



## Section 2. Is landcare for you?

In this section we help you work out if landcare is the right option for you and for the farmers and communities you are working with. If you know the problems you and/or your farmers are experiencing and you understand the benefits, costs, risks and challenges of applying landcare, you should be able to decide if landcare is the right choice for you.

### The benefits of landcare

#### How landcare benefits farmers

Because farmers are the main target of landcare, most of the benefits of landcare are farmer-related. Benefits include the following:

- By adopting conservation farming technologies such as contour farming systems, farmers can reduce soil and nutrient loss and increase productivity. Research shows that contour farming technologies reduce annual soil loss in unprotected corn fields from 40–60 tonnes per hectare to less than 5 tonnes per hectare. By reducing soil loss and maintaining fertility, farmers are able to maintain adequate levels of production of their staple crops for subsistence and cash income.
- By reducing soil erosion, farmers have the assurance that they are not contributing to the serious downstream effects of sedimentation, such as reduced water quality, silting of dams and deterioration of river and marine ecosystems.
- The contour farming systems used in landcare bring opportunities for farmers to diversify and increase their cash income by growing high-value crops such as vegetables, plantation crops (pineapples, bananas) and tree crops (fruit trees, timber trees, rubber). By increasing food security, reducing risk and improving cash income, landcare greatly improves livelihood security. A case study of a landcare farmer in South Cotabato showed the net profit from his diversified vegetable farming system, using similar labour and marketing inputs, to be 70% higher than the traditional corn-based farming system.
- As well as being a source of cash income, diversifying crops with fruit and vegetables can improve the family's diet and nutrition.



Landcare can deliver many livelihood benefits to farming families.

- In some cases, such as in Bohol, abandoned degraded cropping land can be rehabilitated to supplement income from traditional crops such as rice and coconuts. This also means that rice and coconut labour can be more consistently used throughout the year, benefiting both the farmer and the labourer.
- Landcare makes it easier for farmers to tackle other livelihood issues by, for example, establishing a backyard garden, planting herbal medicines to improve family health, improving sanitation around their homes, composting biodegradable waste, sharing labour for farm and conservation activities, and helping each other and the community in times of need such as sickness and death.
- Farmers get opportunities to continuously build their knowledge, skills, self-confidence and leadership by taking practical 'learning by doing' training and by interacting with other landcare farmers during cross-visits to other farms. They can expand their social and knowledge networks with progressive farmers in other localities, and with research agencies, private agribusinesses, and industry and marketing organisations. These linkages help farmers to gain access to new plant varieties, production technologies, marketing chains, and opportunities for generating additional off-farm income (for example, training other farmers, and collecting and selling tree seeds and seedlings).
- The presence of a landcare program is likely to increase farmers' contact with LGU officials and staff, potentially improving government service delivery and access to financial and material resources. There is also more opportunity for farmers to be involved in planning and addressing development issues through their *barangay* development council.
- By boosting the self-confidence of landcare families and increasing their hope for the future, landcare can strengthen family ties, improve joint decision making and increase the family's ownership of their issues. It also brings about a closer bonding of people in the community, with a greater interest and spirit in helping community members in need—the true spirit of *bayanihan*.



# Diverse crops transform barren land into a model landcare farm

by Samuel Abrogar

In 1992, Henry Binahon left the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to develop his farm in Sungco, Lantapan, in Bukidnon in northern Mindanao, with his wife Perla and their two children.

Using the agroforestry technology he had learned at university and his personal experiences in farming, Henry transformed the barren and undulating 6 hectares of land into a productive farm in just 8 years.

‘I wanted my farm to someday become a showcase for other farmers to visit and possibly copy the technology I used’, says Henry. ‘This would be my own personal contribution to the restoration of the environment.’

Henry tackled pest and disease problems by applying the indigenous knowledge of pest management, natural farming technologies and vermicomposting (worm farms) for soil improvement. He planted different vegetable crops and fruit and timber trees to minimise the infestations of pests and diseases.

He solved soil erosion problems by ploughing contour lines along the sloping areas and by planting the vegetable crops and fruit and timber trees both as a food source and a source of income.

‘This meant I had varied market options, resulting in better economic viability for sustaining production and income,’ he says.

‘There really is money in farming when you combine crops within an agroforestry system.’

Henry receives many people and farmers from different social groups visiting his farm and observing what he has achieved.

‘Our farm is now a landcare education venue for farmers, technicians, researchers, students and other interest groups. We share our initiatives with our fellow farmers in the locality, and educate our visitors in the concepts and principles of landcare and conservation farming, as a strategy for socioeconomic stability and sustainable ecosystem management.

‘The challenges were exciting. But I have shown that all things can be possible and that many positive outcomes can be achieved through hard work and good planning.’



Henry Binahon (right) demonstrates nursery production techniques to other farmers at his training centre in Lantapan, Bukidnon.



