

The effectiveness of decentralisation reforms in the Philippines's forestry sector

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ABSTRACT

Decentralisation reforms and political conditions in the Philippines present an ideal environment for forest management by recognising the land entitlements of upland and indigenous communities and promoting the involvement of local government units. By assessing whether current conditions – policies, institutions, and programmes – are conducive to effective decentralisation, this study examines the present state of decentralisation in the forestry sector of the Philippines. By analysing case studies conducted in Nueva Vizcaya Province, it also attempts to answer a broader question: when is decentralisation a success and when is it a failure? A number of uncertainties are revealed, along with various issues that hamper decentralisation, and that are interrelated and reinforce one another in much the same way as they have done over the past decade. The study highlights the need for caution when increasing the involvement of government at different levels, as it affects the pace of decentralisation reforms. It also shows that a mix of site-specific interventions and community endeavours that focus on securing local livelihoods has led to some success. This is a strategy that helps decentralisation reforms.

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1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, a considerable literature has emerged on the shift from centralised to decentralised management of natural resources, specifically the forests in developing countries. This reflects the experiments and programmes in community forestry or local forest management that aim to empower local communities, assigning responsibility or enabling devolution. Decentralisation in the forestry sector is considered an effective alternative to the command and control approach towards forest management, which in the past has led to the decline and degradation of forests in developing countries. It has been estimated that by 2002 around 22% of developing countries' forests were formally under some form of decentralised management (White and Martin, 2002). Such noticeable changes in developing countries' forestry sectors took place during the 1990s with the implementation of new forest policies supported by facilitating institutional arrangements at various government levels. These policies recognised decentralisation as a fundamental instrument for managing and conserving forest resources. Now the question that arises is: Are conditions conducive to effective decentralisation in the forestry sector?

In this study, we attempt to answer this question in the context of decentralisation in the forestry sector in the Philippines. The study focuses on the Philippines because of its relatively extensive experience in forestry sector decentralisation (Pulhin et al., 2007). It has a relatively long history of forestry programmes that solicit broad public participation, and more policies and laws favouring devolution in forestry management than any other Asian-Pacific 'developing country' (Banerjee, 2000). It uses a mix of democratic, administrative, and fiscal decentralisation strategies in the natural resources sector. A major approach to decentralisation in the Philippines involves transferring responsibilities from the national government to local government units and local communities. Grainger and Malayang (2004, p. 11) suggest that decentralisation in the Philippines forestry sector contributes to "democratisation and pluralisation, by changing relationships between villages, local and provincial governments and the state", and it is "as much a social experiment as a forest management strategy". The Philippines also has one of the largest programmes especially under Community-based Forest Management (CBFM) projects. There are in all 5503 CBFM project sites nationwide covering around 5.97 m ha, and involving 690,691 households and 2877 people's organisations. Around 1577 sites are being managed through CBFM Agreements (Statistics provided by CBFM Division, Forest Management Bureau, The Philippines), whereas in the remaining sites different tenure arrangements mainly intended for upland communities are

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being implemented, such as Certificate of Stewardship Contracts (hereafter, stewardship contracts) and Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claims (hereafter, ancestral domain).¹

In the discussion that follows, we examine the literature on decentralised forest management, outline how our study contributes to this literature, and elaborate on the methodology used to undertake our study.

Early literature on decentralised forest management focused on communities (villages, user groups, and also formal and informal institutions), probably because of increased academic interest in common property resource management (Berkes, 1989; Ostrom, 1990; Hobley, 1996). However, recent literature is more concerned with local governance systems and downward accountability of local authorities (Larson, 2002; Contreras, 2003; Andersson, 2004; Manor, 2004; Ribot, 2004; Ribot et al., 2006). This reflects the efforts of developing-country governments particularly in the 1990s to shift responsibilities for resource management to local government units or municipal governments. There is a need for analysis of forest governance above the community level (Agrawal and Gibson, 1999), and of structures and functions of devolved formal authorities (Andersson, 2004) or local government administration (Grootaert and Narayan, 2004). There is also a need to describe the political economy of social-environmental interactions in view of widespread evidence of bribery and illegal exchange in natural resource management (Robbins, 2000). This is highly relevant in the context of increased emphasis on decentralisation involving a number of actors and stakeholders. Furthermore, several studies (e.g., Enters et al., 2000; Sundar, 2001; Edmunds and Wollenberg, 2003; Post and Snel, 2003; Mccarthy, 2004; Nygren, 2005; Rosyadi et al., 2005; Mvondo, 2006; Sikor and Thanh, 2006; Mapedza, 2007) suggest the emergence of some common patterns including the pros and (mostly) cons of decentralised forest management and thereby emphasise that there remain critical features of decentralisation processes that need attention. Based on such studies, we have concluded that the necessary conditions for achieving decentralisation are as follows. First, grant local communities more access to forest resources (Post and Snel, 2003). This might be achieved by limiting the influence of political and economic elites on decentralised institutions and having state agents direct benefits to the intended beneficiaries, who are socially and economically weaker (Larson, 2002; Edmunds and Wollenberg, 2003; Andersson, 2004; Mvondo, 2006; Sikor and Thanh, 2006). Second, increase the influence of local communities in the goal-setting and decision-making processes (Enters et al., 2000; Mapedza, 2007), and enable local communities to challenge traditional state authority (Nygren, 2005; Rosyadi et al., 2005). This can be achieved by transferring sufficient authority and setting up appropriate institutional arrangements at the local level, and by overcoming "imaginative obstacles [erected by central governments] in the path of decentralised institutions and choices" (Ribot et al., 2006, p. 1881). Third, establish accountable institutions at all levels of government (Ribot et al., 2006) and hold the state accountable for failures (Sundar, 2001). Fourth, expose conflicts over resource interests (Mccarthy, 2004; Nygren, 2005). Fifth, increase financial and human resources for local governments that assign high priority to forest resource development

