

## **PARTNERING IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper is mainly based on the actual experiences of field personnel of the Agro-Industrial Development Program (AIDP), UPLB-College of Agriculture from 1993 to 1999. The AIDP is a collaborative research and extension program between and among the UPLB-College of Agriculture, the local government units (LGUs), and the local state colleges and universities (SCUs). It is geared to develop a management organization that delivers agricultural extension in the context of devolution, as mandated in the Local Government Code of 1991, and the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA).

The program used two types of agricultural extension management organizations for effective delivery of agricultural extension services to the farming population. These are (1) the province-wide organization, which is operating in Oriental Mindoro and Marinduque, and (2) the municipal-level organization, which is operating in seven towns of Laguna and a town in Cebu. These organizations are composed of the different stakeholders, particularly the LGUs and SCUs.

In the process of building up the partnership between the different levels of LGUs and the local SCUs, a number of facilitating and constraining factors were identified. The facilitating factors were: (1) joint planning and consultation among different stakeholders; (2) clear identification of roles by the LGUs; (3) shared commitment of the different partners; (4) development emphasis of the LGU; (5) initiative of the people and strong farmers organizations; and, (6) social networks of individuals in the organizations. On the other hand, the following were the constraining factors: (1) political conflict; (2) insufficiency of financial and manpower capability to share in

the partnership; (3) lack of commitment in terms of priority; and, (4) absence of clear cut role and responsibilities

**Key words:** partnership, agricultural extension, devolution, stakeholders, local government units (LGUs), state colleges and universities (SCUs), empowerment

## THE CONTEXT OF AGRO-INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (AIDP I)

Farming today is becoming very complex. Farmers now need to know the technological options they have and the skills necessary to make appropriate decisions. In the past, the Department of Agriculture was the agency mandated to extend these technological options to farmers. This function of the Department has been devolved to the local government units (LGUs) since the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991. This in effect empowers the provincial, municipal and barangay governments to set their own priorities for agriculture. While empowerment of LGUs is good, it nevertheless gives rise to one difficulty: the lack of coordination and synchronization of programs between LGU's provincial and municipal levels. The law is also silent on the relationship between the Office of the Governor, through its Provincial Agriculturist Office (PAO), and the Office of the Mayor through its Municipal Agriculturist Office (MAO). Because of this, provincial agricultural development programs cannot be implemented at the municipal levels unless approved by municipal executives. The same holds true in implementing national programs. All this points to the need for an organization that would put the LGUs into a single management.

Even if they are put into one organization only, the LGUs nevertheless lack agricultural information to disseminate. They have no formal links with knowledge centers, since they have been traditionally isolated from these institutions. One way to correct LGUs' institutional isolation from knowledge centers is to devise an organization that would pave the way for collaboration between the LGUs and local SCUs. LGUs and SCUs enhance their ability to meet farmers' information needs by working hand-in-hand in mutually acceptable arrangements that do not compromise their institutional goals and visions. This was the premise of the first phase of Agro-Industrial Development Program of the College of Agriculture in its partnership arrangements with the LGUs and local SCUs from 1993 to 1999. The AIDP wanted to find out how exactly this process would proceed.

This paper argues that AIDP I is more than an extension program of the College of Agriculture. It attempts to develop an organization that delivers agricultural extension in the context of devolution, Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. This paper discusses the processes involved in evolving organization founded on partnership that binds the different levels of LGUs, local SCUs, and other stakeholders in agriculture. It also discusses the other unique features of the program, such as participatory planning, institutionalization of monitoring and evaluation for every

project site, procedures of resource mobilization, and institution building and strengthening. But before proceeding to these issues, let us highlight first the theoretical basis of partnership in coming up with an accountable and sustainable agricultural extension delivery system.