## Landcare brings healthy soil and more regular income

On the mountainous slopes of Pilar, a municipality in the centre of the island of Bohol, Justiniano Celeres farms his half-hectare plot of land. Cassava was once the sole crop grown but, since taking on landcare in 2006, Justiniano now also grows pineapples, ginger, corn and sweet potatoes.

Starting by ploughing contours and creating natural vegetative strips along the steep slopes, in less than a year he noticed changes in his soil. 'You could hardly see any topsoil at all here before I started landcare', he says. 'Now the topsoil has built up again. The soil is healthy now and I don't have to use as many fertilisers or chemicals, so my costs are less.'

Justiniano has also seen an increase in yields and is pleased that the range of crops gives him an income all year round. 'While one crop is at a young stage, I am planting another crop and harvesting yet another.'

With this range of produce, Justiniano can feed his wife and six children and earn a more regular income.

Humble in his achievements, Justiniano is justifiably proud that other farmers in the locality have noticed his success and are copying his landcare practices on their own farms.



Justiniano Celeres grows a diversity of crops on his farm in Pilar, Bohol, including pineapple, banana, cassava, sweet potato and forage crops.









## Farming in the foothills of Mt Apo Natural Park

The vegetable growers of Kapatagan supply Mindanao's largest city, Davao City, with fresh produce. Farming in the foothills of the Mt Apo Natural Park, the last refuge of the endangered Philippine Eagle, means there are inevitable tensions between farmers and park management staff.



Farmer Leo 'Dodong' Castillo is leading the way with landcare at Kapatagan, Digos City, Davao del Sur, in the foothills of Mt Apo Natural Park.

The landcare approach can provide a means of easing these tensions by building bridges between farmers and local and national government agencies. With the farmers making better use of the land they have, they are less likely to encroach on protected areas. This is good news for both biodiversity and the farmers' long-term livelihoods.

Leo 'Dodong' Castillo is the farmer leading the way with landcare in the area. He likes the practical nature of the landcare training programs and is now making his own organic fertilisers. 'After learning, we go to the field and try it by doing', he says.

With some slopes steeper than 70 degrees, contour ploughing is also important for stopping soil erosion—something Dodong was aware of before landcare even came to his district. He planted trees to protect his soil and he is now a keen supporter of landcare's natural vegetative strip technology, which is cheaper and easier to use than other schemes.

'The technology is very beneficial to us farmers because it protects the fertility of our farms', Dodong says. 'You can plant coffee in the strips and then plant corn in the ploughed area. This means you have extra income from the coffee. I am 100% landcare!'





## Church ministry 'converts' South Cotabato family to landcare

Daisy and Flor Barret used to grow corn on a 3-hectare farm in Ned in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato. When they first heard about landcare, they didn't pay much attention to it. However, when the program was integrated into their church ministry, they started to better appreciate its values and were 'converted' by its goals and objectives.

After a cross-visit to Lantapan, Bukidnon, where they saw diversified farming systems, they shifted from cropping only corn to also planting vegetables and perennial crops, and keeping

livestock. Daisy regrets that they had not learned about this technology much earlier.

From their vegetables they now earn additional income of P100 daily which they put towards their children's schooling, their monthly power bills and their savings.

After a cross-visit to Lantapan, Bukidnon, Daisy Barret and husband Flor changed from growing only corn to a diversified system on their farm at Ned, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato.

## Controlling erosion for neighbourly relations

Landcare helped Sergia Subaa ease tensions on the San Isidro farm where she works in the north-west of Bohol.

High rainfall on steep slopes was causing a big headache for the landowner. 'Big portions of our soil used to flow down onto the neighbour's rice fields below and cover the plants, killing them,' Sergia explains. That all stopped after she convinced the landowner to plough the slopes along contours, rather than vertically, and to replace the corn crop with seven different crops, including a variety of fruit trees.

Sergia is an active member of the local landcare women's group, which has started a nursery and is producing flowers for market. The income from the flowers is used to support other group activities, such as tree planting and extension training.



Sergia Subaa convinced the landowner to plough contours on his steeply sloping farm in north-west Bohol. This stopped the soil from being regularly washed onto the neighbour's rice crops below.





## How landcare benefits extension workers

More and more, government and non-government extension workers are rethinking their approach and shifting from the traditional top-down technology transfer to the more facilitated 'learning by seeing and doing' methodology promoted by landcare. Benefits for extension workers include the following:

- The farmers have more ownership of the process and more input into selecting activities that are relevant to their local needs. This means that the extension program will be more self-sustaining and potentially more successful. It also has the potential to eventually service the broader economic, environmental and social needs of communities.
- Because landcare is group based, there is likely to be a higher level of participation by farmers. This means that there will be more farmer-to-farmer sharing from cross-visits and other group activities, and more farmers trying out and adapting the technologies they have learned. The result is that adoption is likely to be both greater and faster.
- The learning environment for extension officers is richer as a result of the dynamic farmer-learning process and because collaboration with other extension professionals is more likely.
- Because landcare can secure funding and resources from LGUs and other sources, there is potential for a more rewarding work environment for extension officers, with more opportunities for professional development and an expanded role in carrying out activities.
- Extension officers work closely with farmers on topics of more relevance and interest to them, so there is potential for developing friendlier, more satisfying and more productive relationships.



