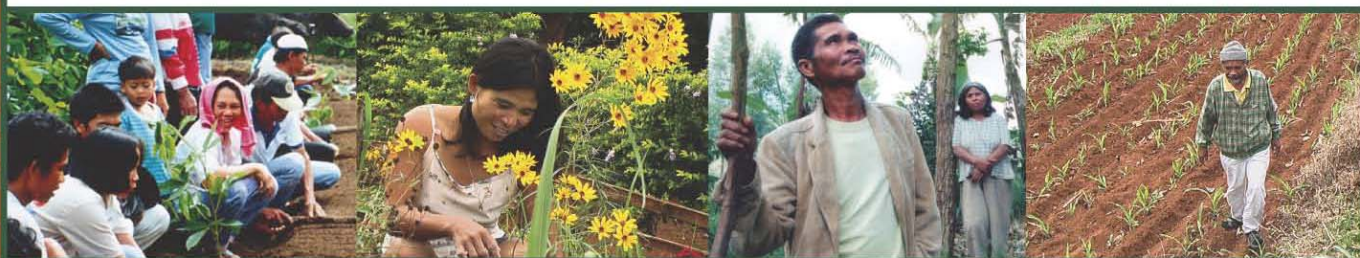




Philippines-Australia
Landcare Project

Learning from Institutions and Designing a Landcare Support Agency

Working Paper Number 9



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PREFACE

The Philippines-Australia Landcare Project Working Paper Series is intended to disseminate the results of research undertaken in the course of two successive action research projects, the first funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the second jointly funded by ACIAR and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID):

- ASEM/1998/052 *Enhancing Farmer Adoption of Simple Conservation Practices: Landcare in the Philippines and Australia* (1999-2004)
- ASEM/2002/051 *Sustaining and Growing Farmer-Led Landcare-Type Approaches to Natural Resource Management in the Philippines and Australia* (2004-2007).

For further information about these projects contact the project leader, Noel Vock, at Noel.Vock@dpi.qld.gov.au and about the working papers and other research outputs contact Rob Cramb (r.cramb@uq.edu.au) or Noelyn Dano (noelyn_dano@yahoo.com).

This Working Paper summarises research undertaken on the institutional arrangements for supporting Landcare-type activities in the Philippines. The particular focus is to derive lessons for establishing a Landcare organisation or agency that will be needed to facilitate an expanded Landcare program in the future.

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. KEY CONCEPTS	2
3. EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE LANDCARE PROJECT	5
4. LESSONS LEARNED FROM COMPARISON OF INSTITUTIONS	9
5. DISCUSSION	12
6. CONCLUSION	14
REFERENCES	17

1. INTRODUCTION

The achievements of a previous ACIAR project, “Enhancing Farmer Adoption of Simple Conservation Practices”, and the initial gains of the on-going ACIAR-AusAID supported Philippines-Australia Landcare Project, “Sustaining and Growing Landcare Systems in the Philippines and Australia”, have demonstrated a significant contribution of the Landcare approach in terms of technology promotion and creating livelihood options, natural resource conservation, knowledge-skills and social capital enhancement, and environmental stewardship improvement. With the Landcare practices and processes having been proven to be effective at the pilot research sites, there has now been an increasing interest among key players in the program implementation to devise ways and mechanisms that will help Landcare sustain and grow, hence the scaling-up objective. By “scaling-up” here is meant “the process of bringing more benefits, to more people, more quickly, more equitably, and more lastingly over a wider geographic area” (2005).

The institutional research agenda of the Philippines-Australia Landcare Project is “to analyze and evaluate the appropriateness of models used to sustain and scale-up Landcare processes”. This relates to the “institutional framework” component of the project, the objective of which is to strengthen the institutional support structure for Landcare by assessing available “models” and *designing a preferred robust institutional support agency* that effectively sustains existing municipal Landcare associations and local Landcare groups, and works with government and non-government agencies for Landcare’s sustainability and scaling-up.

Four agencies (or proto-agencies), all primarily involved in natural resource management efforts in the country’s uplands, were studied to present different cases of institutional arrangements from which lessons can be drawn:

- The Landcare Foundation of the Philippines Inc. (LFPI)
- The Mag-uugmad Foundation Inc. (MFI)
- The Landcare Coordinators Network (LCN) (within the Philippines-Australia Landcare Project)
- The Philippines Watershed Management Coalition (PWMC).

LFPI is a Mindanao-based NGO that supports community-driven projects that aim to enhance environmental resilience and promote capacity-building in NRM for the upland communities through the “Landcare Trust Fund” and through direct partnership with bilateral/multilateral programs and projects. MFI is a Visayas-based non-profit organization which has over twenty years of experience in addressing environmental degradation, natural resource conservation and management, as well as organizing communities for development. LCN is a small network of Landcare facilitators supporting the implementation of a Landcare program in the provinces of Misamis Oriental, Bukidnon, South Cotabato, Agusan Del Sur, and Bohol, through the Philippines-Australia Landcare project. The PWMC on the other hand is a coalition of individuals and groups coming from the local government units, the DENR local offices, and the non-government and people's organizations working for the protection and rehabilitation of watersheds across the country.

