

5.0 STRATEGIC PROGRAMS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 Business as Usual

The stakeholders in the sector are now becoming aware and vigilant about the fate of forestry in the country. There were already many assessments conducted and recommendations forwarded. The Review and Revision of the Master Plan for Forestry Development Project only validated what has been forwarded and extensively discussed in various fora and professional gatherings. Nevertheless, the Project provides the strategic focus by which the sector could concentrate to make some successes. Without the Revised Master Plan, the sector would be continuously confronted by issues and problems already known to exist a long time ago.

Firstly, forestry institutions would continue to be ineffective in addressing the sector's problems. It would continue to operate under weak policies and ill-equipped human resources. Nevertheless, it will continue to move into the path of sustainable forestry with the implementation of initiatives pragmatically designed to address current problems. However, it will still be saddled by the same issues and problems identified in this Project. Some of these are:

- forestlands will continue to be encroached, forest boundaries unrespected;
- continuous decimation of residual dipterocarp forest, watersheds will continue to be degraded and forests converted to other land uses;
- private investments in forestry will remain very low; and
- intersectoral linkages and cooperation would be hard to achieve

Secondly, poverty in the uplands would continue to become a problem in forest conservation. Population would exert more pressure on forest resources because of lack of employment opportunities. The sector may be caught flatfooted by the irreversible impacts of exploding population,

Thirdly, many watersheds will continue to lose their vital functions. Alarmed stakeholders will continue to find ways in solving the problems. Some groups will be commissioned to continue to evaluate and assess the situation. Sooner or later, they will find the same issues and problems, and will recommend the same solutions.

With the sector's continuing decline, it would realize the need for some plans and programs and would scramble to have one. Hence, it would resort to the previous assessments conducted and try to reconfigure earlier plans. Eventually, it would have the guts to implement the plans although at a much later period. By this time, the sector is almost hitting rock bottom, where it is more difficult to make a turn around.

5.2 With the Revised Master Plan

The priority programs of the Revised Master Plan are so designed to have a snowballing effect. Hence, it addresses the more critical problem first so that other programs may soon be facilitated. Among the expected impacts of priority programs are as follows:

5.2.1 Policy Reforms and Institutions Development

Harmonization of forest and other policies affecting the sector would eliminate flashpoints that spur conflicts among government agencies dealing with the same clientele. This also affords platforms for long term coordination among agencies and stakeholders. Retrofitting the PFA as a line agency, and reorienting its main function as first: a forest land management agency and second, a forest resources management authority, would respond appropriately to the long term goal of putting every hectare of forest lands under sustainable management unit. The separation of the authority and enterprise functions of the PFA would promote efficiency in forestry operations. The capacitation of forestry institutions would be facilitated where conflict in functions

On the other hand, the creation of the National Council for Sustainable Forestry (NCSF), a coordinative body, would facilitate coordination among agencies whose concerns are influenced or affected by what is happening in watersheds; e.g., Department of Agriculture with their AFMA, Department of Agrarian reform with the CARP, etc.

5.2.2 Prioritization/watershed integrated land use planning simultaneous with forest boundary delineation

Prioritization of watershed for integrated land use planning purposes simultaneous with forest boundary delineation would start the process on determining what are the forest areas needed for protection purposes and what are the areas needed for other purposes. Such activities are really the critical start of sustainable forest management where the use for forest lands are determined based on criteria that would best serve the society in an optimum manner. This would allow the watershed/forest managers and other watershed/forest users realize the many and interrelated functions of watershed.

This set of programs would also provide sustainable production of water for domestic, irrigation, power generation and other industrial uses at the same time affording the stakeholders determine and operationalize other beneficial options in the use of watersheds. The ultimate impact would be the ensurance of long term health of the watersheds.

5.2.3 MIS, IEC and R & D enhancement

Full support in the enhancement and development of these support programs would create an information highway where the communities and other watershed/forest managers would have easy access to information for improvement of their management decisions. A good MIS would make a DENR Regional Office more investment- friendly by minimizing the cost of obtaining information for investment purposes. Availability of up-to-date technology would promote economic efficiency in forest management. This program would also afford forest managers anchor their decisions on management tools and information based on science.

5.2.4 Sustainable management of residual forests, other natural forests, arresting forest destruction

This program would contribute much to poverty alleviation in the uplands by creation of employment opportunities in the uplands. This strategy would minimize conversion of natural forests into other non-forest land uses. This would help restore order in the management of residual forests where currently, 36,000 ha are lost annually due to conversion. Likewise, this would help attain self sufficiency in wood and other forest products.

5.2.5 Forest area expansion through plantation development, ANR, other means

Establishment of forest plantations is one of the visible means of employing people. However, employment in this type of endeavor is usually intermittent. By having forest plantations at the right places and being intensively managed for commercial production would provide continuous source of employment. The process of establishing, tending, harvesting, processing, marketing and renewal of plantations would be a continuous and deliberate cycle addressing poverty, wood sufficiency, illegal practices in affected areas.

On the other hand, expansion of other forest areas for rehabilitation and restoration purposes through establishment of indigenous forest plantations would improve the health of the watersheds. This would also impact on the conservation of biodiversity.

5.2.6 Biodiversity and environmental programs

With the current initiatives on the protected area subsector and the proposed programs under the revised Master Plan, it is envisioned to have a perpetual existence of biological and physical diversities in a system of protected areas and such other important biological components of the environment sustainably managed for the benefit of mankind. The program impacts would be a secure and healthy PA system managed by well-informed and empowered stakeholders supported by the citizenry and providing sustainable benefits and enjoyment to society.

5.2.7 Forest industries rationalization and development

Rationalization and development of forest industries would afford the nation to see the economic contribution of forests. This would transform the forest-based industries into globally competitive firms with environmentally-sound forest management platforms significantly contributing to the national economy and helping address poverty alleviation in their areas of operations and vicinities.

5.2.8 Sustainable management of grazing lands

Implementation of programs on grazing would improve benefits from such areas which are minimal at present. This program is designed to make grazing lands as sustainable source of health and wealth for the benefit of Filipinos. This will also enhance the improvement of the carrying capacity and productivity of grazing lands through improved forage and pasture grasses, improve livestock production through proper management practices and breeding technology and provide security of tenure and incentives to grazing land managers to improve their management operations over the long term.

5.2.9 Full development of M & E and C & I system for all forest types and management systems

Full development of M & E and communications systems as well as C & I as a management tools would improve utility of information and enhance horizontal and vertical flow of communications. This would also impact on the improvement of MIS and IEC. As a complementary tool, C & I would help prepare forest managers and users realize the impacts of management decisions on the health of the forests. C & I system would help transform local forest management systems produce globally competitive products from sustainably managed forests. This also preparatory to forest certification, a necessary tool in the full implementation of SFM.

5.2.10 CBFM as a cross cutting strategy in all forest management systems

Enhancement of CBFM implementation would put into the right track many CBFM projects where POs became inactive due to various reasons or another. This is the bridge program where the lack of

continued support rendered many POs disillusioned with the program. This is expected to activate many POs and contribute to the poverty alleviation in the uplands. On the other hand, CBFM expansion through strengthening and expansion of existing sites, and identification and implementation of new sites close many open access areas and likewise put them under formal management systems that would ensure sustainability of resources