## A foundation for the Philippines' farming future

Even though landcare is still young, it is the necessary foundation for the Philippines' farming future. That's what Eldon Ruiz believes. Eldon is the Southern Mindanao Landcare Coordinator with the Landcare Foundation of the Philippines, Inc. (LFPI).

Growing a diversity of crops instead of a single crop is just one way that landcare helps poor farmers survive. 'When farmers grow a number of crops', explains Eldon, 'they have a daily income from selling vegetables locally rather than waiting 5–6 months to get income from a single crop and incurring lots of debt on the way.'

Eldon believes farmers can take better control of their own situations through landcare. 'As a group, for example, they can ask different service providers for assistance with things like providing shovels, scythes, seedling bags, fruit tree seedlings, and seeds of fruit and forest trees. Many landcare members testify that landcare, with its technologies and group interaction, is now part of their daily lives. They have shifted their concern from the individual to the community level. They now believe that, through group efforts, much can be done.'

Before joining the landcare movement in 1999, Eldon knew little about it. Coming from an agricultural research background, he had to learn about participatory research and facilitation. But the experience of working with farmers, along with the training, helped build his skills in facilitating groups and building capacity.

'This training was very important to me because it helped me to feel much more confident about working with farmers', he says.

'Through landcare, I also feel more sensitive to the needs of the farmers. It gives me a chance to work with many people and increase my capability to deal with them or respond appropriately.

'As I got more involved in landcare, it became clear to me that landcare was not only about production or soil conservation. It is also about the process, about group formation, about linkages and about networking.

'I think it's very important to listen to the farmers, as I believe we can solve most of their problems this way. Often when we listen to farmers, we find they already have a solution in mind, and they just need someone who will direct them or link them to other service providers that can help them solve their problems.'

Eldon helped establish landcare in Ned, one of the most remote areas of south-western Mindanao, where he practises landcare on his own farm. 'My farm is my passion', Eldon says.



LFPI Landcare Coordinator Eldon Ruiz has planted crops in the contours of his own farm in Ned, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato.





## How landcare benefits local government units

Responsibility for agricultural development and natural resource management was devolved from the central government to local government units (LGUs) under the Local Government Code of 1991. Now, *sanggunians* (policymakers) exist at the *barangay*, municipal and provincial levels of local government. As a result, there is a need for more local understanding and interpretation of agricultural and natural resource management issues, particularly the link between the environment and farmers' livelihoods. Landcare services this need effectively and can provide the following benefits to LGUs:

- Landcare provides a forum for LGU leaders and officials to engage with farmer groups in constructive dialogue. In this way, the LGUs learn more about the issues and what is happening on the ground, and the farmers can put forward ideas on how the LGUs can best support activities and programs for sustainable livelihoods. The LGU is seen to be proactive, not reactive; decisions are made faster and with more assurance; and the strategies implemented are appropriate to people's needs.
- At a technical level, landcare provides an extension model for LGU research and extension services to be more effectively integrated at the grassroots level with those of other service providers (academic institutions, private enterprise, research and development agencies) and delivered to farmers.
- Landcare offers LGUs a framework within which they can be more effective in planning and implementing an integrated development approach for their communities. The framework can guide implementation of plans such as an LGU's comprehensive development plan, the watershed development plan, and/or the natural resource management and development plan.
- By partnering effectively with other agencies in landcare, there is potential for a program to access a wider range of resources, which may reduce program costs and farmers' dependence on LGU resources. For example, landcare can facilitate farmers' access to microfinance that was not previously available. LGU resources may also be targeted with greater confidence to areas of greatest need.



- Where landcare is successful in creating more diverse and more profitable farming systems, there is the potential for increased LGU income generation through a broader tax base and increased total taxes.
- Through achieving more rewarding outcomes, LGU extension workers may be more motivated and self-sufficient and, as a result, less reliant on government funds for operating expenses.
- Landcare can be used as a basis for policy incentives/disincentives for farmers. For example, some LGUs have implemented ordinances to levy higher taxes on land that is not protected by conservation systems or is not being used appropriately.
- Landcare groups can be an effective mechanism for distributing trees, animals and other resources as part of municipal programs, and for leveraging outcomes from other programs related to landcare such as backyard gardening, hygiene and healthcare.



Landcare provides a forum for local government units to engage with farmer groups in an integrated approach to development. For example, landcare has helped beautify the home gardens in *Sitio Tungol*, Claveria, Misamis Oriental, proudly displayed here by owner Rosita Lobiano.



## A hog for every woman

Irenea Hitgano, Mayor of Trento in Agusan del Sur in Mindanao, aims to provide the woman in each family in the municipality with a hog to generate additional income for the family. The municipal swine project, which uses biodynamic farming principles, is one of the landcare projects she is most proud of.