Specific areas considered included the organization's history, vision, mission, goals, structure, decision-making processes and leadership, programs and activities, key achievements, funding, communication strategy, monitoring and evaluation system, identity and image, linkages, sustainability mechanisms, challenges and potentials. Their strengths and weaknesses, the key issues in their design and operation, and in appropriate cases their capacity to support a Landcare agency, were also looked at. The data-gathering procedures used in this exploratory study included a series of semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions, participant observation, and document review. This research was not meant to be an evaluation of the respondent-organizations per se. Rather, the aim was to document perspectives from respective staff, and draw out lessons learned from their experiences. There is no intention to give conclusions on the organizations' performance or impacts. The objective is to reflect on their experiences and evolution in a way that might help to formulate some creative inputs valuable in designing a more appropriate institutional support structure for the scaling-up and sustainability of Landcare.

2. KEY CONCEPTS

Institutions and the Natural Environment

“People of different settings develop a variety of different goals for the ecosystems in which they live.” Hanna and others (1996) stress that goals for natural resource use are based on the desire to sustain human life, enhance standards of living, maintain a culture, and protect environmental quality for generations to follow. It is argued that all use involves trade-offs. It is impossible to achieve all goals to the fullest. Who has the right to do what they will with resources? Conflicting interests are assumed to be a natural feature of human communities (Korten 1986). For the effective and equitable management of such a conflict, “institutions” – denoting enforcement mechanisms that individuals use to organize specific relationships with one another – are of great importance.

Statesmanship in Ecological Governance

The state is instrumental in the design, implementation, and enforcement of resource regulations. Giddens (1994) believes that state initiatives, however well intended, frequently have debatable impact. Regulatory schemes fail in their objectives or are directly counterproductive. They may result in unforeseen effects such as social inequity. Sometimes, the impact of state involvement is more subtle. From the perspective of the local community, bureaucratic involvement in resource management can give rise to alienation from local interaction in terms of management responsibilities (Giddens 1994, cited in Hanna and others 1996: 47). What could be cooperative and symbiotic relations are transformed into competitive and “positional” relationships, in which the social conditions conducive to social action – solidarity, trust, equity – are eroded (Hirsch 1976, cited in Hanna and others 1996: 47). Moreover, state officials and decision-makers may succumb to the interest of the most powerful user-groups (Regier and others 1989 cited in Hanna and others 1996: 99).

The 1987 Philippine Constitution provides (Article II, Section 16) that “the state shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology

in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature.” In environmental governance, former DENR Secretary Victor Ramos suggested that all parties to a decision should be informed of the process and be made to understand the rationale of the decision. He stressed that statesmanship demands the summoning of knowledge from the different currents (economics, politics, and ecology) of society and amidst these forces, forging a convergence towards a common direction for the best environmental future for the community. Statesmanship in ecological governance is people-oriented. It considers community experiences and interests as vital to ecological decision making (Ramos 1997: 101).

Acosta (1997: 1-2) observes that “planning from below” was considered an exclusive NGO or subversive methodology before and during the Martial Law years in the Philippines. However, democracy, brought about by the 1986 EDSA Revolution, resulted in the government planners’ adoption of a bottom-up/participatory planning approach. The promulgation of the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991 posited both challenges and opportunities in governance and democracy at the local – provincial, municipal, and barangay – levels. As the LGC decentralized power and authority to the local level, community residents now have a far greater chance of advocating their interests and demanding accountability from their local leaders (Racelis 1994).

Sustainable Development

Everyone aims for development, but what does it mean? Early notions equating development with economic growth are no longer widely accepted. Development is not purely an economic phenomenon because it encompasses more than material and financial benefits. Todaro (1981) argues that development should, therefore, be perceived as a multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social system. Under these systems, members of society attempt to increase their personal and institutional capabilities to mobilize and manage resources to produce their desired sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life (Korten 1990).

Consistent with a people-centred vision, sustainable development is widely understood today as “a dynamic process in which the development, institutional change and direction of investments are in harmony and enhance both current and future potentials to meet human needs and aspirations” (UP National Assessment Report on the Environment 1992). Principle 1 of the Rio Declaration also avers: “Human beings are the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature” (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development 1992).

To achieve sustainability, development strategies must not only be technology-intensive but also organization-intensive. Community organizing vis-à-vis institution-building is an example of an organization-intensive strategy that creates a constructive social environment with a high degree of organizational density, thus creating and accumulating social capital.

Landcare Scaling-up

In a comprehensive study, “Scaling Up Landcare in the Philippines: Issues, Methods and Strategies”, Catacutan (2005) posited that scaling up as a planned intervention requires an actor (“initiating or sponsoring agency”) whose job is to purposely facilitate the process. It was argued that critical to success is the commitment and dedication of such a sponsoring agency and the resources available to support scaling up efforts (Samoff 2001 in Catacutan 2005). Along this line, the element of “institutional sustainability” was emphasized, which connotes that program activities are sustained on an expanding scale on an on-going basis. Moreover, this is said to require the capacity to maintain program quality over time at the desired scale.

