

## WORKSHOP REPORT

# National Greening Program Monitoring Workshop

**Cebu, Philippines**

**January 23-27, 2015**

### A workshop organized by:

The Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI)

The Rain Forest Restoration Initiative (RFRI)

The Department of Environment & Natural Resources (DENR)

**Background:** In February 2011, President Benigno Aquino III signed Executive Order 26 launching a National Greening Program (NGP) that seeks to reforest 1.5 million hectares of degraded lands within six years. The NGP, which is being implemented by the DENR, was heavily criticized on its inception by civil society organizations (CSOs), especially RFRI members who were particularly concerned about the widespread usage of fast-growing exotic species. After a series of consultations, the DENR signed a partnership agreement on February 20, 2012 with the Foundation for the Philippine Environment and the Philippine Tropical Forest Conservation Foundation (PTFCF), on behalf of RFRI. The agreement aimed to increase the amount of indigenous trees to be planted, source the native seedlings from community nurseries operated by RFRI network members, and further the engagement of peoples organizations (POs) in the planting and maintenance of the reforestation sites. The DENR central office then issued memorandum circulars to the regional offices to ensure that the partnership agreement gained full support on the ground.



Despite these agreements and policies, there have been a number of delays and problems in the field implementation. Pertinent issues are being addressed through ongoing dialogue between CSOs and the DENR. One of the recommendations heeded by DENR in early 2014 was the need for a third party monitoring team to validate and assess the reforestation areas developed, as stipulated in the newly improved Comprehensive Site Development Agreement. The existing monitoring and evaluation tool, however, was developed by the DENR without any significant input or participation by RFRI or other CSOs, which were also not included in the conduct of initial monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities. In response, RFRI members raised several questions and asked for clarification on essential parts of the M&E tool and framework, including data gathering, data consolidation, evaluation and the feedback process.

To address this problem, RFRI and DENR agreed to strengthen the partnership by jointly reviewing and enhancing the existing M&E tool and process for the NGP, and pilot testing its applicability in the three major island groups of the country (i.e., Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao). The monitoring in Luzon and Mindanao were previously conducted in 2014. This third and final pilot testing and workshop in the Visayas was intended to consolidate the development of the M&E system for more efficient and effective monitoring of NGP areas in the future.

**Objectives:** Generally, the objective of this joint monitoring was to increase the participation of the CSOs in the implementation of the NGP, particularly in the assessment of the areas covered under the partnership agreement. The more specific aims of this workshop were as follows:

1. Assess the applicability of the NGP joint monitoring tool in the field;
2. Evaluate the physical accomplishments (e.g., seedling produced and planted) and the short-term outcomes of NGP in terms of poverty reduction, food security, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation;
3. Establish baseline data for a monitoring system at the community level and facilitate knowledge and skills transfer among RFRI members, DENR, and assisting NGOs and POs in M&E; and
4. Generate feedback, document experiences and lessons learned, and provide recommendations for the improvement of the existing M&E system of the DENR, and the implementation of NGP in general.

**Workshop Format:** The workshop was held at the Cebu City Resource Management and Development Center. The workshop exercises focused on a 60-hectare NGP reforestation plot within the Central Cebu Protected Landscape (CCPL) that was established in 2012 by Pung-ol Sibugay Cantipla Farmers Association (PSCFA) with facilitation by a local NGO, Cebu Uniting for Sustainable Water Foundation, Inc. (CUSW), and the local DENR office. CUSW is one of the partner NGOs of RFRI assisting with the NGP Partnership Agreement in the province.

Day 1: The workshop started with a courtesy call and coordination meeting with the regional office of the DENR. After the introductions of the participants, Ms. Malou Lalan of PTFCE discussed the objectives of the monitoring workshop, the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders, and the schedule





of activities for the week with the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO), the former and current regional NGP Coordinators, and the Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer of Cebu City (CENRO). Documents for validation, such as signed NGP contracts and disbursement reports, were also secured from the regional DENR office. Key informant interviews were carried out with the former NGP Coordinator and CENRO to gain deeper insights into the NGP planning and implementation process that took place in their area, particularly whether the policies and guidelines related to the Partnership Agreement were clear and whether the funds and resources were sufficient and well-managed.