(Larson, 2002; Post and Snel, 2003; Andersson, 2004; Ribot et al., 2006).

However, the overall effectiveness of decentralisation and the conditions conducive to effective implementation differ significantly from country to country. The differences may be related to the degree of devolution of power in those places or their particular social, legal, and political conditions. As such, there is need for further research on decentralisation from a wider perspective, analysing the factors that facilitate or constrain its effectiveness. It is with this intention that this study assesses the effectiveness of decentralisation reforms in the Philippines's forestry sector.

Recent literature emphasises that more levels of government and a wide range of stakeholder groups necessitate studying the interactions of processes at different scales (e.g., Hooghe and Marks, 2003; Wilbanks, 2005; Dengler, 2007). This applies to the decentralisation processes in the forestry sector. For example, in the Philippines, besides the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples at the national level, provincial governments (governor as head), municipalities (mayor as head), barangays (captain as head) and *sitios*,² which constitute the hierarchy of local government units, are involved in decentralisation processes. In the literature, increasing emphasis is also placed on the 'local aspect' of environmental policy as a key site for policy intervention (e.g., Gibbs and Jonas, 2000). In special circumstances, there is a need for contextualisation of governance, which includes the integration of environmental conservation with local institutions, practices, and social structures to increase involvement of local actors and to co-ordinate programmes with the place in question (Lejano et al., 2007). Decentralisation empowers local people to deal with forest management but does not prescribe the appropriate strategies for achieving goals. In order to further examine these issues, this study attempts to explore whether increasing involvement of government at different levels affects decentralisation reforms and if site-specific interventions help decentralisation reforms.

We adopted a two-pronged methodology for this study. To assess whether current conditions – policies, institutions, and programmes – are conducive to effective decentralisation reforms in the Philippines's forestry sector, this study analysed the views of officials of governmental agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), donor agencies, and academics, and reviewed literature on forestry sector decentralisation in the Philippines. To assess the site-specific conditions that facilitate or hinder effective decentralisation and address the broader question of when decentralisation is a success and when it is a failure, this study analyses three case studies including three Community-based Forest Management (CBFM) project sites in Nueva Vizcaya Province in the Philippines. Actors, stakeholders, and institutions at different locations and levels are analysed to find out what forces are driving and constraining decentralisation processes. The results show that there are shortcomings in the implementation of policy, institutions, and programmes, and thereby emphasise that decentralisation policy and implementation in the Philippines need improvement. The results also show that on the one hand there are grass roots realities that slow or cause the failure of decentralisation reforms, while on the other hand there are some collective community endeavours and interventions to secure local livelihoods that help decentralisation reforms and inspire policy makers. The results of this study are of interest to varying degrees from a policy and programme implementation point of view for the Philippines as well as other developing countries following similar paths of decentralisation.

¹ CBFM Agreements and stewardship contracts are awarded to communities and individuals, respectively, to use forestland for 25 years, renewable for another 25 years. Under stewardship contracts, allocated areas require actual occupation or private development of forestland by individuals prior to project implementation. Ancestral domain includes individual and community-owned areas, but ownership of the entire area is entrusted to the community. In this sense, ancestral domain and CBFM Agreements involve collective management responsibility, but ancestral domain is issued only to indigenous people who have always lived in the same place.

² *Sitios* are sub-units of a barangay, although the smallest recognised political unit in the Philippines is the barangay itself.

2. Case studies overview

Nueva Vizcaya Province in the Philippines was deliberately selected for this study because it has diverse CBFM programmes. It is the site of the first locally-initiated CBFM pioneered by the Kalahan Educational Foundation, a well-known people's organisation that sought governmental recognition of the Ikalahan tribe's claim over their ancestral land through an innovative land tenure arrangement with the Philippine government. It also hosted numerous government-facilitated CBFM programmes with varying approaches and external assistance. There are currently 22 CBFM Agreements issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to people's organisations (some still in nascent stage) in Nueva Vizcaya, not to mention other CBFM initiatives established by local government units and people's organisations such as the Kalahan Educational Foundation. Nueva Vizcaya has more CBFM initiatives than most other provinces. Moreover, the combination of locally and externally initiated CBFM initiatives provides examples of the various issues and dimensions of decentralisation in the Philippines.

