-versa. Likewise, these private groups may have different priorities from the government. Thus, if the opinions of both parties are taken into consideration, more areas of concern are bound to be discussed, analyzed, and resolved.

In the final analysis, GO-NGO collaboration in the CFP is evolving into a more expansive area of partnership between the DENR and the NGOs with these voluntary and private organizations performing more and more functions and taking on increasing responsibilities and with the DENR divesting itself of certain powers and functions which used to be within its sole purview. These developments have resulted in the gradual transformation of the relations between the DENR and the NGOs in the environment sector — a transformation for the better and which, many hope, will last.

Lessons for the Future

Several important points for consideration can be generated from the experiences of the four NGOs. Though their experiences pertain to the CFP in particular, these can provide lessons which can be applied even beyond the context of the CFP. These include:

(1) **Develop trust between the government, the NGOs, and the community residents.** Based on the experiences of the NGOs, mistrust of the government can be traced to the dismal track record of past government projects. This is further intensified because of the government's failure to deliver its promises (e.g., release operating funds on time, pay wages on schedule). A means by which to develop trust between the government and the private sector is to improve the communication linkages between them. Transparency in both government and NGO operations (e.g., opening books of accounts, holding consultations and deliberations open to the public) and voluntary sharing of information will contribute to the improvement of relations between both parties. According to the NFEFI:

GO-NGO relations can be improved by building strong lines of communications with government being consistent with their policies and performing their functions effectively while NGOs consistently share resources with the government such as skills, etc. (NFEFI, 1993:3).

Developing trust, therefore, involves both parties performing their respective duties effectively and efficiently. This will also reflect their commitment to the program and their desire to attain the program's goals.

A particular means by which the government can develop trust on the part of the NGOs and the community residents is to release funds on schedule. It was pointed out by the MAFMS that most of the CFP participants subsist on a day-to-day basis. Thus, a day without wages is a big problem to them. Government would do well to make it a point to pay the salaries of the participants on time. In this way, community residents will believe that the government is sincere in reaching out to them and is committed to the project. After all, action does speak louder than words.

(2) Strengthen the relations between NGOs and community residents.

In cases where members of the community also belong to the NGOs, there is no problem in developing smooth working relations between the NGOs and the communities. But in instances where no local NGO exists and a national NGO has to be "brought in" from outside to assist community residents, working relations may be strained because of mistrust or other attitudinal problems. In the case of the FATCFI and the residents of Lenning, Kalinga-Apayao, there was no need for the NGO and community participants to get acquainted with one another as some of the NGO members also belonged to the community. This facilitated the development of smooth working relations between the NGO and the community (FATCFI, 1993:1).

Orientation-workshops where members of the NGOs and the community introduce themselves and discuss the details of the project may help break the ice. Once again, strong communication lines play an important role in strengthening relations between the NGOs and the community residents. Information should be shared freely and the NGOs must make it a point to relay all pertinent information coming from the DENR to the upland community members. Regular consultations, dialogues, and meetings should be done to enable all parties concerned to deal with problems and issues immediately. Such activities will facilitate the development of good working relations between the NGOs and the communities.

(3) A clear delineation of functions between the DENR and the NGOs should be established. Although the CFP contract to be signed by NGO CFP participants clearly states the functions to be performed by the DENR and by the NGOs, there are still instances where there is an overlapping of functions. In order to resolve this problem, there is a need to clearly define the tasks and responsibilities of the DENR and of the NGOs involved. One step which may be taken is to hold consultations where both parties go over the CFP contract and thresh out gray areas. In this way, problematic issues will be ironed out prior to contract signing and program launching.

The division of labor in the CFP, or any other program for that matter, should be based on the expertise of the parties involved. For example, the NGOs' expertise is community organizing and training and the government's specialty is administration. Therefore, NGOs should be tapped to perform community organizing and training activities while the government takes care of the administrative work. This will eliminate the possibility of assigning tasks to participants which they cannot fulfill adeptly.

(4) Prior to the program implementation, training workshops should be conducted for NGO staff members and community residents. The rationale behind such a move is to acquaint all parties involved with the mechanics of the program such that by the time the program is in operation, the NGOs and the community residents will no longer be wondering what they are expected to do and how they are to accomplish their goals. This suggestion was raised by the FATCFI as it pointed out that its CFP staff:

... lacks exposure to service-oriented programs, technical experience, and management/administrative skills. However ... the management has tried and will [continue to] try to correct such shortcomings mostly [with the] direct involvement and commitment of the staff and community (FATCFI, 1993b:8).

In particular, training workshops in the different CFP components should be conducted. These are reforestation, timber stand improvement, assisted natural regeneration, and agroforestry. Furthermore, NGO members should also be trained in technical activities like perimeter surveying, mapping, and resource inventory, among others. Once the NGO members are equipped with these skills they can in turn train the communities. In this way, knowledge and technical skills will be passed on from one sector to another. Technical training workshops involving CFP and community participants should be conducted to develop and strengthen the technical skills of NGO and community members. Once they are armed with these skills, they will no longer be dependent on the government to provide them with technical assistance.