Partnership among stakeholders has become today's buzzword and a favorite subject of development advocates. There are several reasons for its advocacy. In agricultural extension, duplication of efforts of different service agencies is commonly observed despite these agencies' inadequate manpower and financial resources. If all of these agencies could work together, duplication would be solved. They might also be able to create greater impact to their beneficiaries than before, since partnership would equally mean greater pooling of resources, skills and expertise. Yet, despite its potentials, partnership, is little understood. It could either refer to the way the public and private actors match their means and competencies in providing social services to their clients or the way partners assume ownership of the services they provide (Jalal as cited by Cornwall, et al. 2000). The latter definition is, however, more complex as the owners of services are not only limited to service provision but also the end users. Jalal terms this phenomenon as "responsible partnership" (Jalal as cited by Cornwall et al. 2000). Gibbon furthers this definition to include what Cadbury is advocating as the equal sharing of power among the partners and Fowler's advocacy of "understood and mutually enabling, interdependent interaction with shared intentions" (Fowler as cited by Cornwall et al. 2000).

Partnership, therefore, is an extremely complex strategy. It attempts to combine and coordinate people, technology, job tasks and other resources to achieve effectively a common or shared goal. According to Swiss Commission for Research Partnership with Developing Countries, the establishment of partnerships is founded on the following basic principles: (1) deciding on the objectives together, (2) building up of mutual trust, (3) sharing of information, (4) developing of networks, (5) sharing of responsibility, (6) creating transparency, (7) monitoring and evaluating collaboration, (8) disseminating the results, (9) applying the results, (10) sharing of gains equitably, and (11) building on the achievements.

Establishing partnerships basically requires continuing dialogue and exchange of experiences among all those involved, including members of the local community. Discussing common problems together can motivate all partners to cooperate actively. The best division of tasks and responsibilities, based on varying strengths of partners, offers the best chance of producing and using synergy, and that all those involved - right up to the end-user - will really benefit from partnerships. Like any kind of cooperative enterprise, partnership in agricultural extension must always be oriented towards a particular goal in a specific setting.

Despite the potentials of partnership, Bell et al (1999) indicate that there are disadvantages associated with its use. Firstly, coordinating many people to work together is not easy. Decisions are not easy to reach in this arrangement because there are many minds working at the same time. This is even magnified when

each of the parties involved has its own interests to pursue. There is also the problem of communication, commitment as well as the credibility of partners. Sometimes ethical problems emerge, affecting an otherwise effective functioning of partnership. Summarily, it is a costly exercise in terms of time, effort and even money. But despite all these negatives, AIDP I believes there is no other way to deliver agricultural extension services to farmers except through partnerships.

### AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION ORGANIZATIONS IN AIDP SITES

The program is able to come up with two types of agricultural extension organizations: province-wide and (2) municipal-level organizations. The province-wide organization of agricultural extension is operating in Oriental Mindoro and Marinduque; the municipal-level organization in seven towns of Laguna and one town in Cebu.

### PROCESSES INVOLVED IN COMING UP WITH AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION DELIVERY SYSTEM

*Initiation stage.* The manner by which the idea of partnership was introduced to partners by UPLBCA/AIDP depended on the circumstances of encounter. In Oriental Mindoro, this idea of partnering was put across to the governor of the province only after it had sought the assistance of UPLBCA in developing and implementing its rural and development programs for the province. At that time, it was easy for the UPLBCA/AIDP to introduce such an idea since there was already a proposal for partnership from the Center for Rural Organization and Support Services (CROSS), an NGO operating in Bansud. In the same way, the birth of partnership among the province of Marinduque, the Marinduque State College (MSC) and UPLBCA/AIDP came about because of the initiative of the provincial government under Governor Carreon. Elliot (1999, personal observation) refutes this, however. She claims instead that the academic people started such a partnership. At first, it was President Javier (UP President, 1993-1999) who first recognized the need of the province to be assisted by UPLB. President Javier recognized this after he had gone to the province to look after his relatives. Dr Roberto E. Coronel, erstwhile head of National Genetic Resources Laboratory of Institute of Plant Breeding, also realized this when he was asked to make an agroeconomic system and information for the formulation of sustainable agricultural development. At the same time, President Monterey of Marinduque State College (MSC) convinced the UPLBCA to include the province as an AIDP site. In Laguna, where the initiatives from the provincial executives were lacking, partnerships originated either from the efforts of local officials of a number of municipalities and from UPLB's commitment to reach out, first, to its surrounding areas before any other area. For example, the partnership of the municipality of Rizal with Laguna State Polytechnic College (LSPC) and UPLBCA/AIDP came about after one of its councilors made representation to the UPLBCA Dean to include Rizal

