

Cooperators' Perceptual Profile and Range of Participation in Community Environmental Programs in Palawan

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ABSTRACT

The study compared the cooperators' perceptual profile and range of participation in government (GO) and non-government organizations (NGO) community environmental programs in Palawan. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) Community Forestry Program (CFP) in Mariwara, Princess Urduja, Narra and Haribon Palawan's Community Development Program for Environmental Protection (CDEP) were analyzed based on the Kincaid's Convergence Theory.

Positive perceptions of the community cooperators on environmental programs were revealed for both GO and NGO. Four factors classified their perceptions under each program. These were: participation, economic benefits accruing from forest utilization and organizational concerns, sustainability, and role of community for CFP; and participation and provision of alternative economic sources, organizational concerns and environmental awareness, education and values formation, and preservation and its effect for CDEP. These factors reflect the elements and directions of the environmental programs. Furthermore, wide range of participation of the NGO and GO community cooperators particularly in the implementation phase of the two programs was evident.

With the growing concern on environmentalism and the proliferation of environmental programs, the community cooperators should already take part on the onset to ensure that the what, how, where, when and expected effects are attuned to their situation and geared towards their welfare.

Keywords: environmental programs, Palawan, NGO, community environmentalism

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, attempts have been made in changing approaches to rural development when efforts were not making the impact expected of them. Greater attention was directed towards participatory approaches involving more people in development activities aimed at empowering them. In this context, the role of communication is being increasingly recognized as central.

The impact of communication to community life can be seen in terms of people's social response to a development program. The clientele's perception of and participation are indicators of program effects.

It is on this premise that an analysis of the cooperators' perceptual profile and range of participation in the community environmental programs of government and non-government organization in Palawan was conducted. The province of Palawan, being the country's last ecological frontier, has been a recipient of environmental programs geared towards its sustainable development. Thus, efforts to this end must be provided and that consequences must ensure its realization.

Objectives of the Study

1. To describe the community environmental programs implemented, the communities and cooperators involved;
2. To analyze the perceptual profile of the community people on the environmental programs;
3. To determine the range of participation of the community people in pre-planning, planning, implementation, and post-implementation of the environmental programs;
4. To compare the perceptual profile and range of participation of the cooperators in GO and NGO community environmental programs; and
5. To draw policy recommendations for the implementation of community environmental programs in Palawan

METHODOLOGY

The study compared the cooperators' perceptual profile and range of participation in government (GO) and non-government organizations (NGO) community environmental programs in Palawan. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) Community Forestry Program (CFP) in Mariwara, Princess Urduja, Narra and Haribon Palawan's Community Development Program for Environmental Protection (CDEP) were analyzed based on the Kincaid's Convergence Theory.

The naturalistic inquiry and survey research were the methodologies used. The data were generated using the triangulation technique through focused group discussion, key informant and individual interviews, document analyses, and non-participant observation of workplace and community situations.

The community cooperators of the two programs served as respondents. Qualitative analysis supported by descriptive statistics, t-test, and factor analysis were used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The GO and NGO Community Environmental Programs

Community Forestry Program is a government program aimed at training and organizing local communities to protect and sustainably manage forest resources for their direct benefit. On the other hand, CDEP is a program of a non-government organization, the Haribon Palawan which aims to organize, empower and develop efficient support system for the communities to protect, improve and conserve the environment condition of the St. Paul National Park. CDEP is not only concentrated on forest protection but on the other aspects of the park's environment.

Both GO and NGO utilized the existing community organizations and education as entry points for their environmental programs although these were not the identified priority needs of the community. Consultations with the communities were made only when the programs were already ready for implementation and not during their conceptualization. As such, the introduction of the programs was met with resistance.

The GO has a multi-layered organizational structure as there are five organizations (DAI-NRMP-DENR-UPLBFI-SPPI) handling CFP alone while the NGO has a relatively flat structure where only one organization (Haribon Palawan) is carrying out.

The Program Sites

CFP site is in Sitio Mariwara, Barangay Princess Urduja, Narra, Palawan which is located 104 kms from the city of Puerto Princesa and 14 kms from the Narra town proper. It has total land area of 4,196.30 has, most of which are agricultural lands, with 555 households and a total population of 2,963.

