The Performance of Community Organisers in Promotion of Community Forestry in Leyte Province, Philippines

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A study was conducted to assess the role and effectiveness of community organisers in supporting the development of people's organisations in achieving community-based forest management objectives in Leyte Province Philippines. Community organisers were found to be effective in forming people's organisations (POs), motivating people to participate in voluntary activities organised by POs and encouraging cohesiveness among PO members. Community organisers manage to raise the level of environmental awareness and knowledge of members of people's organisations, develop leadership interest and skills, create various livelihood opportunities and provide direction and facilitate the establishment of large tree plantations. However, the short duration of community organisers' contracts (typically two years) is insufficient to establish mature and cohesive POs prepared to assume management on their own, including the management of tree plantations. Further, lack of training and funding support, low wages, delayed payment of salaries and limited time to work with people's organisations, as well as the pressure to produce tangible outputs such the establishment of large tree plantations, prevents them from placing greater emphasis on the development and empowerment of the people.

Keywords: People's organisation, community empowerment, Community-Based Forest Management, smallholder forestry

INTRODUCTION

An active program of Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) has been instituted in the Philippines, administered by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), with livelihood, environment and resource supply objectives. CBFM agreements are made with People's Organisations (POs), and these are normally formed with the assistance of a Community Organiser (CO). Community organising is widely practiced in the Philippines as a means of social preparation for community investment and empowerment activities (Duthy and

Bolo-Duthy 2002). Community organising is rooted in the belief that those who benefit least from the current social, economic and political structures have the greatest potential to build (and the most to gain from) long-term, successful movements to create action for social change. This theory maintains that members of disenfranchised communities have the self-interest to build community-based organisations that can confront inequities that negatively affect community life (Mediratta and Smith 2001).

In relation to community forestry, community organisers encourage people to commit themselves to sustain the PO, to share community commitments and to motivate them to grow trees and protect forests for the future. A people's organisation is a group of people who may be an association, a cooperative, a federation or other legal entity established by the community, to undertake collective action to address community concerns and needs as well as mutually share the benefits from their endeavour (DENR 1998). Community organisers are believed to have the ability to empower POs and to build people's management skills and leadership capabilities that are seen as essential components to sustainable forest management. The role of the CO is a challenging one, involving a range of tasks in the organising, training and empowerment of smallholder communities. The effectiveness with which POs are formed to undertake community forestry and their long-run sustainability is critical to the progress of reforestation in the Philippines.

The research reported here examines the performance of a sample of community organisers in promoting community forestry in Leyte Province in the Philippines and measures which might be introduced to make the organising process more successful. A number of indicators have been devised to evaluate the performance of COs in organising communities to undertake forestry projects. The paper first provides background to community organising in general and the role of COs in Leyte Province in supporting community forestry. Details of the research method are then provided, followed by an overview of the study area and the POs investigated. Indicators are then set up for evaluation of CO performance and the degree of success of the community organising process in relation to these indicators is evaluated with respect to a number of CBFM sites in Leyte Province. Some overview comments conclude the paper.

COMMUNITY ORGANISING: BACKGROUND AND ROLE IN LEYTE FORESTRY

Community organising had its roots in the USA through the works of Saul Alinsky, which gained recognition in the 1930s (Stoecker 2002). This followed the creation of a community organising model in several independent citizen organisations in the USA, particularly in Chicago, where sustainable improvements in the living conditions of members were achieved (Finks 1984, Stoecker 2002, Szynka 2002).

Community organising has been defined in similar ways by a number of authors. For example, Beckwith and Lopez defined community organising as:

> The process of building power through involving a constituency in identifying problems they share and the solutions to those problems that they desire; identifying the people and structures that can make those solutions possible; enlisting those

targeted in the effort through negotiation and using confrontation and pressure when needed; and building an institution that is democratically controlled by that constituency, that can develop the capacity to take on further problems and that embodies the will and the power of that constituency. (Beckwith and Lopez (1997, p. 2).

while Stall and Stoecker viewed community organising as:

The process of building power that includes people with a problem in defining their community, defining the problems that they wish to address, the solutions they wish to pursue, and the methods they will use to accomplish their solutions. (Stall and Stoecker 1997, p. 2).

Furthermore, Gauld in quoting the Philippines DENR defined community organising as:

A systematic, planned and liberating change process of transforming a community into an organised, conscious, empowered, self-reliant, just and humane entity and institution. (Gauld 2002).

Community organising is generally structured around the idea that there are 'haves' and 'have nots' in any society, and that the 'haves' will usually not be willing to give up their advantage. Members of such a community are drawn from a geographic or a cultural community (Stoecker 2001). Common to community organising is a culture of confrontation by means of protests, demonstrations and street actions of various kinds. These are premised on the belief that the problems of a community are caused by unfair treatment by government, discrimination or disinvestments by corporations, or insensitivity of developers. Community organising places emphasis on efforts to change external conditions in order to change internal community conditions that can bring about the social change.

Community organising as a form of social action was introduced in the Philippines in 1970, and was linked with the Basic Christian Community as the main pastoral thrust of the church that believes the theory of liberation (Bishop Francisco Claver 1979, cited by Murphy 2003). Many of the early community organisers were priests, nuns, ministers and committed lay Christians. Community organising work in the past has been criticised as 'radical' due to the prominent role it played in the national anti-poverty effort which challenged the existing elite and status quo, particularly in the anti-Marcos movement during the Martial Law period (Murphy 2003).

The community organising approach was first tested in the Philippines in 1970 at the Tondo foreshore area where urban poor people lived illegally on government land, forming the largest squatter area in South-East Asia. Zone One Tondo Organisation (ZOTO), with 60,000 members, was formed using the community organising (CO) approach. During the Martial Law era, ZOTO was able to persuade the government to allow 180,000 poor people to remain in the area and to have access to basic services including electricity, piped water, roads, drainage and pathways.