In the following excerpt, Catacutan (2005) presented the alternative modes of scaling-up the Landcare program beyond the scope of the sponsoring agency (2004):

“LGU-Led Scaling Up. An identified advantage here is the Local Government Units’ capacity to leverage funding with the private sector in joint venture and partnership schemes for NRM projects. Other advantages include LGUs being permanent local institutions, and that they are organized into local government leagues, an alternative institution promoting knowledge sharing among LGUs, that can be tapped to help facilitate scaling-up of Landcare. Having an LGU-led scaling up is however not without challenges, citing experiences in which political dynamics within the LGU system, that impacted positively or negatively on Landcare.

“NGO-Led Scaling Up. Non-Government Organizations are described to have comparative competencies in terms of flexibility, commitment, and ability to learn and adapt (Biggs and Neame 1995), and are observed to have typically incurred lower costs under less bureaucratic project implementation measures than government. One advantage of an NGO mode for scaling up Landcare is said to be in the growth of NGO networks which are area- or sector-based. Networking has increasingly become the primary means and vehicle for NGOs to mainstream alternative approaches and to scale up their activities (Asian Development Bank 1999). This mode however is said to require mechanisms and tools for systematic cross-learning and exchange and peer support.

“NGA Project-Led Scaling Up. National Government Agencies have regional offices, and are thus theoretically seen to have the mechanism for scaling-up. Despite the critiques of their top-down approach and the transitory nature of their interventions, scaling-up Landcare through projects that they implement could be feasible. It is noted that although NGAs are controlled to a degree by their funding agencies, scaling-up could be potentially extensive if the Landcare concept could be successfully embedded in project designs at the outset.

“Coalition of Actors. One advantage of a coalition is that it can bring more expertise and resources to bear on complex issues, where the technical or

personnel services of any one organization would not be sufficient (Spangler 2004). It can also raise the members' public profile and receive more attention than if they acted individually. Moreover, Cramb (2000b) emphasized that dissemination of technologies typically involves networking, advocacy, lobbying and other activities by such development coalitions.

“The essential requirements for a coalition to work effectively are someone to act as convener of the coalition members, a way to meet the initial establishment cost, and an agreement of goals and compatibility of organizational values. The coalition may start loosely or informally, but the role of the convener is crucial at this stage. Ownership of a coalition is unspecified, all parties are decision makers, information and knowledge as they relate to the shared interest are common, and the coalition is structurally fluid (Aslop 1998). Coalition building is a loose way of organizing people that offers useful guidelines for policy makers and policy designers concerned with multi-actor intervention (Aslop 1998). Nonetheless, it is important to be mindful of the potential disadvantages of coalitions, including conflicts arising from differences in strengths and weaknesses, and personalities of coalition members. Coalition management can become cumbersome, unless a concerted effort is made to ensure that there is a convener with the resources to share information among players (Forsythe 1997). The chief drawback to forming a coalition is the time, energy, and dedication that it will demand.

“Incorporating the previous modes of scaling-up, a coalition of like-minded individuals, farmer groups, research and development institutions, the academe, and the business sector, can create a critical mass to support simultaneous scaling-up on several fronts and to consolidate wider political support. Thus the Landcare Program could be scaled up through partnerships with a larger, but loose system outside the government bureaucracy. The majority of NGO informants interviewed in this study supported this approach due to apprehensions about the national government.” (Catacutan 2005)

3. EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE LANDCARE PROJECT

Before considering the lessons from the four case studies, it is vital to first examine the status quo of Landcare's institutional arena in the country vis-à-vis how these key players of Landcare have effectively contributed to the scaling-up and sustainability effort, and to build on these experiences. Landcare has reached to several parts of the Philippines already to varying degrees and in various shapes. Some development players have claimed to have applied it, employing one or two of its elements as an approach in natural resource management programs. Others have also taken it as a program in itself whose implementation is guided with some basic principles behind several proven processes and approaches. To attempt a full account of the Landcare activities in the country would be illusory. A feasible task however is to look at the sites of operation and its areas of implementation from the current project's perspective. The thrust of the on-going Philippines-Australia Landcare Project is Landcare's growth and sustainability. The various players in the

sites of operation are then undoubtedly exhibiting different modes of engagement in addressing these goals. Who or what are these players? And what institutional arrangements have evolved in their processes of scaling-up Landcare? The many actors involved include but are not limited to the following.

Landcare Groups and other People's Organizations. These constitute the mass base of Landcare. They are the prime users and managers of the natural resources that Landcare tries to protect and enhance to create more livelihood options for rural development. Thus most of the activities are geared toward improving their capacity as stewards of the environment. Their existence as groups has been facilitative for a more cost-effective learning process to take place.

Farmer Trainers Groups (FTGs). Advocating a farmer-to-farmer approach in extension, the FTGs have been a great support structure for a more effective dissemination of appropriate technologies in the uplands. One of the great challenges faced here is the sustainability of such an institutional arrangement, given the opportunity cost involved on the part of the farmer trainers. To address this, the Landcare facilitators are proposing to have this activity anchored/institutionalized in the LGU systems, whereby the latter will provide proper incentives to the farmers involved.

