

Conservation International / Philippines - Population Environment Project

Since 2002 the CI/Philippines Population Environment Project has implemented an integrated Population-Environment program that demonstrates the link between population and improved biodiversity conservation.

In the northern Sierra Madre Biodiversity Corridor, CI/Philippines works with the NGO PROCESS Luzon and local government units to help the Indigenous People (IP) groups and others in remote upland communities to understand that having smaller and healthier families will improve their living conditions.

The Project provides this underprivileged sector the opportunity to access desired basic services that will foster healthy families, while improving capacity of families and communities to manage forest resources.

Development Challenge

There is a growing popular realization that **uncontrolled population growth** is driving the destructive exploitation of forest resources and is an important root cause of increased frequency and severity of natural disasters. Native upland forests are threatened by the **encroachment of human settlements** and the resultant **conversion of forest into upland agricultural plots** through slash and burn cultivation is one of the principal causes of habitat loss in the Sierra Madre.

Both **in-migration and high fertility** have led to the expansion of existing settlements and the creation of new ones in the upland regions where primary forest remained. Decreases in migration notwithstanding, the people who moved to the region remain living on subsistence farming, largely in poverty with high fertility rates, and **minimal access to government services** including Reproductive Health and Family Planning (RH/FP). Livelihood prospects are deteriorating because of **lack of alternative employment opportunities, poor knowledge of sustainable forestry, minimal conservation awareness** and **lack of political will to enforce forestry regulations**.

Approach

The Project showcases an integrated natural resource management and RH/FP project with holistic, community-based activities that empower local residents to improve family welfare and safeguard their environment. Working with its local partners, CI will continue to manage the integrated population and environment project. This includes developing activities that link reproductive health and family planning services functionally with natural resource management in general, and biodiversity conservation in particular.

CI also assists managers of forestland concessions with revision and implementation of their forest management plans, ensuring that the plans balance the needs for resource extraction with protection of critical habitat and threatened species. And CI maintains other ecosystem benefits such as watershed protection and a safe, steady water supply.

Activities

- Provide training to Midwives, BHWs and Hilots to enhance their skills in delivering RH/FP services and skills, improving the referral system and localized delivery centers.
- Build the capacity of the People's Organizations (POs), Indigenous People (IPs), and LGU to implement their development plans and enforce conservation policies and initiatives.
- Support the organizational strengthening and external networking efforts of the POs and their desire to adopt and implement sustainable and environment-friendly livelihood projects.
- Help LGUs and communities monitor and assess changes in the population-environment links in the project site, enabling them to review and modify their development plans in achieving balanced population growth and natural resource use.
- Create a mechanism—a local conservation trust fund—that will involve the private sector actively in conservation and development efforts.