

Promoting Equity: A Challenge in the Implementation of Community-Based Forest Management Strategy in the Philippines

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Abstract

A decade ago, community-based forest management was declared as the national strategy to achieve sustainable forestry and social justice in the Philippines. The mandate was to take into account the needs and aspirations of local communities whose livelihoods depend on forestlands. This paper examines if community-based forest management promotes equitable forestland allocation and access to forest resources. A review of policies and operational guidelines suggests that the government has allocated considerable areas within forestlands for community management. Long-term security of tenure was granted to organized local communities through the issuance of the Community-Based Forest Management Agreement and other land tenure instruments under the various people-oriented forestry programs that were implemented in the past. This gives them the right to possess and develop forestlands. However, despite these achievements, there are still a number of improvements that could be made, especially in providing local communities access to forest resources. Currently, the government still has ultimate control and supervision over the utilization of forest resources, including those that are found in areas that are already being managed by local communities. The log ban policy is an unresolved issue that continues to affect the integrity of the community-based forest management strategy in the country.

1. Introduction

In the Philippines, involvement of local communities in forest management has evolved through time. Until the 1960s, forest management was primarily oriented towards the protection and preservation of the forest. Access to forestlands and resources during that period was mainly through license agreements or permits in favor of corporate groups (Asian Development Bank 1994). Upland farmers received little benefit from the use of forest resources and lesser incentives to protect the forests. The law also strictly prohibited slash and burn cultivation and occupancy within forestlands. It emphasized the prosecution and ejection of forest dwellers that were then perceived as destroyers of the forests. Despite such punitive measures, local people continued to move into forestlands for shifting cultivation and livelihood opportunities. Nowadays, most of the forestlands in the country are occupied and being cultivated by local communities, their livelihood and general well-being are intimately linked with the forest.

The Philippines has promulgated a number of policies favoring community-based management of the forest in the country. However, there are still inherent difficulties and insufficiencies in the implementation of these policies that limits equity of forestland allocation and access of local communities to forest resources. The paper will focus on the review of these policies as they continue to affect the expansion of the community-based forest management in the country. It will further explore the reasons for such limitations.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section provides basic information about forestlands and resources and their potential for community-based management. It includes information on the system for recognition of the rights of forest communities and their access to forest resources. Section two explains the methodology adopted in the study. Section three presents the main arguments focusing on policy implementation of CBFM related to forestlands allocation and access of local communities, institutional support and limitations, and the equity outcomes. Finally, section four provides some conclusions.

2. Background

2.1. Forestlands and Resources

The Philippines covers a total land area of thirty million ha. Today, about 14.14 million ha (47%) are classified as Alienable and Disposable (A&D), 14.77 million ha (49%), which are generally above 18% in slope, are classified as forestlands while 1.09 million ha (4%) remain unclassified (Figure 1).

Land Classification (30 million ha)

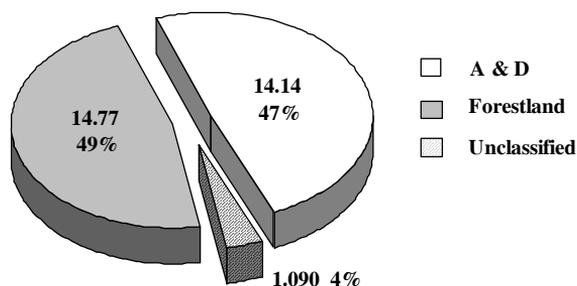


Figure 1: Land Classification in the Philippines

Of the country's 15.86 million ha of classified and unclassified forestlands, 6.52 million (41.11%) ha are under actual forest cover. The balance of 9.34 million ha (58.89%), which are open and cultivated, are the potential areas that can be allocated to forest communities for collective development projects. These include 2.6 million ha of cultivated lands, 2.4 million ha of shrublands, 2.4 million ha of wooded grasslands and 1.10 million ha of grasslands.

Under the Philippine law, forestlands are part of the public domain. At present these areas serve as home to roughly 24 million people, or one-third of the country's population, of whom 6 to 10 million are classified as indigenous (Li 2002).

2.2. Local Communities in Forest Management: A Brief Recount of the Past

A change of government policies and strategies during the 1970s heralded a more responsive and participatory approach to forest management in the Philippines. In 1971, the government passed the Kaingin Management and Land Settlement Regulations under Forestry Administrative Order No.62. This regulation required the government to conduct a complete census of all forest dwellers to identify potential beneficiaries and prepare a management plan to serve as a basis for the development of occupied areas in forestlands.