as an AIDP area (Gesmundo, 1999: personal observation). The same is true for Cavinti. Introducing partnership idea to executives of Nagcarlan, Luisiana, Liliw, Magdalena, Los Banos, Sta Rosa and Calamba, came very naturally, since these towns had been sites of UPLBCA's agricultural extension activities.

*Signing of MOA.* A memorandum of agreement among various stakeholders will legitimize the organization of agricultural extension. Signing the MOA is integral to the program. Although signing is not a guarantee that the partners will do their share, the experiences of some AIDP-covered provinces and municipalities showed that this served as a binding force among partners to render their responsibilities/commitments to the different AIDP project sites. Signing of MOA among Oriental Mindoro partners was at two levels. One, at the provincial level, was in February 1996 at the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) in Cavite. The other, the municipal level was held in Oriental Mindoro in October 1996. In Marinduque, signing at the provincial level was held in September 1996, followed by the municipal levels.

In 1995, MOAs were simultaneously signed in each of the AIDP-covered municipalities in Laguna, except for Rizal which had its signing in April 1996.

*Participatory planning.* One of the ingredients of a successful partnering system is a project plan to which it can be applied. Nevertheless, the conception of a project plan has to undergo a long and tedious process of consultations and assessments of the area's potential for development as well as stakeholder's commitments. The process involves conducting planning workshops for stakeholders.

*Planning workshops.* The workshops covered provincial and municipal levels. For the Oriental Mindoro partnerships, a series of workshops was conducted at UPLB and in the province in 1996.

One major workshop output was the drafting of AIDP Oriental Mindoro indicative plan, which was used as a reference and justification of the provincial budget office on annual program/projects' financial support. Marinduque conducted a similar workshop in the province in 1996, which was followed later on by a consolidation workshop at UPLB.

In Laguna, participatory planning workshops were conducted in Nagcarlan, Liliw, Magdalena, Luisiana, Sta. Rosa and Calamba, to devise their respective Municipal Agricultural Development Plans (MADP). While the rest of the AIDP-covered Laguna municipalities focused their activities on their own MADPs, Rizal, being a neophyte in the program, started its planning at the barangay level based on the concept of Community Development Process (CDP). Barangay level plans were later integrated to form the MADP.

*Resource Mobilization.* Smooth project implementation in each AIDP area depended very much on equal sharing of resources among stakeholders. Budgetary problem was common among government institutions and some LGUs, with the exception perhaps of Oriental Mindoro. Indeed the provincial and municipal governments of Oriental Mindoro were able to release P3,970,000 and P1,806,875, respectively, to support identified projects under AIDP. Barangay governments

likewise, gave counterpart funds of P40,000 each. Such government agencies as the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Office of the Southern Cultural Community (OSCC) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) also gave their support as well as other government organizations (GOs) and peoples organizations (POs), such as the Plan International of Mindoro which gave P184,000 and Farmers Association of Victoria with P50,000. These funds were released to support projects in Oriental Mindoro towns, including rice, cutflower, vegetable and fruit, livestock and forest trees productions. Plant nurseries, plant pest clinic and agricultural breeding stations were established serving as support facilities for the production of forest trees seedlings, fruits and vegetables.

While AIDP-Mindoro was enjoying financial support from the partnership, AIDP-Laguna, specifically Nagcarlan, Liliw, Sta. Rosa and Los Baños did not have such opportunity due largely to stakeholders' failure to deliver the resources expected from them. Consequently, only a few tangible projects were implemented, including a cooperative in Magdalena and a municipal nursery in Luisiana. There were other accomplished activities though they did not need financial assistance; these included training on swine production, anthurium production, asexual propagation of plants, kimchi and tomato sauce processing.

