CERTIFICATE OF STEWARDSHIP CONTRACT AND WATERSHED MANAGEMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS AND NON-PARTICIPANTS OF INTEGRATED SOCIAL FORESTRY PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Many people rely on watersheds for direct and indirect benefits such as water, timber and non-timber forest products (NTFP), food through upland agriculture and protection from floods and land slides. But situations such as rapid increases in human population, improper farming systems and over exploitation of the uplands continuously threaten the watersheds. In the Philippines, since migration of people from lowlands to upland areas is uncontrollable, upland dwellers were given the chance to legally occupy and cultivate the upland areas through the land tenure system in the form of the Certificate of Stewardship Contract (CSC) under the Integrated Social Forestry Program (ISFP) of the Government, and become partners in watershed protection and management.

This research study examined the difference in the level of participation in watershed management between upland dwellers with CSC and without CSC. The systems of land-use and cropping patterns, and soil and water conservation practices of both groups of farmers were studied. Household survey, Focus Group Discussions and in-depth interview were conducted in information gathering. Site visits were also performed to verify the actual differences on the systems of farming of said groups of upland dwellers.

The results of the analysis revealed that, generally, the only difference in the systems of land-use and cropping patterns between the two groups of upland dwellers was the number of crop types of which farmers with CSC had more. Farmers with CSC also practiced more non-conservation practices such as utilization of NTFP from the forests, and use of chemicals in the farm which include inorganic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. The results further revealed that land tenure or CSC did not influence practices of both groups of farmers. Both groups of farmers generally believed that people should participate in watershed management and ISFP, and should have land tenure security or CSC. But then, people are not practicing conservation farming in reality. Problems identified in the study area included: absence of land tenure security, limitation of area, leadership and personal interests, upland dwellers attitude, natural calamities, plant diseases, insurgency and government monitoring.

The study recommends that people's organizations should be re-organized and strengthened to promote cooperation towards effective participatory watershed protection and management, and cooperative development. The government should strictly monitor upland dwellers' activities inside the watershed area to ensure wise use and conservation of upland resources. Merging ISFP with the CBFM program of the government is a good approach but must be well planned and properly coordinated. Without strict monitoring of the government, issuance of CSC is not recommended.

KEYWORDS: LAND TENURE / ISFP / AGROFORESTRY / UPLAND DWELLERS / CSC / WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

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