Similarly, the government promulgated Presidential Decree (PD)¹ No. 389, otherwise known as the Forestry Reform Code in 1974. It directed the forestry agency to develop and implement a continuing program for forest occupants. The decree was later amended when the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines was issued in

¹ Presidential Decrees (PD), Letter of Instructions (LOI) and Executive Orders (EO) are laws issued by virtue of power vested on the President and upon the recommendation of the Secretary of the Department concerned, in this case, the Department of Environment and Natural resources (DENR). They do not require legislative review or approval.

1975 under PD No. 705. It also required the government to define which lands may be the subject of occupancy and design an agroforestry development program for the forest occupants.

As a result of the policy changes, the Forestry Occupancy Management (FOM) Program, the Family Approach to Reforestation (FAR) and the Communal Tree Farm (CTF) Program were implemented. However, these programs did not give the local communities greater authority and land security, they were merely designed to rehabilitate open and cultivated areas and contain occupancy in forestlands. The recognition of the rights of local communities and the system of forestland allocation of areas they occupied and developed were merely through the provision of short-term tenure instruments.

For example, in the FOM (1975), a renewable two-year FOM permit was issued to every participating forest occupant. The main idea was to regulate their activities and stabilize their farming system by planting cash crops in combination with tree species of economic value. In the same way, the FAR (1979) was implemented on a short-term contractual scheme for local communities to hasten the reforestation efforts of the government. It was only the CTF (1979) that granted local communities a 25-year CTF Certificate to rehabilitate and develop open and denuded areas into agroforestry plantations.

On July 28, 1982, the Integrated Social Forestry (ISF) Program was launched under the Letter of Instructions (LOI) No. 1260 with the goals of alleviating poverty, promoting social justice and developing and protecting forest resources through proper stewardship of the areas that are part of the forestlands. The ISFP consolidated FOM, CTF and FAR to promote a more holistic approach in the development of open and occupied areas within forestlands. It was an attempt by the government to democratize the use of forestlands and promote more equitable access to forest resources. The program provided organized members of local communities a renewable 25-year Certificate of Community Forest Stewardship (CCFS) and individual participants with a Certificate of Stewardship (CS), also with a tenure of 25 years.

The implementation of the ISF Program strengthened the involvement of local people in forest management. This program recognized forest communities, including indigenous people, as partners of the government in the development of open and denuded forestlands, while at the same time undertaking activities aimed at improving their socio-economic condition. The change of regulations towards a more developmental and people-oriented forest policy also provided local communities a more active role in forest management and better access to forest resources.

2.3. CBFM in the Master Plan for Forestry Development

In 1990, the Master Plan for Forestry Development (MPFD) in the Philippines was prepared to ensure systematic and coordinated efforts for forest resource development and management. The Master Plan spells out the goals and objectives of the development programs and projects in the forestry sector. It includes a program on people-oriented forestry (POF) that serves as the primary vehicle to provide local

communities equal opportunities in forest management and access to forest resources. POF local communities, including indigenous communities, are actively involved in managing, conserving and using forestlands and resources.

2.4. CBFM: A National Strategy for Sustainable Forest Management

After more than two decades of implementing various people-oriented forestry programs, the Philippines government has developed a strategy believed to be more sustainable, equitable and holistic. Now, all efforts geared towards the development of forestlands adopt Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) as a national strategy to ensure sustainable development of the country's forestland resources and achieve social justice in consonance with the provisions of Executive Order No. 263 issued by the government in 1995.

Briefly, CBFM as a strategy refers to all organized efforts of the government to work with local communities in and adjacent to public forestlands. It underscores the principles of social equity, sustainability and community participation in forest management and biodiversity conservation. Through the CBFM strategy, the government empowers and allocates to local communities portions of the forestlands for development, protection, management, conservation and further grants them access to utilize forest resources. Specifically, the CBFM strategy aims to protect Filipinos, right to a healthy environment; improve the socio-economic conditions of the participating communities; and promote social justice and equitable access to and benefits from forest resources. These objectives highlight the important role expected of local communities, not only in promoting forest development but also to help advance the overall socio-economic development in the Philippine uplands.

Even in the revision of the MPFD in 2003, the government recognized the need to further enhance the implementation of the CBFM strategy. It aimed to bridge the gap in providing support to sustain the interest among the participating members of the People's Organizations (PO)². Specifically, the revised master plan intends to strengthen existing sites, identify and implement new sites, place open access areas under formal management systems and pursue development activities geared towards resource generation.

In June 2004, support for the community-based approach in forest management was further exemplified through the promulgation of Executive Order No. 318. It declared community-based conservation and development as among the guiding principles to promote sustainable forest management. It reiterated community-based forest management as the primary strategy in all forest conservation and development projects in the country.

² A People's Organization (PO) may be an association, cooperative, federation or other legal entity established by the community to undertake collective action to address community concerns and needs and mutually share the benefits from the endeavor.