Over the years community organising has helped the poor achieve major improvements in their living conditions. The in-city relocation of 7,000 families in

Dagat-Dagatan, and the acquisition of land titles for 23,000 families, were the result of community organising efforts. The Pasig River People's Organisation which aims to improve the quality of the Pasig river water has implemented successful projects within the watershed. In 1987 the 'Sama-Sama' Peoples Organisation – a large PO which began in 1982 – successfully fought eviction from government land during the Martial Law period and then subsequently persuaded President Corazon Aquino to proclaim 150 ha of land for the residents of the National Government Centre. They also negotiated the provision of basic services for the residents (Murphy 2003).

The community organising experience in the Philippines has put emphasis on the use of numerous repeated action-reflection cycles (Murphy 2003). Community organisers follow a number of basic principles: (1) aim towards national social transformation, (2) recognise and respect the primary roles of the people in their ability to confront, understand and deal with the root causes of their problems and to build their own vision of an alternative society, (3) recognise that genuine transformation can be effected only through people's collective strengths, and (4) involve learning by continuing refinement of theory and understanding through experiences. Community organisers operate by identifying people's felt needs as a starting point to: motivate people to undertake action to address community issues; strongly encourage the collective process in problem-solving, decision-making and planning; and develop local leaders to perform tasks, establish open and legal community organisations and avoid imposition of ideology. Ten steps have been defined for people's organisation formation:

- integration (a process wherein the community organiser tries to establish rapport and communication with the members of the community by participating in and learning from their everyday life).
- social investigation or study of the community;
- tentative planning and strategising (the choice of one problem to work on);
- groundwork (the door-to-door explanation and motivation of people);
- meeting (community discussions to plan and solve problems);
- role play (to prepare leaders for negotiation);
- mobilisation (of people in communities to advocate solutions to their own issues and problems);
- evaluation (review of what has been accomplished and what was not accomplished);
- reflection (the deeper or theoretical aspects of the work); and finally
- the formation of a people's organisation.

In general, community organising mainly works towards consciousness-raising, organisation-building and mobilisation. The aim is to achieve effective power for the people and establish and sustain relatively permanent organisational structures that best serve their needs and aspirations. It is held that changes must be achieved through a participatory process wherein the whole community is involved in the organising process.

Two major approaches are practiced by community organisers in the Philippines. The *project-based approach* involves use of service delivery and development strategies to organise communities. A project is introduced to the community as an

entry point to mobilise people and then gain support that is instrumental to the formation of a people's organisation. This approach aims for community self-reliance. The *issue-based approach*, which derives from the methods of Alinsky (Murphy 2003), focuses on collective action in which people are mobilised on the basis of unity on one or more specific issue. The aim is to help people advocate for themselves using means such as: building networks and alliances; developing collaborations; conducting dialogue or negotiations, mass mobilisations and demonstrations of protest; and presenting petitions to relevant authorities to express community issues and problems. The issue-based approach helps people to develop critical consciousness, self-confidence and the ability to stand up to authority much more rapidly than is possible using the project-based approach. This type of community organising approach begins and builds upon local, small and concrete issues – those the people want to do something about (Dionisio 1985). Fundamental to community organising is the building up of people's collective power. This is seen as a key approach for solving problems of powerlessness, and a step towards affecting change in the orientation of economic, political and cultural structures heading towards social transformation.

Community organising (CO) is one of the approaches employed to mobilise upland communities in the Philippines. According to DENR (1998), this approach assists the government's strategy to involve those communities in the management and utilisation of forest resources and at the same time assure the long-term sustainability of forestry activities. COs assist in the preparation of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Local Government Unit (LGU) and the DENR in pursuing CBFM, undertaking land-use planning, identifying and selecting potential CBFM sites as well as promoting the CBFM to communities. Prior to the pull-out of CO assistance, community organisers are required to assist PO members to formulate and produce the Community Resource Management Framework (CRMF), a Resource Use Plan (RUP) and an Annual Work Plan (AWP).

RESEARCH METHOD

Thirteen community forestry sites in Leyte Province were purposively selected on the basis of a variety of characteristics, spread over seven municipalities and covering various stages of community organising. Three sites were selected in Babatngon, two in Palompon, Inopacan, Matag-ob and Matalom, one in Isabel and one in Baybay (Table 1). The target respondents included members of people's organisations selected using simple random sampling, NGO members and community organisers selected using 'snowball sampling' (as described by Fink 1995), and staff of the DENR (at regional, provincial and municipal level) and LGUs selected using purposive sampling (following the approach outlined by Stone and Collin 1984).

Table 1. Survey sites for which site profiles were obtained

Municipality	Barangay	People's organisation surveyed
Babatngon	Sitio Santo Nino, Rizal II Proper, Rizal II	Rizal Upland Developers Association (RUDA)
		Rizal II Marketing Cooperative (RMC)
	Villa Magsaysay	Cambantad Upland Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative (CUFMPC)
Isabel	Putingbato	Puttingbato Rainforest Association (PRA)
Palompon	Cruz, Baguinbin, Plaridel, Cangcosme	Bililhong Ani sa Katunggan Hangtud Walay Katapusan (BAKHAW)
	Santiago	Santiago Tree Planters and Livelihood Beneficiaries Association (STPLBA)
Matag-ob	Cambantad	Cambantad Upland Farmers Association (CUFA)
	Bulak	Bulaknong Kapunungan nga Nagamuma sa Kakahuyan (BUKANA)
Inopacan	Hinabay	Hinabay Upland Farmers Association (HUFA)
	Conalum	Kapunungan sa Yanong Maguuma sa Inopacan (KAHOI)
Matalom	Tigbao	Waterloo, Anahaw, Luwan, Lunas, Tigbao Reforestation Beneficiaries Association (WALLTREBA)
	Caningag	Caningag Multi-Purpose Cooperative (CMPC)
Baybay	Sitios, Cienda and San Vicente	Cienda San Vicente Farmers Association (CSVFA)

A questionnaire was drafted and tested on five members of a people's organisation, to refine the questions, to familiarise enumerators with the questions and to improve their style of questioning. Protocols were established with various gatekeepers of selected sites to ensure safe fieldwork activities.

