

COURSE REPORT

Rainforestation Training & Monitoring of the El Verde Movement

**Pili, Camarines Sur, Philippines
October 12-13, 2012**

A course sponsored by:

Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI)
Institute of Tropical Ecology and Environmental Management, Visayas State University (ITEEM-VSU)
Rain Forest Restoration Initiative (RFRI)
Environment Disaster Management and Emergency Response Office-
Provincial Government of Camarines Sur (EDMERO-Cam Sur)

Background: On February 23, 2011, Hon. Lray Villafuerte, Governor of Camarines Sur Province, launched the El Verde Movement with the goal of “bringing back the original rainforests and creating viable and productive farm agriculture in harmony with nature.” The Movement aims to achieve this goal by planting 12 million trees in two cities, 35 municipalities, and 1,036 barangays by the end of 2012.

The El Verde Movement has received significant national publicity by including President Benigno Aquino III and other dignitaries in the launching ceremony and by breaking two Guinness Records for tree planting. For the first record, the provincial government mobilized almost 7,000 volunteers to plant 64,096 trees in 15 minutes. For the second record, over 7,000 volunteers planted 1,009,029 mangrove trees in one hour.

The El Verde Movement emphasizes the usage of native trees and promotes Rainforestation as the main planting strategy in upland forest areas. This is due to the advocacy of two Rainforestation trainers, Mr. Jerry Osea and Ms. Theresa dela Cruz, both of whom were working for the EDMERO-Cam Sur at the time the movement was conceived.

ELTI tries to keep in regular communication with training program alumni in order to track their progress and provide follow-up support when needed. Because of the large size of the EL Verde Movement, a short training on Rainforestation was requested for the EDMERO-Cam Sur staff and some members of People’s Organizations who are involved in the El Verde Movement. This training was integrated with monitoring of some of the existing EL Verde sites.





Course Objectives:

- Orient the participants on Reforestation and how this strategy addresses both environmental and social concerns of reforestation;
- Train the participants to establish native species nurseries, and collect and raise good quality planting material; and
- Monitor and evaluate the El Verde Movement nurseries and sites, document best practices and lessons learned, and provide recommendations for improvement.

Course Format: The 2-day training was held in the Provincial Capitol Complex in Pili, Camarines Sur, with resource people consisting of Dr. Marlito Bande, Engr. Jimmy Pogosa, and For. Hernando Mondal from ITEEM-VSU, Mr. Eric Buduan from the Philippine Tropical Forest Conservation Foundation, and Ms. Hazel Consunji from ELTI. The first day consisted of presentations on basic principles of Reforestation, steps in nursery establishment and seedling production, mangrove ecosystems, and the socio-economics of reforestation. The last topic, which highlighted the case study of Cienda San Vicente Farmer's Association in Leyte, covered the development of farmer's organizations, establishment of constitution and bylaws as a way to record member's inputs and ensure an equitable distribution of benefits, timber registration with the Department of Environment & Natural Resources, and other administrative issues that need to be addressed for a successful reforestation project.



During the second day, participants visited the El Verde Movement's central nursery, where hands on demonstrations in preparing and bagging potting media, collecting and preparing wildlings for transplanting, and constructing and managing a recovery chamber were carried out. The participants were also given an assessment of current nursery operations and suggestions on how to overcome problems. The most apparent problem was that of over-grown seedlings, which resulted from budgetary limitation in transporting them to the planting sites. Discussion revolved around how this could be avoided by adopting a more decentralized system of community nurseries located close to the planting areas. This approach would not only allow the provincial government to cut costs in nursery maintenance and seedling transport, but would also better integrate local communities into the program while ensuring a higher rate of seedling survival.



In the afternoon, the participants and resource people visited a nearby El Verde reforestation site and nursery. Both the nursery and reforestation site were quite impressive, but some of the seedlings in the nursery were overdue for planting. Local farmer cooperators and the EDMERO-Cam Sur coordinator of that site gave an orientation to the group, discussing the planting strategy and mechanisms through which the cooperators are



involved in the El Verde Movement. Dr. Bande then demonstrated how to conduct a proper site assessment, including vegetation and soil analysis, followed by a discussion of the layout and planting strategy. Impromptu discussions were held with some of the other farmers who were maintaining other parts of the Rainforestation site as well, before everyone returned to the Capitol Complex for the sharing of final thoughts, review of lessons learned, and the official closing of the training program.

Participants: Participants consisted of 20 staff members from EDMERO-Cam Sur, which is leading the implementation of the El Verde Movement, four members of People's Organizations, and 2 local DENR staff who are involved in the program.

Outcome: The training and monitoring provided very important feedback not only to the EDMERO-Cam Sur for the improvement of the El Verde Movement, but also to the resource people for the continuous advancement of the Rainforestation program. While the El Verde target of 12 million trees will soon be reached, these lessons and feedback provided can be applied to subsequent stages of the province's greening campaign and in their involvement in the National Greening Program. For ELTI and RFRI, visiting the El Verde site provided some assurance that good quality reforestation can be achieved through large-scale government initiatives, but underlined the point that monitoring should be done as early as possible, while recognizing that there will ultimately be limits to the influence we can have on the design and implementation of these programs.



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