2.5. Extent and Coverage of CBFM: How Far Has it Gone?

CBFM covers all areas classified as forestlands, including the allowable zones within the protected areas. In the strategic action plan for CBFM, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)³ has set as target of 9 million ha of forestlands to be managed following the CBFM strategy.

As of the middle of 2005, 5503 projects were already established. These encompass an aggregate area of 5.97 million ha involving 690,691 households. Of these areas 1577 sites with a total area of 1.57 million ha were allocated to organized communities through the issuance of long-term CBFM Agreements (Table 1). The rest of the project sites are covered by land tenure instruments under the various people-oriented forestry projects that the Philippine government has implemented in the past.

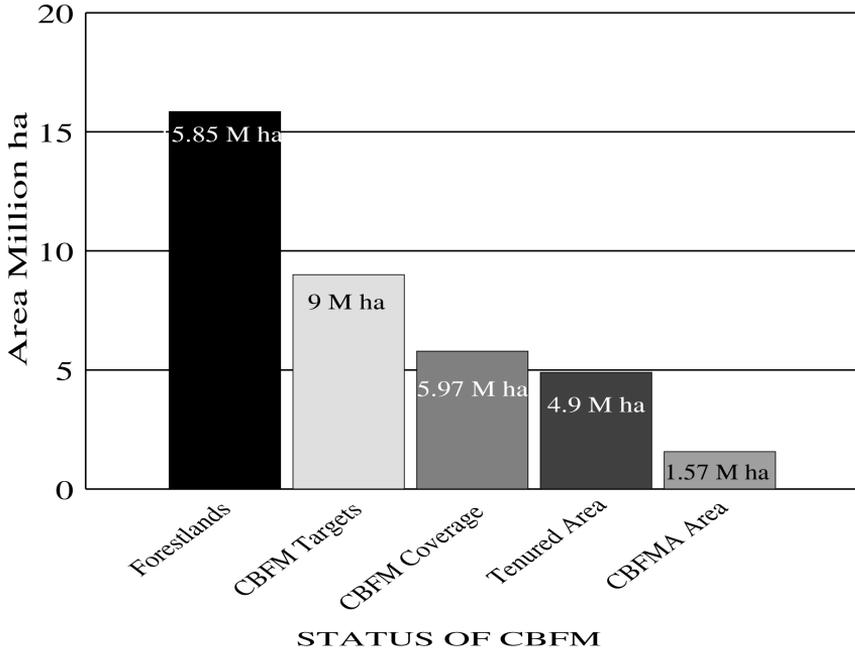
Table 1: Summary of CBFM Agreements Issuance

<i>Region</i> ⁴	<i>No of Sites</i>	<i>Tenured area</i>	<i>No. of Households</i>	<i>No. POs</i>
ARMM	10	22,861.20	2,365	10
CAR	67	48,045.74	11,909	67
01	126	40,080.38	14,205	126
02	93	272,505.84	92,099	93
03	120	78,066.68	11,544	120
04A	31	16,707.30	2,920	31
04-B	79	96,602.27	10,122	79
05	52	41,703.80	10,542	52
06	104	42,656.70	16,978	104
07	133	45,476.60	11,901	133
08	111	107,557.63	12,693	111
09	121	66,298.01	12,030	121
10	295	214,209.05	30,376	295
11	92	195,396.30	25,895	92
12	48	88,645.49	10,197	48
13	95	197,233.97	28,115	95
TOTAL	1,577	1,574,046.96	303,891	1,577

³ The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is the primary government agency in the Philippines responsible for the conservation, management, development and proper use of forest and other natural resources.

⁴ DENR is sub-divided into 16 Regional Offices which include the National Capital Region (NCR). Each region is headed by a Regional Director. NCR is not included in Table 1 because it does not cover any CBFM project while ARMM (Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao) operates as an autonomous region.

The 5.97 million ha (Figure 2) currently covered by CBFM already comprise about 66.3% of the total area targeted by the government. This is a concrete manifestation of the government’s determination to carry out its policy of involving and allocating suitable portions of forestlands for the local communities to manage.



Though the Issuance of CBFMA

Figure 2: The Coverage and Status of Forestland Allocation

3. CBFM Assessments and Reflections of Implementations: A Working Framework

Several evaluations, consultations and studies have been undertaken to review and assess the implementation of the CBFM strategy. These were conducted to pursue a common goal of enhancing the implementation of the strategy throughout the country. The most important of these studies include:

1. National CBFM Multi-stakeholder Assessment and Reflection Workshop (*DENR 2003*)
2. Synthesis of In-depth Case Studies Conducted in CBFM Areas (Pulhin 2005)
3. Field Review of Forty Seven CBFM Sites (Miyakawa *et al.* 2005)

It is from these three studies that the majority of data is drawn to support the arguments presented in this paper and the observations that the *implementation of government policies on CBFM is limiting equity of forestlands allocation and access to forest resources*. It is also within this framework that I will explore the reasons for these inequities.