Local Government Units (LGUs). In most cases, the Provincial LGUs were the entry points of Landcare at the sites, trying to get the “approval” of the Provincial Chief Executives for the program’s implementation. Sometimes this relationship between the project team and the provincial government develops when the latter actually provides tangible support such as office space, personnel, or other counterparts. The provincial government occupies an influential position in terms of scaling-up a program. If we talk of strategic engagements, however, the experiences of the project team across the sites suggest that the LGUs at the municipal level have been their number one partners in institutionalizing Landcare to address the issue of sustainability. The aim is to further tap the institutional mechanisms available at the provincial level to strengthen the support for Landcare. The provincial government is however seen more as a “big brother” that has a potent force which can help the municipal LGUs in sustaining a Landcare program, than the key implementer of Landcare itself.

Landcare being a community-based approach, it is but logical to find the municipal government as the more effective institution that the project team has partnered with so far in the program implementation. The communities, who are themselves barangay residents, are direct constituents of the municipal LGUs, thus are in the better position to influence the latter in responding to their expressed needs and aspirations. It can also be noted that the municipal governments are closer to where the action is. They are then better situated to formulate policies that are more reflective of local sensitivities and practices. Moreover, they have the authority and resources to make things happen on the ground and at the policy level, at least in their own units of jurisdiction. In other words, it is evident that municipal LGUs are fertile grounds for Landcare to get institutionalized and supported. A prerequisite here however is the proper orientation and influence given to the “centres of power” in the municipality (e.g., Mayor, legislative council, Municipal Agriculture Office MAO), Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO),

Municipal Planning and Development Committee (MPDC). In this respect the Landcare facilitators play a crucial role.

Given the changing administration and the political dynamics involved, the way for Landcare to move forward seems to be through institutionalization of mechanisms that enjoy some reasonable degree of permanence, like local policies and programs. Looking at the line of authority, the municipal LGUs need to get involved in both downward and upward relationships with the barangays and provincial LGUs, respectively – the barangays being its links to the communities, and the provincial government to other levels in the government hierarchy.

National Government Agencies (NGAs). Despite the decentralized power and authority granted by the Local Government Code to the LGUs, experiences in the country can attest that the NGAs still play a major role in the realm of environmental management. In the Landcare program implementation, the regional offices of the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) have been the major NGAs that our project team is also partnering with. They are noted to have “well-oiled” programs with national scale, which when properly channelled, will likely have great impact on the communities. The kind of interest generally shown by our partner NGA personnel seems to indicate the mutual benefits that result from the partnership established, which is characterized primarily by the complementation of what each can offer. One big advantage of involving the NGAs in Landcare is the capacity to scale-up the approach to a much wider scale. There is however a caveat here, that such kind of engagement must again be coupled with proper Landcare orientation and well-planned facilitation of the process.

Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and other Service Providers. There are many like-minded NGOs and other service providers that are being linked with the Landcare program implementation. These range from local and international NGOs and research institutions to foreign-funded projects whose mandates and/or objectives complement Landcare in NRM. Among them is the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF). Aside from being the implementing agency in three of the five provincial sites of the Philippines-Australia Landcare Project, it has other on-going activities that go well with Landcare, such as those of the AECI-funded “Tree Seeds Systems in the Communities” project. Moreover, with its decade of experience in advocating Landcare in some upland areas in the southern Philippines, ICRAF has been hosting a number of cross-visits and trainings for various groups and individuals from other sites, even outside the current Landcare project’s areas of operations.

Conceptualized by ICRAF to fulfil a mission of supporting locally-led natural resource management initiatives, the Landcare Foundation of the Philippines Inc (LFPI) is another organization that promotes Landcare. Although it operates only in three municipalities within two provinces at the moment, and its activities are limited to those associated with its “Trust Fund” program and its four other implemented projects, the Foundation is established as an agency that would administer a long-term small-grants program to support conservation farming and agroforestry-based NRM, and is envisaged “to become a key actor of the NRM debate at the regional and national level, with the ability to participate in national

conservation strategies, to work with other public and private agencies to develop agile and effective management approaches, and to nurture existing Landcare groups and other organizations becoming involved in conservation farming and agroforestry for the first time.”

The following sums up the key roles that LFPI plays in support of Landcare:

- Source of small grants (10,000-20,000 pesos) for Landcare group-led NRM-associated activities through the Landcare Trust Fund (37 Landcare groups so far in the municipalities of Claveria, Lantapan, and Malitbog);
- Implementor of NRM projects employing the Landcare approach;
- Technical service provider (e.g., partnering with the Misamis Oriental Landcare project team in some capacity-building activities in support of the Farmer Trainers Team in Claveria);
- Partner/collaborator of other key players in Landcare, such as ICRAF in some of its initiatives associated with the AECI-supported “Tree Seed Systems in the Communities” Project and the Philippines-Australia Landcare Project (in the municipalities of Claveria, Lantapan, and Malitbog).