CDEP site is in Barangay Cabayugan located 75 kms northwest of Puerto Princesa City. It has 2,000 people composed of 500 families residing in the less than 500 has forest and agricultural lands. It is also surrounded by the marble mountains going to the St. Paul's Subterranean Park.

Both sites are composed of people from various ethnic groups, those in the CFP site are migrants from Mindanao while majority of those in the CDEP site originated from Pangasinan. Majority of the community cooperators in the two sites are engaged in farming and forest-related occupations. Although radio is the most commonly owned media in both areas, interpersonal media are still the most accepted and accessible means of communication. Filipino is the medium of language used in both sites.

The Community Cooperators

A total of 86 CFP community cooperators were included for this study. Of whom, 54 are males and 32 females. More than three-fourths of them are married with a mean age of 34.5 years and have spent an average of 6.16 years only in school. Almost 85 percent are engaged in farming-related activities while the rest are into rattan and almaciga gathering, business, government and non-government employment, and studying.

Of the 71 CDEP members studied, there were more females (45) than males (26). Most of them were married, had an average of 39.8 years and had spent 10.14 years in school. Such educational attainment enabled almost half of them to engage in occupation other than farming.

Perceptual Profile of the Cooperators

The perception of the community cooperators on environmental programs was based on the degree of agreement and disagreement to the statements describing the elements of CFP and CDEP. The statements used in getting the perceptions of the community cooperators were based on the different elements/components of the environmental programs. Intercorrelations between the different statements included in each program were computed to identify the pair of statements that are related and to serve as basis for the generation of the factors. Factor analysis was done separately for each organization to determine the statements that are related and group them into factors. The original number of statements were reduced into factors, the number of which was less than the original number of statements.

Degree of perceptions of community cooperators. CFP cooperators were asked to rate 15 statement related to the program (Table 1). Their average rating reflect agreement to the 10 positive statements; disagreement to the four negative statements; and an uncertain rating to one negative statement. A strong agreement had been expressed to item #5 which deals on the CFP principles while an uncertain rating had been given to whether the community has the sole concern over forest management and the financial benefits sharing. The overall ratings indicate that the community people have a favorable perception about CFP.

Similarly, the community cooperators of CDEP were also asked to rate the 20 statements about the program (Table 2). Of the 15 affirmative statements, the community cooperators strongly agreed to the six and agreed to the remaining nine statements. For the five negative statements, they disagreed to the four and gave an uncertain rating to item which states that environmental protection and conservation lowers their income. Based on the total scores obtained from the responses, it could be deduced that the community cooperators of CDEP have a positive view of the program.

Table 1. Degree of perceptions of community cooperators on community forestry program.

Statements	Average Rating	Descriptive Rating
1. Grants the community the privilege to utilize forest resources	4.1	Agree
2. Encourage community participation	4.2	Agree
3. Licenses forest destruction	1.9	Disagree
4. Provides access to financial benefits of forests	4.1	Agree
5. Embodies principles of sustainable development	4.6	Strongly Agree
6. Lessens involvement of local residents with AO's presence	2.1	Disagree
7. Communities buffer between the forest line and intensely cropped areas	4.2	Agree
8. CFMA conditions follow DENR requirements only	2.5	Disagree
9. Consultations should be undertaken continuously	4.5	Agree
10. Communities are capable of managing forest responsibly	3.6	Agree
11. PO's could protect, plan and manage forest resources	3.9	Agree
12. Communities could find reforestation and rehabilitation activities	4.1	Agree
13. Affects livelihood activities adversely	1.7	Disagree
14. Communities have the sole concern on forest management operations and sharing of financial benefits	2.8	Uncertain
15. Lessens slash-and-burn farming (kaingin) by providing alternative livelihood opportunities.	4.0	Agree

Note: The perception statements were shortened for tabular presentation.

Table 2. Degree of perceptions of community cooperators on community development program for the protection of the environment.