Data were collected by four enumerators, one of whom was the first author of this paper. The enumerators were split into two teams, with each team having a male and female member in order to ensure both male and female respondents were comfortable answering questions. Data were collected through personal interview (including informal conversation), focus group discussions, observation and access to secondary sources. During February to May 2003, the two teams of enumerators interviewed 189 respondents from 13 people's organisations, 17 community organisers, officers from nine NGOs and seven LGUs, as well as nine DENR staff from regional to municipal offices. The data collection and analysis methods are illustrated in Figure 1.
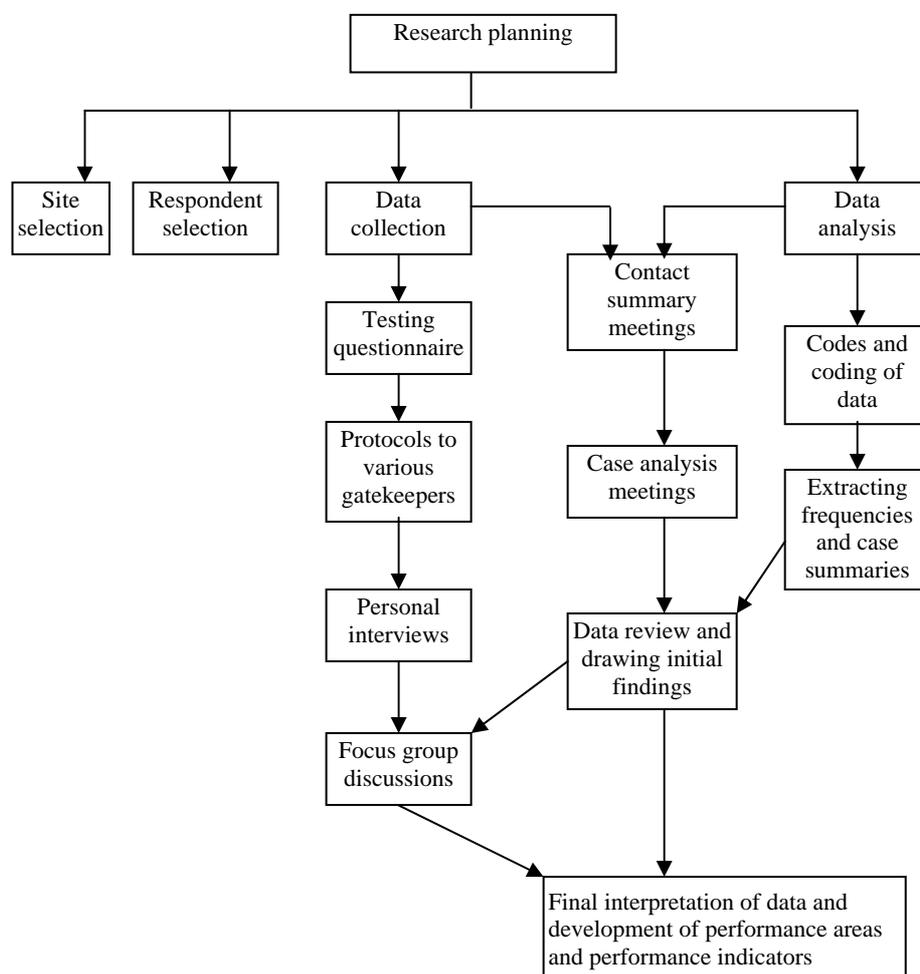
Figure 1. Methods of data collection and analysis

Following Miles and Huberman (1994), *contact summary meetings* guided by contact summary forms were used by the enumerators as a guide during the early data analyses carried out in the field. After each day of interviewing, time was put aside during the evening to discuss observations and difficulties. This process revealed main issues or themes that were of interest, illuminating and important. The team of enumerators also met every week to reflect on the week's survey activities, describe what had happened during the week, clarify disagreements and confusing information gathered and identify follow-up questions that would resolve conflicting and confusing data. *Case analysis meeting forms* – also adopted from Miles and Huberman (1994) – were used to guide the weekly analysis meetings. These summarised the information gathered and helped resolve conflicting data. The results of contact summary meetings and the case analysis meetings contributed substantially to the initial findings. Apart from these meetings, direct observations

during exposure to the study sites, printed documents collected and the review of data by each enumerator provided a level of confirmation of initial findings.

Data were also collected from archival records and public documents associated with CBFM, people's organisations, the DENR and NGOs. These documents were used to resolve conflicting data gathered during interviews, for instance about the total number of hectares granted to the POs through their CBFM agreement.

Various methods were used to review the data, which further refined the quality of the survey observations. In particular, focus group discussions were held to validate and help interpret the initial findings from the interviews. In preparation for the focus group discussions, the initial findings and issues gathered by individual enumerators were tabled for discussion during the preparation meetings. The initial observations and issues were summarised during these discussions, for subsequent presentation during focus group discussions held in five municipalities.