There are diverse views and opinions about equity. There are also a number of discussions about it, but no agreement so far has been reached as to what constitutes an equitable outcome. According to Fisher and Malla, it is not necessary to insist that equity requires precisely equal sharing of benefits; rather, it connotes “fairness” and “justice.” They further emphasized that equity is a subjective issue, not a question that can be decided by objective definition (Fisher and Malla 1987).

Similarly, Fisher opined that community forestry can be used in two rather distinct ways. On one hand, it can be used as a convenient generic term or gloss to describe a range of different policies and forms of forest management which have in common some involvement of local people in forest management. The second one is the management of forests by communities for their own use (Fisher 2005). But as Agarwal stated, involvement or participation of local communities in forest management is determined especially by policies, acts or rules, norms and perceptions, in addition to the endowments and attributes of those affected (Agarwal 2001).

3.1. The National CBFM Multi-Stakeholder Workshop: Assessment and Reflection

The National CBFM Multi-stakeholder Assessment and Reflection Workshop was organized primarily to translate recommendations from previous consultations into concrete actions to support the implementation of the CBFM strategy. DENR officials and representatives of other government and non-government organizations that participated in the workshop recommended actions pertinent to CBFM implementation based on the results of previous assessments conducted by other stakeholders. One of the priority areas identified was the need to review CBFM policies and streamline operational guidelines to address the needs at the local level, especially on the criteria for the selection of participants, issuance of tenure instruments and utilization of forest resources.

In the same workshop, the need to further develop capacities of POs, CBFM Coordinators and Local Government Units (LGUs) and the institutionalization of multi-sectoral involvement in CBFM was discussed. The conduct of the workshop was timely and relevant. All the recommendations have since been translated into operational directives and some were incorporated in the formulation of guidelines to pursue the primary intent of enhancing the CBFM.

3.2. In-Department Case Studies: Exploring the Impediments and Opportunities for CBFM

In the early part of 2004, the DENR, with support from the National Forest Program (NFP) Facility and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and in collaboration with some non-government organizations, conducted in-department case studies of selected CBFM areas in the islands of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The studies attempted to explore the current implementation impediments and opportunities for improvement in order to translate the result into practical recommendations that will serve as input in strengthening the CBFM strategy.

The case studies concluded that despite the continuous expansion of CBFM, a number of problems continue to beset its implementation. Policy and institutional support for CBFM was identified as major area of concern. Recommendations were made to help facilitate delivery of services at the project level and policy development at the program level.

3.3. DENR-JICA Field Review of Forty CBFM Sites

Similarly, DENR, through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) assisted the Project for the Enhancement of CBFM and conducted field reviews of forty seven projects in the Philippines. The report also confirmed that the numerous policies and guidelines issued on CBFM are difficult for the various stakeholders to fully understand. Many of the POs also raised the concern that while the law declared CBFM as a national strategy to promote sustainable forest management, the government's frequent change of rules and guidelines was not creating a stable environment to work within.

It is in this context that this paper further explores the policy aspects related to the recognition of rights of local communities over forestland areas they develop and occupy and the opportunities for them to access and utilize forest resources in accordance with the CBFM strategy.

4. CBFM Policies and Operational Guidelines: Implementation Issues and Concerns

4.1. Forestlands Allocation and Tenure Rights

In the Philippines, it appears that the government has already vigorously pursued the involvement and allocation of suitable portions of forestlands to local communities. This is supported in various policies and operational guidelines that have been promulgated (Table 2). However, the findings of the assessments, evaluations and studies indicate that the policy and institutional support for CBFM remains weak. Despite some initiatives, there is still much room for improvement in policy and institutional support for CBFM (Pulhin 2005). This was mainly attributed to: 1) complex procedures and many restrictions imposed on local communities who seek access to utilize forest resources; 2) the perceived institutional inefficiency to implement CBFM especially at the field level; 3) the absence of financial mechanisms to help finance CBFM; and 4) the policies for soliciting the participation of the LGUs, non-government organizations, and tacitly, the people's organizations, are insufficient.

Before exploring the above arguments, there is a need to review the processes involved in the implementation of CBFM, especially those relating to allocation of forestlands and access of local communities to forest resources in CBFM areas. These processes are stipulated in the Revised Rules and Regulations for the Implementation of CBFM under DENR Administrative Order (DAO) No. 2004-29.