Mayor Hitgano believes that landcare can help farmers in her community tackle poverty by reducing farm input costs and diversifying their income source. She visits each *barangay* with her agricultural officers and representatives of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to give farmers information about landcare, answer their questions, and provide technical support, such as how to make organic fertiliser. She has appointed a landcare coordinator to help drive the spread of landcare in her municipality.

'I do this because I want to help farmers raise their incomes. The fertilisers they buy from the stores are so expensive. One hectare of rice can cost P8,000 to fertilise, but with organic fertiliser it will cost only P2,000', she explains.

Mayor Hitgano targets women for landcare activities such as hog raising and planting vegetables and fruit trees. 'The women can help their husbands instead of going from house to house gossiping', she says. 'If they care for the land, they and their families will have healthy food and healthy bodies'.

Her plans for the municipal swine project are to supply one of the biggest supermarkets in Davao City with organic pork within 2 years. The market linkage was arranged by CRS. Hogs from the households will be consolidated by the municipal government and delivered to market.



To help farming families raise their incomes, Irenea Hitgano, the Mayor of Trento, Agusan del Sur, is supplying each family with a hog.





## The costs, risks and challenges of landcare

While it is clear that landcare has many benefits, there are also some costs, risks and challenges. We believe that these are significantly outweighed by the benefits. However, knowing about these costs, risks and challenges helps you to keep a balanced perspective on the program.

### The costs, risks and challenges for farmers

- To implement contour farming systems such as natural vegetative strips, there is an initial cost to the farmer from the loss of crop production from the strips. Farmers may be able to compensate for this by planting high-value crops on the strips (for example, bananas, pineapples or trees) or in the alleys. The reduction in soil loss from using contour farming systems will improve soil fertility, so ongoing fertiliser costs should also be less.
- There are some start-up costs in applying new technologies. Examples are the cost of seeds for high-value vegetable crops and the cost of seedlings for agroforestry systems. In some cases, the ongoing production costs for high-value fruit and vegetable crops may be higher than for standard staple crops such as corn and rice. This needs to be weighed up against the potentially higher returns.
- In some cases, there may be more risk associated with the new farming systems; for example, more danger from pests and diseases, or more market volatility. These risks can be largely offset by training the farmers so that they are armed with the necessary knowledge to give them confidence in managing the new crops and farming systems effectively.
- Farmers who are involved in a landcare group and landcare-related events are likely to spend some time away from the family and the farm.



## Healthier and wealthier vegetable production

Switching to organic farming methods is bringing health benefits for lowland farmers in Agusan del Sur.

Maralito 'Boy' Rosauro is President of the Awao Vegetable Growers' Association, which is the focus of landcare activities in the area. Boy and his wife Melanie have embraced landcare and have implemented natural farming systems, using organic fertilisers without the use of pesticides, and cultivating worms for composting.

'We used to apply toxic chemicals, which are not good for human health', says Boy. 'Now we use organic farming technology. We are getting the same income as we used to previously, but we have fewer expenses.'

'With organic farming, our soil is free from toxins, and this prevents our soils from becoming acidic and keeps them fertile', says Melanie.

Boy and Melanie say landcare has helped them implement organic farming through training, financial assistance and demonstrations of the technology.

Now their vegetable farm is a demonstration farm and they are keeping landcare going through the growers' association.

'It's not easy for farmers to shift to organic farming when they're used to inorganic farming', says Melanie. 'But they have already seen the results here, so this will convince them.'

Boy agrees that the benefits are obvious: 'First and foremost, for the health of the people, and secondly for the sustainability of the environment.'



Melanie and Boy Rosauro and their family have reduced their expenses by switching to organic practices on their farm in Awao, Sta Josefa, Agusan del Sur.





## The costs, risks and challenges for extension workers

- As with any new extension process, landcare requires extension workers to be personally and professionally motivated to change their outlook and practices. They also need to commit time and effort to training and self-development.
- The expanded responsibility and the different way of doing things can at times be testing and challenging, requiring flexibility, patience and endurance. Some extension workers may find it hard to convince their managers, particularly older municipal agricultural officers, to embrace a new approach like landcare.
- The partnership building that is required as a central component of landcare requires more skills and effort in negotiation and in maintaining the partnerships.
- Because some of the more challenging areas for landcare are in remote upland areas where there is political instability, extension workers may need to work in areas where the risk to their personal safety is higher than normal.





Landcare may require local government unit officials to take a longer term view to achieving their goals.

