

SOCIAL FORESTRY NETWORK

THE CEBU INTEGRATED SOCIAL FORESTRY PROJECT

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The Cebu pilot project is an undertaking of the Forest Management Bureau (FMB, then the Bureau of Forest Development) under its Integrated Social Forestry Programme (ISFP). Launched in 1981, the ISFP addresses the problems of poverty and environmental degradation in the uplands using three major strategies: provision of farm tenure to uplanders; promotion of upland development technologies designed to increase the productivity of upland resources while at the same time stabilising them; and mobilisation of uplanders through local organisations.

The farm security arrangement being implemented by the project is the stewardship system, which allows upland farmers 25 years or more of undisturbed use of public lands provided that they adequately develop the land following ecologically sound and stable resource management practices. (An alternative farm security arrangement being promoted under the ISFP and implemented at the project sites is the communal forest lease.) The upland development technologies prescribed by the ISFP deal with soil stabilisation measures and agroforestry. The local organisations formed under the ISFP are expected to function as natural resource managers upon FMB's withdrawal from the project sites.

This paper focusses on the experience of the Cebu pilot project in integrating women in the project. It first provides an overview of the goals and the organisation of the project, and of the community in the project area. It also describes the project participants and discusses the ways in which women and men have been mobilised for project activities. Lastly, the paper presents the authors' reflections on gender issues that directly concern project implementation and the possible ways in which these issues may be addressed in the future.

GOALS AND ORGANISATIONS

As a pilot project under the Ford Foundation-assisted Upland Development Programme (UDP) of the FMB, the Cebu project innovates in the manner of implementing the ISFP by using community organising technology. This innovation is intended to develop a farmers' association, impart organisational skills to farmers, help the community manage its human and natural resources, and develop the farmers' ability to acquire for themselves the social and agricultural services they need. The organising approach is also employed in delivering farm security to members of the project community and in promoting adoption of the recommended technologies among them.

The project is being implemented by two project field coordinators (PFCs), who are detailed to the social forestry unit of the FMB Argao District Office. PFC-1 is a female agriculture graduate from the Visayas State College of Agriculture (VISCA). She has been in the FMB since 1981 and in the pilot project from its beginning in 1984. PFC-2 is a male forestry graduate from VISCA. He has been in the FMB since May 1986 and in the pilot project since February 1987 replacing a female PFC, who is also a VISCA agriculture graduate.

The PFCs are assisted in the field by a survey aide, a clerk, and a bookkeeper. The project field staff members are backed up by the district forester, the social forestry unit and section chiefs of the FMB district and regional offices, respectively. (All these personnel are male. The assistant district forester of Argao, a female, is also currently involved in the project in an unofficial capacity.) The PFCs receive on-the-job training in community organising from the Philippine Association for Intercultural Development (PAFID), and later, from the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP). They also receive training in agroforestry technologies from the College of Forestry of the University of the Philippines.

THE SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

The Cebu project is located in an area of Barangay Nug-as in the municipality of Alcoy, Cebu. Encompassing 356 hectares of a 3,000 hectare timberland area, the project is located 18 km southwest of the town of Alcoy. Nestling on the hinterlands of Southern Cebu with an elevation of 600 to 800 m, the area is accessible by a rough, winding barangay road that is passable throughout the year. It can be reached by motor vehicles. However, because no public transport vehicles ply the route, local people travel the distance to and from Alcoy town on foot.

The Community

The project area is inhabited by 92 households, all of which rely on farming the rocky, steep mountainsides for subsistence. The majority earn cash income from the production of vegetables which are sold in Mantalongon (a barangay in the neighbouring municipality of Dalaguete) 20 km away. A few of the households occasionally earn cash income through employment in the FMB's Southern Cebu Reforestation and Development Project (SCRDP), the barangay road maintenance projects of Nug-as, and, until recently, in the industrial tree plantation and coal exploration of two privately-owned mining firms in the area. Young women and men also earn cash through employment in the lowlands as domestic helpers, storekeepers, bakery assistants, or stevedores. They occasionally remit cash to their families in the mountains, but they generally spend their earnings on themselves (on clothes and *kalingawan* or entertainment).

Farming has been the main occupation of the local people. It was begun by their ancestors who had come from mountain farming communities in the neighbouring municipality of Dalaguete. The early settlers came in the late 1800s and in the 1940s during the Japanese occupation. They cleared the land by cutting down and burning the forests. As their numbers grew, they developed a system of claims over the land and gradually created permanent settlements in the community in and around the lands they tilled.

