

Empowering People's Organizations in Community Based Forest Management in the Philippines: The Community Organizing Role of NGOs

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ABSTRACT

Underlying community based forest management is the belief that communities are in the best position to manage and protect forests if they participate in decision-making on the sustainable use of forest resources. For several decades the development approach in the Philippines has been to empower People's Organizations (PO) through the use of community organizers employed by development oriented NGOs. Lack of attention to community organizing and social preparation, however, has been identified as a factors hindering forest protection. In less developed countries the effective reach of government is limited. The relationship between NGOs and POs therefore acts as a dual span bridge to the community relying on the development and training skills of NGO staff and on the ability of the PO to mobilize its membership to perform on-ground works. Analysis of case studies of the use of community organizing at Mt Makiling and Mt Banahaw has demonstrated that the capacity for communities to be involved in community forestry is a prerequisite to effective participation.

Keywords: community organizing; capacity building; community development; participatory forest management; NGOs.