## The costs, risks and challenges for local government units

- If there are no existing landcare facilitators within the program partnership, the main cost for an LGU is the human resource—the landcare facilitator. If the LGU has an extension officer with the interest, motivation and time to try the landcare approach, the only additional cost is the training/reorientation and some extra local travel. Landcare is a process that requires skills and patience in negotiating arrangements with farmers and partners; for example, additional time may have to be spent consulting with farmers to help them take ownership of the process. The training addresses these needs. Beyond this, experience has shown that it is possible to run a successful landcare program with minimal material costs. This is because the greater involvement of farmers and other partners generally results in a greater range of funding options being made available. In addition, the landcare partnership is generally able to source a greater collective sum of human, financial and material resources than any one organisation, and then share these appropriately.
- Once landcare gets going, LGUs may receive additional demands for services. Farmers may discover new opportunities and feel empowered to engage more with service delivery agencies, including LGUs. In time, this may bring additional costs. Examples are the costs of administering larger dispersal schemes, logistical costs for community activities like training and field visits, rewards for landcare leaders for particular services, and costs of deploying farmer facilitators to better link LGU services with farmers. In some cases, resources such as seeds or nursery plants may need to be redirected to areas of greater need.
- The landcare process can take some time to deliver the full range of benefits—possibly longer than the standard 3-year political cycle. This requires elected LGU officials to take a long-term view and be comfortable with incremental changes towards their broader goals.



## How landcare links with other programs and projects

Landcare can easily be adapted to fit with any other program or project that is pursuing change in rural communities, and where group action is required. Up to now it has been applied predominantly in programs pursuing outcomes in agriculture, natural resource management, peace building and land tenure. However, it should work equally well in programs on health, housing, solid waste management, water supply, education, population management, social welfare and microfinance.

There are some particular advantages where there is obvious overlap between programs; for example, where landcare is helping upland farmers diversify their corn- or rice-based farming systems with fruit and vegetables, there is obvious potential for fit with preventive healthcare programs related to improving diet. Similarly, where landcare is helping farming communities in conflict areas of Mindanao to expand their economic potential and connect with new markets, there is obvious potential for fit with peace and order programs.

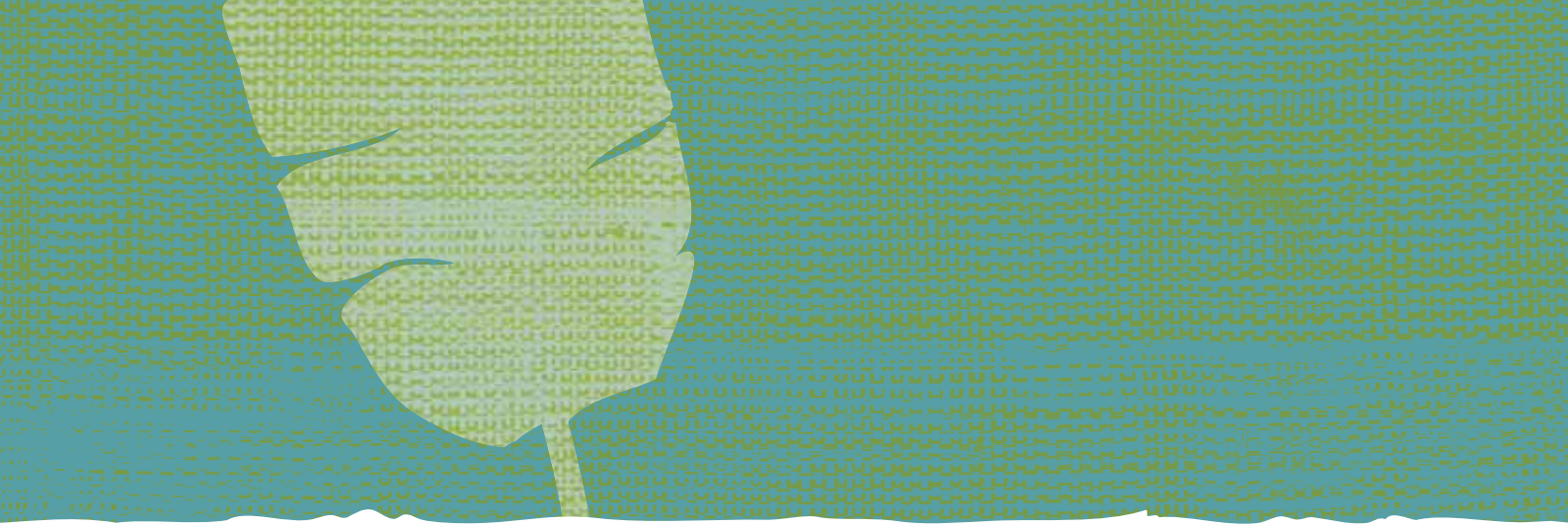


Landcare can work with other programs to help farming communities connect with new markets.



Through landcare, farmers visit wholesale and retail markets to study market requirements.