Today, their descendants and the descendants of those to whom they had passed on their lands, continue to cultivate the farms as before. This time, however, the farms are no longer the rich, fertile farms of the past. Farmers have shortened the fallow period of their lands, and they now depend heavily on commercial fertiliser to produce enough corn, the staple crop, for subsistence. Thus, there is a need for them to halt further deterioration of the soils and make them naturally productive again.

The Project Participants

The target beneficiaries of the pilot project were the farmers in the community who had been cultivating landholdings within the project site since 31 December 1981. This criterion for identifying target beneficiaries was an offshoot of the choice of the stewardship system as the farm security scheme for the project. Stewardship certificates, the instrument of farm security under the stewardship system, are awarded to qualified cultivators of landholdings within a social forestry project.

The stewardship holders, who constituted the qualified project participants, were selected following the ISFP implementing guidelines. Ministry Administrative Order (MAO) No. 48, which provides the implementing guidelines for the ISFP, specifies that stewardship be awarded to forest dwellers who have been in the upland community since or before 31 December 1981. The actual participants in the project, however, were largely determined by membership in the upland farmers' association. The constitution and bylaws of the association limited membership to those at the project site who had been awarded the stewardship certificates by the FMB, or who were in the process of obtaining one, and who had taken the association's oath of responsibility.

Of its 115 target beneficiaries as of June 1987, the project had awarded stewardship certificates to 84 farmers; 9 more were expected to be given their certificates (see Table 1). Of the 84 awardees, 49 (46 males and 3 females) have joined the farmers' association.

EXPERIENCE IN INTEGRATING WOMEN IN PROJECT ACTIVITIES

As mandated by the implementing guidelines of the UDP and ISFP, the project focused on three main concerns: the creation and development of an upland farmers' association; the delivery of farm security to the participants; and the promotion of upland development technologies. Other activities which were undertaken based on the participants' articulated concerns pertained to the delivery of basic social services to the community.

Table 1 Distribution of stewardship certificates, by status of awards, and by civil status and sex of beneficiaries (June 1987)

Status of awards	Family heads		Single		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Awarded	77	3	4	0	84
To be awarded	8	1	0	0	9
Total	85	4	4	0	93

Creation and Development of a Farmers' Association

The first two years of project implementation centred on the creation of the farmers' association. The project mobilised a core group of 8 leaders who, in turn, mobilised 26 farmers to initiate the formation of the association, supported the formulation of a constitution and bylaws, and implemented a farm input credit project through the association. The association conducted officers' caucuses and general assembly meetings to plan and decide on activities, and formed *ad hoc* committees to implement them. Towards the end of the second year, conflicts associated with the credit project were widely attributed to the highly centralised decision-making processes carried out by the association leadership. Thus, on the third year, the project divided the site into four sectors, and thereafter concentrated its efforts in assisting the sectoral groups to formulate plans for undertaking sector-specific agroforestry activities even as a new set of officers endeavoured to resolve the issues that arose from the credit project.

The core group members were identified by the project staff based on the recommendations from FMB personnel who had worked in the community. The group was composed of seven men and one woman. All of them were subsequently elected officers of the association. The female core group member was elected Public Relations Officer (PRO) because of her network of family relations, fictive kin and friends in the community. When the association drew up its constitution and bylaws about five months after the elections, it was decided that the elected officers be retained and sworn into office. The lone female official, whose spouse held the stewardship for their household, was also inducted as an association member. Her household became the only one represented by two members (she and her husband) in the association.

While most of the planning and decision-making activities of the project were initiated by the predominantly male officers and members of the association, a few women were able to participate in these activities through their attendance in general assemblies. These women generally came to the sessions as their husbands' substitutes. Some attended the meetings to take advantage of the opportunity to sell food, cigarettes and *tuba* (coconut wine). However, three women consistently attended the meetings even when their spouses were also present. A few of the more articulate women participated in the discussions by asking clarifying questions, commenting on the issues being discussed, and contributing suggestions.

In the credit project, four committees were formed to formulate the guidelines and procedures for implementing the project. Members of the association were allowed to avail of loans; non-members could avail of the inputs in cash but at higher prices. To implement this policy, the association required the secretary to verify the membership status of the loan applicants in the association and to issue promissory note forms to them. Because very few women were members of the association, most women participated indirectly in the credit project by influencing their spouses' decisions to avail of the farm inputs. In one case, the woman, who spent more time farming than her husband who was preoccupied with off-farm work, prodded her husband to avail of the project's pesticide supply when she observed insect infestation in their fields.

