

Date: 24 November 2016

Session 2: Eco-compensation and Poverty Reduction
Practical Experiences in Combining Poverty and Environment at the National Level: The National Greening Program of the Philippines

The Philippines' National Greening Program

Ma. Teresa Galano Aquino

*Chief of the Forest Management Bureau, Forest Resources Conservation Division,
Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines*

Our people's indifference to nature has taken its toll on our environment. The Philippines had experienced unimaginable destruction that we finally took notice and realized how much we took the environment for granted. Only 23% of the country's land area remained with forest cover. It compelled then President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III to issue Executive Order No. 23 (EO 23), immediately banning logging in natural forests and intensified forest protection.

It started our journey along the right path. The signing of Executive Order No. 26 (EO 26) on February 24, 2011, launching the National Greening Program (NGP) to fully rehabilitate the country's denuded lands, further enhanced EO 23. People affected by EO 23 were prioritized in the implementation of EO 26.

The NGP is the Philippines' banner program for forest rehabilitation with target of planting 1.5 billion seedlings covering 1.5 million hectares from 2011 until 2016, a massive effort which goal is more than reforestation. The NGP aims to address poverty reduction, food security, environmental stability, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The NGP adopts the following strategies:

- ▶ Social mobilization — where there is a collaborative effort of government, private sector, people's organizations, nongovernment organizations, and civil society in the implementation of NGP activities. Among government agencies, the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) comprise the National Convergence Initiative (NCI) working in cooperation with other national agencies in the provision of technical assistance.

- ▶ Harmonization of initiatives — where all greening efforts and other similar activities of the government, private sector, local government units, and the civil society shall be consolidated and harmonized under the NGP.
- ▶ Provision of incentives — where tenured communities are the priority recipients of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development and proceeds from agroforestry plantations accrue to beneficiary communities.
- ▶ Application of science and technology (S&T). The science of forestry is adopted at its early stage of survey, mapping and planning, promoting in the process site-species-market matching. The Program also promotes the use of quality planting materials sourced from seed production areas and clonal nurseries.
- ▶ On the other hand, planting sites are surveyed, mapped and assessed using GPS and GIS, and coded following the Philippine Standard Geographic Code.
- ▶ All NGP sites are geo-tagged with geographic coordinates and time stamp to give information about where the pictures were taken and when.
- ▶ Sites have individual Certificate of Site Development (CSD) duly signed and attested by field officials showing improvement through pictures taken before and after planting.
- ▶ Web-based access to NGP coded maps and geo-tagged photos.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in its Global Forest Resources Assessment for CY 2015, ranked the Philippines as 5th worldwide in terms of greatest forest gain from 2010 to 2015.

As of November 11, 2016, the NGP has planted some 1.34 billion seedlings covering 1.63 million hectares and generated about 3.3 million jobs. By the end of 2016, given its fiscal target, the NGP would have planted 1.37 billion seedlings and 1.6 million hectares, thereby exceeding its overall target of 1.5 million hectares without completely utilizing the allocated 1.5 billion seedlings.

The NGP encouraged planting of high-value crops such as coffee, cacao and rubber; non-timber forest products such as bamboo and rattan; fruit-bearing trees; fuelwood; timber in production areas; and mangrove and indigenous species in protection forests.

The program has also engaged the participation of peoples' organizations, indigenous peoples, other national government agencies, local government units, state universities and colleges, civil society organizations, private sector, churches, and students. Through linkage with other government agencies, some peoples' organizations received training on generating livelihoods and provided with post-harvest facilities.

The NGP has adopted good governance measures such as use of technology that include GIS/GPS maps for geo-tagging of sites for transparency and monitoring; duly-signed CSD for each NGP site and accomplishment reports made under oath for accountability of officials; adherence to Procurement Law for procurements; annual 100% monitoring of all NGP sites performed by the respective Regional Offices, and all reports subscribed and under oath; funds directly released to the provincial environment and natural resources officers (PENROs) from the

start of the year for immediate site protection and development; and yearly review of Program implementation by the Commission on Audit, among others.

Executive Order No. 193 (EO 193), signed on November 12, 2015, expanded the implementation of the NGP from 2016 until 2028 to cover remaining unproductive, denuded and degraded forestlands using the Forest Landscape Restoration Approach and to sustain the gains of the NGP. The implementation of the Program under EO 193 coincides with the updated Philippine Master Plan for Forestry Development and is also meant to put into action the Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement to address sources of greenhouse gases.

The enhanced NGP aims to transform existing productive NGP areas into vibrant economic zones through agroforestry, link communities to the value chain and promote social entrepreneurship, and increase and expand areas for agroforestry and convergence with other government agencies.