### Links with government programs

There are many processes where landcare can link with government programs in areas of common interest. Various programs are being implemented by LGUs, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Agrarian Reform and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. In particular, important policy frameworks have been put in place by the government to recognise the role of local people and local communities in managing natural resources. Examples of these policy frameworks are as follows:

- The Community-based Forest Management Program of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources recognises people and local communities as the key players in managing forests.
- The Local Government Code recognises the importance of having local communities, represented by their *barangay* and municipal governments, play an active part in managing natural resources. The Code mandates that each LGU will establish its own local development council. This council is the mechanism by which the LGU works together with its constituents, represented by the leaders of peoples' organisations (farmer groups, landcare groups, women's groups, Indigenous peoples and tribal councils).
- The Philippines Strategy for Improved Watershed Resources Management (Department of Environment and Natural Resources, 1998) aims for the sustainable multiple use of the natural resources within all watershed areas of the country in a manner that is environmentally sound, economically viable and socially acceptable. It also promotes the prevention of further watershed degradation and the restoration of the productive and protective functions of currently degraded watershed areas.

### Links with non-government programs

Although programs of non-government and civil society organisations often focus on objectives that are different from those of landcare, there is generally always a relevant development component with opportunities for landcare to offer complementary resources and skills. For example, we have recently forged partnerships with the Government of the Philippines – United Nations Multi-Donor Programme's ACT for Peace Programme, Habitat for Humanity, World Vision and Catholic Relief Services.

Cooperatives that are focused on livelihood and agricultural production issues have good potential for linkages, as does the Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan.





## Landcare adds value to Upland Development Programme in South Cotabato

When landcare was introduced to *Barangay* Lake Seloton in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, a farmer group already existed and was being supported by local government extension workers.

The Upland Development Programme in Southern Mindanao (UDP) had already established a local program and gained community and local government support. Landcare added value by providing further technical assistance to the farmer group.

José Somido is a farmer extension worker for the *barangay* council. He has a nursery that produces vegetable seeds for the farmers in his group. Before the UDP he was growing corn on his 1.5-hectare farm with no contouring.

‘Now I plant bananas and vegetables in the contoured alleys as well as corn to feed my chickens’, says José. ‘And I observed that I don’t need as much water for my farm because the soil is better.’

‘With just corn, I had to wait 3–4 months before I could harvest. And sometimes my corn was attacked by insects and I had nothing. Now, if one crop fails, I have another to go to market with and earn money.’

As the *Barangay* Extension Worker, José manages a number of farmer trainers and is responsible for looking at how things are going across the whole *barangay*.

If he can’t solve a problem, on his own farm or someone else’s, he looks to Municipal Agricultural Technician Jethro Arceo for advice.

‘Landcare adds value to our existing partnership with farmers’, says Jethro. ‘UDP introduced tree planting and contouring. With landcare we’re testing different crops in the contours. We’ve had some success with onions, cabbages and garlic. And landcare has helped us to find ways to market these new products.’

Vermicomposting is another technology introduced by landcare. Farm wastes are composted under plastic for 14 days, then the plastic is removed to allow the soil to breathe for a day before the worms are brought in. It takes about a month for the worms to then produce natural fertiliser.

Jethro believes the success of landcare in Lake Seloton comes from working with an existing group and avoiding unnecessary competition that would result from setting up a new group. ‘Our principles are almost the same principles as those of landcare—principles of participation and inclusion’, he says.

For farmers like José and his group, landcare brings new ideas and inspiration: ‘Landcare has the technologies and also the sincerity to work with people.’

Farmer and *Barangay* Extension Worker José Somido believes landcare has added value to an existing farmer group at Lake Seloton, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato.





Landcare facilitators create an environment where it is easy for people to learn and share ideas.

## The important role of the landcare facilitator

Facilitation is at the heart of landcare. It is about making it easy for farmers to get involved in and take ownership of the issues affecting their livelihoods.

At an appropriate pace, landcare facilitators carefully take farmers (and others where appropriate) through the development, consensus, ownership and implementation of appropriate solutions for sustainable improvement of livelihoods. The problems they are solving can be economic, social, environmental or political.

This facilitated process of change is different to some other extension approaches, which often manipulate or control the change process, or even ignore it totally. Some technology transfer projects are like this—they are almost totally focused on the technology, and ignore the process of change; or they are almost totally focused on the transfer, and try to manipulate people to adopt the technology.

For these reasons, it is important to clearly understand the specialised role of the landcare facilitator.

## The responsibilities of a landcare facilitator

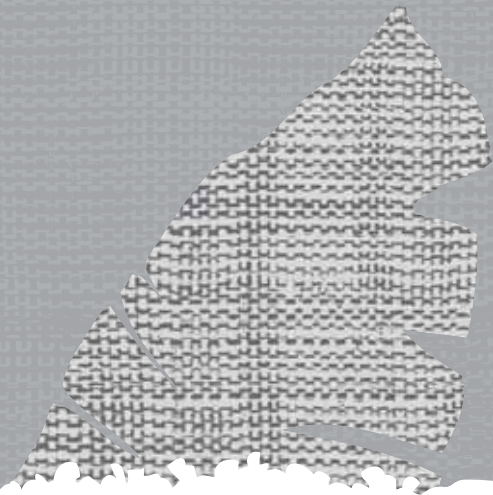
The landcare facilitator is responsible for:

- forming landcare groups
- building the knowledge, skills and self-sufficiency of the landcare group
- networking and communicating with the landcare group
- communicating with LGUs and other partners
- establishing links with service providers and funding agencies
- monitoring and evaluating the landcare program.