We conducted case study investigations of the three CBFM initiatives, namely the Buenavista CBFM, the Kalahan reserve, and the Dumayop Watershed Project (Fig. 1). These were purposively selected to represent a mix of successes and failures that are of interest from a policy viewpoint. Other selection criteria were representation in terms of the length of decentralisation experience, community structure, and the roles of government and donor agencies. Buenavista and Kalahan represent more successful CBFM sites, and Dumayop a failure. Kalahan has the longest decentralisation experience, followed by Buenavista and Dumayop. Dumayop and Buenavista are more heterogeneous in terms of community structure, while Kalahan is more homogeneous. All sites varied in terms of the roles of government and donor agencies, with Kalahan more independent from external influence.

We interviewed key informants to collect information on decentralisation in the forestry sector. These key informants include: officials of people's organisations, federations of people's organisations, and NGOs associated with the selected CBFM project sites; officials of concerned governmental agencies involved in planning and implementation of CBFM projects at different levels in Nueva Vizcaya Province, which are the Community Environmental and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) and local government units; officials of the Forest Management Bureau and DENR in Quezon City; officials of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), involved in funding CBFM; and academics from the University of the Philippines Los Baños undertaking research on the Philippines's forestry sector. A group discussion was also held with the beneficiaries of the selected CBFM projects. Below we briefly describe the case situations studied in Nueva Vizcaya Province.

2.1. Buenavista: a successful case of decentralisation with external intervention

The CBFM project launched in 1995 in Barangay Buenavista, Bayombong Municipality, is managed by the Federation of Vista Hills, Kalongkong, Kakilingan, Upland Farmers Inc. It is considered a successful case, being commended as a 'Model Sustainable Development Project' in the upland category by the Regional Development Council in 2003 and 2004. This project is aided by the International Tropical Timber Organisation and also supported by the DENR. Barangay Buenavista comprises five sitios. The federation comprises three people's organisations of upland sitios – Vista Hills, Kalongkong, and Kakilingan – which are responsible for the overall management of the CBFM project. The other two sitios, which are located in the lowland and traditionally involved in sedentary agriculture, are not direct CBFM stakeholders. The CBFM Agreement awarded to the federation by DENR includes a

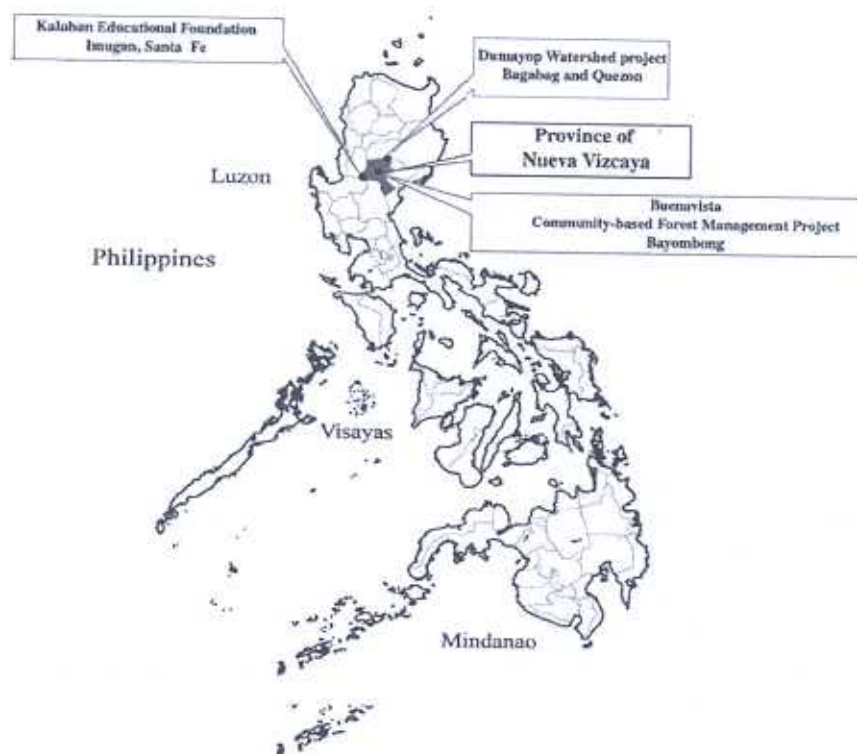


Fig. 1. Case study sites in Nueva Vizcaya Province in the Philippines.

total of 3000 ha of classified forestland. Half of this forestland is natural second growth Dipterocarp forest and the rest is a mixture of tree plantations, regenerating forest, grassland, and agroforestry farms.

