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Community-Based Forest Management — A Key To Sustainable Development

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Abstract

In response to the environmental problems in the uplands (e.g. deforestation, loss of biological diversity) and to the call for sustainable development embodied in the Brundtland Report, the Philippine government embarked a new planning strategy for sustainable development, the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) in 1990. CBFM is a strategy where the locus of decision making lies with the people in the communities. CBFM is a process by which people themselves are given the opportunity, and, or responsibility, and accountability in managing their resources. CBFM operates on the premise that resources are managed best when the people affected by decisions participate in the design and implementation of these decisions.

A tool for implementation is the provision of incentives. To encourage participation, some of the incentives provided include: participants may mortgage their allocated land to financial institution and use the money in developing the land; and the provision of technical, legal, financial, marketing and other needed assistance by the concerned government institution. However, stewardship agreement may be cancelled when participants fail to comply with the terms and conditions stipulated in the stewardship agreement, and when forestry laws, rules and regulations are violated.

The number of programs and projects which have been implemented or are currently being undertaken which employ attributes of CBFM attest to its viability as a strategy for sustainable development. Experiences under such programs and projects have shown that local communities can manage their resources effectively if given the opportunity to do so, and if provided support by the local government and other sectors, be organized and trained in various skills. Some of the lessons learned include: provision of land tenure security, incentive mechanisms, and options to meet farmers' basic needs; introduction of income generating projects; staff participation in the affairs of the community beside their regular duties, etc.

Keywords: Incentive mechanism, participation, strategy, tenurial instruments, tool