The landcare facilitator, in carrying out their responsibilities, should aim to:

- empower people, groups and institutions to create change and to respond to change
- create an environment for sharing and learning, using the principles of adult learning
- play the supporting role, not the leading role; this means looking for activities that encourage independence and self-reliance, and not intervening too much in group activities; it is easier to facilitate a group that is open to new ideas and technologies

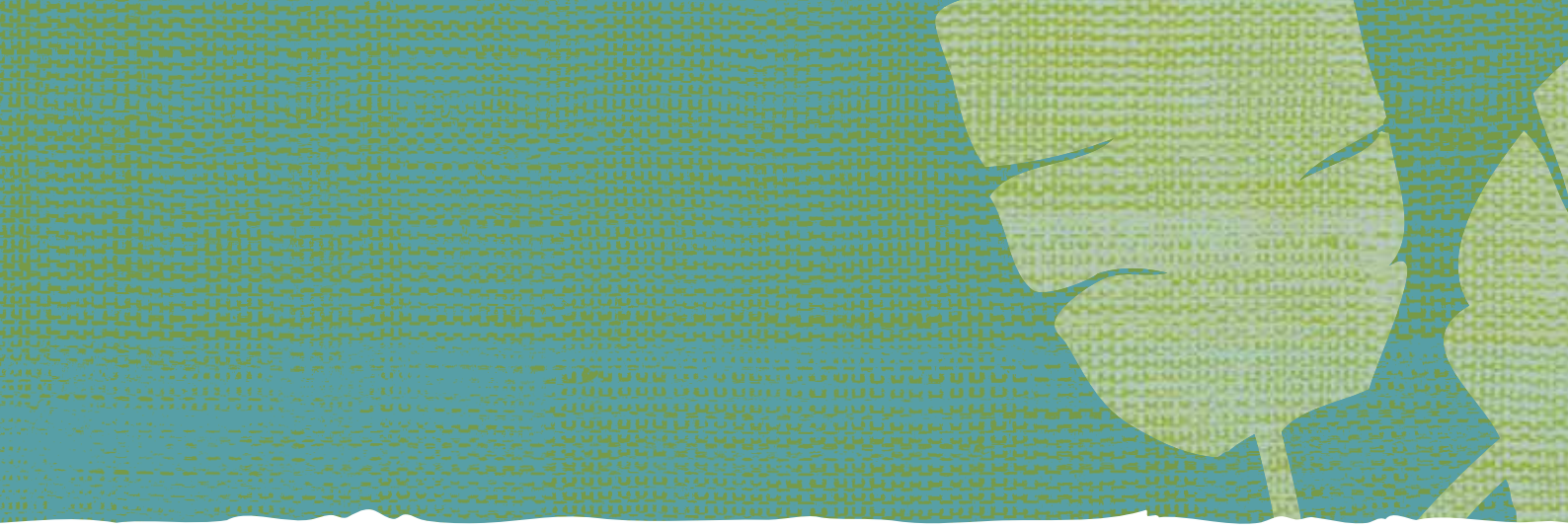


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- build up activities slowly and ‘drip feed’ information in line with the farmers’ learning pace so as not to overwhelm people with too much technology or too much information at any one time
  - share different technologies from which the farmers themselves can choose those appropriate to their needs, rather than providing a technology package for farmers to rigidly follow step by step; the facilitator needs to source and gain access to a range of appropriate technologies, often in areas where they have little expertise
  - balance the process and the technical content, while paying attention to both; the process side requires a mix of social and interpersonal skills, while the content side requires a mix of technical knowledge and the ability to effectively source outside technical support.

## Tips for landcare facilitators

- Identify and participate in any extension training available, especially in group development and facilitation skills.
- Be prepared to share your facilitation experiences with others; you learn more through sharing.
- Make it very clear to farmers and others that landcare is a process and not a technology.
- If you are employed by a development or research organisation with a particular objective, check before you start that your organisation has some flexibility in how you achieve the objective. This is important because farmers often have a different approach and use different methods to achieve an objective. Always be open with the farmers about your organisation’s objectives and how you are trying to meet them. Let the farmers decide whether or not they believe this to be the best approach.





## **The qualities that make a good landcare facilitator**

The qualities that make a good landcare facilitator are:

- openness—this is important for building trust and confidence
- a welcoming friendly attitude
- sensitivity—having that extra level of awareness to be able to pick up important signals
- empathy with people, i.e. being able to place yourself in their shoes, particularly people in poor rural communities
- a genuine interest in agriculture and natural resources, and in farmer group activities
- a passion for seeing rural communities improve their livelihoods in a sustainable way.