Four focus group discussions (FGDs) were held to validate PO survey responses and a fifth mainly to collect information from NGOs and community organisers. Each of the FGDs was attended by three people's organisations, concerned local government units, the DENR and NGOs. Focus group discussions generated different reactions from participants and it was noticeable when some people in a group were enthusiastic to participate in discussions. These avenues were considered productive and effective, particularly during probing and in validating conflicting information such as when was the organisation was formed, total number of members and the name of agency with which they registered their organisation.

Data analysis consisted of three forms of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The contact summary forms and case analysis meeting forms used in fieldwork assisted in early data analysis and in extracting themes. The data were coded and transferred to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to extract frequencies and case summaries. The data were subjected to a process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming, which was undertaken during the writing of summaries, coding, teasing out themes, making clusters and making partitions. The data were then displayed in an organised, compressed assembly of information, noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations and causal flows, which permitted the drawing of conclusions. These activities were assisted by the use of SPSS.

OVERVIEW OF STUDY AREA AND PEOPLE'S ORGANISATIONS

Most of the barangays in which communities were surveyed controlled similar land areas, each having substantial timberland. Most of the people living in each community were tenured migrants, certificate of stewardship contract (CSC) holders, people depending on the forest for their livelihood, or previous beneficiaries of people-oriented forestry programs of the DENR (for instance the Integrated Social Forestry Program). The primary source of household livelihood was growing cash and food crops, supplemented by raising livestock. Generally, infrastructure and basic social services were found to be poorly maintained and equipped, which was an obstacle to community organising. For instance, poor road condition and expensive and limited transportation made the locations difficult to access for community organisers. A large number of PO members surveyed do not farm in

timberland areas and were living 6-7 km away from tree plantation sites. These people were motivated to participate in tree planting to earn money rather than manage and protect the forest areas.

Most of the 13 POs surveyed were formed to access CBFM project funding support from the DENR. Members from these POs were predominantly motivated to join a PO because of the 'promised' or anticipated direct and indirect project benefits, including a daily wage for participating in nursery, tree planting and related activities and the expectation of a share from the revenue when trees are harvested.

Eleven of the 13 POs surveyed had tree plantations, though few had harvestable trees. The remaining two were at the preparation stage, establishing nursery seedling production and planting trees. One of the POs (the CSVFA) showed greater achievements than others, with a higher level of development and empowerment of members. CSVFA was assisted by full-time community organisers adopting an issue-based approach, had funding sources and received more than two years of community organiser assistance. In the four POs considered to be developing – BAKHAW, HUFA, KAHOI, CMPC – members met regularly, economic projects were continuing and from time to time members received monetary and non-monetary benefits. BAKHAW exhibited greater achievements that the other three, assisted by multi-million PhP project funding[1] as well as the full-time and dedicated support from their LGU, the DENR and their community organisers. The remaining POs appeared to be less successful, having irregular or no meetings, limited or no PO activities, a high number of inactive members and no economic projects that were being managed. The economic projects that do exist showed no obvious evidence of being managed or of monetary or non-monetary benefits being received by members.

All POs surveyed had been assisted by a community organiser, contracted by the DENR and an LGU, who generally prepared them to implement a CBFM project. Community organising activity varied in terms of the number of years the community organisers had been working with POs and the stages of community organising work undertaken (Table 2). At the time of the survey, four POs were about mid-way through the process of fulfilling their community organising contract, two were in the early stages of CO assistance, while the other POs had their CO assistance fulfilled. Two POs had developed and employed from among their members, local community organisers who were continuing the work of community organising. All POs were managing economic projects, although many of their projects had failed. Most of the POs were involved in protection and maintenance of large tree plantations. Most practiced top-down decision-making and used similar communication methods, including meetings, sending letters to members through an officer-in-charge and word of mouth.

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[1] $US1.00 = approximately 50 Philippines pesos (PhP).

Table 2. Total number of years of CO work in each PO

Name of people's organisation	Number of years of CO assistance					
	1	2	3	4	5 or more	CBFM contract status
RUDA		x				Fulfilled
CUFMPC	x					Aborted
RMC		x				Middle
PRA		x				Fulfilled
BAKHAW		x				Soon to phase out
STPLBA		x				Middle
CUFA		x				Fulfilled
BUKANA		x				Fulfilled
HUFA	x					Initial
KAHOI				x		Fulfilled CBFM, continued by local CO
WALLTREBA		x				Fulfilled
CMPC	x					Middle
CSVFA					x	Continuing with local CO

Two of the POs had been formed by the people's own initiatives prior to receiving CO assistance. Formation of these POs arose from the people's concern to address local issues. The need to control the rampant illegal logging operation within the locality of Gabas and Kilim was the basis of unity for the formation of the Cienda San Vicente Farmers Association (CSVFA), while the motivation of the Hinabay Upland Farmers Association (HUFA) was the access to affordable meat and low interest credit. HUFA is situated in a remote upland community with dangerous roads and has few transport links and high transport fares. These POs, by their own initiative, achieved considerable successes in managing the projects they initiated. The community organisers who were assisting HUFA, which was at the initial stage of CO assistance at the time of survey, directed their efforts at providing training and preparing members to undertake nursery management and tree planting activities. The community organiser who assisted CSVFA concentrated on activities that consolidated and strengthened the PO, including preparing officers and members to manage larger projects with external funding.

PERFORMANCE AREAS AND INDICATORS

Performance areas and indicators as in Table 3 were chosen to evaluate the effectiveness of COs in undertaking their organising activities under CBFM contracts.