Project Landcare Coordinators and Assistants in Five Provinces. These Landcare personnel do much of the facilitation work in the Philippines-Australia Landcare Project implementation in their respective sites. Activities conducted or facilitated may include: information, education and communication (IEC) initiatives, trainings (i.e., on appropriate technologies as well as on organizational development and capacity-building), cross-visits, strategic planning of Agri-NRM programs at the LGUs, and Landcare integration in LGU plans and priorities (translated through policy, program, personnel, and/or budgetary allocations). In many of these activities, the facilitators work closely with local government officials and staff at the municipal level, with assistance from the barangay agricultural workers.

A relevant development is the formation of the *Landcare Coordinators Network (LCN)*. It evolved as an (informal) institutional arrangement within the Project that facilitates information flow and exchange, especially given that the Landcare coordinators (and the field assistants whose “voices” they bring) across five provinces are officially connected in different organizations with respective mandates to take into account. With the team members’ common interest in realizing the Landcare project goals, the LCN has effectively served as a feedback mechanism on the viability of different approaches employed when the team facilitates the processes involved in the program implementation, engaging various players in the field and in the policy communities. It provides a venue for sharing of experiences and lessons which are vital in having well-informed decisions aimed at fostering more appropriate policy options and/or actions at various levels. The network has also been facilitating a basic training program for the project team, forums, and cross-visits involving different Landcare players and other interested groups across the five provinces and beyond.

The Project Management Committee (PMC) is another institutional mechanism that plays an important role in the current implementation of the Landcare Program. It is composed of representatives of the partner agencies in the Philippines-Australia Landcare Project, namely ICRAF, SEARCA, CRS, DPI&F, UQ, ACIAR, and AusAID. Although with a decentralized system observed in the project, sharing

leadership and management with team members who are on-ground implementers, major decision-making especially on areas affecting the project's over-all direction, policies, and priorities, is lodged in the PMC.

4. LESSONS LEARNED FROM COMPARISON OF INSTITUTIONS

The four cases of institutional support depict prevailing patterns on how some practices that help shape its operational system and the way other stakeholders interact with it have enabled the organizations to more effectively address their respective goals. The following paragraphs present the salient points, highlighting some key lessons learned in their respective operations.

Organizational Structure: Size, Representation, and Decision-making

Multi-sectoral and Multi-disciplinary. Employing a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary representation in the decision-making body is illustrated in three out of the four cases. The organizations generally chose people with different fields of expertise occupying strategic and influential positions in the society to be part of their Board of Trustees (BOT). The MFI for instance had at some points, an Assistant Secretary of DENR, a farmer, as well as a media representative among other like-minded individuals as Board members. This was not only perceived as a way to draw ideas from various perspectives and to positively affect organizational leadership and management, but also as a mechanism to better promote their programs to a wider populace.

Commitment and Competence. The LCN's experience, on the other hand, showed that the commitment and the competence (a mix of both technical background and management skills) among the members of this loose organization had played a crucial role in enabling it to effectively function. Both the MFI and the LFPI seem to support this contention when their respective executive officers recognized human resource development as an important factor in the success of their endeavours. Moreover, some key members of the LFPI have pointed out the need to provide capacity-building activities at the BOT level in the areas of corporate management, organizational management, and networking.

Small and Personal. In terms of organizational size, a small membership seems to have generated some advantages. In the case of the LCN, for example, being a small, personalized network is likely to have been an important factor in ensuring strong commitment to the project's thrusts, and a very good relationship between members. Also, being small allows the LCN to be flexible in its strategies and responses to new developments, since it is not bound by the bureaucratic procedures inherent in a large organizational structure.

Shared Leadership. More than its size consideration, such flexibility however was largely influenced by the devolved leadership observed in the project management of which the network is involved, giving reasonable room for the members to discuss among themselves and strategize things based on how they see them fit to on-ground operations. Moreover, after the first year when someone in particular took the lead as a convener, leadership in the network was shared rather than anchored on a particular individual. This has developed a greater sense of ownership

among members of any activity being initiated, and such a spirit of shared responsibility consequently resulted in a better sense of shared accountability. A positive indication of this approach is reflected in the 100 per cent attendance of its seven members in all its quarterly meetings in the past two years of its operation.

The experiences of the MFI, the LFPI, and the PWMC on the other hand showed a common problem encountered in obtaining a quorum during BOT meetings, even if a minimal monetary incentive is provided to the attendees, such as in the case of the LFPI. Although the LCN's organizational structure is different from the other organizations mentioned, it may still be safe to assume that such experience of the latter may be attributed to the size of its decision-making body that necessitates more numbers to constitute a quorum, or to any other factor affecting members' interest. In relation with this, respondents from all the organizations recognized the need to devise incentives for their staff and Board members, which may not necessarily be financial.

Activities and Networking

The activities of the organizations under study range from giving of technical assistance through training (e.g., MFI's training on conservation farming technologies) in enhancing capacity among partner individuals and institutions, to providing small grants to community groups (e.g., LFPI's Trust Fund that endeavours to incorporate a livelihood component with NRM). To be effective, a small grant scheme needs to be flexible and able to respond quickly to requests and changing contexts. Facilitating opportunities for information exchange (e.g. cross-visits, seminars, multi-stakeholders forum, etc.) on the other hand, form a significant component of the strategy employed by the above-mentioned networks (i.e., LCN and PWMC) in trying to broaden participation in natural resource management.

