

FOREST POLICIES IN THE PHILIPPINES : A WINDING TRAIL TOWARDS PARTICIPATORY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

The Philippine journey to sustainable development is replete with actions and visions of individuals and groups who have believed that governmental initiatives and resources can never be adequate to truly navigate the country to its desired destination. The dream of an equitable and sustainable future for the Filipinos is one fraught with uncertainty and difficult choices that would require vigilance and perseverance among those who aspire for such.

Such would also require not only painstaking toils but equally a re-thinking and re-orientation of institutions that deal with environment and natural resources in particular.

The forestry sector, considered to be a significant resource critical to the country's efforts to achieve the goals of sustainable development was a subject to interesting shifts in its policies and management. Amidst forces of change that characterized the historical evolution of forest policies, interesting trend towards people and community participation have become increasingly pervasive.

This paper briefly outlines the twists and turns in forestry policies and programs, including the driving factors associated with reforms and the possible prospects of continuing in the same direction into the next century.

The Context of Devolution in Natural Resource Management in the Philippines

Devolution in this paper refers to the process involving the transfer of state or central power of access and control of resources to user groups. For centuries, during and after the colonial periods, resource management in the Philippines is strongly centrally-determined, top down and non participatory (Figure 1). Before the colonial period, however, local resource management were highly localized and in the hand of "Datu" and other local leaders. The colonial period was characterized by passing of laws consolidating power on access and control of resources into the hands of the state. Post colonial government continued to support this pattern of centrally-controlled access to resources.

The Philippine Constitution and various Presidential Decrees (PD) including PD 705 or the Revised Forestry Code generally defines control, management and goals regarding the utilization of the country's natural resources. Major features of these provisions are the following:

- a. The state generally is the steward and, therefore, allocates and manages our natural resources through existing line agencies;
- b. Utilization of natural resources should benefit citizens of the country both of the present and future generations; and
- c. Ecological, cultural and developmental considerations are taken into account in the utilization of our natural resources.

The various provisions in our Constitution build in the concern for generating inter-and intra-generational and continuing benefits from our natural resources. The right of every Filipino to join a productive and wholesome environment is also guaranteed by our Constitution as stipulated in Article II Section 16. However, the state do not have the resources nor the capacity to protect and manage these resources sustainably and the present state of our environment and various life support system has brought about grave concern and alarm. Sajise et al (1992) in a report covered by the University of the Philippines Assessment on the State of the Nation described the state of our environment as follows:

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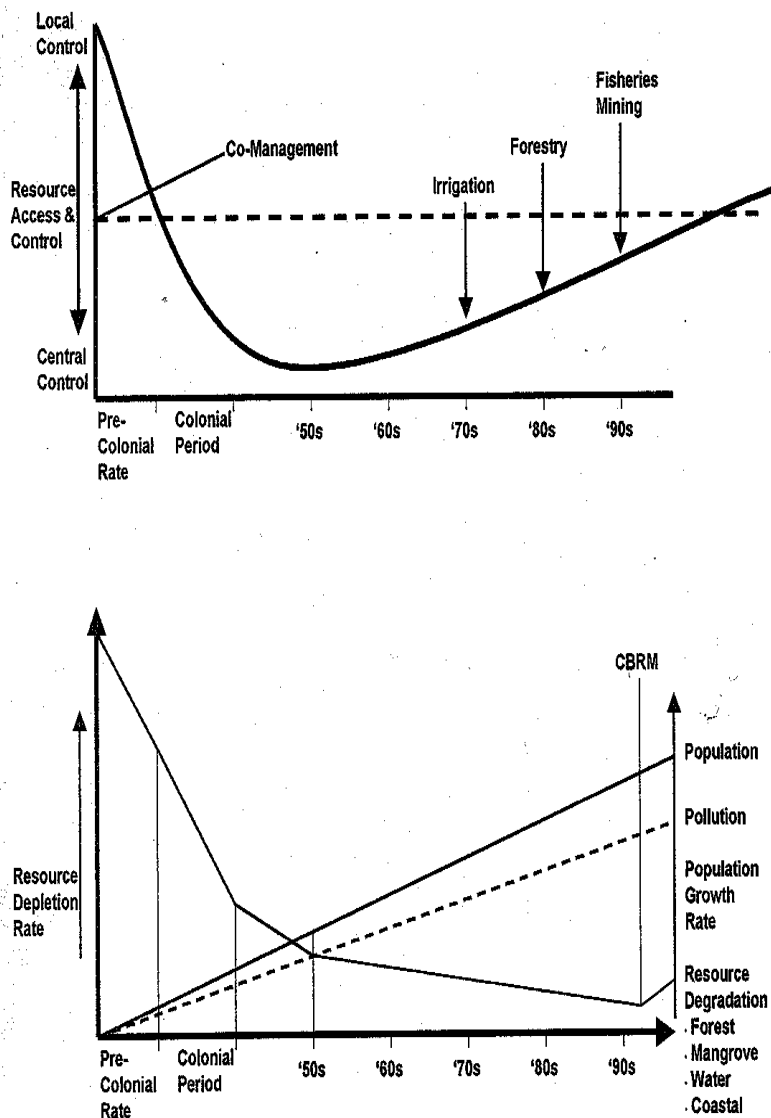