Deliver of Farm Security

The activities associated with the delivery of farm security were the parcellary survey, receipt of applications for stewardship certificates, and subsequent awarding of stewardship to the project's target beneficiaries. Parcellary surveys were conducted in two periods of project implementation. The first, conducted at the very

start of the project (in July 1984), resulted in the awarding of stewardship to 32 farmers.

The complaint by the association's PRO regarding the inaccurate depiction of her family's landholdings in their stewardship certificate led the association to pass a resolution requesting for a resurvey of the awarded landholdings. It also passed another resolution requesting the FMB to extend the project's coverage to the entire area, thus increasing the potential membership of the association and the number of participants in project activities. Another series of parcellary surveys was then conducted and mechanisms for ensuring farmers' participation were initiated.

In the activities pertaining to land security, adult male members of the community constituted the major participants. Except for four widows, three of whom were members of the association, all those who applied for stewardship were men following the project's assumption that they headed their households. In ten cases where the lands `belonged' to the women, stewardship was granted in the names of their husbands. An exceptional case was that of one widow who took on a common-law husband. She applied for stewardship herself to protect her children's rights to inherit her lands. In the parcellary surveys, all the participants were men because they were considered the most knowledgeable about the boundaries of their farm holdings; the widows sent their sons or brothers to participate in their stead.

Promotion of Upland Development Technologies

Until early 1987, the project's efforts to promote upland development technologies had focused on soil conserving measures. These included the construction of rockwalls for bench terracing purposes, vegetative methods of contouring such as hedgerow planting, fascine contouring (gathering and tying farm debris along the contour lines of the field), contour planting, and boundary tree planting. Rockwall construction was promoted in the project initially through the mobilisation of an *alayon* group (an indigenous system of labour exchange) and, later, by making the approval of individual credit applications dependent on farmers' compliance to construct rockwalls. The promotion of vegetative methods of contouring and boundary tree planting was undertaken through information dissemination and dispersal of seeds or seedlings of farmer-specified tree species, respectively. Improved ways of constructing rockwalls with the use of an A-frame are currently being promoted by the project through individual demonstrations on the farm lots of interested farmers.

In 1985, these promotional activities were supported by a cross-farm visit to three agroforestry showcases in Cebu, and a farmers' seminar on forest ecology. Another support activity was the institution of an `Outstanding Farmers' Awards' scheme in 1986. Many planning sessions were also held on agroforestry activities which could be conducted at the project site.

Because the project was concerned with promoting soil conservation and tree planting to as many farmers as possible, association membership was often not required for participation in the project staff's promotional activities with individual farmers. The project staff disseminated information about rockwall construction and other soil conservation measures to any farmer who showed interest in them. They gave tree planting materials to members or non-members who cared to ask for them. In such activities as the cross-farm visits and the farmers' seminar, however, participation was limited to association members and to their substitutes because of budgetary constraints. Nonetheless, interested non-members came to the farmers' seminar as observers.

Information dissemination and distribution of planting materials were addressed to the men although there was no deliberate attempt to exclude (or to include) the women. This was because information dissemination was often done in conjunction with groundworking activities. On such occasions, the project staff generally sought and communicated with the association members (or the men). They met with the women only when the men were not around and requested them to relay information to the men. This communication process obviously influenced the women's farming practices for many began to practice vegetative contouring methods, either on their own initiative or on instructions from their husbands. Some women were also observed to participate in such activities as the distribution of planting materials through the men. One woman, in particular, persuaded her husband to avail of the project's mahogany seedlings and supervised his planting of the seedlings in their farm.

Unlike the other technology-promotion activities, the planning sessions were largely association activities and participation in them was generally confined to members. In the first two years of the project, these sessions involved only the project staff and a few association officers. The plans discussed dealt with support activities such as the establishment of a community library on upland development technologies, the initiation of a demonstration farm and a nursery, and the construction of a farmers' training centre.