Statements	Average Rating	Descriptive Rating
1. Increased environmental awareness	4.7	Strongly Agree
2. Disorganizes communities in the buffer zone	2.1	Disagree
3. Affects livelihood adversely	1.8	Disagree
4. Supports sustainable condition of the St. Paul National Park	4.3	Agree
	4.1	Agree
5. Encourage community participation	2.3	Disagree
6. Formation of new organizations and discarding existing ones	4.7	Strongly Agree
	4.6	Strongly Agree
7. Starts conservation values with the children	4.7	Strongly Agree
8. Promotes primary health care	1.9	Disagree
9. Stresses the need for day care center	4.4	Agree
10. Membership is not open to all		
11. Need for cooperation between the park administration and buffer zone communities	4.0	Agree
12. Instills appropriate technology for resource utilization and conservation	4.0	Agree
13. Inter-organization participation reinforces CDEP's	4.3	Agree

delivery system and enhance community welfare	3.0	Uncertain
14. Community people as principal actors in solving problems	4.7	Strongly Agree
15. Lowers the income of families	3.8	Agree
16. Tenurial rights sustain people's concern to the environment	3.9	Agree
17. Provides alternative economic sources	3.4	Agree
18. Maintains healthy environment of the St. Paul Park	4.7	Strongly Agree
19. Sustains traditional practices in agriculture	3.8	Agree
20. Focuses on training and environmental education.	3.9	Agree
	3.4	Agree
	4.7	Strongly Agree

Note: The perception statements were shortened for tabular presentation.

Results indicate that community people tend to have positive perception of an environment program be it implemented either by a GO or an NGO. Thus, the hypothesis that community cooperators of an NGO have a positive perception on environmental programs than those of a GO is not accepted.

This outcome could be attributed to the all out efforts exerted by both implementors in disseminating and explaining the elements of the programs to their respective cooperators. However, there is still a need to intensify these activities, as reflected in some of the items which yielded undecided responses so that the community people could have a better grasp of the programs.

Factor Loadings (CDEP). The statements under factor 1 are those numbered 3,5,10, 12,13,14,17 and 19. Based on these statements this factor deals on two elements of the program. The first is on participation. The community cooperators perceived that CDEP encourages participation in its various projects and problem-solving activities. Thus, membership is open to all households in the community. In addition, inter-organizational participation was believed to reinforce the program's delivery system and to enhance community welfare. The second is on the provision of alternative economic sources to lessen population pressure to the St. Paul Park's environment. The community cooperators agreed that through the program, appropriate technologies for resource utilization and conservation are instilled among the residents. With these technologies, it was also perceived that the traditional practices in agriculture were sustained and were not adversely affected by CDEP.

Statements under factor 2 are those numbered 1, 2, 6, 16, and 20. Based on these statements, this factor focuses on organizational concerns and environmental awareness. The organizational concerns referred to in this factor are the formation and strengthening of new and existing local associations of communities in the buffer zone for environmental protection and management. On the other hand, CDEP was perceived to increase environmental awareness and that training and education on health, agriculture and conservation are among its important components. As to this is the issue raised on Statement #16 on tenurial rights which is believed to sustain people's concern to the environment.

Statements under factor 3 are those numbered 7, 8, and 9. Based on these statements, this factor could be described as education and values formation. Education referred to in this factor is on: basic education (3R's), primary health care, ecology, environmental laws and other concerns while values formation is on environmental protection, conservation and sustainable management.

Statements under factor 4 are those numbered 4, 11, 18, and 15. The first three statements could be described as preservation and its effect. Preservation referred to in this factor is the concerted efforts of the communities in the buffer zone, park administration/city government, Haribon Palawan and other concerned organizations needed to preserve the ecological balance of the St. Paul Subterranean National Park. The last statement (#15) dealt on the effect on income of these preservation efforts. The community cooperators expressed uncertainty as to whether environmental protection and conservation lowers the income of the families in the locality.

These factors, namely: participation, provision of alternative economic sources, organization concerns, environmental awareness, education, value formation, and preservation subsume the elements of CDEP as reflected in its goal "to organize, empower and develop the environmental condition of the parks, in this case the St. Paul Subterranean National Park.

Factor Loadings (CFP). The statements under factor 1 are those numbered 1, 2, 3, 12, and 14. Based on those statements, this factor dwells on participation of the community people in forest resource utilization, conservation and management and in sharing financial benefits derived from such operations. Although the community cooperators believed CFP grants them the privilege to utilize forest products and encourages them to participate in all phases of the program, they disagreed on the statement that such an access can become a license to destroy their forest environment.

The statements under factor 2 are those numbered 4, 6, 9, and 13. Statements 4 and 13 deal on the economic benefits accruing from forest resource utilization. The community cooperators perceived that CFRP provides access to financial benefits and does not affect livelihood activities adversely. On the other hand, statements 6 and 9 focus on organizational concerns such as the existence of an assisting organization and the need to undertake continuous consultation among community people, DENR, and the AO. As perceived, the presence of the AO does not lessen the involvement of the local residents.

