

# GREEN COVENANT-BASED APPROACH TO REFORESTATION AND AGROFORESTRY PROJECTS

*Agroforestry and Watershed Management Component - Scaling-Up of the DA-CHARMP2*

## BACKGROUND:

The Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) is known as the watershed cradle of Luzon, holding rivers that sustain the lowland communities of Regions 1 and 2. These rivers hold ecological, cultural, and spiritual benefits for the indigenous people of CAR. Unfortunately, funding for most of the reforestation and agroforestry projects in these regions are terminated by implementing government agencies.

Thus, CHARMP2 institutionalized the Green Covenant Approach for these projects. Its objective is *to implement Reforestation and Agroforestry Projects in 170 Indigenous Cultural Communities/Barangays covered by the DA-CHARMP2 within six years, through the active participation of the PLGUs, MLGUs, BLGUs and the Indigenous People's Organizations/ People's Organizations (IPOs/POs).*

## WHAT IS CHARMP 2?

The Second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resources Management Project (CHARMP2) is a development project

implemented in the six provinces of Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) with the Department of Agriculture (DA) as the executing agency; and Local Government Units (LGUs), National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) as co-implementing agencies. The project aims to reduce poverty and improve the quality of the life of indigenous peoples of highland areas in the Cordilleras by supporting beneficiary initiatives on increasing food security, conserving and improving highland forests and watershed based on sustainable practices.

One of the five (5) components of the project is the Community Watershed Conservation, Forest Management, and Agroforestry (CWC/FMA), which aims to:

- Promote the rehabilitation of watersheds in the target areas using sustainable forest management practices;
- Enhance conservation of the major watersheds in the Cordillera Administrative Region;
- Provide the indigenous communities with opportunities to improve their socio-economic well-being.

The project engages communities in the planting of forest trees, fruit-bearing trees and protection of the watershed.

## THE BIRTH OF THE GREEN COVENANT

The Green Covenant was adopted as CHARMP2's strategy to effectively and efficiently implement the reforestation and agroforestry activities of the CWC/FMA component. The reforestation project began with the Participatory Project Investment Planning (PPIP) through the assistance of the Social Mobilization, Participatory Investment Planning and Land Tenure (SMPIPLT) component of CHARMP2. This required the participation of the community to identify critical, communally-owned and managed watersheds, that should be restored, conserved, and protected as reforestation sites. Moreover, this aimed to support the Domestic Water and/or Community Irrigation Systems within the Project Barangay.

The reforestation and agroforestry sub-projects to be implemented are identified and prioritized by the communities themselves. Stipulated in the Green Covenant are the agreements among the Project, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations (IPOs) and other stakeholders in the implementation of these sub-projects. It is signed by the IPOs, with the Project. Moreover, the signing of the Green Covenant emphasized their roles as stewards of the community watersheds, further highlighting their "sense of ownership" for the projects. Thus, ensuring project sustainability.

### *Sapata*: A Solemn Oath

Former Abra Provincial Planning and Development Coordinator, Philip B. Tingonong, called the agreement a multi-partite covenanting scheme. He said that the Covenant is doctrinal in approach and implies a deeper sense of responsibility, compared to ordinary civil contracts. Moreover, it is in line with the Biblical concept of the covenant — likened to an "Oath" or the *Sapata*. In many indigenous communities, the *Sapata* signifies their intimate interconnection with the sacred.

An excerpt from the covenant reads: "This covenant is an evergreen document which attests to the partnership of the PO/IPO with the Barangay, Municipal LGU, Provincial LGU and DA, and to the commitment of the PO/IPO and community members to take care of their environment, as the trees planted, and the forests taken care of shall be the living evidences to this undertaking, now and in the future."

The covenant is solemnized through traditional practices such as butchering of preferred animals as an offering to the ancestors or "*anitos*" in guiding the implementation, protection and conservation of the given natural resources including the reforestation and agroforestry projects.

### The Indigenous People's Rights Act

In compliance with the provisions and implementing rules and regulations of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA), the Green Covenant stipulates the following:

- *The rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs)/Indigenous Peoples (IPs) to occupy and own*

*ancestral domains/lands, to develop, manage and conserve the resources therein;*

- *The responsibilities of IPs to preserve, restore and maintain a balanced ecology in their ancestral domain by protecting the flora and fauna, watershed areas and other reserves; and*
- *The task of IPs to restore denuded areas by actively initiating, undertaking and participating in the reforestation of denuded areas and other development program and projects.*

Furthermore, the IPO is responsible in the procurement of goods and services as described in the approved work and financial plan in the implementation of reforestation and agroforestry projects. This is in accordance to the guidelines on procurement through community participation (Local Government Code (LGC), and the Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Government Procurement Reform Act (GPRA), Section 53.12 on Community participation). This ensures that IPOs can sustain the project or its activities even after the initial phase of project implementation, even when project resources are no longer available.

As agreed upon by the IPO and other stakeholders, the covenant establishes that the IPO will resort to mechanisms by which they will maintain and expand the sub-projects in perpetuity, even when funding assistance ceases.

