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**HARNESSING UPLAND COMMUNITIES
TOWARDS SELF-SUFFICIENCY THROUGH A SUSTAINING'
PNOC SOCIAL FORESTRY SCHEME**

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Abstract

The PNOC-designed Social Forestry scheme aims to achieve an enhancement *of* the social and economic circumstances of the people living in and dependent upon reservation lands and resources for their livelihood. Instead of ejecting forest dwellers from the reservation, their potentials are tapped to become forest management partners, and encouraged to work collectively to improve their socio-economic welfare on a self-reliance basis, PNOC, therefore, hopes to reconcile the conflicting interests of forest dwellers and the development of geothermal energy resources. Its implementing tripod strategy focuses on discipline, self-help savings mobilization scheme, and continuing social education and technical training. From **4** model/pilot projects, the PNOC social forestry scheme has been expanded and replicated *in* some **48** new farmer-associations. Thus, the scheme has a high potential as catalyst of change and a model in rural community development.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC), in its rural development effort to enhance community relations and in line with its environmental and social responsibility has ventured into a sustainable development scheme. That is, the Social Forestry projects implemented by PNOC in its watershed reservation areas (**WRAs**) in the Philippines. This project was started in 1989 in four model (pilot) upland communities under the joint auspices of PNOC and the New Zealand government. In the geothermal reservation system being developed for energy purposes, such **WRAs** play a major role because "recharge of geothermal resources may be affected significantly by the hydrological characteristics and stability of the upper catchment areas," explains de Jesus. The forest is needed to ensure sustained permeation of rain water into the soil down to the geothermal reservoir.

Hundreds of families have established abode in the geothermal catchment areas and have cleared some portions of the forest for kainain (swidden agriculture) farming in the

1960's - 1970's. The thick forest cover, therefore, already experienced gradual degradation when **PNOC** started its forestry operations in the area in 1983.

PNOC, has recognized the pressing socio-economic problems confronting the forest dwellers to use the land that eventually led to the destruction of the ecosystem. However, the wanton destruction of the forest in the **WRAs** cannot be solved solely through punitive approach of forestry law enforcement because of the socio-economic nature of the problem associated with it. Thus, the **PNOC** social forestry projects came about to reconcile the conflicting interests of forest occupants/settlers and the development of geothermal energy resources. In this case, the forest dwellers become partners in forest management. They are encouraged to work collectively to improve their economic welfare on a self-reliant and sustained basis.

2.0 THE PNOC SOCIAL FORESTRY OBJECTIVE

The project's primary objective is to achieve an enhancement of the social and economic circumstances of the people living in and dependent upon reservation lands and resources for their livelihood. This objective is being achieved through appropriate land use management systems, security of tenure, and forest conservation value appreciation, among others.

3.0 THE PNOC SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Its development strategy follows a tripod approach, namely: continuing social and technical education, self-help savings mobilization scheme, and instituting organizational discipline.

3.1 The Development Approach.

The development process involves three major stages. These include conception, mobilization and stabilization stages implemented in five phases of operation. The conception stage involves the social preparation phase. This covers values education, group building and leadership development emphasizing the middle-level leadership.

The mobilization stage constitutes the implementation of agroforestry scheme following the multiple land use management systems: micro-enterprise development such as self-identification of other livelihood/economic support projects; linkage establishment and networking which would

enhance inter-agency cooperation and smooth communication network system; monitoring and periodic performance appraisal system through the participatory community assessment (PCA) approach. The latter is a tool to make adjustments in the development strategies during various points of the project operations. The stabilization stage involves the phase-out process. This means the institutionalization of a local coordinating body to enable the people's organizations to carry on with the project management when PNOC gradually withdraws with active involvement. PNOC will however continue to monitor the project and will provide the necessary interventions to ensure fulfillment of the project objectives.

3.2 The Self-Help Savings Mobilization Scheme.

A non-withdrawable capital build-up (CBU) fund has been designed for the sole purpose of strengthening the organization's financial capability. The CBU fund is derived from a voluntary deduction of 10 percent from the daily wages (income) of individual farmer-members or revenues earned by the organization through the PNOC and New Zealand assisted livelihood projects such as the rattan plantation projects, agroforestry projects and reforestation projects, among others. As Hall (1987) aptly puts it: "An organization of strong financial resources is less vulnerable to economic fluctuations than one with no reserves."

3.3 Organizational Discipline.

The local leaders have learned to develop its competence in implementing organizational sanctions to any erring officer or member of the people's organization. Thus maintaining harmonious relationship among the members thereof. For instance, a chairman was removed from office and made to pay the amount which he allegedly squandered from organizational funds. Another chairman and a treasurer were suspended for not coursing their loans through the organization's screening committee and by conniving for the unwarranted approval and release.

4.0 SOME ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Certain constraints were encountered in the organizational development process, namely:

1. In the early stage of the project operation, it was perceived that the project was "left leaning." This unfounded accusation was ignored by the community facilitators until the talks gradually died down.

2. Leadership crisis usually occurs during leadership changes in organizations and when the organization experienced unfaithful leaders allegedly malversing and misappropriating their funds.
3. Non-compliance with certain organizational policies such as the no-proxy policy in the field project operation and other disciplinary measures to instill group discipline.
4. Lack of knowledge in basic management skills, cooperative development, and simplified bookkeeping procedures.
5. Values and attitudes such as the "wait-and-see" posture, "ningas cogon", "manana" habit, opportunism, individualism and resistance to change were prevalent among the project cooperators.