(5) Make the NGO accreditation process more flexible. An oft-cited problem on the part of NGOs is the delay in the processing of their accreditation papers. The DENR NGO Desk has attempted to resolve this problem by having national NGOs accredited by its national office and regional and provincial NGOs by the respective regional offices. Still, the delayed processing of papers continues. An NGO has attributed this to "too much bureaucracy and red tape" in the government (MAFMS, 1993:3). To resolve this problem, paperwork should be kept to a minimum. The government must keep in mind that it is working with NGOs and rural community members who are not used to and even shun the

practice of having to fill up many forms. Thus, paper work should be reduced to the bare essentials. On the other hand, the NGOs should see to it that they comply with all the requirements for accreditation. After all, it is not just the government which should adjust.

The government should also avoid biased decision-making in the accreditation of NGOs. According to the EVRDFI:

It has been observed that NGOs under "politicians" are always being prioritized specially in the accreditation process. This should not be done ... to avoid frustrations [on the part] of NGOs [who aim] for the development of poor Filipinos (EVRDFI, 1993:4).

Hence, the DENR should, in the selection of NGOs which will participate in various programs, adhere strictly to the criteria set in AO No. 52 (1992). Moreover, emphasis should be given to the track record of such NGOs in development programs.

(6) Set up a local GO-NGO council which will handle problems which may arise during the program process. The formation and establishment of a local GO-NGO council will facilitate the threshing out of problems encountered in the program process. This was suggested by the MAFMS as a response to the problem of delayed transfer of funds (MAFMS, 1993:3). If the NGOs have access to such a council, they no longer have to go all the way to Manila to bring their problems to the central office of the DENR. In cases where immediate responses to problems are required, this will be of great help as the geographical distance between the NGOs and the DENR is lessened. In cases where a local council already exists, then strengthening and institutionalizing such a set-up should be done.

(7) Review and re-asses GO-NGO relations in the CFP in light of the Local Government Code of 1991. The Local Government Code of 1991 institutionalizes non-governmental sector participation in government programs and projects. It provides for mechanisms and strategies for NGO participation in, among other things, community-based forestry programs. In light of the provisions of the Code, there is a need to review and re-assess GO-NGO relations in the CFP and to include the LGUs in such programs. This move will strengthen not only the relations between the government and the NGOs but also that between the national government and its local counterparts.

With the government divesting some of its powers and functions and transferring this to the LGUs, government operations will be increasingly decentralized. Thus, the NGOs no longer have to deal with the national government at all times as the LGUs are also empowered to assist them in their needs and to play the role of partners in development. Though the Code institutionalizes and strengthens GO-NGO-LGU relations, it does not provide solutions to all the problems arising from such a partnership. Thus, it is up to the government, the NGOs, and the LGUs to implement the provisions and to realize the full benefits of the provisions of the Code. Early experiences in the implementation of the Code should also be taken into account. These will provide insights and lessons which may be applied in on-going collaborative efforts not only to strengthen GO-NGO-LGU relations but also to improve project operations.

NGO Participation in National and Local Governance

For the most part, GO-NGO collaboration relies on the active participation of NGOs in government programs. As the case studies have shown, GO-NGO collaboration is an emerging trend in governance and a trend which has been looked at positively. Despite this, problems continue to arise in the process of government and NGOs working together. Somehow, these problems have contributed to the inability of government and NGOs to achieve program goals. Hence, there is a need for both parties to address these issues and concerns together in order to improve and strengthen GO-NGO relations.

In order for GO-NGO collaboration to be meaningful and effective in attaining program goals, greater NGO participation should not only be promoted but actualized. Moreover, participation should not only mean taking part in the program process or being physically present in such. Meaningful participation should include having an influential voice throughout the process particularly in decision-making. The presence of NGOs should be felt not only out in the field but also in the boardroom where crucial policy decisions are made.

Through increased GO-NGO collaboration, it is hoped that the empowerment of the NGO community will be achieved. But NGO empowerment in particular or people's empowerment in general is not manna from heaven or a gift from the government. Empowerment is a process of enabling entities — be they NGOs, POs, community groups, or individuals — to decide for themselves. Thus, empowerment is not something which is served on a silver platter but is something which one works for. Therefore, the challenge for the government and the people's sector is to struggle for and achieve genuine empowerment of the people — together.

With the empowerment of the people's sector will come greater NGO participation in government operations. This, in turn, means a more extensive collaborative relationship between the government and the NGO community with the former divesting itself of more and more of its traditional powers and functions and the latter performing an increasing number of tasks and responsibilities which used to be out of its reach.

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