## **The skills that a good landcare facilitator needs**

A good landcare facilitator needs the following skills:

- personal communication skills: observing, speaking, listening, questioning and probing, summarising, conversing, presenting
- group development skills: group dynamics, teamwork, participation, conflict resolution (particularly when confronted with diverse people in different situations with different agendas)
- networking skills: dealing with partner agencies to facilitate support and funding; linking with national government agencies and other external agencies to gain support
- learning skills: reflecting, sharing, thinking laterally
- technical skills: some basic technical skills in agriculture and natural resource management, preferably with a good knowledge of rural sociology, are important for understanding farmers' technology needs and for supporting farmers in using the technologies; any technical field experience is invaluable.



## The farmer facilitator

A farmer facilitator is a landcare facilitator who is also a farmer. While the responsibilities, qualities and skills of the landcare facilitator apply equally to the farmer facilitator, their role is more about implementing technologies on their own farm, sharing their experiences with their fellow farmers, and facilitating farmer meetings and training sessions with visiting technical experts.

## The right mindset and a willingness to learn

Anyone can become a landcare facilitator. It does not require a college degree or a lot of experience in community organising, although these things are of course beneficial.

What it does require is a mindset for helping people (especially farmers) to discover their own solutions to their own problems and the ability to connect them with people who can help them.

Don't get too hung up on the responsibilities, qualities and skills that we have listed here—with the right mindset and a willingness to learn, we feel sure that anyone can do it.



Farmer facilitators play an important role by demonstrating conservation technologies on their farms and sharing their experiences with their fellow farmers.





## Building friendships is the key to building partnerships

Lorena ('Aying') Loma is a 27-year-old landcare facilitator with LFPI. Her first landcare project was at *Barangay Ned*, a remote village in the municipality of Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, in south-western Mindanao.

Aying regularly travelled the 70 or so kilometres from her base in Koronadal City to Ned on a hired motorbike, but often had to walk many kilometres when heavy rain made the roads impassable.

'My first visit to Ned was an extra challenge because the road was so bad. It really takes perseverance, trust and confidence in the Lord to get there', says Aying. Her first 2-month stay in Ned challenged her to live a simple life in a remote village, with no relatives and friends nearby.

'Sometimes I asked myself why I was in Ned; after all it's quite a lonely place to live', she reflects. 'But little by little I found my comfort zone with the farmers. Soon, I realised I wasn't alone and I was there for a cause—to help the farmers in Ned'.

Inspired by the warmth of the Ned farmers, Aying worked hard to help them improve their living and protect their environment, teaching them conservation farming techniques and planting trees with them. Seeing the potential influence of future generations, she also taught good land management practices to students in two Ned secondary schools. And while she was overwhelmed by the active participation of both students and farmers, she was concerned with their lack of resources.

'Although their enthusiasm was there to help protect their environment beyond just their own farm, they simply can't because they are constrained by the lack of resources', she explains. Sometimes Aying's help was as simple as making available quality planting materials and cellophane bags. And again, she quickly realised that she was not alone and that she could help them create partnerships.

'Building partnerships with existing government and non-government agencies and linking farmers to these programs is the key to complementing resources', Aying says.

'Constant follow-up and interaction to build rapport, and a common vision with these partners is crucial.

'Being part of Ned as one big family is very important to me', says Aying. 'And hearing how happy the farmers and students are to be part of landcare warms my heart. It's nice to know that when they see the trees that are now growing in Ned, they remember me as well.'

LFPI Landcare Facilitator Lorena 'Aying' Loma (left) found that perseverance, trust and building friendships with both farmers and agency staff helped her to spread landcare.





## Summary – Is landcare for you?

The key points to take away from this section are as follows:

1. Landcare benefits farmers by protecting their soil; improving their cash income and livelihoods; improving their families' nutrition and health; and developing the farmers' skills, confidence and knowledge. These benefits outweigh the costs and risks of applying new technologies, market volatility and the time invested in landcare groups and activities.
2. Landcare benefits extension workers by creating the means for a more self-sustaining and successful program with greater participation by farmers, faster adoption of conservation technologies, and more funding and resources. Extension workers need to be committed and motivated, which requires time, new skills and expanded responsibilities.
3. Landcare benefits LGUs by providing them with a forum to engage farmer groups, listen to their concerns, extend technologies and integrate development approaches. The resulting increase in profit in the community will deliver a better tax basis for the LGU, but landcare requires some investment in landcare facilitators, services and materials.
4. Landcare can link with existing government and non-government programs and add value by providing access to farmer groups, providing technical expertise and leveraging other resources.
5. Landcare facilitators have a specialised role in forming and supporting landcare groups, networking and communicating, linking with outside resources and coordinating monitoring and evaluation activities.
6. Effective landcare facilitators empower people to change, support rather than lead, respond to the needs of farmers, recommend appropriate technologies and are good communicators. They are empathetic, open and have a passion for working with farmers for sustainable outcomes.
7. Anyone can become an effective landcare facilitator provided they are prepared to develop the right mindset and are willing to learn.