The statements under factor 3 are those numbered 5 and 8. Based on those statements, this factor covers the principles embodied by CFP on sustained yield, management, equity, and conservation of forest resources for the present and future generations. To make the program sustainable, the conditions which will be stipulated in the CFMA should not only follow DENR requirements (statement #8

disagreed upon by the community cooperators) but must also consider community needs as well. The statements under factor 4 are those statements numbered 7, 10, 11 and 15. The first three statements describe the roles of the community in CFP as: a buffer between forest line and intensively cropped areas; responsible forest managers; and capable protector, planner and manager of forest resources. The last statement (#15) points at a possible impact which could result from the community's assumption of these roles. This refers to the decrease in the slash-and-burn farming activities when alternative opportunities are provided to the community people.

These factors: participation, economic benefits from forest utilization, organization concerns, sustainability and roles of the community in CFP also subsume the elements of CFP as reflected in its thrust on organizing local communities to protect and sustainably manage forest resources for their direct benefit.

For both organizations, it can be noted that the factors identified for the perception statements were reflective of the different components of their environmental programs. The development and implementation of the communication strategies according to these program components might have contributed to the community cooperators' awareness and understanding of the principles, goals and objectives of the environmental programs. Thus, positive perceptions on CFP and CDEP prevailed.

Range of Participation

Range of participation in the two environmental programs was based on the number of activities undertaken during pre-planning, planning, implementation and post-implementation phases of the different communication processes and on the number of community cooperators involved in an activity.

Of the four phases studied, it is only in the implementation of the communication processes where almost all the community cooperators of CFP had participation. The same is true with the CDEP community cooperators except in materials preparation and production as they do not have their own community newsletter unlike those of the CFP's. In pre-planning, the difference in the proportion of GO and NGO community cooperators who participated was highly significant as revealed by the computed t-value. This can be attributed to the greater number of preliminary studies for needs assessments which were conducted by the GO than the NGO. In planning, the range of participation of the community cooperators for both programs was the same. The two groups had low proportions of community cooperators who has participated in the same number of activities, giving no significant difference in its computed t-value. In post-implementation, the NGO community cooperators had wider range of participation than those of the GO's. Statistical test revealed significant difference between proportions of community cooperators who had participated in the activities conducted. However, it is in post implementation phase where the least

range of participation of community cooperators was noted for both programs. The number of activities conducted were very few and the proportion of community cooperators who had participated in those activities was also very low for both groups.

These findings indicate similarities and differences in the range of participation of community cooperators in the different phases of communication processes for GO and NGO programs. However, in the overall proportions of community cooperators who had participated, no significant difference was revealed between the two groups. Hence, the hypothesis that the range of participation in the different phases of communication processes for the environmental programs of the NGO community cooperators is wider than that of the GO's is not accepted. The range of participation of the community cooperators of the two organizations are the same. This implies that community people not only participate in non-government programs like CDEP but in government-funded programs as well like CFP. However, such participation should not only be cultivated in the implementation phase but all throughout the program.

Conclusion

Despite the absence of clearly defined communication policies and strategies, the different approaches used by the GO and NGO in their community environmental programs have brought about favorable consequences in terms of positive perception and wide range of participation of the community cooperators.

Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

- ⇒ Inclusion of a communication unit in the org. structures of the agencies/organizations involved in environmental programs responsible for setting up the mechanisms pertinent to communication.
- ⇒ Enlisting people's participation on this regard will provide opportunity to establish a clear understanding of the environmental programs and a sense of ownership which are critical to their sustainability.
- ⇒ Flexibility in operations of implementing agencies should be allowed to respond effectively to varying local needs and conditions.

Operational CIPO Model for Environmental Programs

At the onset of the program, the community people should already take part to ensure that the what, why, how, where, when and expected effects are attuned to their situation and geared towards their welfare. By doing these, the appropriate communication approaches, methods, media and messages could be designed in accordance with the context at which the programs will operate.

For Further Research

- ⇒ Communication analysis of environmental programs using operational program activities as parameters.
- ⇒ Measuring other consequences of communication such as income, environmental protection, and management schemes adopted and community cohesiveness.

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