Figure 1. Conceptual Representation of CBRM Historical Trend and Resource Use in the Philippines.

The state of our environment is already critical as indicated by the following facts:

1. The forest cover the country is only 20.5 percent today compared to 57.3 percent 90 years ago. To regenerate enough forest cover to bring it back to the same level would require 177 years at present rate and efficiency of reforestation.

2. Agricultural production efficiency for important grain crops (rice and corn) have been going down since 1985. This is because of expansion into marginal lands as a result of land conversion and lack of access to lowland production areas of upland migrants. Decline in agricultural efficiency is also a result of degradation of the agricultural resource base due to degradation of the soil resource base, pest incidence and chemical pollution. This is very profound as 58.2% of our total population and 65% of the rural population is directly and indirectly dependent on agriculture for employment and livelihood.
3. The rich freshwater endowment of the country is fast deteriorating. For example, 40 rivers (including all rivers of Metro Manila) out of 384 river systems are now considered biologically dead due to pollution; 480,802 hectares of freshwater areas are affected by salt water intrusion.
4. The coastal habitat and resources has also considerably declined. Coral reef destruction is up to 70 percent in extent, mangrove areas have been reduced to only 30 percent (139,725 has.) and seagrass communities have been destroyed. This coastal resource destruction and improper fishing methods have resulted in the decline of overall fisheries production. Sustainable yield limits for fisheries may have been exceeded already.
5. In urban and settlement areas, the growth of human population in areas of comparatively small sizes and the lack of a planning framework upon which to base development have led to incompatible and inappropriate land uses which in turn have become the main cause of environmental deterioration such as water pollution, problems of waste disposal, deteriorating health and nutrition status of people created magnified natural disaster impacts (environment magnification).

The deterioration of our life support systems is expected to be exacerbated in the following decades by the following forces.

- High foreign debt burden;
- Poverty;
- Rapid population growth;
- Inequity;
- Weak institutional capacity;
- Lethargy of local communities;
- Stagnant economy; and
- Non-responsive political system

In accordance with definition of sustainable development, the present trend of the capacity of life support systems in the Philippines will not allow the country to pursue a pathway of sustainable development. Exacerbation of this condition is also predictable if present trends will continue.

Zosa-Feranil (1992) predicts a low population estimate of 91M and a high estimate of 110M Filipinos by the year 2010. If poverty, inequity, weak institutional capacity to protect the environment together with a high foreign debt burden will continue to prevail in the next decade, the Philippines will be following a course of unsustainable development accompanied by the prospects of low level of quality of life for our people.

It has been realized, therefore, that current trends in the use of resources to achieve sustainable development is untenable and that alternative methods offer chances of reversing this trend. Consequently, there has been a shift to forward-looking policies and strategies that advocate community-based initiatives to rehabilitate, conserve and protect the resources based on enhancement of local knowledge and skill responsibility and accountability.

The shift to locally-based or user-based resource management started in the early 1970's in the Philippines with the irrigation sector, followed by the Forestry sector in the early 1980's and Fisheries and mining towards the early 1990's (Bagadion, 1990; Fellizar, 1993; Muñoz, 1993, Serna, 1993; Pomeroy, 1995). These shifts were not total devolution but leaned toward co-management where the state and the community, together with other stakeholders, share the

management responsibility of access, control and benefits on the use of these resources. Impetus for the shift were mainly the following focus;

- a.) Recognition by the state of the benefits and of local level or the users willingness to share the responsibility of protecting these resources at no cost to the government;
- b.) Local user groups can effectively organize themselves for collective action and has the skill to manage resources properly;
- c.) Institution of “pockets” of policies that promoted the institutionalization of the community-based and participatory approaches to natural resource management; and
- d.) The phenomenon of the “people power” revolution in 1986 that instituted reforms in our Constitution favoring community-based approaches.