The mobilization for internal budgetary support took place not only in the provinces and municipalities but also in barangays as it did in Rizal, Laguna. In preparing their agricultural plans, several barangays in Rizal took a substantial amount from their local development funds to support AIDP identified livelihood projects. In Magdalena, local officials were able to mobilize some resources to provide credit assistance to deserving farmers for their crop or livestock production projects.

*Monitoring and evaluation.* Monitoring and evaluation, inherent components of the implementation of project activities, formed part of the projects' regular operation. Evaluation determined how far or short an activity or undertaking went and how much more would be done to accomplish what was set out earlier.

In Mindoro, project monitoring was made through project visitations, on-site reviews, MAOs regular monthly meetings and annual reviews. This was usually participated by the different stakeholders in the partnership.

In Marinduque, monitoring and evaluation was made through project reviews and monthly management committee meetings.

In Laguna, an annual project review for the overall accomplishments for a given year was usually conducted. Likewise, a mid-year review on project updating is done in all project areas to track down the progress of the project for the first half of the year. This exercise revealed some limitations/problems in project implementation. Solutions or remedial measures were then given to ensure smooth implementation of projects.

Institution building and strengthening. Putting together the stakeholders of agricultural extension into one organization is by far the best option to strengthen them. The first MOA between the LGUs and UPLB provided the former an

opportunity to get familiar with the various units of the university, which could give them other services and technical support. In Magdalena, Laguna, the first IPM training on rice and corn informed the participants on available varietal trials on rice, in collaboration with PhilRice, and corn with IPB. The AIDP project staff likewise facilitated the LGU's linkage with the College of Veterinary Medicine and the Philippine Carabao Center, for some solutions to Magdalena farmers' disease problems in carabao. In Luisiana, the AIDP project was followed up by LGU's arrangements with other government agencies offering development assistance, notably the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), Southern Luzon Polytechnic College (SLPC) and National Economic Development Authority (NEDA).

AIDP scored yet another achievement and that is by building up LGU's leadership capability to put together the various service agencies on agricultural development under one organization. This strategy not only avoids duplication of functions among these agencies but also enables them to realize their complementary roles vis-à-vis other agencies. This likewise allows them to maximize use of their resources. This is well exemplified in Oriental Mindoro when the Provincial Governor's Office, through the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist, was able to solicit the assistance of DTI, TESDA, DOST, DA, PCA and other agencies to work closely with them in developing agriculture in the province.

In Marinduque, implementation of projects/activities began in 1997 with a series of trainings/seminars on crops and livestock production among agricultural technicians, farmers, and NGOs, in coordination with the provincial government, Marinduque State College (MSC) and other related government agencies. Training on mushroom production and fruit processing in UPLB soon followed.

In recognizing the importance of organized groups, associations or cooperatives, AIDP exerted all efforts to facilitate their establishment in areas where there is none and when need is indicated. In Magdalena, the MASIKAP Cooperative was established, which is now engaged in running a store to sell production inputs to farmer-members.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM AIDP IMPLEMENTATION

The success and failure of partnerships in different AIDP areas vary. While some areas had gainful experience from partnerships, other areas had so far been unfortunate to enjoy their benefits. Some facilitating and constraining factors in partnership have been identified as follows:

### A. Facilitating factors

#### **Joint planning and consultation among stakeholders to ensure representation of all interests**

The presence of LGU officials, DA staff, local SCUs and farmers evinced participation of stakeholders even during the pre-planning phase of the program. Likewise, projects contained in the MADP were a product of thorough planning at

the barangay and municipal levels as in the case of Mindoro and Laguna, particularly in Rizal town.

#### **Clear identification of roles by the LGU**

The first implementing year of AIDP projects in all AIDP areas can be regarded as UPLB led. Project implementation eventually changed gears; this time with LGU calling the shots in most AIDP areas. In Mindoro and Laguna, specifically in Rizal, Magdalena and Luisiana, LGU partners considered AIDP the umbrella of all their agricultural activities.

The Mindoro partnerships (provincial, municipal and barangay) demonstrated their commitment with the considerable amount they had released to the program in support of the area's different projects.