Table 3. Performance areas and indicators chosen for the evaluation

Performance area	Indicators
PO development and empowerment status	Performance in formation of people's organisations: includes activities under the 10 steps in PO formation listed above.
	Awareness and knowledge gained by PO members, including environmental awareness and knowledge
	Leadership and management capabilities of PO leaders and officers, with respect to ability to initiate projects based on their local resources, and to liaise, and create networks and alliances on behalf of their organisations
	Change in POs membership
	Frequency and regularity of meetings
	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) in relation to POs and community organising activities
Economic projects initiated and managed by each PO	Quantity and status of economic projects managed by each PO
	Monetary and non-monetary benefits received by members
	Record-keeping and bookkeeping systems
	Planning, monitoring, and evaluation
Nursery and tree plantation projects	Status of nursery operation and tree plantation,
	Extent of tree planting, and age of trees planted
	Maintenance activities on tree plantations
	Identification of problems and implementation of measures to address these problems

Performance in PO Development and Empowerment

All 13 POs underwent the 10 PO formation steps with assistance from the CO. However, the length of time taken to establish the PO varied depending on internal and external pressures. Performance under the six indicators is presented below, highlighting patterns of events, commonalities and similarities of responses in the experiences.

Performance in formation of people's organisations

It is clear that the core focus in mobilising people to form CBFM groups was to establish tree plantations. COs were under pressure to achieve this expected output. Hence the formation of POs appeared limited to the mobilisation of manpower for the establishment of plantations. Then, after the typical two-year period of project support from the community organiser, responsibility to manage the project and to sustain the PO was left in the hands of the members. Typically the POs were weak and fragile, unready for this responsibility. Leaders, officers and members were left confused and with mounting concerns since they did not fully understand what the true intention of CBFM was, where their projects were heading and what their projects would mean to the community in the future.

The project-based approach used by community organisers to encourage people to join the PO created expectations that livelihood projects would provide them with an additional source of income to support their meagre earnings. Hence, members became frustrated after waiting for livelihood projects to commence almost two

years after they were first promised. Livelihood projects were like 'giveaways' after the people had established tree plantations. No proper preparation and implementation assistance was provided; in fact, livelihood projects were the last to be implemented and received little support from the community organisers. The result was that most of these livelihood projects failed.

Awareness and knowledge gained by PO members
This was gained mainly via seminars and training sessions, exposure to successful POs, experience participating in projects that addressed environmental issues and sharing of experiences and ideas among members. Eleven POs reported that their members had gained a basic knowledge of the importance of planting trees and of the effects of planting trees on the environment and on the people. Two POs clearly had a higher level of environmental awareness and knowledge than others. The study indicates that a longer period of community organisers' assistance, sincerity and full commitment of support from external organisations (i.e. DENR, LGU, NGOs), funding support and monetary benefits, are all important elements for raising the level of awareness and knowledge of the members of the people's organisations.

Leadership and management capabilities of PO leaders and officers
This indicator can be evaluated in terms of the ability of PO leaders and officers to liaise, establish networks, initiate projects using local resources and negotiate on behalf of members' interests. Only four POs indicated experiences of and capability in all of these areas. Distinguished leadership and management capabilities of PO leaders and officers were evident in two POs. These two POs had received more than two years of external assistance and funding (from community organisers, NGOs and foreign funding donors). Their members received regular monetary benefits and anticipated future monetary benefits from timber harvesting. However, the PO leaders that clearly demonstrated an ability to liaise, negotiate, establish networks and use local resources to develop projects were in those POs that are less dependent, or no longer dependent, on external support.

Increase and decrease in PO membership
Changes in PO membership were mainly influenced by project benefits, pressure to accomplish tree planting projects (of POs with existing project funding and CO assistance), protecting members' interests and the lack of organisational direction causing limited PO activities and no financial benefits to members. Six POs reported a sharp decrease in membership. This was mainly caused by a loss of motivation due to false promises, dissatisfaction with leadership and management style, the long wait for promised livelihood projects, financial discrepancies, alleged DENR 'corruption', politics within the PO and lack of carry-on funding. Several POs indicated that there had been an increase in their membership due to efforts to recruit new members. People were also encouraged to join because of the promised financial benefits. Some POs reported that there had been no appreciable increase or decrease in their membership and this was due to a strong desire to protect the improving status of the PO as well as the interests of its active members.

Frequency and regularity of meetings
Meetings were judged the most effective communication means by 65% of

respondents[2], compared with other means such as house-to house information dissemination, sending of letters to each member and the use of handheld radios. Meetings allow PO members to interact directly with other members and officers to discuss issues and raise suggestions. Respondents indicated that meetings are scheduled monthly but these were not actually held by eight of the POs. Regular meetings of PO officers and members are the strength of POs, as a vehicle for information exchange, inspiration and direction. POs with irregular meetings or no meetings at all had no continuing organisational activities and members lacked information about where the organisation is heading, or were confused about whether the PO even still existed. POs with regular meetings had motivated and active members, organisational activities were continuing and initiatives were taken to implement projects. POs with irregular meetings or no meetings at all, had inactive members or only a list of members remained and no organisational activities were held.

SWOT analysis of People's Organisations and Community Organisers
In the survey, questions were asked about the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of COs and POs in implementing CBFM projects. Eight POs mentioned their remaining active members and their tree plantations as strengths. Another strength reported was the community organiser's commitment and determination with regard to their work and their skills. This included the CO's ability to mobilise people, to develop cohesiveness and leadership capabilities in people and their ability to build networks of support as well as their ability to create and initiate opportunities for change and to empower people. Only two POs identified a high level of organisational maturity and development as specific strengths.

These strengths were confronted with heavy pressure from external circumstances (threats). These include limited donor funding, unfair demands from funding donors, the influence of local and regional politics, bureaucracy, hierarchy and 'corruption'. These pressures weakened the ability of community organisers to perform their tasks and the POs to achieve their objectives.