When planning sessions and other activities began to be undertaken by sector in 1987, the participants were primarily male. As in general assemblies, however, women and non-members were free to attend the sector meetings. Moreover, not all the people who engaged in sector-level project ventures were association members. In fact, the membership question was one of the issues discussed in some sectors in connection with planned agroforestry activities. These activities included black pepper production, bee-keeping, livestock production, and hedgerow planting using napier grass, *kakauate* (*Gliricidia sepium*) or ipil-ipil (*Leucaena leucocephala*).

Delivery of Basic Service

The upland farmers' associations created opportunities for the officers who were also key community leaders, to address some basic needs of the community. The regular association meetings served as fora for discussing and planning these needs. These plans were brought to the attention of the project staff for support in their implementation. Thus, in late 1985 and early 1986, the project assisted the association with the preparation of a proposal for a water supply development project and in holding free clinics at the project site.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Many of the lessons people learn are drawn from hindsight. Since the members of the project staff were unacquainted with gender issues in social forestry, they dealt primarily with the male heads of farming households. The staff's experiences in the field, however, suggested that this was not necessarily the best approach in implementing the project. Three issues which they realised must be addressed are discussed in the following sections.

The Equity Issue Regarding Land Security

While the ISFP implementing guidelines express no bias as to the gender of those qualified for stewardship, the certificate of stewardship itself specifies the head of the family as the stewardship holder. The project thus assumed that the 'head of the family' referred to the male spouses in farming households, regardless of who among the married couples originally 'owned' or developed the land. It further assumed that the male spouse was the farmer in the family or household because it was he who was perceived as having the major responsibility of providing for the family. The assumption that the male is the cultivator and head of the farming household was not exclusive to the project staff. Even among the farmers themselves, the men generally claimed being the heads of their households. They reasoned that 'it has always been that way'. These pro-male biases raise the question of equity in relation to the men and women in the upland project. Two points are worth considering.

The first point is anchored on existing civil laws governing ownership of properties. The Civil Code of the Philippines allows ownership of properties acquired before marriage to be retained by its owners. Thus, land inherited or purchased by the man or the woman before marriage continues to be recognised as owned by the spouse concerned. Development of and the fruits from the land, however, are shared in so far as these accrue to the family. In the absence of agreements covering separation of property, lands purchased in marriage are considered jointly owned by the married couple; this proceeds from the assumption that the funds used to acquire such properties had been raised through the couple's joint effort.

While the Civil Code refers to ownership of alienable lands, its principle of conjugal ownership has been invoked in awarding stewardship in the uplands. In the project it has been argued that the stewardship rights are 'conjugal' owned by the couple; thus, it is sufficient that only one spouse should be awarded stewardship. This argument is tenuous, however. In the first place, it disregards the origin of the land, that is, who among the spouses first acquired and developed the land before marriage. In the case of the 10 women in the project whose lands were awarded to their husbands, the stewardship system ignored the original possession of the land by the women, and instead gave the land rights to the men. Moreover, the stewardship system falls outside the realm of the Civil Code on conjugal property rights. Thus, there is no guarantee as yet that, in cases of separation, the unnamed spouse of the stewardship holder will have protected access to the land. While it can be argued that a one-person stewardship grant will serve as an incentive for the unnamed spouse (that is, the woman) to remain wedded to the male grantee, it may not operate in the same manner for the grantee. The stewardship system, therefore, may not really provide security of land tenure to the women.

A second point for consideration pertains to the labour contributions of women and men in the development of farms in the uplands. It is a well-known fact that, particularly in subsistence farming, cultivation of the land is generally a household activity. Providing for the survival of the family is thus, a collective responsibility of the husband, wife, and the children.

At the project site, the women have been observed to work in their farms as long as 8 hours daily, 6 days a week, and 10 to 12 months a year to ensure the availability of at least a meal a day for their families. Their field activities include weeding, planting, harvesting, and attending to the livestock. While the men spend similarly long hours in the farms, some women, in addition to their work in the farm, undertake the more physically exhausting tasks such as rockwall construction (which is usually a male task) and clearing the land with the use of a *bodlong* (a crowbar), generally considered a man's farm tool and usually employed for breaking the soil hardened by several rainless months. Many of the women in the project area wield the *bodlong* when necessary. They tell the men when fertilizers or pesticides have to be applied in the fields, or apply these themselves when the men are not available to do so. The women also instruct and supervise their children's work in the farm. In a number of cases, the women are often left to provide continuity in the care and management of the farm because their spouses spend time in search of or doing cash-paying work. (The main source of wage employment at the site is the FMB's reforestation project.) All things considered, the women are as much farmers as are the men. In naming the men as the stewards, the project denies the women the recognition that they deserve for developing the lands alongside the men.