Table 2 Summary of Major CBFM Policies Cited in the Paper

Year	Policy	Brief Description
1971	Forestry Administrative Order N0.62	Kaingin Management and Land Settlement Regulations
1974	Presidential Decree No. 389	Forestry Reform Code
1975	Presidential Decree No. 705	Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines
1982	Letter of Instructions No. 1260	Launching the Integrated Social Forestry Program for Forest Dwellers and Communities
1991	Republic Act No. 7160	Local Government Code of the Philippines
1995	Executive Order No. 263	Adopting CBFM as the National Strategy to Ensure Sustainable Development of Forestlands and Resources
1998	Joint Memorandum Circular No. 98-01	Manual of Procedures for DENR-DILG-LGU Partnership on Devolved and other Forest Management Functions
2003	Joint DENR-DILG-LGU Memorandum Circular No. 2003-01	Strengthening and Institutionalizing DENR-DILG-LGU Partnership on Devolved and other Forest Management Functions
2004	Executive Order No. 318	Promoting Sustainable Forest Management in the Philippines
2004	DENR Adm. Order No. 2004-29	Revised Rules and Regulations for the Implementation of Executive Order No. 263

The provisions of Executive Order No. 263 recognize and support the capacities and important roles of local communities to protect, develop, utilize and manage forestlands and resources. This is formalized through the granting of CBFM Agreements which provide access and incentives (Box 1) for the local communities to forestlands and resources.

Box 1: List of Incentives Under CBFM

The issuance of CBFM Agreement offers concomitant incentives that could be enjoyed by the PO in the development of their CBFM projects. Among these are:

1. The right to occupy, possess, utilize and develop the forestlands and its resources within a designated CBFM area and claim ownership of the introduced improvements;
2. To allocate to the members and enforce the rights to use and manage the allocated forestlands and resources within the CBFMA area;
3. To be exempted from payment of rental for use of the CBFM areas;
4. To be exempted from paying forest charges, as required by law, on timber and non-timber products harvested from plantations; and
5. To receive all income and proceeds from the utilization of forest resources in CBFM areas.

This agreement is a production sharing agreement entered into between a community, as represented by a People's Organization, and the government to protect, develop, utilize and manage specific portions of the forestland consistent with the principles of sustainable development and pursuant to a Community Resource Management Framework (CRMF).

However, participation in CBFM is not totally free. POs that hold CBFM Agreements are required to participate in site identification, selection, and project boundary delineation. They also have some important obligations and responsibilities to be performed. Among these are:

1. To protect the entire forestlands within the CBFMA area against illegal logging and the unauthorized extraction of forest products, slash and burn agriculture and other forms of forest destruction;
2. Designate areas according to their sustainable use and allocate and regulate resource-use rights in accordance with national laws, rules and regulations;
3. Prepare and implement CRMF and a 5-Year Work Plan (WP) with assistance from CBFM coordinators and LGU;
4. Formulate and implement equitable benefit sharing scheme among members; and
5. Recognize the rights of occupancy through the granting of individual certificate of stewardship based on the census of actual forest occupants, and provided the Certificate of Stewardship (CS) applicant is a regular member of the PO.

It should also be noted that not all local communities can be included as participants. Only the communities, as represented by their POs, that have the following qualifications are allowed to participate in CBFM:

1. Members shall be Filipino citizens;
2. Members may either be:
 - a. Actually tilling portions of the area to be awarded;
 - b. Traditionally using the resource for a substantial portion of their livelihood; or
 - c. Actually residing within or adjacent to, and are dependent on and actually developing portions of the areas to be awarded.

All others that do not meet the qualifications are excluded. In many of the CBFM areas, PO membership is generally low. For example, in Cebu, a province on the Island of Visayas, the *Kapunongan sa Mag-uuma sa Yutang Lansangan sa Bulalacao* (KMYLB), an association of farmers within the forestlands of Bulalacao, was awarded a CBFM Agreement covering an area of 1651 ha in 1999 in the barangay of Nug-as, Alcoy Cebu. The barangay⁵ has a total population of 2465, or 448 households; only 40 (or 8.9%) of the households in the barangay⁵ are included as members of KMYLB.

⁵ The barangay is the second smallest political unit (next to Sitio) in the Philippines.

In Leyte, another province in the Visayas, another PO locally known as *Unyon sa Mag-uuma sa Capoocan* (UMACAP), a farmer's cooperative in Capoocan, was awarded a CBFMA covering 2387 ha in 2000. The project site is located in 3 barangays of Capoocan with a total population of 3536 with 683 households, but only 127, or 18.6%, of these households are the enlisted members of UMACAP. As a consequence, promotion of equal access to and benefits from forest resources has become a problem. The residents of the barangays that are not included as members of the POs complain that they are deprived of the same opportunities to utilize forest resources. There are also other members of the community that still carry with them a 'wait and see attitude'. Unless they see that there are substantial benefits that they can obtain, they remain hesitant to participate in the community projects.