Weaknesses included the reality that community organising is in any event a short-term 'come-and-go' service with imposed time limitations. Job insecurity and low wages of the COs contribute to their frequent turnover. Other internal weaknesses commonly reported were decreasing participation of members, inactive members, no regular meetings, no proper record and bookkeeping system, unclear project management (lack of transparency in financial transactions and lack of planning, monitoring and evaluation), and inability to resolve boundary disputes.

Having a harvestable tree plantation, possible expansion of livelihood projects and links to funding agencies, and making greater use of existing networks and alliances were potential opportunities for the POs to pursue.

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[2] Levels of meetings are the general assembly meetings, project monitoring committee meetings, management committee meetings, and board of directors meetings.

Economic Projects Initiated and Managed by each People's Organisation
Ten POs managed economic projects[3] (mostly income-generating projects) while five had initiated projects using their own funds. It was evident that receiving benefits, especially financial benefits, motivated members to participate actively in organisational activities, particularly project-related activities. Based on the pattern of responses from PO members, it was established that income-generating projects are more likely to gain greater support from members and be sustained. The conceptualisation and planning of these projects was based on the skills of the people, their capacity, ability, resources and, most importantly, an attempt to address specific community issues. 'Managed' projects (regarded as livelihood projects) were more likely to fail. A number of projects which were extended to POs as a part of CBFM project implementation had failed and been abandoned. The implementation of these projects was not based on the people's skills, ability and resources and did not address identified community issues.

Quantity and status of economic projects managed by each PO
Two of the POs surveyed had six to nine continuing initiated and managed projects, while three had no projects at the time of survey (Table 4). CSVFA had six and BAKHAW nine continuing economic projects. CSVFA, BUKANA, HUFA and KAHOI all had continuing projects. The other nine POs had managed projects funded by external funding sources, including the World Bank. Seven POs had at least one active project, mostly in the form of money-lending and capital build-up mobilisation. Five POs had previously managed projects – mostly consumer store and livestock fattening and raising projects.

Monetary and non-monetary benefits received by PO members
Most of the economic projects initiated and managed by POs have provided benefits to members in the form of employment and income, as well as non-monetary benefits, although not every member of the POs has necessarily benefited. The majority of the respondents replied that they had received monetary benefits from joining a PO. These were in the form of allowances as PO officers, employment, incentives from economic projects and wages. Incentives included monetary allowances for storekeepers and the project manager, and access to low interest credit. Members that had gained employment opportunities included BAKHAW members hired as paid staff and CSVFA youth professional members hired as community organisers under a LGU project contract. All identified these opportunities as providing monetary benefits. All POs surveyed claimed that non-monetary benefits were gained by joining the PO, in the form of training, seminars and exposure to successful POs. These activities were reported to have enhanced their skills, raised their level of awareness, created the opportunity to become involved with social activities, establish friendships, and increased their security of land tenure.

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[3] The term 'economic project' is used to describe all projects undertaken by people's organisations and is not limited to income generating projects. 'Initiated' projects represent those projects that are funded by the PO's own resources and 'managed' projects are projects that are funded by external agencies and particularly the DENR (through CBFM) and JIBEC. Discussion of nursery and tree plantation projects is deferred to the next performance area.

Table 4. Number and status of initiated and managed projects of each PO (excluding nursery and tree plantation projects)

PO name	Total number of projects	Status of initiated and managed projects		Number of income generating projects	Other projects
		Continuing	Not existing		
RUDA	2	1	1	2	-
CUFMPC	-	-	-	-	-
RMC	-	-	-	-	-
PRA	3	1	2	3	-
BAKHAW	9	9		8	1
STPLBA	-	-	-	-	-
CUFA	4	-	4	2	2
BUKANA	5	3	2	3	2
HUFA	4	3	1	3	1
KAHOI	2	2	-	1	1
WALLTREBA	1	1	-	1	-
CMPC	1	1	-	-	1
CSVFA	6	6	-	3	3

Financial benefits appear to be the driving force behind participation of community members in POs. Participation rates are low when they are absent and high when they are present. For instance, three POs reported that the rate of inactive membership was high and that activities including meetings were limited or non-existent due to a lack of project funding and absence of livelihood projects that could provide monetary benefits to members. A further four POs claimed that the rate of inactive membership was high, financial benefits had not been received in full and members were tired of waiting for the promised project funding to be released. On the other hand, the six POs that did have active economic projects and had provided financial benefits to their members, indicated that support and cooperation from the members had been generated.

Record-keeping and bookkeeping systems
A simple record-keeping and bookkeeping system was practiced by all POs and was managed and kept by their secretaries. BAKHAW and CSVFA had well established record-keeping and bookkeeping systems including regular internal and external audits. On the other hand, several POs indicated that officers and members do not regard record keeping and bookkeeping as an important component of PO management, and these lack policies on borrowing and safe-keeping of important documents. Problems included difficulty in locating important documents, for example contracts, when needed. This resulted from documents being kept among several members of the PO. Handover of documents and records does not take place when POs change leadership. Some POs had no clear idea about the importance of a key person responsible for keeping documents and most had no appointed bookkeeper, BAKHAW and CSVFA being exceptions. The secretaries are often also the bookkeepers and in some POs there is confusion between secretary and treasurer about who is responsible for the bookkeeping. Thus POs records are sometimes

divided into two, which sometimes produces conflicting records. At times financial discrepancies occur, leading to conflict among members and reduced participation in organisational activities due to a lack of confidence in the leadership and management.

Planning, monitoring and evaluation

Eleven POs had poor planning, monitoring and evaluation methods. Each PO had mostly unwritten plans and monitoring was in the form of oral presentation by the officers, for example through a project committee report during regular general assembly meetings. Evaluation of activities and projects implemented was not common practice for the majority of POs. Formal planning, monitoring and evaluation were only evident in CSVFA and BAKHAW, which were able to produce documents associated with these activities. The majority of the POs surveyed had little developed ability, concern, knowledge and skills regarding planning, monitoring, evaluation and PO documentation, which involved record-keeping, bookkeeping and report writing. Few displayed any evidence that these activities are regularly practiced or that adequate record-keeping and bookkeeping systems are in place.