The project's narrow view of the role of women in upland farming is further reinforced by the rules governing membership in the farmers' association and participation in the project. It has been noted that project resources are directed through the farmers' association, and membership in the association is based on the possession of stewardship certificates. Because of these procedures, the project denies the women access to its resources. It also denies itself access to a valuable resource in the uplands: the women.

Women as a Vital Resource

As farmers and homemakers, the women in the project are in a position to carry out responsibilities in the association, and assess and implement farming technologies. The lone female officer, whose membership in the association was an exception rather than the rule, was credited by the project staff for the attendance of a good number of members in association activities while she held the position; her persistence in questioning the accuracy of past stewardship awards led to a resurvey of landholdings in the site. Three other women (who attended meetings in spite of their husband's presence) contributed to the discussions of certain project issues through their clarifying questions and comments. An officer's wife was known to help her husband in his functions as treasurer of the association.

These cases of women's direct and indirect participation in organisational functions indicate their potential for holding leadership positions in the association. A further indication of this is the way in which a group of women organised themselves into an organisation. In undertaking activities, the women showed ability for dividing work among themselves, coordinating with the project staff and health personnel, and reflecting on their experiences to improve the implementation of subsequent activities. However, because of the association's definition of membership, the women had to create another organisation in which to exercise

their leadership skills over what are generally regarded as women-specific concerns. Thus, the project was unable to tap the organisational skills of the women.

The women, too, showed keen interest in the upland development technologies promoted by the project staff. They implemented the technologies, such as hedgerow planting, in their farms. Because some of them spent more time in the fields than their husbands who were occupied with off-farm work, a number were in a better position to assess these technologies. For instance, the wife of an association officer complained to one of the authors about fascine contouring which her husband instructed her to use. Even as she followed his instructions, she reportedly voiced her doubts about the effectiveness of the procedure in controlling soil erosion. She claimed to prefer to use crop debris as mulch rather than as material for fascine contouring. She said that mulching keeps the topsoil in place and prevents the soil from gathering just above the contour lines. Because the project had focused on the men, its staff had not immediate access to valuable feedback from the female users of the technologies promoted by the project.

Efficiency in Technology Promotion

To respond efficiently and effectively to the grave problems of poverty and environmental degradation in the uplands, a development agency needs to know its target beneficiaries well. It needs to know who they are, what they do, and who among them do what specific activities. Such knowledge enables the agency, among others, to plan more appropriate interventions and to implement or promote these interventions more efficiently.

In the project area, farming is an activity jointly undertaken by men and women. It must be added that in the households farm work is generally assigned among members depending on their capacity for physical labour. The men usually prepare the land using the *bodlong* while the women and children do the weeding using the *guna* (a flat bolo). Men apply fertilizers and pesticides while the women observe the progress of the crops. Men also generally construct rockwalls to prevent soil erosion while the women use vegetative contouring techniques. Men fetch water from deep open wells for cows while the women and children bring goats to pasture and feed the pigs and the chickens. In households where the man takes on off-farm jobs or does not attend religiously to his tasks, these divisions become blurred and the woman takes on some of the man's farm responsibilities.

It has been argued by the project that male association members share the information and technologies they learn from the project with other members of their households; thus, it is sufficient to have them represent households in the association. The case of the woman who complained about the soil erosion measure recommended by her husband indicates that this indirect route may not be the most effective. The man, who spent less time in the fields, did not have the same understanding of his farm's situation as his wife. There seems to be a need for the project to impart soil conservation measures not only to the men but also to the women. More specifically, there is a need for the project to identify the effective users of the technologies it espouses, and to address these users directly.

Final Notes

The project staff realised the severe limitations which the male definition of association membership placed on the implementation of the project. They were particularly concerned that, under the present organisation, the women's efforts in the fields are not being given due recognition by the project. Specifically, giving the 'outstanding farmer award' only to the man when it is his wife who does most of the farmwork seems grossly unfair. They were also concerned that budgetary constraints limit the delivery of assistance only to the farmers' group and prevent them from responding directly to the concerns of the women's group.

The project staff intends to review the association's constitution and bylaws with the farmers. The staff also plans to initiate discussions on the matter of women's participation in the association. However, they will leave it to the men and women of the project community to decide how gender issues should be resolved.