5. Major Findings

5.1. Access to Forest Resources: Complexities of Procedures and Restrictions Imposed on Local Communities

A critical issue that has to be elucidated is the access of local communities to forest resources. As argued in the case studies and in a number of assessments conducted on CBFM, the procedures for harvesting timber resources in CBFM areas are complex (Pulhin 2005). There are many restrictions imposed on POs before they are allowed to utilize these resources. These include complex requirements associated with the issuance of transport permits and the preparation of CRMF and the Five-Year Work Plan, which is usually viewed as too technical and beyond the capability of the POs.

Preparation of CRMF and Five-Year Work Plan

To a great extent, I find merit in this argument. In the existing guidelines and procedures on CBFM, the POs are expected to prepare the CRMF within 30 days after the issuance of the CBFM Agreement. The CRMF serves as the strategic plan of the community on how to manage and benefit from the forest resources on a sustainable basis. It describes the long term vision of the community, commitments and strategies for the protection, development and utilization of forest resources. It further indicates the environmental impacts of and the mitigation and enhancement measures for the activities to be undertaken by the POs in CBFM areas.

In addition, the guidelines also require the POs to prepare a five-year Work Plan consistent with the CRMF. It should contain a projected five year plan for detailed strategies, activities and targets of the PO on protection, development, resource utilization and enterprise development, among others. While the DENR Officers and LGUs concerned are mandated to join and assist the POs to prepare the CRMF and 5 year Work Plan, both plans still need to be reviewed and affirmed by DENR.

It is understandable that government sees itself as having the responsibility to ensure that forests are properly managed and protected and forest officers are tasked

to carry out this mandate. It is the government's moral obligation to protect public interest and ensure that the future generations of Filipino people continue to have green forest to inherit, fresh air to breathe and clean water to drink. However, complicated procedures and requirements can often be onerous and impractical.

Cognizant of such complexities being imposed on the POs, especially in harvesting and utilization of forest resources, DENR embarked on the streamlining and simplification of requirements and operating procedures on CBFM. As a result, POs are no longer required to undertake the tedious requirements and processes for them to be issued with Environmental Clearance Certificate (ECC) (DAO 2004-29). The affirmed CRMF itself already substituted the Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) as a requirement for the issuance of the ECC. Likewise, the simplified guidelines only require the POs to prepare work plans every five years, instead of having them prepared and affirmed by DENR every year. This made their work easier and convenient.

But POs must still follow all prescribed rules, regulations and guidelines for harvesting timber resources particularly the issuance of cutting permits and transport certificates. However, while it appears that these regulations provide strict requirements under which the POs must work, at least they are allowed to harvest and utilize forest resources within the CBFM areas as long as they comply with the requirements.

The Log Ban

A more pressing issue is the policy on logging ban now being pushed by some environmental advocates. In December 2004, as a reaction to the massive flooding and devastating effects of landslides in the provinces of Aurora and Quezon on the island of Luzon, the government (as represented by DENR) ordered the cancellation of all logging permits in the stated provinces and the suspension of all other logging permits in the rest of the country, including CBFM areas. This has severely reduced economic activities for many POs to manage large tracts of forestlands areas that were allocated to them under the CBFM Agreement.

Many of the CBFM areas include portions of the natural forest that are currently protected and managed by local communities. For example, in Isabela, a province in the Northern part of the Island of Luzon, a PO known as VIBANARA (taken from the names of barangays where the project is located), was awarded a CBFM Agreement covering 10,220 ha of forestland. Out of the total project area covered by the CBFM Agreement, 64% is residual forest (6585 ha) with less than one percent of old growth forest. In another case, in Compostela Valley, a province in the Island of Mindanao, the Ngan Panansalan, and Pagsabangan Forest Resources Development Cooperative (NPPFRDC) was also awarded a CBFM Agreement covering an area of 14,800 ha. Seventy five percent of the project site is composed of residual forests.

Harvesting of timber in CBFM areas provides great opportunities for the POs to generate financial capital to support livelihood projects, development activities like agroforestry and reforestation, and forest protection. In other words, local communities should also generate benefits to sufficient level to sustain economic

and development activities at the local level. For example, in the affirmed CRMF of the NPPFRDC⁶ in Compostela Valley in Mindanao, the PO planned to utilize a total volume of 67,500 cubic meters of timber from their CBFM area for five years to support their livelihood and generate capital for forest protection activities, plantation and agroforestry development. The members of the PO hoped that after fifteen years, they would be more dependent on plantation forest, which consequently will reduce the pressure and allow the natural forest to regenerate. Unfortunately, because of some alleged violations of forest regulations, the DENR suspended the resource utilization permit of the PO. As a result, the livelihood, forest protection, plantation and agroforestry development activities of the PO were adversely affected (IPC 2004).