Nursery and Tree Plantation Projects

The community organisers' responsibilities within the majority of POs were primarily directed towards setting up nurseries for seedling production that are ultimately intended to supply planting stock. These activities have to comply with the focus of CBFM and pressure from DENR to produce tangible outputs within the 2-year CO contract. Ten POs had experience of managing a nursery for seedling production intended for tree planting. Members from two other POs received fruit tree seedlings from the Department of Agriculture through the Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM) program, although these seedlings were already overgrown and mortalities were reported.

Status of nursery operation

Seventy-seven percent of PO members interviewed reported that a tree seedling nursery was implemented to supply seedlings for their tree plantation project; 50% said that this project was not sustainable after the tree planting activities had been accomplished, while only 27% reported that their nursery for seedling production was continuing (Table 5). Nurseries were found to exist only where project funding and the community organiser's assistance were still active, except in the case of CSVFA. There are varying reasons for the individual members involving themselves in the raising of seedlings. Some PO members raise seedlings to replace dead out-planted seedlings, a few reported that they wanted to learn from growing seedlings, while the majority of the members involved themselves in nursery seedling production mainly to generate income. Nursery projects undertaken by the majority of the POs were intended to produce seedlings for a CBFM project and not for external sale.

Table 5. Nursery and tree planting projects of POs (n=196)

Project	Number of times mentioned	Fraction of respondents (%)
Nursery project	151	77
Status of nursery project		
Not existing	97	50
Continuing	54	27
Tree planting project	147	75
Status of tree planting project		
Harvestable	47	24
Maintenance and protection	98	50

Status of tree plantation established by each PO
Fifty percent of the respondents said that tree plantations were established and were at the stage of maintenance and protection while 24% reported that they had harvestable trees. The leaders and officers of POs had difficulty sustaining members' active participation in organisational activities and maintenance of tree plantations, particularly in the case of young tree plantations (two to three years old).

Number of hectares planted with trees and age of trees planted
Ten POs had tree plantations, including one mangrove plantation, ranging in size from 20 ha to 1,400 ha (Table 6). All of these tree plantations are at the maintenance and protection stage. At the time of survey, HUFA was at a nursery and tree planting preparation stage (part of the CO mobilisation stage), while STPLBA and CUFMPC had fruit tree seedlings distributed to members but not yet planted. The delay in out-planting the overgrown seedlings was due to the individual members' interest in securing individual lots to plant their seedlings.

Protection and maintenance of tree plantations
Lack of government (including DENR) support and the lack of policing power for the members of the POs were major obstacles to tree maintenance and protection against theft and fire. PO members were hesitant to conduct forest patrols and large tree plantation areas were difficult to maintain particularly for those POs with only a few (or mostly inactive) members and no patrol equipment or handheld radios. Common views expressed by respondents were that inadequate plantation maintenance was caused by unsustained organisational activities, absence of meetings, and lack of immediate benefits to justify members' labour inputs. About 27% of respondents indicated that receiving financial benefits was the major motivating factor for participation in tree planting, maintenance and protection activities, while only 2% said that security of land tenure motivated them to be involved in plantation protection and maintenance (Table 7).

Table 6. Tree plantation area of each PO surveyed

PO name	Plantation area (ha)	Comments
RUDA	200	Protected tree plantation. Model rainforestation project of DENR.
CUFMPC	92.5	Designated area. Fruit tree seedlings dispersed but not planted yet, due to individual area boundary issue.
RMC	70	Agroforestry.
PRA	120	Tree plantation. about 6 years old.
BAKHAW	1,396	Two-year-old mangrove plantation on CBFMA area.
STPLBA	31	Designated agroforestry area. Fruit tree seedlings dispersed but not planted yet due to boundary issue.
CUFA	280	With harvestable tree plantation. Having difficulty finding a timber market.
BUKANA	172	Harvestable tree plantation. In the process of fulfilling RUP requirements and had inventoried almost half of tree plantation.
HUFA	160	Designated agroforestry area. No tree plantation yet. Intend to plant fruit trees.
KAHOI	100	Have harvestable trees. In the process of fulfilling RUP and tree inventory activities.
WALLTREBA	55	Tree plantation nearly six years old.
CMPC	20	20 ha of two-year-old agroforestry (plantation and fruit trees); another 20 ha plantation planned.
CSVFA	5	A youth project of 5 ha new of tree plantation, but also protection, rehabilitation and conservation of 2,226 ha of timberland.

Table 7. Motivation for tree planting and maintenance (n=196)

Motivation for PO members to participate tree planting maintenance	Number of times mentioned	Fraction of respondents (%)
Financial benefits	53	27.0
Non-monetary – restore natural resources	33	16.8
Non-monetary – knowledge and skills	29	14.8
Non-monetary – land tenure	5	2.6

Four POs (CSVFA, BAKHAW, KAHOI, and BUKANA) had continuing maintenance and protection activities on their tree plantations. The motivation for these members to involve themselves in voluntary activities was the monetary benefits received from economic projects, the anticipated financial benefits from harvesting trees and the continuing external assistance extended to these POs beyond project funding and termination of CO contracts.

Problem identification and remediation
Respondents expressed similar problems in relation to tree plantations, as listed in Table 8. These problems concerned plantation security, harvest permits, market

access and changing forestry laws. Some of the problems proved beyond the capacity of the POs to solve.