Of considerable value, too, is Rizal LGU's allocation of P50,000 for Year II of MADP project implementation. In Magdalena LGU provided the farmers through the MASIKAP cooperative P300,000 to carry out their own business.

#### **Shared commitment of the different partners**

This was made manifest in Mindoro and Laguna partnerships as mentioned previously. MinSCAT in Mindoro, MSC in Marinduque and LSPC in Laguna, although hampered by lack of material and human resources, participated in the program from its initiation to implementation stages.

#### **Development emphasis of the LGU**

MADPs' implementation in different municipalities has varying degrees of accomplishment because of the natural variations in the development foci of local officials. Some gave priority to agriculture while others were busy on infrastructure concerns.

Oriental Mindoro is a perfect example of an LGU whose local executives showed strong emphasis on agriculture, considering the substantial amount they gave to the program. Likewise, Rizal in Laguna has also been a very supportive partner with their budget realigned for the implementation of AIDP projects.

#### **People's initiatives and strong farmers' organizations**

People's initiatives contributed largely to the smooth program implementation as Rizal clearly demonstrated. At their own initiative Rizal requested immediately training on project proposal preparation and packaging to hasten up submission of their proposals to the municipal government office for funding. Farmers felt the need for such training right after preliminary discussions with them on project concepts. Consequently, priority proposals were prepared, submitted and approved by the Rizal municipal government.



### **Social networks of individuals in the organizations**

It is commendable that in Marinduque establishing partnerships between UPLB, MSC and LGLs was facilitated by personal networks of people in these organizations. This confirms that contacts influence decisions more regarding inter-institutional coordination than generalized institutional relationships.

### **B. Constraining Factors**

#### **Political conflict**

This particular problem was very much apparent in Nagcarlan, Laguna, wherein the MAO who was supposed to be working closely with AIDP, could not relate well with the mayor on AIDP matters because of conflicting politics with the mayor. As a consequence, no tangible projects were established in the area for the past five years.

In a similar vein, Zara (1999, personal observation) reported that signing of MOA for AIDP-Batangas could not take off because of political conflict between the government's executive and legislative branches. The governor wanted to enter into a partnership, but majority of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (SP) members barred him so because of some provisions in the MOA with regard the province's financial obligation to the project. In fact, the SP only allocated an amount of P5.00 as the budget of the office of the provincial governor for the year 1999.

#### **Insufficiency of financial and manpower capabilities to share in the partnership**

Oriental Mindoro's MinSCAT, Marinduque's MSC and Laguna's LSPC were willing to participate in the program, but were constrained since they could not complement in the partnerships with their scarce resources. Time was another stumbling block; their staff were overloaded with teaching units. Garcia (1998) reported that insufficiency of financial and manpower capabilities were not only due to lack of these resources per se. Rather, these were outcomes of policies that do not allow SCUs to exercise some flexibility in their tasks besides their primary function of teaching.

#### **Lack of priority commitments**

This problem was prevalent in Laguna, specifically in Nagcarlan. Liliw and some urban agriculture areas where municipalities focused their priority on high impact projects.

### Absence of clear-cut roles and responsibilities

Some AIDP areas claimed that there was clear identification of roles among different partners. Banatiao (1998, personal communication) claims otherwise, saying that in the case of the Urban Agriculture Project (UAP), the MOA that supposedly binds the partnership contains general statements of responsibilities by partners. There are no implementing guidelines either; hence, the SCU is at a loss. Banatiao (1999, personal observation) further adds that there is no stipulation in the MOA specific to the leadership role of the project. More often than not, partners look up to or rather depend on UPLB on what to do.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that AIDP I is more than an extension program of the College of Agriculture. It attempts to develop an organization for agricultural extension delivery system that binds the different levels of LGUs and local SCUs for effective delivery of extension services to the farming population. This paper has also discussed other features of AIDP I, such as participatory planning, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation of projects, and institution building and strengthening. In building up partnerships between all levels of LGUs and local SCUs, a number of facilitating and constraining factors have been identified.

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