Currently, in only 2 regions in Mindanao Island, Regions 11 and 13 (see Table 1), are POs allowed to harvest and utilize forest resources. However, in these two regions, not all the POs can harvest forest resources in their CBFM areas. DENR requires a comprehensive evaluation of the performance of all the holders of tenure instruments issued in forestlands, including the CBFM Agreement. Under the regulations, only the POs that are religiously complying with the terms and conditions stipulated in the Agreement and those that have satisfactory performance in reforestation, agroforestry development, timber stand improvement and forest protection are allowed to undertake harvesting of forest resources. Except for the non-timber forest products (NTFP)⁷, the suspension continues to be in force in other parts of the country.

The logging ban also includes the suspension of harvesting of planted trees. The database on CBFM also indicates a considerable area of forest plantations developed by POs. This is a significant investment by POs hoping to improve their livelihood. If the log ban continues, they lose the benefits that they had expected to generate from the harvest of what they have planted, making their lives even more difficult.

5.2. Institutional Insufficiencies Affecting CBFM Policy Implementation

Organizational Structure and Staff Support for CBFM

The limited number of DENR staff, particularly at the field level, who can provide technical assistance and conduct regular monitoring of the implementation of CBFM policies is often identified as a key factor that impede the implementation of CBFM (Miyakawa *et al.* 2005, Pulhin 2005). As an offshoot of the national assessment done by a multi-sectoral group in 2003, DENR conducted a survey of field personnel assigned to CBFM. The survey revealed that only 641, or an average

⁶ NPPFRDC is the first and only People's Organization in the Philippines that was granted an International Certification for its sustainable forest management practices.

⁷ Non-timber forest products include rattan, bamboos, vines, resins, palms, and other similar products taken from the forest, other than timbers.

of 43 personnel per region, usually designated as CBFM Coordinator, were implementing CBFM in the field. With the 5503 CBFM sites already established nationwide, one CBFM coordinator⁸ is tasked to oversee an average of eight sites covering an aggregate area not less than 8000 ha.

This limitation was also highlighted by the result of the in-depth case study conducted by the DENR in collaboration with different non-government organizations with the assistance of the National Forestry Program (NFP) Facility. The study revealed that in one Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO), only 2 out of 38 staff were responsible for CBFM implementation. The issue was further confirmed by the field review (DENR-JICA Enhancement of CBFM Project) of 47 sites that indicate that a CBFM coordinator is responsible for an average of five or more projects. The study also found that the situation is further aggravated by the lack of capacity of some of these DENR staff supporting the CBFM. The study concluded that these situations make facilitation and the support of CBFM extremely difficult.

In addition, there are still many DENR staff or personnel assigned in CBFM that lack the necessary attitudes and capacity to work with local communities. The result of the DENR-JICA field review on forty seven CBFM sites also indicates that in most of the sites visited, DENR personnel assigned to support the POs generally lack training and efforts for self improvement (Miyakawa *et al.* 2005).

There are also perceptions that the DENR structure is not responsive to the needs and demands of CBFM. There is duplication of functions being performed by DENR offices at various levels that leads to inefficiencies and is a waste of resources in the implementation of CBFM. This is evident in Surigao del Sur, a province in Mindanao Island under the assistance of the National Forestry Program Facility. Apparently, the functions being performed by the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO)⁹ merely duplicates CBFM functions that are already being performed by the Community Environment and Natural Resources (CENRO)¹⁰. In such case, the PENRO is perceived as an unnecessary layer of authority that only delays implementation of CBFM activities.

5.3. Financial Support

While Executive Order No. 263 declared CBFM as the national strategy to ensure sustainable development of forestlands and resources in the country, only a

⁸ CBFM Coordinators are DENR staff assigned to provide technical assistance and facilitate the activities of the POs. Many of them are foresters, agriculturists and graduates of social sciences with training related to community organizing, agroforestry, forest plantation development and protection and related fields.

⁹ PENRO is the office of DENR established at the provincial level.

¹⁰ CENRO is a DENR office at the community level which covers certain number of municipalities depending on the resources to be managed. It is directly responsible in the implementation and monitoring of all projects on environment and natural resources sector.

meager budget was provided for the program to be fully implemented. For the last five years (Year 2000-2004) CBFM has only received an annual average of 5.12% out of the total forestry sector budget (Table 3).

In addition, the CBFM Special Account intended to provide financial support for the development of CBFM projects has not been implemented. The General Appropriations Act (GAA) and the State Auditing Code of the Philippines require that all revenue collected by the government should be deposited with the National Treasury or a National Government repository. In these laws, it is prohibited to earmark funds for specific project like CBFM.