The Philippine Forests and Forestry: A Glimpse into the Dark Past

Ancient records would show that in 1521, when the early Spanish colonizers first landed in the Philippines, 90% of the country was covered with lush tropical rain forest (about 27M hectares out of 30M total land area). By the year 1900, 21M hectares of forest cover or about 70% existed. In 1995, there were only 5.6 hectares (19%) of remaining forest. Of these, only 0.8 M hectares are old-growth dipterocarp forests. The rest are either logged-over and degraded areas. The 1996 Forestry Statistics place the remaining forest at 5.4 million hectares (18%), while 10.5 million hectares are open, degraded or occupied areas.

Given that in 1950, estimated forests is 14 million hectares, this means that nearly 9.6 million hectares of forest was lost in about 46 years or a 200,000 hectares average forest loss per year. It has been reported that around 100,000 hectares are still being lost yearly.

To make matters worse, there are more than 20 million Filipinos who settled in the uplands. Nearly half of them are totally dependent on the forest resources with household income of P15,000 to P25,000. They are also characterized by a high population growth rate, placed at 2.8% annually, which is higher than the national rate of 2.32%.

Several factors were blamed to have caused the massive destruction of the country’s forest resources. Some of these were: illegal and indiscriminate logging practices, shifting cultivation, unfavorable policy environment, weak law enforcement and slow pace of rehabilitation efforts.

As of 1996, the forestland types, key issues and possible management interventions can be summarized as shown in Table 1. The condition of these areas demand complex and urgent policy and management measures. Such would likewise need an appreciation of factors and events that brought about the sorry state of these resources.

Policy Shifts: The People-Oriented and Participatory Trail Unfolds

This portion is a cursory view of the past and present forest policy and instruments. Though not a detailed listing and exhaustive discussion on what in reality transpired, it is hoped to provide idea on the evolving pattern of forestry policy in the country, that eventually led to a more participatory, people-oriented programs. These policy shifts can be noted from various DENR Administrative Orders [DENR Administrative Orders 2, 22, 95-19, 96-29, 96-30, 97-12] and Executive Order (EO 263)].

Early policies related to the forestry sector can be traced to its long history of colonialism, first under Spain and later the United States of America. The promulgation of the Regalian Doctrine during the Spanish era, and the concept of Public Domain installed during the American regime, both promoted the doctrine of state ownership over all natural resources, including forests. This meant that all natural the forests, and areas designated as forestlands, are owned by the state and therefore any use is subject to governmental regulation and legal controls. Forest utilization has become a ‘privilege’ granted by the state to individuals or groups.

There was very little in the way of forest policy prior to 1900s due mainly to the abundance of forest resources during the period. During the Spanish era, royal decrees were promulgated to govern

utilization of forest resources that prevented unauthorized slash-and-burn farming and levied taxes on forest products.

The Forestry Act of 1904 (FA 1904) aimed to encourage rational exploitation of the forests by installation of an appropriate regulatory environment, to prescribe fees and taxes, and to define parameters for conversion of forestland to agriculture. It also led to the

Table 1. Types of Forestlands, Key issues, and Possible Sustainable Management Systems.

| Indicator/ Parameters | Forest Lands | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| | Coastal/ Mangrove | Cultivated Uplands | Residual Forests | Old Growth/ Virgin Forests |
| Approximate Area | | 7.8 M has. | 3.4 M has. | 1.0 M has. |
| Access | High (near markets and road) | Moderate (old logging roads converted in brgy. Roads) | Moderate (old logging roads; high in existing TLAs) | Poor/almost inaccessible (except via old logging roads or trails) |
| Population | High (coastline urban centers) | Moderate to High (mostly lowland migrants and some IPs; density depends on peace and other situation and productivity) | Moderate to High (migrants and IPs; some are ancestral domains) | Low to Moderate (mostly by IPs and few migrants; extensive domain claims in cancelled/abandon ed TLAs; density depends on peace and order situation) |
| Productivity | Low to medium (major link in seafood activity) | Moderate to High (depends on market, peace and order, agroclimatic conditions) | Moderate to High (high potential for natural regeneration, agroforestry, and plantation) | Moderate to High (productivity and biodiversity) |
| Interventions | Rehabilitatio n, protection, tenure, access, income generating projects (IGPs) | Rehabilitation, COs, IGPs, access, Agroforestry (AGF) | CO, partnership with TLA, forest management, labor intensive forest products harvesting, natural regeneration enrichment planting, protection | Protection, enhancement and maintenance of biodiversity, respect of domain claims, limited forest products extraction |

