



Australian Government

Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research

Social Sciences

Improving the methods and impacts of agricultural extension in conflict areas of Mindanao (the Philippines)

Overview

Farming households within conflict-vulnerable areas of Mindanao face many challenges to improving their livelihoods.

These include dislocation to farm activities, difficulty in accessing markets, uncertainty about long-term investment in farm infrastructure, lack of social cohesion and isolation from government information and services.

Previous ACIAR-funded work in other areas of Mindanao has highlighted how certain types of community-based extension methods can rapidly improve livelihoods of farming households. This project aims to refine and evaluate these extension methods in the more complex setting of conflict-vulnerable areas of western Mindanao.

The project is working with relatively poor farmers to help improve and diversify their income away from single livelihood mainstays such as mono-cropping of corn and the environmentally destructive practice of charcoal production. Two new farmer enterprises – tree nursery production and high-value vegetable production – have been introduced and saw an almost complete cessation of charcoal production by participating communities.



KEY FACTS

ACIAR Project No. ASEM/2012/063

Duration: October 2013 to December 2020 (7 years)

Target areas: Zamboanga Sibugay, Maguindanao and South Cotabato provinces, the Philippines

Budget: A\$2,602,440

Project leader

Dr Mary Johnson, RMIT University

Key partners

- Landcare Foundation of the Philippines
- University of the Philippines Mindanao
- University of the Philippines Los Banos

ACIAR Research Program Manager

Dr Jayne Curnow

Objective

The aim of the project is to develop an improved 'model' for agricultural extension in conflict areas of Mindanao.

The objectives are to:

- ◆ Determine the livelihood impacts of conflict on agricultural communities and extension services in case study conflict-affected areas.
 - ◆ Implement a pilot program of improved extension and livelihood innovations, making use of principles and methods largely derived from previous ACIAR projects.
 - ◆ Analyse the impacts of the pilot extension and livelihood innovation program.
 - ◆ Engage more broadly with relevant conflict area extension and other agencies outside of the case study areas to communicate project methodologies and findings.
- ◆ The important role of women as key players in rebuilding their communities in both social and economic terms has been highlighted through the project. Considered by their communities as proficient communicators and negotiators women are taking leadership roles, building trust, maintaining farms and food production, initiating small enterprise and supporting community-based recovery processes.
 - ◆ Since December 2017, the project has been collaborating with the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic, and Natural Resources Research and Development (DOST-PCAARRD) in a parallel evaluation of the LIFE Model, under PCAARRD's research environment, at three new sites adjacent to the ACIAR project sites. The process, funded by PCAARRD, is designed to assist scaling-up of the project outcomes at the national government level.

Expected outcomes

- ◆ Successful livelihood development programs established with farming households and Local Government Unit (LGU) technicians in six pilot communities in Zamboanga Sibugay, South Cotabato and Maguindanao.
- ◆ Tree nursery production and high-value vegetable production developed. Tree nursery activities added 10 to 20% to farmers' annual income.
- ◆ In each of the pilot sites, the livelihood development program is being delivered through an improved model for agricultural extension targeted at assisting LGUs, NGOs and other locally-based extension agencies to more effectively provide their services to farming households in their conflict-vulnerable communities. This includes facilitating farmer access to technical innovations, building community social capital, and collaborating closely with local institutions. The new extension model has been identified as the LIFE (Livelihood Improvement through Facilitated Extension) Model.

