

Republic of the Philippines

Northern Mindanao Community Initiatives and Resource Management Project Project Performance Assessment

Executive Summary

- 1. Background and objectives.** The overall goal of the Northern Mindanao Community Initiatives and Resource Management Project (NMCIREMP) was to reduce the vulnerability and enhance the food security of about 58,500 low-income households (310,000 people) living in the project area. Its approach was to target two adjacent regions among the country's poorest, namely, Northern Mindanao and Caraga. In terms of specific objectives, the project was designed to:
(i) promote/strengthen the community institutions of indigenous people, poor upland farmers, agrarian reform beneficiaries, poor fisher families and women's self-help groups, making them self-reliant and capable of undertaking their own development activities; (ii) promote the conservation and improvement of the natural resource base; (iii) improve village infrastructure; (iv) facilitate the representation of indigenous people in local councils and the issuance of certificates of ancestral domain titles; and (v) enhance the responsiveness of local government units and other service providers to the diversified needs of the community institutions.
- 2. Project components.** Project design was relatively complex inasmuch as it involved six components, a range of subcomponents and multiple stakeholders. All components were anchored at the municipal local government level through project coordination offices. These were supported by offices at the provincial and regional levels as well as by the main project facilitation office in Northern Mindanao. Components included: community institutions and participatory development; community infrastructure investments; natural resources management; socio-economic support and studies; support fund for indigenous people; and the project management component.
- 3. Relevance.** The project's overall goal of reducing the vulnerability and enhancing the food security of low-income households in the project area was relevant to the Government's own policies and strategies in that regard. Project strategies to promote local self-reliance and to support small and disadvantaged communities through self-identified and managed economic, social and environmental subprojects, were aligned with major objectives under the national development agenda. Also, NMCIRMP's objectives were aligned with IFAD's country strategic opportunities programme of 2000, particularly as it related rural poverty to a focus on the country's poorest provinces and to targeting both upland and coastal communities to improve tenurial security, indigenous people self-determination and sustainable economic development. Project targets became even more relevant in IFAD's country strategic opportunities programme of 2009, which included Northern Mindanao in all three of its strategic objectives.
- 4. Effectiveness.** The project was largely effective in reaching the designated target groups and in achieving its five objectives. All project targets were reached and, in many cases, surpassed although the achievement of the natural resource management objective was not as far reaching. Delays in the flow of funds early in the project caused difficulties, slowing down implementation; nevertheless, the initial barriers to effectiveness were overcome, allowing implementation to accelerate, complete the majority of subcomponent activities and reach key

performance indicators in terms of coverage and attainment of the five objectives. This resulted in the establishment and strengthening of community institutions, including almost tripling the expected number of functional self-help groups, which are still actively engaged in livelihood activities. Environmental activities were not as numerous as planned but those implemented showed tangible benefits such as increased fish stocks, rare fauna protection and watershed protection. Rural infrastructure subproject targets were surpassed and there have been positive results in terms of marketing of agricultural produce and better access to services and availability of agriculture inputs, including irrigation water. Secure tenurial status and greater self-determination and representation have made a solid contribution to addressing indigenous people development priorities.

5. **Efficiency.** Overall, the project was implemented moderately efficiently. The cost-benefit ratio and project management costs were higher than for other comparable projects in the country, despite the positive economic internal rate of return in the order of 34 per cent . Still, it should be noted that focused investment in the project area gave rise to additional long-term benefits, such as local government capacity-building and the convergence of different initiatives to provide a platform for future economic growth initiatives.
6. **Impact.** Overall, the project produced extensive benefits among participating communities. For example, impact on human and social capital and empowerment was substantial, particularly due to the formation of self-help groups, training and regular, constant interaction among project partners. Positive impact was also achieved in terms of natural resources management (NRM) and protection, although this was limited by the slow progress of the NRM component in the early years of the project. On a less positive note, impact on agriculture has been moderate, with achievements mainly linked to improved irrigation. Indeed, the number of people experiencing food shortages has declined and the income generated has enabled them to purchase food; however, household food security is still vulnerable to climatic shocks. Finally, the impact on institutions and policies is deemed by this assessment as being highly satisfactory.
7. **Sustainability.** Overall, the sustainability of project investments and benefits are high, despite the complexity of interventions. The innovative nature of sustainability planning, i.e. building in long-term local government unit commitments for supporting local investments and local groups beyond the project period, has led to the continuation of a high level of still ongoing activity in the communities beyond the project closure. The sustainability of project investments has improved governance and community processes, and raised the overall level of development in the barangays (villages) and supporting institutions.
8. **Innovation and scaling up.** Overall, the planned innovations were realised and put into practice, thereby contributing to the achievement of project objectives. Implementation of the planned innovations and natural replication of additional ones has reinforced the success of project outcomes. With regards to scaling up, it should be noted that the project design did not envisage scaling up. At the same time, the positive results of the initial project Poverty Alleviation Fund livelihood initiatives were scaled up into a new fund focusing on community level enterprises. In addition, policy and guideline changes have been scaled up at the national level.
9. **Gender.** Overall, with regard to gender and women's empowerment the project performed in a highly satisfactory manner. The project's gender-oriented approach resulted in increased access of women to leadership positions and their involvement in management of community initiatives, as well as provided women more access to funds and livelihood resources, particularly under the Poverty Alleviation Fund. One strategic policy the project implemented was sustaining gender-balance representation in training and project-relevant activities.

All these provided opportunities for women to have representation and exposure to community development concerns.

10. **Recommendations.** NMCIREMP's successful achievements have led to formulate recommendations to be of use to IFAD in further developing its portfolio in the Philippines, as well as to assist the Government of the Philippines in view of the move towards more integrated government implementation related to rural development. Among these, are the need to continue nurturing the strong links between communities and local government units, thus creating potential for further development initiatives; and developing a new set of skills to support commercial (value chain) development initiatives.