2.2. *Kalahan reserve: a successful case facing new challenges posed by decentralisation*

During the early 1970s when new forestry-sector policy initiatives were underway, there was an organised attempt by an indigenous people, the Ikalahan people in the Santa Fe Municipality, to secure tenure and management rights over their ancestral domain. Under the guidance of a missionary leader, who had close relations with government agencies and NGOs in Manila (Magno, 2001), the Philippine government recognised ancestral land claims, or legal Ikalahan rights, on nearly 15,000 ha of forestland in exchange for watershed protection by the Ikalahan. This was the first such agreement in the Philippines and Asia (Rice, 2002). The Kalahan Educational Foundation, a people's organisation that officially represented the Ikalahan people, was established to conduct initial negotiations with the government. This foundation still oversees the management of Kalahan reserve. Since 1993 Kalahan reserve, encompassing 50,000 ha of forests, has been formally recognised as the ancestral domain of the Ikalahan people.

2.3. *Dumayop watershed project: a case of failed decentralisation*

The Dumayop Watershed Project was the most recent of the three initiatives implemented by DENR in the late 1990s using a loan from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). This CBFM project is spread over two municipalities, Bagabag (CBFM 1) and Quezon (CBFM 2), and constitutes the Dumayop River watershed. Bagabag includes two barangays, Berebet and Pogon Sino, and consists of four sitios, each having its own people's organisation. Quezon, meanwhile, includes two barangays, Calaoacan and Bonifacio, and consists of five sitios. Previously, each of these sitios had its own people's organisation, but three sitios were later merged into one. The seven people's organisations are linked together under a federation called the Dumayop–Magat Agroforestry Development Association. This project ended in 2003 with the termination of external support.

3. Decentralisation reforms: effectiveness of policies, institutions and programmes

Forest policies and programmes implemented in the Philippines since the 1970s initiated a process of recognising the entitlements of upland and indigenous communities, and include swidden practices, unlike most developing countries where initial social forestry programmes mainly focused on tree plantations. Although early programmes in the Philippines failed, they opened a "policy window for addressing the resource utilisation rights to forest occupants" (Magno, 2001, p. 273). In the early 1980s, a more comprehensive national programme called the 'Integrated Social Forestry Programme' was started with active participation of volunteer groups, civil society, and reformers in the government. This programme focused on providing land tenure to upland individuals/families through stewardship contracts that gave them exclusive use and occupancy rights to upland public forestland. Despite financial support from foreign donors like the Ford Foundation, Inc., this programme too failed to some extent owing to weak implementation, low beneficiary participation, poor government support, neglect of ancestral domain rights, and uncertainty over the sharing of forest products. However, a land tenure arrangement under the Integrated Social Forestry Programme laid the foundation for future CBFM programmes in the Philippines.

Political events in the Philippines during the mid-1980s and subsequent new legislation facilitated the rise of people-oriented forestry programmes and the establishment of CBFM. The 1987 Philippine Constitution brought local governance, agrarian and natural resource reforms, and formulation of forest policies with a more pragmatic approach. The Community Forestry Programme, with renewable 25-year agreements exclusively for forest communities, was initiated in 1989. It focused on the development and protection of residual forests and accelerated their transfer to community management, but with the active involvement of NGOs to sustain equity and conservation in forest management (Magno, 2001). This programme provided communities with the leeway to extract forest resources for improved economic welfare. The programme was seen as a means to alleviate upland poverty.

As community-based resource management (forestry, irrigation, and watershed management) gained momentum, government orders were formulated and enacted periodically to speed changes. Some of these orders were the Local Government Code (RA 7160 in 1991) that partially devolved some DENR functions to local government units and paved the way for their involvement in forest management; the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 1992 that encouraged community participation in delimiting land boundaries and managing protected areas; and the Rules for Ancestral Land and Domain Claims in 1993 that asserted the rights of indigenous people to their ancestral lands. The hallmark of these decentralisation policies in the Philippines was Executive Order 263, issued in 1995, which adopted CBFM as the national strategy for sustainable forest management and social justice in upland regions. This paved the way for institutionalisation of local forest management. Various programmes involving people's participation in forest management that existed in 1996 were integrated into CBFM.

In addition, passage of the Indigenous People's Rights Act in 1997 provided for recognition of indigenous peoples' vested rights over their ancestral lands. Together with Executive Order 263, these landmark policies constituted a primary means of allocating forests and forestlands to local communities, thereby significantly helping the decentralisation process. Executive Order 318 of 2004 prescribed the pursuit of sustainable management of forests and forestlands in watersheds based on six key principles including community-based forest conservation and development (Pulhin et al., 2007). Under this new policy, CBFM remains the primary strategy of all forest conservation and development projects.

In sum, the CBFM strategy focuses on the *de jure* provision of secure land tenure to individuals and communities to bring social justice and equity in resource distribution as enshrined in the constitution. Furthermore, since the 1980s poor upland dwellers have received help through land reforms and democratised access to forest resources. These forest policies and political objectives to this day distinguish CBFM in the Philippines from decentralisation policies in other developing countries. But do these reforms work in practise? We assess their effectiveness by addressing some of the questions that emerged frequently during this study.