Whatever form of activity any organization is involved in, an effective way for it to thrive in the development work is building up on its experiences. Accordingly, one of the reasons why the MFI survived is the fact that after more than two decades, it has established a niche with its farmer-based extension strategy in upland development programs that continues to give high regard to farmers' capacity to deliver extension services. On the other hand, employing a Trust Fund to assist community-based initiatives seems to be a great strategy in which the LFPI can have its own niche as well in support of the Landcare movement, widening its base at the grassroots level.

The value of networking is evident in the cases presented. The MFI for instance has enabled its partner People's Organizations and farmers to participate and implement projects with several NGOs, LGUs, and NGAs. A significant portion of its accomplishments is said to have been realized with the support from partner agencies and organizations. The PWMC was able to conduct major events with sponsorship from its various links, like the Mayors' League of the Philippines. The members of the LCN, whose role is more facilitation, generally implement activities with and for their partners. The LFPI on the other hand acknowledges partnership and networking as an approach that enhances capacity among involved institutions, contributing to greater sustainability of efforts, and opening windows of

opportunities for more collaborative undertakings, complementary funding, and other project development.

In networking, an important element that was commonly pointed out is credibility. The MFI representative has aptly reflected this in his statement: “It is of great value that we sustain relationships established, and we do this by being ethical and responsible in dealing with partners.”

Funding and Sustainability

Primarily External Donors. A general challenge of the organizations over time has been to stabilize and sustain financially. The MFI has emphasized that, despite this concern, a development program implementer has to be cautious as well in accessing funding opportunities, seeing to it that the bias of the funding agency does not adversely affect the practices that the former promotes. A “Trust Fund” or any “buffer fund” that is well managed can be a good mechanism that helps in sustaining efforts.

Except for some self-generated income, the funds of almost all the organizations involved in this study were 95-100% sourced from foreign donors. An important implication here is the issue of sustainability of operations and/or programs.

Partnership with LGUs for Sustainability. Along this line, one of the big realizations of the MFI was said to be that partnership with the Local Government Units (LGUs) can be an effective approach to sustain local actions. (It was only in 1995, more than a decade after their early initiatives in the uplands, when MFI started an open collaboration with the LGUs.) One of the methods that the LFPI is slowly starting to employ in order to sustain initiatives is also said to be partnership and collaboration with LGUs. The PWMC has duly recognized the financial capacity of the LGUs as well especially that the latter has been sponsoring a number of their major events, such as annual assemblies and forums. The LCN, on the other hand, has always looked at the LGUs as the primary partner, which has both human and financial resources as well as institutional mechanisms that can be tapped to sustain local actions. Thus, it sees itself more as a facilitator, giving technical assistance to the LGUs and linking them to other service providers for more cost-effective and sustainable operations on-ground and at the policy level.

Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

Transparency in decisions, actions, and resources has always been seen as an important feature in the organizations’ operations. Having accessed funds from “external” donors, M&E related activities that are initiated by the funding agencies have always been part of the process. Playing a more crucial role, however, is the informal monitoring of activities at the staff or implementers’ level (e.g., MFI’s participatory “management audit”, LFPI’s internal M&E, or the LCN’s regular feedback giving during meetings or through the “e-group”, supported by the members’ involvement in process documentation), which is more like an opportunity to work out problems together, rather than being a conventional system of “checks”. This seems to have the advantage of moving away from a hierarchical model of a “donor-beneficiary” relationship, thus creating a more enabling

environment for learning to take place, influencing management actions over time for more sustainable outcomes.

5. DISCUSSION

What are the essential elements for the Landcare processes to grow? Under what institutional mechanisms are these elements present? What mode of scaling up can best sustain these arrangements and what are the characteristics of the institutional support structure essential for this mode to work? These are the fundamental questions that the project's institutional research wants to answer. From the experiences of the four organizations presented, lessons were drawn regarding some enabling factors for a more effective and sustainable operation of an NRM "sponsoring agency".

Preconditions for Landcare scaling-up which are suggestive of potential Landcare sites have already been identified in related literature. It seems clear that integral factors to success embodied in the Landcare approach include appropriate technologies, institution building, and a three way partnership involving community groups, LGUs, and technical service providers (Catacutan 2005). The concern here, however, is specifically on the institutional arrangements needed for the Landcare processes to grow. Though limited in scope and still in progress, the current Landcare project has already endeavoured to experiment with these mechanisms in the process of promoting and institutionalizing Landcare, which can provide a reasonable indication of their viability. From its experience as reflected in the above discussions, the following *essential elements to support the scaling-up of Landcare* can be identified:

- Community groups, including farmer trainers;
- Active support from the local governments especially on institutionalization to address the issue of sustainability (the municipal LGU as the prime mover, and the provincial and barangay LGUs as its "back up" on different aspects);
- NGAs whose well-funded programs can complement Landcare;
- Like-minded NGOs and other service providers such as research institutions and academe, forming part of the network of Landcare advocates;
- A pool of competent site coordinators (preferably with a mix of technical background and management skills) and well-trained facilitators, providing technical assistance and facilitating information flow and exchange;
- A comprehensive training program for facilitators (both project-based and external) especially on Landcare facilitation skills and on "appropriate technologies";
- A senior multi-disciplinary advisory group that can provide sound direction and oversight for an effective Landcare program;
- A well established monitoring and evaluation system;
- Some coordinating mechanisms used to organize specific relationships among various key players of Landcare for a more integrated effort, which indicate the need for a "sponsoring or initiating agency" that takes the lead in crafting these mechanisms.