Source: Basic Community Organizing Handbook for Community-Based Forest Management Programs, 1996

organization of the Forest Service which eventually became an independent Bureau. Forestry curriculum was established within the University of the Philippines, College of Agriculture, and some years later, the creation of the College of Forestry.

Due to negative impacts of deforestation in some areas, reforestation projects were initiated in 1916. A Reforestation Administration was established. This was followed by actions to further improve

FA-1904, foremost of which is the prescription of a selective logging, to encourage sustained yield exploitation of for dipterocarp forests.

In general, prior to 1970, most policies were drawn up with a view towards controlled development of intensive extractive industry, managed by organized corporations under the regulation of professional government bureaucracy.

Given the policies and regulations enacted during the period, there was proliferation of timber companies, rampant over-cutting, excessive export of raw logs, and widespread unauthorized conversion of forest lands into agriculture, by the late 1960s. The rate of deforestation was recorded to be 150,000 hectare per year. In response to this, Republic Act 3701 was enacted in 1962 imposing heavier penalties for shifting cultivators in forest areas. Two years later, realizing the failure of punitive measures to curb illegal forest occupancy and the practice of shifting cultivation, forest occupancy was recognized as not only economic problem but a social one as well.

The Marcos regime in the 70s provided the impetus for people-oriented forestry. During this period that programs to enable people and community's participation in forest activities were formulated and implemented. These included the; Forest Occupancy Management Program (1975), Family Approach to Reforestation (FAR) Program (1976), and the Communal Tree Farming (CTF) Program (1978). Also in 1978, the Program for Forest Ecosystem Management (PROFEM) was formulated requiring all citizens of the Philippines to plant one tree a month for five years. It was in 1982 through the enactment of the Letter of Instruction 260 that the Integrated Social Forestry Program was created to consolidate CTF, FOM and FAR into one comprehensive program. It was borne from the recognition that people in the forest areas cannot be ejected, and that these people have potential role in the conservation and development of forest resources. The program sought to "democratize the use of public forests and to promote more equitable distribution of the forest bounty". It was meant to provide a legal mechanism that would enable government to harness the labor of upland communities in implementing the program, at the same time, democratizing access to forest resources. It was seen as a complete turn-around from the original posture of government of imposing punishment and other restrictions to people and communities who enter the public forest lands without permit or license.

Under this program, qualified individuals and communities were allowed to continue occupying and cultivating the upland areas. Through Individual or Community Stewardship Agreements, people were given tenure over the land for a period of 25 years, renewable for an additional 25 years. In exchange, the program participants were required to undertake protection and reforestation activities.

As an instrument for democratizing access to forest resources the ISFP program was a laudable step yet was still wanting in many respects. It has been characterized by weak implementation, low participation of beneficiaries, neglect of ancestral domain rights and uncertainty with respect to sharing of benefits from forest products.

The first comprehensive attempt to revise the forestry policy or FA-1904, came through the formulation of Forestry Reform Code of 1974. The Code centers on the industrial forestry sector including abolition of short-term permits and the granting 10 to 25-year licenses, establishment of forest plantations and a mandatory investment in processing facilities. The Code also contained provisions designed to improve tenure security for settlers occupying Public Domain land. This has been the first attempt to shift from regulatory approaches to control spread of slash-and-burn farming.

Further enrichment was undertaken for the Code through the drafting of the Revised Forestry Code in 1975 which included the concept of multiple-use, advancement of forestry-related science and technology, rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems, encouragement of wood processing and the gradual phase-out of log exports. Social forestry began to emerge as a new direction in forestry policy.

In 1986 People Power Revolution, the concepts of decentralization, people's participation and the recognition of the socio-political dimensions of forestry moved into the mainstream of policy formulation. This period was characterized by significant changes in the consultation process in policy making. The period also saw tremendous influence of international NGOs in environmental issues. The DENR devolved authority and responsibility to regional, provincial and community offices. There was

made possible an environment conducive to dialogue and consultations involving government, NGOs, people's organizations and multi-sectoral participation.