5.0 CERTAIN BEHAVIORAL OBSERVATIONS AMONG PROJECT COOPERATORS

Though the impact of the social development aspect of the project cannot be outrightly seen, certain manifestations of attitudinal change have been observed in the development process. These include the following:

1. Increased environmental awareness, such as gradual eradication of swidden agriculture in the clientele areas; establishment of wildlife and birds sanctuaries; filing of appropriate cases against local kaingineros, and serving as guardians of the forest against unlawful activities.
2. Increased number of school-age children actually enrolled.
3. Increased youth and women's participation in the organization's leadership positions and other related activities.
4. Adopting the simplified parliamentary procedure in conducting meetings.
5. Prospective members are not easily accepted without undergoing the social education and training towards group capability building.

6. Organizational sanctions have been applied to impeach or suspend erring officials to instill discipline on everyone.
7. Improved management skills in nursery and plantation establishment.
8. Policy adopted and practiced on utilization of internal savings scheme.
9. Learning to keep organizational funds, both savings and time deposits in banks.
10. Instituted management and control measures to protect association's funds.
11. Setting aside 10 percent of individual and group income called the non-withdrawable capital build-up fund of the organization.
12. Practicing the cash trading principle by instituting a no-credit policy in consumerism.
13. Developing a sense of community discipline by questioning irresponsible acts of officers adversely affecting the organization's prestige.
14. Extended its linkage establishments and networking with government organizations, non-government organizations, and people's organizations.
15. Food served at home improved.
16. Personal outfits has improved.
17. Family income increased due to work contracts with PNOC.
18. Project scheme replicated by 48 new farmer-groups within geothermal reservation areas. See list of farmer-groups adopting the PNOC Pilot Social Forestry Project scheme in Table 1.
19. Local leaders' active involvement in the PNOC annual farmers congress which led to the formation of the Philippine Federation of Social Forestry Farmers' Association (PFESFFA).

Table 1. LIST OF FARMER GROUPS ADOPTING THE PNOC PILOT SOCIAL FORESTRY SCHEME

1. SOUTHERN NEGROS GEOTHERMAL RESERVATION		C. BACON-MANITO GEOTHERMAL RESERVATION	
1. LATAP FARMERS ASSN.	Zamboanguita	1. MILAGROSA FARMERS ASSN.	Castilla
2. DOMANON FARMERS ASSN.	Zamboanguita	2. INANG MAHARANG FARMERS ASSN.	Manito
3. NAGPANTAO FARMERS ASSN.	Dauin	3. OSIAO FARMERS ASSN.	Bacon
4. PAGANG FARMERS ASSN.	Siaton	4. TRIS FARMERS ASSN.	Bacon
5. PUHAGAN FARMERS ASSN.	Valencia	5. PANGPANG FARMERS ASSN.	Sorsogon
6. BALILI FARMERS ASSN.	Valencia	6. STO. NINO FARMERS ASSN.	Bacon
7. NASUJI FARMERS ASSOCN.	Valencia	7. LA UNION FARMERS ASSN.	Castilla
8. APOLONG FARMERS ASSN.	Valencia	8. CABARBUHAN FARMERS ASSN.	Bacon
9. SAGBANG FARMERS ASSN.	Valencia	9. SAN ISIDRO FARMERS ASSN.	Castilla
10. LUNGA FARMERS ASSN.	Valencia	10. BALASBAS FARMERS ASSN.	Manito
11. SAN ANTONIO FARMERS ASSN.	Situlan	11. GUNLAJON FARMERS ASSN.	Sorsogon
12. BASLAY FARMERS ASSN. *	Dauin	12. CANGILA FARMERS ASSN.	Castilla
13. BEDLAO FARMERS ASSN. *	Dauin	13. MAYPANGI FARMERS ASSN.	Castilla
		14. BALABAGON FARMERS ASSN.	Manito
		15. CAVIT FARMERS ASSN.	Manito
		16. TUBLIJON FARMERS ASSN., INC. *	Sorsogon
1. LEYTE GEOTHERMAL RESERVATION		D. MINDANAO 1 GEOTHERMAL PROJECT	
1. MATINAO-ABUCAYAN FARMERS ASSN.	Kananga	1. 701 MT APO FARMERS ASSN.	Cotabato
2. LIM-AO FARMERS ASSN.	Kananga	2. SUDSUHAYAN FARMERS ASSN.	Cotabato
3. RIZAL AIRSTRIP FARMERS ASSN.	Kananga	3. ANNGI FARMERS ASSN.	Cotabato
4. LAKE DANA O FARMERS ASSN.	Ormoc city	4. BALABAG FARMERS ASSN.	Cotabato
5. CAGHALO FARMERS ASSN.	Carigara	5. ILLOMAVIS FARMERS ASSN.	Cotabato
6. CABINTAN FARMERS ASSN.	Ormoc city	6. KISANDAL FARMERS ASSN.	Cotabato
7. MAGLAHOG FARMERS GROUP	Ormoc city	7. MEOHAO FARMERS ASSN.	Cotabato
8. RUBAS FARMERS ASSN.	Ormoc city	8. MUA-AN FARMERS ASSN.	Cotabato
9. LIBERTY FARMERS GROUP	Ormoc city	9. SAYABAN MULTI-PURPOSE COOP	Cotabato
10. GAAS FARMERS ASSN.	Ormoc city		
11. TINGIB FARMERS ASSN.	Pastrana		
12. CALAO FARMERS ASSN.	Burauen		
13. TONGONAN FARMERS ASSN. *	Ormoc city		

* PNOC-NZ Pilot/Model Social Forestry Projects

6.0 CONCLUSION

With regard to its significant contribution to the development of upland communities, PNOC can readily play a major role **as** a catalyst of change in rural development efforts to help the upland communities help themselves and encourage other developers of ,related projects in the country.

Thus, PNOC can lay claim that there could be no substitute to getting the assistance **of** upland communities to co-manage the forest, the so called "**the** green lungs of the earth".

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