Coalition of Actors. The involvement of different players whose varying contributions significantly complement each other for a more effective scaling-up and sustainability of Landcare seems to manifest the viability of the 'coalition of

actors’ as the mode to follow in order to best sustain these existing institutional arrangements that provide an enabling environment for Landcare. This does not however erase the possibility of shifting the mode in the longer term as things evolve. In order for the coalition to function well, having a competent “convenor” or a “sponsoring or initiating agency” is a must, whose job is “to purposely facilitate the process of scaling-up as a planned intervention”.

In the context of the Landcare project, the Landcare Coordinators Network (LCN) has been undertaking a “convenor” role to a limited extent, acting as a “learning group” strategizing various modes of engagement across the sites, and is instrumental in broadening further the base of Landcare, linking partners in one province to another, facilitating farmer-to-farmer, LGU-to-LGU, and technician-to-technician interactions. The informal (being unregistered) nature of the LCN has had so far no negative effect on its operations. This simplicity of structure has been rather more facilitative. An important element it has at the moment is the committed and competent members, which is good because networks must be started with commitment, but cannot however be sustained only on that. Moreover, if what is envisioned is a coalition of a number of actors, the convenor needs to get institutionalized, registered, and operating with clear sets of guidelines, otherwise it can be vulnerable to some complicated and differing mandates and management systems of members’ home institutions.

The “Covenor” or the “Initiating Agency”. In conceptualizing the appropriate design of this Landcare “initiating agency”, it will be of great help if we first figure out the roles of this agency. Along this line, thoughts were drawn from the project team, particularly from the members of the Landcare Coordinators’ Network, who then suggested the following as among the roles that the envisioned agency may assume:

- A convenor that works closely with the two other primary players in Landcare, namely, the local government and the farmer-led Landcare associations;
- A sharing group, an integrator of efforts and facilitator of information flow;
- A broader Landcare advocate, acting to promote Landcare in much bigger contexts, in various institutions and communities across the country, consistently taking into account some defined core principles of Landcare and the three cornerstones of its approach, namely, appropriate technology, institution building, and partnership;
- As a “power house” for Landcare, with a number of specific tasks –
 - resource centre for information regarding Landcare processes, approaches, and technologies;
 - provider of technology assistance to relevant institutions;
 - facilitator of cross visits and other means of information exchange;
 - strategist in helping improve operations and modes of engagement;
 - provider of a systematic training program for Landcare facilitators;
 - documents and generally spearheads the participatory M&E of Landcare initiatives across sites, keeping and managing databases for that purpose.

Such an agency is seen not as a direct implementer of various projects with different groups. Rather, aside from provision of technical assistance, it may help facilitate

the sourcing of funds for its member or partner organizations. The very essence of this “agency” is that, through the roles that it assumes, it will endeavour to keep the Landcare program implementation in the country up and running.

Nature of the “Agency”. Consistent to a preference for the “coalition of actors” mode, several members of the project team, as well as some key personnel of the Landcare Foundation, recognize the necessity of having some kind of a network or a “Landcare umbrella organization” for a more concerted effort and a wider sphere of influence. Some members of the Project Management Committee have suggested the name “Landcare Partners” for that “agency”, conveying a more inclusive and friendly identity.

In a focus-group discussion, a question was thrown to the Landcare coordinators as to their suggestions if there was no existing project or institution that is carrying out the above mentioned roles. What about the LFPI? In response, they had this to say: “At present, the LFPI seems to employ primarily the ‘Trust Fund’ approach, and its coverage in terms of interventions and areas of operation is still limited. If LFPI’s priority is the Landcare groups, this network’s concern can include giving of technical assistance to relevant government or private institutions.” Others suggested that the envisioned network could be a body that is much broader than the LFPI, and the latter could be among the key member institutions, perhaps acting as secretariat to that network. Another one entertained the possibility of the LFPI (which is a SEC-registered entity) being reconstituted to assume a key role in the network. In relation to this, it is worth mentioning that despite its current limited operations, the LFPI’s vision and mission are in harmony with the general vision the project team has of the “Landcare agency”. The difference is more on the specific roles assumed, as reflected in the Foundation’s current priority activities. From on-going team discussions, it is evident that many have envisaged having a support institutional structure that is outside the government bureaucracy as the more practical option, thus a *private agency*. Whether or not it is feasible to reconstitute the LFPI for the purpose of establishing the desired agency is something that requires further discussions among key decision-makers involved due to the complexity of the issue.