3.1. *Is the policy-making process decentralised and relevant in practice?*

The Philippines has many policies facilitating forestry sector decentralisation (e.g., see FMB, undated), and they are changed often. These policy changes, it is claimed, are a response to real-world problems and failures in existing policy. Policy changes are shaped by new secretaries of the DENR,³ who follow a strongly protectionist approach (Grainger and Malayang, 2004). However, they come mostly in the form of DENR administrative orders and amend-

³ The Philippines lacks a career bureaucracy such that leading civil servants tend to be temporary political appointees (Grainger and Malayang, 2004).

ments, which are provisional policy instruments (not official laws) and therefore easily replaceable. Presidential Decree 705, known as the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines, issued in 1975, remains the major forestry law that should theoretically provide the legal framework, but it is now irrelevant because the recent trend towards decentralisation is the antithesis of earlier policies. Moreover, this decree is regulatory rather than developmental in nature, and therefore does not capture the spirit and intention of decentralisation. A new law focusing on sustainable forest management, which adopts CBFM as the principal strategy, has been pending the approval of Congress for the past 10 years.

Another issue relates to the extent of communication among local government units (LGUs). Many LGUs and even regional offices do not receive copies of the rules and regulations or the numerous administrative orders and modifications (Lowry et al., 2005). On the other hand, policy changes are "aimed on an ad hoc basis at addressing multiple goals" (Tumaneng-Diete et al., 2005, p. 188). These ambiguities in forest policies allow DENR to retain control.

Policy changes also do not necessarily capture grass roots concerns or needs. Policies and programmes emanate from the national government and therefore jeopardise decentralisation reforms. Decision-making in the context of decentralisation in the Philippines takes place at three levels: policy, programme, and project or local level. The policies and programmes are both defined by DENR (national government). Although the policy and programme units of DENR are co-ordinated, decision-making is not that structured. The LGUs, people's organisations, NGOs, private sector, and Community Environmental and Natural Resources Offices are the decision-makers at the project or local level. In the 1980s local communities were involved only in the implementation of social forestry projects. The role of local communities was defined by the enactment of decentralisation policies; they were to be represented by people's organisations in policy, planning, and project monitoring. However, the role of people's organisations in certain regions is passive and thereby ineffective in helping to voice grass-roots concerns. Under Local Government Code, LGUs must establish Environment and Natural Resources Councils as special bodies that will engage civil society in local governance. In Nueva Vizcaya and other provinces, federations of people's organisations have been created instead of councils. Incidentally, most federations have been inactive for the last several years due to limited financial resources available since DENR banned timber harvesting, their most important source of revenue.

LGUs are also not playing their expected decisive role in this process. The diversity of forest policy-making stakeholders, each with varied interests and agendas, constrains efficient consensus-building. This in turn leads to a centralised policy-making process.

3.2. Do decentralised institutions have policy making and execution capacity?

The policy interface takes place within DENR headquarters and regional offices, but there is a lack of co-ordination between LGUs and DENR. LGUs are responsible for supervising CBFM programmes and DENR Integrated Social Forestry Programme sites within their jurisdictions. Early in the devolution process, DENR-LGU co-ordination was quite weak, as LGUs were ill-prepared for devolution. Furthermore, LGU roles and functions vis-à-vis DENR in terms of law enforcement were not clearly defined (Sabban, 1997; Magno, 2001). Additionally, insufficient resources have constrained the capabilities of LGUs for supervising CBFM programmes.

LGUs lack the capacity to either make or implement policy decisions regarding forestry. Therefore, they cannot play a key role in realising forestry-sector decentralisation. In fact, LGUs have generally failed to manage responsibilities that have devolved to them. An example would be the cadastral survey of lands where DENR

recovered this devolved power because of the LGUs' inability to manage implementation (TPEGP, 2002). This suggests that although the Philippine government is attempting to adopt a federal type of administration with more regional autonomy, it has not done so with its governmental structure. Hence, regional and local administration is ineffective in discharging its responsibilities.

Moreover, LGUs are mostly controlled by traditionalists with outmoded views. LGU officials face elections every three years, which focuses their attention on re-election instead of unpopular enforcement of forestry regulations (Geollegue, 2000). Decentralisation success or failure therefore relies heavily on the ability of people's organisations to manage local forests. LGUs receive an 'internal revenue allocation' from the national government, which represents 40% of all national taxes collected by the Bureau of Internal Revenue based on the previous three years, population, land area, and an equal sharing factor (TPEGP, 2002; Lowry et al., 2005). This further makes LGUs favour infrastructure and developmental projects over forestry programmes. For example, in the Cagayan Valley Region, most people's organisation members lost interest in forestry decentralisation because health, nutrition, and water were deemed more important (Cruz and Acay, 2004).

3.3. Do decentralisation programmes match the capacity of local communities?

The co-existence of programmes with different tenure arrangements creates competition for participants. This is apparent when project managers are obsessed with large, ambitious projects (Dalmacio, 1997; Sajise et al., 2003). This overloads communities with activities when management resources are already overstretched. Consequences include poor community organisation (Sajise et al., 2003) and loss of focus on CBFM objectives (Dalmacio, 1997). CBFM initiatives are additionally affected when farmers are also recipients of family contracts (under the contract reforestation projects of the late 1980s to the 1990s) (Cruz et al., 1997).

