

Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative

COURSE REPORT

RAINFORESTATION: A STRATEGY FOR ECOSYSTEM-BASED DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

June 2–3, 2022 Barangay Maganhan, Baybay City, Leyte Philippines

A course organized by:

Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI), Institute of Tropical Ecology & Environmental Management of Visayas State University (VSU-ITEEM), and Restoration Initiative for Sustainable Ecosystems (RISE)



The participants of the training together with the training facilitators, organizers, and resource speakers

Background: Baybay City on the island of Leyte was recently devastated by tropical depression, Agaton (known internationally as Megi). The storm stalled out over the island dropping a large amount of rain in a short period of time causing a series of landslides killing over a hundred people and causing widespread flooding that affected thousands. One of the villages most badly affected was Barangay (Brgy.) Kantagnos, where virtually the entire village was covered by a mudslide. Those who survived the landslide lost their homes and were relocated to the neighboring village of Brgy. Maganhan.

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Trees and forests can play an important role in reducing landslide risk through several mechanisms. Tree roots anchor the soils to the bedrock and form buttresses against soil movement. Trees also reduce landslide risk by lowering soil moisture levels through interception, evaporation, and transpiration. However, using the right kinds of trees is important—native trees with deep roots and have evolved in the context of typhoons are particularly important. Shallow rooted trees, on the other hand, can increase the risk of landslides due to the weight of the trees on unstable slopes.

Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR) has emerged as a strategy to use trees to mitigate the danger of landslides and to help rehabilitate areas where landslides have already occurred. To increase the awareness of Eco-DRR as an important land use strategy, VSU-ITEEM, ELTI, and RISE, conducted a two-day Rainforestation training event in Brgy. Maganhan for residents of Brgy. Maganhan and Brgy. Kantangnos.

Course Objectives:

The two-day training was designed to increase the awareness of the community of Brgy. Maganhan and Brgy. Katangnos on recent environmental issues concerning landslides that the Philippines is facing. The goals were to:

- Introduce the importance of Philippine biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- Provide an orientation to the concept of Rainforestation;
- Explain the idea of Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR) and how it relates to Rainforestation; and
- Assist the participants with the formulation of a development plan for their proposed sites.



Dr. Marlito Bande discussing the drivers of deforestation and the concept of Rainforestation during the first day of the training



Dr. Ceniza visiting the training site to encourage the participants to take advantage of this training opportunity



Victoriano Valenzona Jr. presenting his farm plan

Program

Day 1

The first day of the training was implemented in a local chapel in Brgy. Maganhan. The training officially started with a formal opening program, including a prayer, singing of the Philippine National Anthem, a welcome message from Hon. Rufo Valenzona (Brgy Captain), and an introduction to the training program by Mr. Leonard Paolo Longatang (VSU-ITEEM). Ms. Joy Compendio (Philippines Program Coordinator, VSU-ELTI) gave a presentation on Philippine biodiversity, highlighting the status of the Philippines as a biodiversity hotspot, outlined the 12 primary forest formations of the Philippines and discussed the economic value of the ecosystem services provided by the country's rich forests. Dr. Guiraldo Fernandez Jr. (Professor, VSU) gave a presentation on peace and the environment, highlighting the importance of sustainable environmental management in avoiding natural resource conflicts by discussing research recently conducted with farmers and fisherfolk in Pilar, Camotes, Cebu. Ms. Kleer Jeann Longatang (Instructor, VSU-ITEEM) introduced Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR), underlining the ability of rainforestation to mitigate or prevent typhoon-related disasters. Following lunch, Dr. Marlito Bande (Professor, VSU-ITEEM) described the drivers of deforestation, the origins, and main objectives of Rainforestation, and the process of Rainforestation site establishment. As the final session, Engr. Jimmy Pogosa (Instructor, VSU-ITEEM) gave a lecture covering nursery establishment, fruiting phenology, seed treatment, wildling collection, and the development of a recovery chamber.



Aladin Lonto presenting a farm plan on behalf of his family



Participant Rufo Valenzona presenting his farm plan

Day 2

Dr. Antonio P. Abamo (Director of the Extension, VSU) and Dr. Maria Juliet C. Ceniza (Vice-President for Research, Extension, and Innovation, VSU) provided opening remarks to start the second day of the training. Each participant was given time during the morning session to develop an action plan for developing Rainforestation sites with their groups and consult with the training facilitator and resource people about their proposed plans. In the afternoon, each group presented their individual or group farm plans, for which they received feedback from Dr. Bande and the rest of the VSU-ITEEM and VSU-ELTI staff. A total of eight farm plans were presented: one by a women's organization in Maganhan, one by a joint team of the barangay officials and workers from Department of Education, and six individuals. The event was formally closed by Dr. Eliza Espinosa (Director, VSU-ITEEM).



One of the organizers assisting a participant with the creation of his farm plan



Course Participants:

The training participants included 47 individuals from Brgy. Maganhan and Brgy. Kantagnos, most of whom were women. There were also several representatives from the Environment and Natural Resources Office of Baybay City.

Follow-up: As soon the farm plans are approved and the planting locations settled, the VSU-ITEEM, VSU-ELTI, and RISE training team will help the community by providing technical assistance and supplying seedlings to be planted.

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