Since 1986 to the present, people-oriented forestry program was seen to be on the rise, more NGO involvement and greater role of local government units in forestry matters. Also, it signaled the policy decision to ban all logging in all growth forests that took effect January 1992. Timber production had to shift to residual forests. A system of protected areas was established and rights of cultural minorities recognized.

It was also under this new administration that two milestone policy instruments were enacted which reinforced the existing social forestry program, namely; the issuance of Certificate of Ancestral Land Claims and the NIPAS law otherwise known as Republic Act No. 7586. For the first time, the right of indigenous people to their ancestral lands was given importance. More than mere recognition, the NIPAS law uphold the rights of these people, tenured migrants and other affected communities to participate in decision-making process related to the management of protected areas. Indeed the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act of 1992 encouraged the involvement of the communities in the delimitation of land boundaries and in the management of protected areas. These two pieces of legislation contributed to the increased role of people and communities in environment and natural resources management. In addition to these are two other policy developments that have nationally influenced the move towards people participation in development thereby making it imperative to empower them. One of these is the formulation of the Philippine Strategy for Sustainable Development with people empowerment as a dominant component. The other is the passage of the Local Government Code devolving central power and authority to the local government units. The implementation of community forestry program is one of the responsibilities given to the local units from the central government.

As another change in national leadership occurred in 1993, more and greater emphasis was given to people-oriented and participatory management of the forest resources. During this period that community-oriented program in forestry was accelerated. The DENR DAO No. 22, Series of 1993 established the Community Forestry Program with the following objectives:

- a. initiate community-based forest development management and utilization of natural resources within second-growth upland forests and residual mangrove forest to promote social equity and prevent further degradation of natural resources;
- b. protect the remaining primary forests with the help of the community;
- c. enhance institutional capacity of the DENR, Local Government Units, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations in catalyzing community-based forest management

Under the Community Forestry Program, organized community members residing within or adjacent to a second growth or residual forests, shall be awarded 25 years Community Forestry Management Agreement (CFMA) renewable for 25 years. The agreement was designed to provide long term security for utilization of forest resources that would consequently motivate the community people to develop and manage the resource on a sustainable basis.

During the Ramos Administration (1993-1998), two pieces of important legislation were passed that gave strong recognition for the principle of community-based resource management. The first was the Executive Order No. 263, Series of 1995, which mandated community-based resource management as the national strategy for managing our forests. The second was the Executive Order No. 247 on bio-prospecting, which lays down the rule that indigenous and local communities must first give their prior informed consent before any outsider can enter and obtain resources from their respective localities.

Community-based resource management has evolved as a definite policy in the management of environment and natural resources. As the then President Fidel V. Ramos stated:

"This community-based strategy stems not out of a theoretical view of rural communities and people empowerment. It is based in fact, on an objective assessment we have made of the state of our resources, environment and population",

"That is why we are determined to restore the rights of local communities and indigenous people to the enjoyment of our natural resources. People who are organized, who have a real stake in

the forest, who have effective ownership, acknowledged rights of use, and who have accepted the protection and management responsibilities over these forests can now be depended on to achieve our vision of sustainable management of natural resources.”

“We believe that only by empowering organized local communities and indigenous people would we be able to arrest the degradation and loss of our forests. That is the core of our strategy for sustainable development of our forests.”

The Administrative Order No. 96-29 provides for the rules and regulations for the implementation of Executive Order 263 and institutionalizes the Community-Based Forest Management Program. Section 2 of the said Order specifies the basic policy of the Program stating that:

“It is the policy of the State to: a) protect and advance the right of the Filipino people to a healthful environment; b) improve their socio-economic condition through promotion of social justice, equitable access to and sustainable development of forest land resources; and c) respect the rights of the indigenous peoples to their ancestral domain by taking into account their customs, traditions and beliefs in the formulation of laws and policies. Active and transparent community participation and tenurial security shall be among the key strategies for achieving these goals.

“Accordingly, the State acknowledges and supports the capacities and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples to protect, rehabilitate, develop and manage forest lands and coastal resources. The State shall provide legal and technical support to ensure equitable access and sustainable use of natural resources”.

