Integrating food security and livelihoods into watershed rehabilitation

Community reforestation in Biliran, Philippines

Severe deforestation

In 1900, around 95% of the total land area of the Philippines was covered with lush tropical rainforest. By 1940, however, massive logging had reduced the forest cover to only 50%, a loss of approximately 15 million hectares. Deforestation continued at an alarming rate throughout the 20th century, leading to a massive decline of forested areas in less than a century; the most rapid and severe in the world. The Philippines transitioned from being a large-scale timber-exporting country in the mid-1900s, to a major timber importer by the close of the century. Dramatic loss of forests affects food security.

Community forestry

This strategy to manage the land for both food security and reforestation involves people working together to establish or manage tree plantations, while simultaneously planting fruit trees and agricultural crops to satisfy nutritional requirements and livelihoods. Socioeconomic benefits and food security are the key motivations for people to work as a group to conserve biodiversity and manage their forest sustainably.

Philippines
Size: 300,000 km²
Population: 98.39 million
Capital: Manila

Government strategy

Community forestry has been the major government strategy to promote sustainable development in the uplands for nearly four decades. While there have been many projects under various titles, the majority of people-based programmes are implemented under the Community Based Forest Management Programme (CBFMP). Although the CBFMP is a highly regarded initiative for rehabilitating denuded uplands and sustainably managing forests, implementation can often be complex and difficult. Learning from earlier efforts is key to informing current programmes.

Improving community forestry

Keys to address the shortcomings of previous community-based reforestation programmes, and improve success in strengthening food security and restoring degraded landscapes

1. **Appropriate project design**
2. **Adequate social preparation**
3. **Strong leadership**
4. **Transparency in handling project funds**
5. **Sustainable livelihood and food security measures**
6. **Sufficient and timely release of project funds**
7. **Institutional agreements and a supportive policy environment**
8. **Security of land tenure**
9. **Extension officers organise, guide and train communities and implementers**
10. **Women at the forefront**

Understanding the needs of communities

A key to success in people-based forest restoration is in adequately recognising and addressing the socioeconomic and food security issues of smallholder farmers. A communal forestry and evidence-based, best-practice watershed rehabilitation project pilot project was conducted in a highly degraded 26-hectare upland area, home to poor communities experiencing substantial food security issues. It was developed to address key deficiencies affecting unsuccessful restoration projects. Drawing on evidence and lessons learned from previous research and programmes, this project was designed to adapt to local needs and assess results before scaling-up to larger areas. The findings concluded that while the purpose of reforestation is widely understood by communities, if reforestation does not provide short and long-term financial benefits, and is in conflict with smallholders' subsistence farming activities, the programme is unlikely to succeed.

Photos: Nestor Gregorio and Jufamar Fernandez (right)

Community organisation and development

The People's Organisation (PO) divided the planting site into three zones – protection, production and agroforestry – to guide strategies for plantation management, species selection, and harvesting. The number of active members increased from 3 individuals to 30 families. They developed policies regarding membership, management and benefit sharing. In addition, a series of hands-on training classes considerably improved the technical knowledge and skills of the PO members.

Livelihoods

Income is derived from payment for services for implementing the project. Members are pursuing opportunities in seedling and sustainable timber production.

Improved forestry techniques

An inventory by members helped map the forest and identify 300 premium native species. A conservation programme now protects from illegal logging and provides germplasm for reforestation, which can be sold for income.

Food security

An agroforestry zone within the reforestation site has been devoted to the planting of food crops, fruit trees and premium fast-growing timber species.

Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) and Food Security

FLR has the potential to re-establish ecological integrity and enhance human well-being in deforested or degraded forest landscapes. It involves people coming together to restore land through seven place-based interventions.

Food security exists when all people have ongoing physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. These seven FLR interventions contribute to the security of food resources by increasing agricultural productivity and diversification while reducing resource depletion and vulnerability.

This factsheet illustrates the benefits of planted forests:

Planted forests | Natural regeneration | Silviculture | Agroforestry

Improved fallow | Mangrove restoration | Erosion control

This factsheet is excerpted from:

Gregorio, N., Herbohn, J., Harrison, S., Pasa, A., Fernandez, J., Tripoli, R. and Polinar, B. (2015). 'Evidence-based best practice community-based forest restoration in Biliran: Integrating food security and livelihood improvements into watershed rehabilitation in the Philippines.' In: Kumar, C., Begeladze, S., Calmon, M. and Saint-Laurent, C. (eds.). *Enhancing food security through forest landscape restoration: Lessons from Burkina Faso, Brazil, Guatemala, Viet Nam, Ghana, Ethiopia and Philippines*, pp. 174-217. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

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Supported by UKaid from the UK government.