Table 8. Problems reported by respondents and actions taken to overcome them

Problem	Actions undertaken to address problem
Considering the lack of equipment and facilities, the plantation area is too large for daily patrol operations, and PO members have no policing power over illegal loggers they apprehend. Monitoring activities are risky for ordinary PO members. The maintenance and protection duties require a high level of maturity from POs. Most of the POs surveyed were newly formed and did not yet have policies and measures for plantation monitoring and protection arranged.	The CSVFA requested DENR to allow their members to police their managed tree plantation and timberland area. At the time of the survey, a reply was still pending. WALLTREBA was considering making a similar request to DENR, but since the PO had had no organisational activities for nearly a year (some members reported nearly two years), their request did not eventuate.
Prevalent illegal logging on timberland (protected) areas and stealing of harvestable trees on tree plantation areas managed by POs. Limited or no monitoring or patrol activities in tree plantation.	PO officers and members were desperately attempting to devise means to prevent illegal logging. In a few POs, members had lost their confidence in DENR after illegal loggers caught by members were freed, and they suspected that DENR was biased toward the big businessmen behind the illegal loggers. Some previous PO members had gone back to the illegal cutting of trees for a livelihood.
WALLTREBA and PRA experienced wildfire in their CBFM plantations, believed to have been instigated by tenured migrants living in the timberland area. The CUFMPC experienced a month of forest fires during a drought. Some PO members suspected that fires were deliberately lit to prolong tree planting activities and access more funds.	Community organisers facilitated training sessions for PO members on how to prevent forest fires and create fire breaks.
Some POs – particularly those in the process of complying with the RUP requirement of DENR to obtain harvest permits – lacked technical knowledge and expertise. Securing harvest approval was made more difficult by the many government offices through which a RUP application has to pass, each with specific compliance conditions.	KAHOI had established alliances and tapped expertise from NGOs and LSU to assist in fulfilling the RUP requirements. BUKANA members contributed money to hire DENR technical staff to assist in conducting an inventory of harvestable trees. The view was expressed that they had already spent too much money on the honorarium for and entertainment of DENR staff.
Lack of access in marketing harvestable trees and obtaining to bank loans. CUFA had made several attempts to access loans from banks, which were rejected for failing to comply with document and collateral requirements.	No action was taken because the problem was beyond the capacity of the POs to solve. The members had limited ability to negotiate timber sales or to negotiate with banks.
Changing forestry laws and lack of government information dissemination strategies to educate upland communities are confusing for community members. This was mentioned by several PO members.	No action was taken because this problem is beyond the capacity of the POs to solve. This problem may be addressed in an ACIAR research project.

DISCUSSION

It was expected that information about 'success' and 'failure' of people's organisations could highlight a pattern of experiences that would serve as lessons for the various stakeholders groups, including government agencies, funding bodies, NGOs and POs. The main intention of highlighting PO experiences has been to identify actions that can improve implementation of community forestry projects. It might be possible to replicate successful experiences and map out improvements and modification of strategies to reduce the frequency of 'less successful' experiences.

Each CO-supported community surveyed had successful experiences in keeping the PO in existence and managing projects in their own way, appropriate to their skills, knowledge, ability, local resources, and external funding support as well as the assistance from their CO, the DENR and LGUs. Community organisers succeeded in establishing the basic foundation of cohesiveness among members of POs, in developing a voluntarism attitude, in encouraging the use of initiative to manage projects, in developing leaders, and in establishing tree plantations within their two-year community organising contract with the DENR. However, performance evaluation indicates that at withdrawal of the CO support, the newly formed POs were not yet mature enough to take on complicated tasks and responsibilities. Hence, where community organisers' work within the two-year contract focused less on the development and empowerment of the people and more on establishing plantations, some of the POs struggled to exist following the termination of the community organisers' contracts and project funding.

Community organisers use the project-based (as distinct from issue-based) approach in mobilising people in the community to form groups. This approach develops a financial benefit driven culture among members of POs. The problems that POs encountered – for example PRA, RUDA and WALLTREBA, whose members demanded monetary incentive to participate in project activities and refused to be involved in voluntary activities – was one of the results in using the project-based approach. From the inception period, the people's prime motivation and basis of unity to form such a group are the benefits they expect to receive from the CBFM project, and particularly the immediate monetary benefit. The pattern of experiences among the POs surveyed indicated that sustaining PO activities, such as voluntary activities, is heavily dependent on the assistance of community organisers, project funding support and the continuing structure of support after community organisers' contracts are completed. The absence of any of these forms of assistance diminishes the PO members' participation in organised activities.

PO members gained in awareness and knowledge as a result of the seminars and training sessions they attended, the exposure of members to successful experiences of other POs and involvement in projects that addressed environmental issues as well as the sharing of experiences and ideas among members. The extent of these benefits depended on the intensity and duration of community organisers' assistance, the degree of group unity achieved and the availability of continued funding.

POs that reported an increase in membership were aware of the need to recruit new members to share the pressure of accomplishing tree planting, even though this would involve sharing the financial benefits with other members. POs that reported a decreased membership level had fewer organisational activities in place and were protecting existing member interests. For example, the officers of RUDA had no

intention of accepting new members because it would reduce the number of hours worked and income each member receives in maintaining the rainforestation project funded by the DENR. The reported 'no increase' and 'no decrease' in membership status was due to the improving financial status and interest in the organisation, such as in the case of HUFA.

Most of the POs surveyed have limited ability, concern, knowledge and skills regarding proper PO documentation, which would involve record-keeping, bookkeeping and report writing. Planning, monitoring and evaluation are not formally practised by the majority of the POs surveyed and leaders and officers did not place much emphasis on this aspect. The lack of policing power of POs discouraged members from forest monitoring and patrolling, which was a difficult and dangerous task, particularly in large plantations and for POs with few active members.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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