LGU Partnership and Multi-sectoral Participation

The implementation of CBFM requires strong partnerships with local governments and collaboration with other stakeholders. Under Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1991, the LGUs shall share with DENR the responsibility of the sustainable management and development of forestlands and resources. Toward this end, the DENR and LGUs shall endeavor to strengthen their collaboration and partnership in forest management. The law also requires all national government agencies to consult the LGUs before implementing local development projects.

Table 3: Budget Allocation for CBFM

Year	Forest Management Sector	CBFM Program	Percentage (%)
2000	1,514,805	97,361	6.43
2001	1,423,773	64,185	4.51
2002	1,529,112	73,288	4.79
2003	1,567,055	78,692	5.02
2004	1,536,879	74,602	4.85
Total	7,571,624	388,128	Avg. 5.12

Source: General Appropriations Act and National Program Expenditure

Pursuant to the provisions of the local government code, DENR and the Department of Interior and Local Governments (DILG) jointly issued Joint Memorandum Circulars (JMC) No. 98-01 and 2003-01, setting up the mechanisms for their collaboration and partnership in forest management. In such arrangement, DENR and DILG agree to work together to support POs, and to protect, develop, manage and ensure that all qualified be given equal opportunities to utilize and benefit from forest resources.

To ensure the support of other government agencies, especially the LGUs, and non-government organizations, DENR mandated all of its units to establish and consolidate partnerships among these groups and institutions as their highest priority. It is mandatory for DENR offices to submit any application for tenure instruments, including permits to utilize forest resources for comments by the LGUs (Department Administrative Order- DAO 2004-29). In turn, the legislative council of the concerned LGU endorses such documents to DENR if they find the applications relevant and consistent with local plans. However, in a number of case studies and field evaluation reports, it appears that these policies are still not fully implemented. The expected support from the different sectors for the implementation of CBFM remains insufficient. The reasons identified also include insufficient staff that can be assigned and funds on the LGUs side that could be utilized for CBFM implementation. The other sectors are also busy doing their own priority activities and have insufficient time for collaborative undertakings.

6. Conclusions

This paper has consistently illustrated the will of the government to involve local communities in forest management. This is exemplified in various policies and operational guidelines that have been issued on community-based management of forests. CBFM agreements and other forms of land tenure instruments have been granted by the government to transfer the rights and responsibilities to POs to access, manage and developed suitable areas in forestlands.

However, access of local communities to forest resources remains an issue. The government still has ultimate control and supervision over the utilization of forest resources, including those that are found in areas that are already being managed by local communities. The log ban policy is an unresolved issue that has been adversely affecting the interest of the local communities to participate and of other stakeholders to support the implementation of CBFM. Right now, harvesting and utilization of timber resources are limited to only two regions in the country. The ban has totally restricted all other members of local communities outside these regions to access timber resources. Unless the government promulgates definitive regulations, upon which the POs can be allowed to harvest their plantations and give them back the rights to access and utilize the natural resources that they have long cared for and protected, the integrity of CBFM will continue to be adversely affected.

For effective change, local communities need more formal involvement in rule making and increased bargaining power to ensure that policy changes will have positive impacts on their lives. Government must also not forget that policies that have been formulated with substantial involvement and inputs of local communities and other affected groups will have a long and lasting effect. But, how local communities influence those that make the policies will again depend on their strength and group cohesiveness. In many instances, their bargaining power to lobby the government for fair and just

policies is facilitated if they have the support from external agents like LGUs, NGOs and other groups.

The support of LGUs is important to ensure a higher level of community participation in CBFM. Aside from the LGUs, DENR should also establish mutual and lasting partnership with other stakeholders on the ground to achieve the CBFM objectives. These partnerships should provide creative space upon which each counterpart can seek harmonious relationship and refine the collaborative rules on CBFM through consensus and the consultative processes. In fact, good community forest governance should not only be focused at government organizational levels, but also civil society, forest users and private sector should also be recognized as equal partners.

Equity, as asserted by Fisher and Malla, exists in the Philippine CBFM. The government is just in allocating forestlands to be managed by local communities. The selection of beneficiaries is strictly based on established criteria and procedures, such that those that are qualified are included, and those that are not, are excluded. It is also fair. While it has prescribed some limitations on the access to forest resources, its intention is also to be fair with other Filipino citizens.

Overall, the paper concludes that CBFM as a strategy is a viable model to ensure sustainable forest management. But policies and operational guidelines should be made based on local situations and to the satisfaction of the needs of local communities. The government should develop effective mechanisms to fully harness the potential of community-based forest management to contribute to poverty alleviation at the community level. It would be even more effective if LGUs, non-government organizations and other stakeholders can be motivated to support local community-based forest management initiatives.

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