Diverse CBFM implementation approaches spread confusion in DENR, despite efforts to integrate different approaches under CBFM Agreements. One good example is the CBFM projects of the international donor agencies JBIC and JICA. JBIC focused on a Contract Reforestation Programme that utilised the labour of people's organisation members. This programme's commercial approach aimed to attain high timber volume rapidly to enable people's organisations to repay plantation loans. JBIC was not that concerned with enhancing the capacity of people's organisations who had allotted substantial proportions of their loans to infrastructure development. Once project funds were exhausted, people's organisations could not manage large plantations. In contrast, JICA-funded CBFM projects focus mainly on stakeholder capacity-building in model sites. Activities include community development, agroforestry promotion, and technology transfer.

Besides diversity in programmes and implementation methods, overlapping administration and project boundaries complicate decentralisation reforms. For example, a project area may be managed by two or more barangays comprising a number of people's organisations. It may straddle two municipalities in the same watershed (CBFM sites are integrated on the basis of watersheds). In such cases, a federation of all people's organisations in a project site is established to resolve complications arising from overlapping boundaries. But as we show later, these federations are not that successful.

3.4. Is the government commissioning decentralisation reforms in a unified manner?

Lately, conflicting authority over forests has affected the pace of decentralisation. While DENR controls most of the forests, the

ancestral domains, comprising around 2.5 m ha of forests, are under the authority of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. This powerful government agency is fully supported by legislation. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 mandates the government, through this commission, to recognise, protect, and promote the rights of indigenous peoples. This commission has functional responsibilities at the national, regional, and provincial levels, and an administrative structure similar to that of DENR. However it does not have technical expertise and financial resources like those of DENR, thereby rendering it an ineffective agency. Nevertheless, the commission's influence is growing in CBFM implementation and in the national political arena. In fact, it is demanding a wider jurisdiction to include more forests under ancestral domains.

These developments produce conflict that is constraining decentralisation reforms because the power struggle necessitates centralised decision-making by each of these institutions. Lowry et al. (2005) described a similar conflict between DENR and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in the Philippines. Their joint responsibility in mangrove management results in inaction or inefficiency.

3.5. Is there adequate funding for implementing and sustaining decentralisation reforms?

It appears that the fiscal crisis in the Philippines in recent years has had substantial impact on decentralisation reforms. Inadequate funding provides insufficient support for existing projects and fails to initiate new ones. Additionally, attempts to integrate components of the CBFM programme into one umbrella programme (CBFM Agreements) are also facing challenges. Discussion with the officers of DENR, CBFM Division of the Forest Management Bureau, and CENRO suggested that inadequate finances have hobbled the staff's ability to supervise and co-ordinate CBFM project sites. The LGU budget is not enough to meet staff field-operating expenses. There were cases when DENR employees, working under LGU supervision, were not paid for several months (Geollegue, 2000). Also, new development projects take a back seat. For example, CENRO in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya lacked funds for tree planting in 2003, although funds had been provided for 2002. In 2004, funds were allocated to develop a 4 ha plantation. Moreover, inadequate funding also results in a lack of field staff. Dissatisfaction of DENR personnel devolved to LGUs renders LGUs ineffective and less authoritative. At present, these DENR personnel merely provide technical assistance; they have no budgetary control.

Inadequate funding degrades the performance of forestry-sector decentralisation. The successes and failures experienced by CBFM projects depend on the ability of local people to sustain decentralisation reforms and access funds. While some people's organisations have sufficient funds, there are many inactive people's organisations awaiting funding.

3.6. Are correct market interventions shaping economic decentralisation?

Decentralisation should empower forest-dependent communities by enhancing organisational and technical skills and providing sustainable income and an equitable stake in forest benefits. However, some communities are apprehensive about the motives. Radical groups in the Philippines often claim CBFM policies are shaped by the multilateral financial institutions that fund them, such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), JBIC. Such institutions are accused of placing "neoliberal and environmental conditions on their loans" (Grainger and Malayang, 2004, p. 9). Similarly, Gauld (2000) pointed out that "community-based forest policy bears many of the hallmarks of scientific forestry in which techni-

cal and productivity aspects rather than social and wider environmental considerations are emphasised" (p. 230).

Financial institutions focus on establishing fast-growing exotic tree plantations or industrial tree plantations. Although this strategy aims to generate income to sustain the interest of project participants, financial institutions want the loans repaid. This is evident from the JBIC-funded projects discussed earlier, and further apparent from the benefit-sharing arrangement between the people and the government. During 1992–1998, the state-funded plantation benefit-sharing ratio between the people and government was 70:30. DENR stipulated a new ratio of 75:25 in Administrative Order 98–42⁴ to give the CBFM programme more credibility and appeal. Under this arrangement, 50% of the government's share is remitted to the treasury (for loan repayment), and 50% of the people's share goes to people's organisations for establishing new plantations. However, timber harvesting is now suspended nationwide, including plantations, which has stalled timber harvesting benefits for both the government and the communities.