In a nutshell, the following are some characteristics of the institutional support structure essential for the “coalition of actors” mode to work and effectively disseminate the Landcare approach on a wider scale. It must be a learning organization that advocates adaptive management, employing participatory and flexible approaches in its structure, procedures, and systems of operation and continues to refine its focus keeping it relevant amidst some changing contexts. It should concentrate on process and capacity-building rather than on a project’s quantifiable “targets”. It must be adequately resourced and professionally managed, employing a core staff of experienced Landcare facilitators and with strong involvement of the “Landcare leaders” and the scientific community. There must be resource allocation for participatory M&E.

6. CONCLUSION

Some ideas on the possible design of the agency can already be inferred from the above discussions and analyses, based on the experiences of people involved in

implementing the Landcare program, other stakeholders' perspectives, and related literature. The following presents a hypothetical scenario of an institutional support agency that will take the lead in an expanded Landcare Program. For purposes of the discussion, the name "Landcare Agency" is used.

Goals and Objectives

- The Landcare Agency is a continuously evolving coalition of Landcare facilitators and advocates from various local governments, line departments, academe, research institutions, NGOs and other groups, all committed to supporting Landcare as a farmer-led, community-driven extension process in agriculture and natural resource management.
- It will facilitate information flow and exchange through cross-visits, forums, and other means for relevant institutions and individuals to continuously sharpen strategies in the Landcare program implementation.
- It aims to provide technical support and facilitation in mainstreaming Landcare in local government extension programs and budgets.
- It will link up or collaborate with other service providers to assist in identifying and addressing Landcare groups' problems and priorities.
- It will endeavour to bring together learning and experiences from local communities to enhance field implementation procedures, guide policy reform, and develop more relevant research questions.
- It will document various processes involved in the Landcare program implementation and communicate research findings at both local and international levels.

Programs

The Landcare Agency may explore the following as among its major programs:

- *Capacity Building* – this includes but is not limited to a comprehensive training in the Landcare process and technologies provided to facilitators from both government and non-government organizations.
- *Resource Mobilization* – sourcing funds to support local governments' Landcare program, and for the capacity-building of accredited Landcare associations, as well as for service provision to farmers.
- *Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation* – setting up an effective M&E system and a knowledge management and dissemination strategy; enhancing the research capacity of various players involved in the program implementation; and conducting specialized research by selected professionals.

Organizational Structure

Before it gets a legal personality through SEC registration, the Landcare Agency may operate as an informal organization (just like the LCN), under the auspices of the Philippines-Australia Landcare Project, while working on some administrative, financial, logistical, and secretariat activities entailed in its establishment.

Membership profile. To better support the “coalition of Landcare actors”, the Landcare agency’s membership profile may include field practitioners, farmers, government officials, researchers, academics, and large and small institutions.

Membership categories. The Agency can be structured around different levels of membership:

- Partner members – a loose membership of institutions and individuals who in one way or another have contributed to the expanded Landcare program implementation and are interested in being part of a broader network (e.g., Landcare groups, LGUs, other service providers).
- Board of trustees – acting as the “Senior Advisory Board”, which provides sound direction and oversight for an effective Landcare program. It is envisaged that by having strong involvement of some Landcare leaders in this body, the agency can benefit from the experience of senior people in terms of a perspective on how Landcare and this support agency have developed and possible future directions (e.g., the members of the current PMC and other key leaders). Note that from among the members of the BOT, a set of officers (i.e. President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer) will be elected (also a SEC requirement).
- Core group members – managing the different initiatives involved in implementing the expanded Landcare program. It is possible that these will include the following among others:
 - Chief Executive Officer, acting as the over-all coordinator who provides the over-all management of the Landcare Agency’s operations;
 - Experienced Landcare coordinators and field facilitators/assistants (regional/provincial and municipal levels respectively), managing local Landcare programs across the sites of operation;
 - Training Coordinator managing the over-all training program;
 - M&E and Research Coordinator;
 - Project Development Officer – coordinating the resource mobilization efforts and project proposal development (possibly combined with the M&E role);
 - Secretariat – supporting the members in administration and logistics (i.e., an administration and finance officer).

Registration

Some basic requirements for SEC registration of a Foundation include approval of the name (with about a week to get feedback) and lodging of documents:

- Notarized Articles of Incorporation, including the name of the foundation, address, primary purpose, secondary purpose, member incorporators, number of members constituting the BOT, contribution of each incorporator, and interim treasurer;
- By-Laws covering the annual meeting, regular meetings, meeting of BOT, meeting of general membership, set of officers and schedule of election, qualifications for membership and manner of acceptance, ways in which members get expelled, members’ duties and responsibilities, and other internal rules on membership and meetings;

- Certification of a one million peso bank deposit with an attached Treasurer's supporting affidavit.

From submission of the complete set of required documents, the processing of registration may take from three weeks to two months.

Should it rather be a reconstitution of an already existing Foundation, this will involve filing of a request for amendment of the Foundation's Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws. Since this will involve, among others, getting approval from the majority of the BOT members regarding some amendments to be made, the review process may take a longer time, sometimes reaching six months before obtaining the approval from SEC.

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