FSP — LGU- ICRAF collaboration for better upland development in Malitbog, Bukidnon, Philippines

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The Forages for Smallholders Project of the Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT) started developing forage technologies with the community of Malitbog, Bukidnon since 1996. Through collaboration with the Municipal Agricultural Office of Malitbog, FSP project was carried out by the local technicians at the different villages diagnosed with insufficient livestock feed resources. All activities of FSP were conducted using a participatory approach, which during that time was considered a relatively new way of technology dissemination. Different improved forage species were tested on farm by farmers, development workers and researchers. Different forage systems were adjusted to farmers’ field conditions and farmers’ ideas. In 1996, FSP started working with the village of Kaluluwayan involving only 5 farmers in the project. In 1998, the project had spread to eight villages comprised of 11 small communities called sitios, with 63 farmers evaluating, testing and integrating not less than 10 species of improved forages in their farms.

Lack of livestock feed resource in Malitbog was considered as the primary problem in the area during the initial problem diagnosis of FSP, but in time, succeeding participatory diagnosis had reflected problems on resource management, particularly soil degradation due to erosion. Several local and international institutions came in place to improve Malitbog’s watershed, one of which was the International Center for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF). ICRAF initially worked in sitio Lumbatan in 1998, and expanded further to sitios Mindagat, Gulindawan and Kiabo. The technology promoted by ICRAF at that time was the use of natural vegetative strips for contours. The institution also linked up with the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Malitbog, engaging the same technicians working in FSP. In 1999, ICRAF started working in areas where FSP was operating, bringing more options on contour farming and other soil and water conservation technologies. In 2002, about 418 farmers are adopting soil and water conservation measures in Malitbog, while 236 farmers are monitored to be planting forages both for feeds and soil improvement purposes.

Both FSP and ICRAF coursed their interventions through the LGU. Due to the LGU having limited man power, some activities of both institutions where conducted together but given distinctions by the technicians based on the different objectives of the two institutions. Sharing of resources in terms of man power, technologies, financial

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contributions and farmer-client has been a common practice since 2000, however informal. The LGU technicians on the other hand serve as the strong linkage between institutions and the resource poor farmers. They provide farmers access to technology by coordinating and combining the existing municipal projects with FSP, ICRAF and other government activities that sort of give farmers a package of technology options to select from. The main contribution of the LGU to such partnership is their sincere devotion in carrying out the extension legworks of FSP and ICRAF. Some examples of the resource-sharing strategies of FSP-LGU-ICRAF partnership in better upland development are the following:

- LGU, ICRAF and FSP researchers serve as local trainers for specific workshops or farmer meetings
- LGU serve as the main coordinators of FSP & ICRAF technologies and activities in Malitbog
- FSP provide food while ICRAF provide transportation during farmers meeting
- FSP sites becomes learning sites of ICRAF farmers/visitors while ICRAF, Claveria sites become a cross-visit site for FSP farmers
- FSP and ICRAF provide LGU technicians only gasoline and meal allowance to carry out FSP/ICRAF activities, while LGU pays solely the salaries of technicians.
- FSP & ICRAF provides capacity building and training opportunities for technicians as incentives.
- Provision of technical support of ICRAF to FSP soil erosion research

The informal collaboration has slowly been recognized by both institutions onset year 2000, when FSP formally sought the technical expertise of ICRAF to assist in the experimental on-farm design of soil erosion control using improved forages, in the area of San Migara. At the same time, ICRAF had started organizing Malitbog farmers and alayon groups (self-help groups), including those who are also active FSP farmers, to form landcare groups using the ‘CIAL’ approach developed by CIAT (Local Agricultural Research Committees, Ashby et al., 2000). Farmers are encouraged to put up nurseries and projects from with ten thousand pesos support from ICRAF. Table 1 shows the extent.

Pic. 1 Malitbog farmers cross-visit to ICRAF, Claveria to learn soil & water conservation
of the different collaborative activities and outcome shared by FSP-CIAT and ICRAF in Malitbog, Bukidnon.

Pic. 2 Farmers integration meeting in Malitbog every 3rd Quarter of the month, ICRAF-LGU- FSP led meeting.

Table 1. Results of partnerships and collaboration between FSP-CIAT and ICRAF implemented through the Local Government Unit of Malitbog, Bukidnon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FSP-ICRAF Collaborative Activities in Malitbog, Bukidnon</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FSP farmers participating in ICRAF project</td>
<td>150 farmers</td>
<td>Landcare groups, soil and water conservation (natural vegetative strips and improved forages on contours)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSP farmer groups involved in ICRAF’s Landcare organizations</td>
<td>13 sitios and 7 alayon groups</td>
<td>Farmer groups are supported by ICRAF through the establishment of tree nurseries. ICRAF established formal organizational structure using CIAL approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-visits conducted for FSP farmers to ICRAF sites in Claveria, Misamis Occidental</td>
<td>8 cross visits with 299 farmer participants</td>
<td>To learn new technologies on soil and water conservation, agro-forestry systems and natural resource management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers adopting/integrating FSP and ICRAF technologies and systems with in their farms</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Use of forage contour hedgerows, tree legumes and fruit trees integration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Partnerships among centers are recognized to be an efficient strategy of sharing resources of centers in bringing more sustainable forms of development to resource poor farmers. It becomes ideal in a sense that all centers have their limited capacity in terms of finances, expertise, and manpower to solve the wide scope of problems of development. There are many advantages of collaboration as well as disadvantages:

Advantages
- Efficient use of financial, human and natural resources due to cost sharing and expertise
- Build up of social capital within centers, researchers/scientists, locals and farmer-client
- Brings a more technology options for farmers
- Complementing objectives of stakeholders
- Brings continuity to beneficiaries

Disadvantage
- Difficult distinction of project impacts

If the main goal of collaborating partners is to bring technologies and options to improve the livelihood of upland farmers, the question of who should get the bigger share of the credit should not be a problem. Each institution acknowledges the other partners who helped them achieved the accomplishment. In the case of the LGU, FSP and ICRAF collaboration, more farmers and stakeholders are benefited by the partnerships, bringing more farmers and greater access to different technologies available in the area. Involving and collaborating closely with the LGU in Malitbog brings out a better chance of making developmental effort more lasting, since the influences and the learnings from the activities initiated by FSP and ICRAF will be carried out later by the LGU even when the project is gone. All of these simply outweigh the disadvantages of having partnerships among centers.

Reference