As defined under DAO No. 96-29, the following programs shall be fully integrated, administered and managed under the Community-Based Forest Management Offices at all field levels:

a) Integrated Social Forestry Program; b) Community Forestry Program; c) Coastal Environmental Program (Mangrove Rehabilitation Component); d) Ancestral Domains Management Program; e) Regional Resources Management Program (ENR-SECAL); f) Contract Reforestation Program (loan I)/Forest Land Management Program/ Forestry Sector Project (Loan II); g) Low-Income Upland Communities Program; h) Community Resources Management Program; I) NRMP – Forest Resources Management Component

By themselves the above programs strongly spouse strong people’s participation as key to successful implementation.

Underlying CBFM are the principles of social equity, sustainability and community participation in forest management and bio-diversity conservation. The immediate task is to create and nurture the enabling environment in which people can manage their forest resources in a sustained manner. As such community empowerment, integration of people-oriented forestry projects, deregulation, decentralization, and devolution are the key strategies for promoting CBFM.

In essence the Philippines has truly moved from token participation to total involvement of communities in forest resource management by transforming the people from mere partners to managers. It would be a long way to go and perhaps too early to judge its success in this direction. The trail has been long and winding for participatory forest management. The CBFM has set the stage for a more comprehensive and promising strategies.

Table 2 shows the forest management programs of government the corresponding subject area, tenurial instruments and the beneficiaries. It has to be noted that participation in these programs ranges from individual involvement to groups or community associations, industry or community. Which one is effective is something that would require in-depth study. There are however some indications of inter-program conflict that may diminish the overall success of these various programs. A case in point was the difficulty of reconciling the demands of IFMA, and that of other CBRM programs.

Balancing corporate rights and community rights has been tricky and difficult. Corporate rights has often times gained over the community’s. While IFMA by design had a community development component, community consultation in particular, this aspect was often not implemented nor given due attention. In the study of the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center, the following were observed:

Table 2. Forest Management Programs Implemented by DENR.

| Project/ Program | Subject Area/ Location | Tenurial Instruments | Beneficiary |
|---|---|---|---|
| Industrial Tree Plantation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Land • Denuded Land; • Brushland; and • Inadequately-stocked areas | <p style="text-align: center;">ITPLA</p> <p>A privilege granted by the State to a person to occupy and possess an ITP for 25 years, renewable for another 25 years in consideration of a specified rental.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filipino citizen of legal age; and • Corporation, partnership, association or cooperative (registered under Phil. Laws), at least sixty percent (60%) of the capital is owned and controlled by Filipino citizens; |
| Community Forestry Program | All lands in public domain (upland, lowland, and mangrove areas) except established critical watersheds, protected and wilderness areas, civil, military and other government reservations, and areas covered by existing permits, leases, and/or contracts | <p style="text-align: center;">CFMA</p> <p>A twenty-five (25) year agreement (renewable for another 25 years) which grants forest products utilization privileges to the community residents</p> | Organized community residents subject to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. submission and approval of management/dev't. plan b. compliance w/ DENR rules and regulations, and c. adherence to the principles of sustained yield management. |
| Forest Land Manage- ment Program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reforested lands; • Residual and second-growth natural forests; • Naturally-grown and planted mangroves; and • All denuded lands which shall be approved by the Sec. on a case to case basis | <p style="text-align: center;">FLMA</p> <p>A contract bet. The DENR and Forest Land Manager (FLM) which grants the sole and exclusive privilege to the FLM to occupy, develop, and manage the land specified in contract for a period of 25 years, renewable for another 25 years.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Duly-organized and bonafide residents of the community who successfully implemented reforestation contracts on the area to be covered by FLMA b. Reforestation contractors who are not bonafide residents but who have successfully implemented reforestation contracts |

Table 2. Continued

| Project/ Program | Subject Area/ Location | Tenurial Instruments | Beneficiary |
|---|---|--|--|
| Integrated Social Forestry Program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public forest lands (lands with slopes greater than 18%); • Open and denuded areas; • Areas with former projects on reforestation/afforestation; and • Areas with cancelled leases | <p>CSA (Certificate of Stewardship Agreement) A document issued by the government to qualified individual forest occupants pursuant to Stewardship Agreement (SA). A Stewardship agreement is a 25-year contract entered into by and between an individual forest occupant or forest community association, or cooperative and the government allowing the former the right to peaceful occupation, possession, and sustainable management over the designated area.</p> | <p>Filipino citizen of legal age (individual, family or group) residing w/ in the area and actually till/s the land to be stewarded.</p> |
| Industrial Forest Plantations | <p>Any tract of forestland and other public and private lands planted to timber producing species including rubber, and/or non-timber species such as rattan and bamboo</p> | <p>IFMA A twenty-five (25) year prod'n. sharing agreement entered into by and bet. the DENR and a qualified applicant w/c grants to the latter the right to develop, utilize, and manage a specified area consistent w/ the principle of sustainable development.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filipino citizen of legal age; • Corporation, partnership, association or cooperative (registered under Phil. Laws), at least sixty percent (60%) of the capital is owned and controlled by Filipino citizens; • TLA holders (in good standing) willing to convert TLA to IFMA; and • Community organizations residing near or adjacent to the lands applied for. |