The strategy of promoting large-scale short-rotation tree plantations under Forestry Sector Project I, assisted by ADB, and Forestry Sector Project II, assisted by ADB and JBIC, has failed. It has not helped to promote forest biodiversity. Furthermore, commercial tree plantations are not as valuable as indigenous tree species, which are preferred in furniture-making. Even native species are inferior to those of Malaysia and Indonesia, and hence less competitive (Shimamoto et al., 2004). At the national level, there are repercussions in forestry policy including an export ban or taxes on logs (Tumaneng-Diete et al., 2005), and import liberalisation of forest products (Shimamoto et al., 2004).

Consequently, tree plantations in CBFM project areas suitable for paper and pulp manufacturing are fetching a low market price. There are only a few potential major buyers of timber from such plantations such as the Paper Industry Corporation of the Philippines, which has captive tree plantations on leased government land in Mindanao. These few buyers dictate the price, as reported by Contreras (2003), based on a study of 11 CBFM project sites. Hence, sites which have adopted the planting of short-rotation tree species in both the uplands and lowlands under the CBFM programme, either get low returns on their investment or cannot sell the trees, thereby affecting loan repayment. There are also concerns over the lack of technical knowledge for growing appropriate tree crops, especially in very marginal upland areas, and about limited information on selling products, as well as the lack of access to credit. Such policy failures and gaps render decentralisation reforms ineffective.

3.7. Are benefit-sharing arrangements within local communities in place?

A clear policy oversees the people-government benefit-sharing arrangement, but there is no national or regional policy in the Philippines that sets standards for sharing the benefits accrued from CBFM programmes in people's organisations. Arrangements vary depending on the organisation. In most places, however, there are either informal arrangements or none at all. Benefits in some cases are distributed according to stakeholders' landholdings or according to the forestland area cultivated by each stakeholder in the past. When there are individual as well as community stewardship contracts, people's organisations may divide the rest of the area for community plantations equally among members. Such informal arrangements, including forestland transactions, raise doubts over fair distribution of benefits.

Cruz and Acay (2004) reported the lack of fair benefit-sharing arrangements in all Cagayan Valley Region CBFM sites. In reality,

⁴ The government gets royalties per m³ in terms of forest charges for natural forests managed by communities.

the attempt to democratise forest resource access using access instruments has benefited local elites. Communities with diverse groups are left to fight it out among themselves, without DENR intervention (Gauld, 2000). We also learned that only some members of households in communities were members of people's organisations, which is corroborated by Contreras (2003) and Dizon (2004). Non-members question their benefit shares in project areas and often pose problems for forest protection by undertaking illegal activities leading to intra-community conflicts. Furthermore, it is the relatively better-off members who, as officers, control management affairs and funds. Fund mismanagement is commonplace. Affiliation with a particular religious organisation is also a source of conflict.

3.8. To what extent are NGOs involved in capacity-building of local communities?

NGOs in the Philippine forestry sector mushroomed during the late 1980s to early 1990s when a fundamental shift in forest policy and fund allocation took place, favouring the implementation of CBFM activities. NGOs were engaging local people in CBFM activities, and substantial funds were channelled through them. Almost all CBFM projects had stated roles for NGOs, which generated a whole industry of rent-seeking NGOs (Contreras, 2003). There were around 70,000 officially registered NGOs in the Philippines by 2003 (Grainger and Malayang, 2004). As funds from the government and external agencies diminished, most of these NGOs became inactive and eventually closed.

NGOs are involved in helping bridge the gap between DENR and local communities, although without the flexibility they enjoyed in the past. The government gives NGOs short-duration contracts to undertake CBFM projects like community organisation, and monitoring and evaluation. Sajise et al. (2003, p. 244) call them "NGO contractors". In a way, NGOs have become an extension of DENR. We were informed that DENR's intention is to weed out unscrupulous NGOs due to its accountability for project funds, but this does not necessarily prevent corruption.

The diminished NGO role has had repercussions. Once NGO contracts expire, communities are dependent on DENR. Although DENR has trained most of its CBFM staff to perform the role of NGOs, this is inadequate to sustain the involvement of people's organisations. DENR lacks sufficient financial resources and manpower to provide continued assistance. The inappropriate attitude of some staff members (Sajise et al., 2003) and inadequate resources of local government units are other considerations. NGOs too have had inadequate capabilities for supporting CBFM activities (Cruz et al., 1997). Moreover, some NGOs have reversed themselves in recent years, now vehemently opposing upland logging under the CBFM programme, NGOs criticise CBFM Agreements and equate them to Timber License Agreements (TLAs). Hence, the NGO-government conflicts in the past over TLAs have evolved so that some NGOs clash with upland farmers over CBFM Agreements.

4. Decentralisation: success or failure? Evidence from case studies

This section assesses the site-specific conditions that influence the success or failure of decentralisation in the forestry sector in the Philippines. This analysis is based on three case studies undertaken in Nueva Vizcaya Province.