Day 2: The participants were divided into two teams for this day's activities. The first team conducted a focus group discussion with pre-identified members of the PSCFA (i.e., their association officials and members who did the actual planting), three other POs, which produced and supplied the native seedlings to PSCFA (i.e., their PO officials), and representatives of CUSW and the local DENR office. The purpose of this discussion was to determine the details of the stakeholder consultation process, their perception of the NGP and the actual benefits accrued from their engagement, their mobilization process, and the hindering and facilitating factors that affected implementation. The group came up with recommendations for more development and safeguard measures to ensure that the objectives of the program will be achieved and the initial gains will be sustained even after the program officially ends in 2016. Key informant interviews were then carried out for selected members of PSCFA and CUSW to get more in-depth information regarding the issues raised during the group discussion. Meanwhile, the second team visited the community nurseries that had supplied the seedlings for the NGP project. The participants did a rapid assessment of the nursery stock, secured the relevant documents for validation, such as the nursery logbook and financial reports, and conducted key informant interviews with the nursery managers to learn more about their nursery operations and management practices.



Days 3 and 4: For the next two days, the participants conducted field assessment of the NGP reforestation area.

The group divided into three teams, each consisting of representatives from RFRI, DENR (both from the central and local offices), and PSCFA. Each team was assigned a randomly selected 1-ha plot within the broader 60-ha site for each day, in order to monitor and evaluate at least 10% of the entire reforestation area. For each 1-ha plot, the teams conducted a 100% inventory of all seedlings planted. Basic data including species, survivorship, health/vigor, height, and diameter were identified, measured, and recorded. At the end of the fourth day, workshop participants gathered to consolidate data from the monitoring exercise, as well as the findings from the focus group discussion and key informant interviews. The group determined key result areas for the different stakeholders involved, the enabling elements and challenges for each stakeholder, and next steps to improve the process and the outcomes of the program altogether.

Day 5: On the last day of the workshop, the participants assembled again at the DENR regional office to present the general findings to the PENRO, CENRO, and the former and current NGP Coordinators. An open forum followed where some of the issues were clarified and additional concerns and recommendations from the regional DENR side, regarding the Partnership Agreement in particular, were discussed.

**Participants:** The monitoring workshop had 16 regular participants from RFRI and the DENR Central Office. In addition, between 4 to 20 participants from the local DENR office, CUSW, and POs involved in the NGP, joined the different activities throughout the five days of the workshop.

**Follow Up:** The RFRI and DENR members of the workshop will consolidate the findings and recommendations collected from all three NGP monitoring trips into a final report that will be presented to the DENR Secretary and to the Forest Management Bureau Director/Overall NGP Coordinator. The outcomes of the monitoring exercises and succeeding discussions and plan of action will also determine if and how RFRI will continue to engage in the NGP.





**RFRI Roadshow:** On January 28, immediately following the NGP Monitoring Workshop, members of RFRI held a public event on the importance of native biodiversity conservation and native species reforestation in the Legislative Building of the Cebu City Hall. The half-day event, which was entitled *Kalasangang Kaayuhan sa Katawhan: Hiniusang ugmad-amuma alang sa kinaiyahan sa Central Cebu Protected Landscape (Healthy Forests for the Betterment of Society: Working together to restore the Central Cebu Protected Landscape)*, included presentations by the local government agencies and NGOs on the current situation of CCPL and the collaborative conservation efforts in the protected area. RFRI members also gave several presentations, including a discussion of the network's advocacy and activities by Ms. Lyra Chu (RFRI), an introduction to Reforestation by Dr. Paciencia Milan (Visayas State University), and examples of other reforestation methods for specific land management objectives in the region by Dr. David Neidel (ELTI). RFRI members also exhibited a series of posters to showcase the different organizational members' work and provided outreach materials. Some 50 participants from local government agencies, academic institutions, NGOs, foundations and the private sector attended the event. The Roadshow generated interest and initial discussion on establishing a Cebu regional branch of RFRI as a forum for fostering a multi-stakeholder approach to ecological restoration in the CCPL.



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