Table 2. Continued

| Project/ Program | Subject Area/ Location | Tenurial Instruments | Beneficiary |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ancestral Domain Management Program | Lands occupied by indigenous cultural communities (ICCs) | <p style="text-align: center;">CADC</p> <p>A certificate issued by DENR to ICC/IP declaring, identifying, and Recognizing their claim to a particular traditional territory.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CALC</p> | <p>Indigenous cultural communities who occupied and possessed the lands in accordance to their customs and traditions since time immemorial</p> <p>Members of the ICCs</p> |
| Community-Based Forest Management program | <p>Uplands and coastal lands of the public domain except in the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Areas covered by existing TLAs, PLAs, IFMAs and other forestland by contracts unless lessee, permittee or agreement holder executes a waiver in favor of CBFMA b. A permit is issued only for the collection or harvesting of minor forest products (no waiver required). c. Protected areas except multiple use zones, buffer zones, and other areas where utilization activities may be allowed pursuant to the provisions of the NIPAS law and its IRR. d. Forest lands under administration and control of other government agencies | <p style="text-align: center;">CBFMA</p> <p>A twenty –five (25) year production sharing agreement entered into between a community and the government, to develop, utilize, manage, and conserve, a specific portion of the forest land, consistent with the principles of sustainable development and pursuant to Community Resource Management Framework.</p> | <p>Filipino citizens who may either be actually tilling the land, traditionally utilizing the resource for all or substantial portion of their livelihood, or actually residing w/ in or adjacent to the areas to be awarded.</p> |

- a) In areas where IFMAs has been granted or applied for, there were more often than not, already existing communities of forest occupants (indigenous and migrants);
- b) These communities were usually not informed about the granting of application, and when they are informed many communities were against IFMA;
- c) IFMA as a resource and tenure instrument frequently came into conflict with more equitable instruments such as DAO 2, community forestry, social forestry, etc.

The difficulties encountered in the implementation of IFMA vis a vis other community based programs led to the cancellation of good number of IFMAs. This experience illustrates one of the hurdles in implementing community-based programs in the context of conflicting interests and socio-political and bureaucratic orientation.

Implementation of community-based forestry programs offers at least three challenges, namely: a) the issue of vested interests/rights; b) the re-definition of the role of industry and the State in natural resources management; and, c) the capability of the communities to implement people-oriented forestry programs.

Forest policy from 1800 to the present can be seen as a shift from highly regulatory, centrally controlled and industry-biased to one that is more decentralized, participatory and people-oriented. The 21st century offers opportunities for further enhancement and innovations.

Closing Challenge: Traversing the Sustainability Trail

The stage has been set. The grounds leveled and the seeds sown. Participatory, people-oriented forest policy in the country must take root and mature into fruition to realize the goals of sustainable development. Much however depends on the communities and other stakeholders. Capability must be enhanced and commitment instilled among those in the government, the private sector, the academe and research institutions and the forest communities.

The population pressure will continue to cause strain on the forest resources as people and communities become more hard pressed to improve their living conditions.

Government institutions particularly at the local level will have to enhance their technical and managerial capability to support the program. Existing people organizations must be nurtured and supported to achieve level of competence and stability.

Wisdom is needed on the part of policy makers and regulatory agencies to balance foreseeable multiple and conflicting demands on the forest resources. Complementation between business/private and corporate interests and that of the people's organization must be anticipated and slowly worked out.

Indeed, the trail to participatory forest policies has been long and winded. The country has somehow been able to pave the foundations. However, it remains shaky and unstable as there remains in the future forces that may supplant the initial gains. Persistent, commitment and political will are the price to pay. In the end people's strength, resolve and capability will make the real and lasting difference.

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