## KEY FINDINGS/RESULTS

CHARMP2 has served 148 Green Covenants for the Reforestation project, covering a total area of 8,489.50 hectares. In addition, it has established 162 Covenants for the Agroforestry project, covering a total area of 2,166.12 hectares among the six provinces of CAR.

Outcomes of the project implementation include the following:

1. *Increased water discharge in the micro watersheds;*
2. *Reduction on occurrence of soil erosion and landslides;*
3. *Federation of Reforestation and Agroforestry Peoples' Organizations;*
4. *Crafting of Barangay Ordinances to protect and preserve the established plantations;*
5. *Maximized and improved use of agricultural land through introduction of fruit-bearing trees in slope areas; and,*
6. *Increased income of the beneficiaries.*

In Abra, a federation named Abra Federation of Agroforestry and Reforestation (AFAR) was registered to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on December 2014. The federation is composed of 32 regular members representing the various POs. The federation availed a

# REFORESTATION PROJECT FLOWCHART

## PPIP ENDORSED

(Contracted NGO's Output)

- PPIP adopted and approved by MMG
- PO/IPO formed in the PPIP for Reforestation
- Based on the PPIP submitted and endorsed by the PMG, the PMG together with the Provincial Reforestation Committee will request to the PSO the validation of their priority Barangays

## SITE VALIDATION

- Members of Validation Team
  - Barangay - PO/IPO, BLGU, NGO-CMO
  - MLGU - MPDO, MENRO, MEO
  - PLGU - Refo Com, PMG members
  - Partner Agencies - NCIP, NIA, CENRO
  - PCO
  - PSO - Foresters, G.E.
- Assess refo/agro sites endorsed in the PPIP based on criteria developed
- Validate the PO/IPO (registration, CBL, etc.)
- Requirements for Covenanting
  - Community/Brgy resolution endorsing the PO/IPO
  - Barangay certification declaring the proposed site a communal land if the area is communal
  - Letters of Consent from claimants; if the proposed site is owned/claimed by private individuals

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Physical monitoring (PSO, LGU, and Refo Com)
- Training Needs Assessment
- External monitoring (Engagement of NGO's) - physical validation of accomplishments; institutional and project benefits assessment

## SURVEY AND MAPPING

- Presence of community/land-use maps in the PPIP
- Logistical Support:
  - Engineers transit/total station
  - GPS units
- Maps
  - NAMRIA maps, cadastral, resource or community maps
- Outputs
  - Technical Maps:

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORESTATION PROGRAM

- Nursery operations/production of planting materials
- Establishment of plantations
- Protection and maintenance

## PARTNERSHIP AND COVENANTING

- Environmental Green Covenant between the DA-CHARMP2-PSO, Refo Com, PLGU, MLGU, BLGU, and PO/IPO
- Awarding of covenant per PO/IPO (covenant signing activities)

## TRAINING AND PLANNING

- PO/IPO capacitation on tree nursery and plantation operations including basic bookkeeping
- Come up with financial work plan

PHP2,000,000.00 grant from the Provincial Local Government Unit for continuous project implementation of reforestation and agroforestry. This was implemented on March 2015.

In Benguet, the Benguet Provincial Indigenous Federation of Forest Guardians (BPIFFG) was built. It was formed on November 2015, uniting all the CHARMP2 assisted agroforestry and reforestation groups. It is composed of 17 agroforestry groups and 25 reforestation groups from the different CHARMP2 municipalities, with 1,200 members. The federation was registered to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) on January 6, 2016. The federation was also a recipient of a one million grant from the PLGU of Benguet.

ATI serves as the focal agency and secretariat of the AFEN.

## CONCLUSIONS

- *The implementation of reforestation and agroforestry projects were made effective and efficient by the Green Covenant strategy, as it further sustained the stability of the projects and natural resources.*
- *The green covenant approach yielded positive results in terms of maximized utilization of limited upland farm areas, by increasing forest cover and improving water discharge.*
- *The roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders on the impact of climate change are enhanced. It elicited strong commitment among stakeholders.*
- *Procurement through community participation also hastened the project implementation.*
- *Women participation was enhanced through the preparation of procurement and liquidation documents.*

## ANECDOTES

- *In Abra, the four IPOs in the Municipality of Tubo who implemented reforestation projects in partnership with their Barangay Elders/ Officials crafted barangay ordinances to protect and preserve the CHARMP2 Project established plantations. This was also done in the four Project-covered barangays in the Municipality of Luba.*
- *Mrs. Rebecca Saguilot from Barangay Basao, Tinglayan had harvested the first fruits of her planted citrus (Orange variety) in her agroforestry plots and sold them to people within and outside of her community. She said that proceeds of her sales had augmented their family's daily expenses.*

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This policy brief is produced as part of the project *Supporting Smallholder Farmers in Asia and Pacific Islands Region Through Strengthened Agricultural Advisory Services*, which is funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Together with APIRAS in this project are the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESAs), Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services (PIRAS), the Philippine Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Training Institute (DA-ATI), Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network (BAEN), and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in Fiji. APIRAS serves as the overseer in the Southeast Asian subregional component of the project, which is piloted in the Philippines.

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