

CANADA FUND PROJECT BRIEF

1. Project Title : Support to Community-Based Management of the Aurora Memorial Forest Park and Adjoining Watershed Areas in the Central Sierra Madre in the Provinces of Aurora and Nueva Ecija
2. Location : Aurora and Nueva Ecija
3. Project Sector : Environmental education/training
Environmental research
4. Budget : Php1,000,000.00
5. Implementing Organization : Philippine Association for Intercultural Development
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6. Duration : July 07, 2005 - February 28, 2006
7. Project Description :

This project supports a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder three-year program that aims to preserve, protect and improve the Aurora Memorial Forest Park and adjoining watershed areas located in the Sierra Madre section that bounds the provinces of Nueva Ecija and Aurora in Region 3 of Luzon islands. With the area devastated by recent typhoons, the comprehensive three-year program will initiate the rehabilitation, restoration, improvements and sustaining activities through various component activities. To increase the likelihood for success, the Canada Fund will specifically assist in the conduct of social preparation and capability enhancement activities (e.g. community planning and organizing) in the first seven months of the program and in the acquisition of technical equipment needed for research, mapping, advocacy and documentation.

8. Beneficiaries : 1,000 families
9. Expected Results :

The project is expected to achieve the following in seven months:

- Improved inventory of tools and equipment for research and analysis;
- Enhanced capability of the beneficiaries in terms of skills and knowledge towards planning their livelihood and sustainable development program;
- Enhanced capacity of both the proponent and the beneficiaries in terms of community development tools such as maps, 3-D model, development plan, resource and community data, legal registration, and expanded and educated membership.
- A complete digital database of the spatial data of the Aurora National Park which shall include the following themes: past, current and future land-uses/tenure.

* The database can be updated, shall be user-friendly and accessible to Government as well as NGOs for planning purposes.

The achievement of these results will increase the likelihood that the expected outcomes of the three-year program can be realized. These are the following:

- The park communities are organized into a federation and have gained appropriate land tenure/usufruct instrument;
- The displaced residents are fully resettled and furnished with social amenities;
- Six spring-fed potable water systems are installed (including the rehabilitation of damaged irrigation facilities);
- Five forest guards per community are organized, trained, equipped and armed with legal mandate;
- A communal nursery, agro-forestry area, and inland fishery are established;
- A bio-diversity data are established and translated into laypersons' terms;
- A technical plan for the tripartite and sustainable management of the park is formulated;
- A sustainable program management mechanism is established with the communities acting as local managers and government and outside entities relegated as support group rather than regulators;
- Establishment of erosion control bunds on damaged forest sites and reforestation of denuded hillsides;
- Eco-tourism trails and sites are developed; and,
- Detailed process documentation.

10. End of Project Results :

The following are the actual accomplishment after seven months of project implementation:

3-D Modeling Workshops

Instead of only one, two three-dimensional (3D) modeling workshops have been accomplished upon clamor that both sections of the Park be equipped with such management tool. The first workshop was accomplished in September with the resulting tool housed at the Field Office of PAFID at Sitio Camp Martyr, Bgy. Labi, Bongabon, Nueva Ecija. The second 3-D model was accomplished in October at Sitio Dimani, Bgy. Villa Aurora, Maria Aurora, Aurora and is temporarily housed at the house of the Barangay Chairperson.

Both 3-D models took two weeks each to accomplish with community volunteers alternately working with Mapping Personnel assigned by PAFID.

Community Development Planning Workshops

All Community Development Planning, Assessment and Action Planning Workshops have been accomplished in the target communities. A total of three development planning workshops, two 3-D modeling and land use planning workshops and three smaller workshops for members of planning committees have been facilitated since the start of the project last August 2005. All target communities within the Park have been accommodated.

The initial development planning activity started right after each 3-D model has been constructed. Key leaders and members were summoned to identify each current land use in their respective territories and to have such sketched and color-coded to their models. Once validated, the data was transposed via digital photography and then processed at the mapping unit of PAFID.

Capping the community development planning activity was a Consolidated Planning Seminar conducted in Baler, Aurora last February 23-24, 2006 with the participation of the DENR from both provinces of Nueva Ecija and Aurora, Municipal Planning Offices of the towns of Bongabon, Maria Aurora, and San Luis, representatives from the Office of the Governor and Provincial Tourism Office of Aurora, as well as the members of the Protected Area Management Board or PAMB of the Aurora Park, and key leaders and officials from the communities covered by the project.

The respective Vision, Mission, Goals and Action Plans of the Park residents have been presented with commitment of support expressed by the various government representatives. Such Plans though still have to pass an official approval for adoption in a PAMB meeting. However, a commitment of support to

have such approval has already been expressed by three DENR representatives who attended all previous planning workshops.

Procurement and Utilization of Equipment

All equipment specified by the grant have been procured and are now in use in the preparation of project materials and the conduct of IEC, biodiversity assessment, project documentation and critical administrative works.

Upon acquisition, a training on the proper use of digital and video cameras and LCD system was conducted. A short training on film making was also conducted. And as a result, two rounds of IEC materials and power point presentations were properly accomplished. The first was at the start of the project and the recent having been accomplished in January 2006.

The biodiversity monitoring and assessment (conduct of forest and agro-biodiversity inventory) have been greatly facilitated with the use of the cameras, videos and computers while the generator provided electrical power needed to run the computers for the preparation of reports and other vital documents right in the field.

All other activities funded by the other donors were also conveniently accomplished and documented because of the equipment provided by the CFLI support. Thus, notwithstanding the fact that two of the prospective funding agencies only recently approved their counterpart grants, the more critical results expected of the CFLI support have been adequately met. And having gained adequate management tools, equipment and good experience from CFLI, the PAFID is confident that it can adequately implement the general program for the Aurora Park and its human population as the program moves on to its next phase.

The PAFID has repeatedly informed the various stakeholders during meetings and workshops about the substantial contribution of CFLI particularly on the acquisition of equipment, creation of 3-D maps, and conduct of community planning.

Problems encountered and action taken:

The biggest prevailing problem (until now) has been the unpredictable weather that frequently hampered the implementation of project activities. The project started well at the heart of the rainy season. The succeeding typhoons were the big obstacles as these repeatedly rendered project sites inaccessible for weeks. Even with the availability of a high definition camera, aerial photography could not be immediately accomplished as the visibility was poor and the prevailing winds were too strong for small planes. Some sections are also unstable and dangerous to reach.

The other problem was poor access to transport as only one bus trip is available per day. The participants more often arrived late or sometimes did not arrive at all to the activities. Compounding the transportation problem are the landslides or swollen river. The PAFID was able to solicit a second-hand vehicle and this had somehow improved mobility and enhanced delivery of project services.

The late approval of counterpart funds also posed a problem which resulted to the late implementation (and sometimes cancellation) of committed activities and creating dismay among the expectant communities. Furthermore, the Protected Area Management Board or PAMB, which was supposed to be the PAFID's closest partner, has not been functioning regularly (apparently for lack of operational funds) and this situation posed additional administrative burden as PAFID has to do coordination for two separate DENR offices which are quite far apart from each other.

Another factor had been the aftermath December 2004 typhoons. People have been very busy resettling and finding livelihood opportunities and PAFID could not just simply schedule a meeting or a workshop with them. And recently, military men had started to sway people away from participating in conferences and organizing events as they regarded community activities – especially the organizing of people - as communist inspired. (The PAFID plans to conduct an IEC into their headquarters soon.)