4.1. Securing local livelihoods

A prime factor of the decentralisation success in Buenavista and Kalahan reserve is that the process has granted local people sustained access to conserved and rejuvenated forest resources and

generated other livelihood opportunities. First we highlight the initiatives by Kalahan Educational Foundation in Kalahan reserve. In its initial years, the foundation restored deteriorated forests. These efforts spawned diverse and mostly forest-based livelihood opportunities such as fruit processing, organic vegetable farming, spring water bottling, furniture making, spice production, medicinal plants, resin, essential oil, handicrafts, and charcoal.⁵ The foundation also established public infrastructure. Around 10,000 ha of Kalahan reserve are production forest and 2000 ha are under permanent agriculture and other land use. The remaining 3000 ha are set aside permanently for conservation of flora and fauna.

In the case of Buenavista, there was extensive grassland and some forest cover prior to CBFM project implementation. This is typical of much land in the Philippines, where natural forests have been converted to secondary forests and then grassland by widespread logging and swidden (*kaingin*) farming. Local people in Buenavista illegally logged and made charcoal, and practised extensive swidden farming. The first attempt to rehabilitate denuded forestlands in Buenavista was undertaken in the late 1980s under the Integrated Social Forestry Programme. However, this initiative was unsuccessful because of the programme's limited resources and the continuous influx of new migrants who were not actively involved in the programme and impeded forest protection.

Following implementation of the CBFM project in Buenavista, swidden farming in forestlands was slowly replaced by agroforestry. Massive information, education, and communication campaigns on the destructive impacts of swidden farming versus the socioeconomic and environmental potentials of agroforestry practice, coupled with technical and material support (e.g., provision of free seedlings and vegetable seeds) contributed to the shift in farming practices by most of CBFM participants. Farmers are now cultivating paddy fields while employing soil and water conservation measures, and also undertaking intensive vegetable farming using better technology and with loans from people's organisations. This has led to increased agricultural production and income in Buenavista. Similarly, farmers have gained knowledge of the technical aspects of tree growing. The promotion of agroforestry under the CBFM project, and community-based enterprises such as vegetable and flower production and trading of agricultural supplies, have provided gainful local livelihood opportunities, thereby reducing dependency on forest resources. However, the recent instability of timber utilisation policy within CBFM areas, as reflected in the nationwide cancellation of resource-use permits, threatens the potential of the planned livelihood activities.

4.2. Community composition and organisation

Community homogeneity is one of the factors behind successful collective action in Buenavista. Vista Hills sitio consists mostly of Ilocanos. Kalonkong sitio has a mixed population of Ilocanos and Igorots – indigenous people who migrated to Buenavista in the 1990s. Kakilingan sitio is mainly inhabited by Igorots. Despite seemingly diverse ethnic origins, commonalities in Buenavista promote collective action. Among these are cultural commonalities, livelihood dependence on common resources, and shared needs that dictate collaborative efforts. These community characteristics are complemented by robust leadership. On the other hand, Kalahan reserve, consisting of seven barangays, is populated by Ikalahan indigenous people. This has helped Kalahan Educational Foundation develop local forest management plans, which include harvesting timber and non-timber forest products as per the 1992 National Integrated Protected Area System Act, as well

⁵ But Kalahan reserve's success is unique. Other ancestral domains are fairly unsuccessful. See, e.g., Logong (2000).

as agroforestry policies. The sustainability and success of the Buenavista CBFM project and Kalahan reserve are attributed to the commitment of local people and transparency of the institutional arrangements for forest management.

On the other hand, a major factor contributing to the failure of Dumayop Watershed Project is the scattered locations of the people's organisations over a large area, and heterogeneous community composition. The seven people's organisations involved in the project are sparsely distributed in nine sitios within four barangays and two municipalities in the 3780 ha project area. Moreover, the people's organisations belong to varied ethnolinguistic groups such as Ilocanos, Tagalogs, Isinay, Bicolanos, Igorots, and Cebuano, which, unlike the Kalahan reserve community, have little in common to foster collective action. This makes communication difficult among the people's organisations. There is limited participation of local people in project management, and in fact they are unaware of the activities undertaken by the federation. This has led to suspicion among the local people over the lack of transparency in transactions of the federation and people's organisations. There was also no focus on community organisation during the initial years of Dumayop Watershed Project. Comprehensive site development and community organisation were undertaken simultaneously. As the people's organisations/communities were not built to handle collective tasks and responsibilities, project implementation suffered. Conversely, in Buenavista, measures were taken to organise the community before implementing the CBFM project.

The lack of community organisation in the early stages of CBFM project implementation, which ultimately led to the failure of Dumayop Watershed Project, is also attributed to ill-conceived NGO involvement. The NGO attempted but failed to organise the community and was instead more involved in project implementation. When the NGO's two-year contract expired, the people's organisations were left without the capacity to implement further project activities.

4.3. Management of development funds in a decentralised regime

In Buenavista, project funds are managed by only a few persons. The federation is being managed by a steering committee comprising International Tropical Timber Organisation project staff and DENR officials at the provincial level. Funds can be withdrawn only by submitting a project proposal to DENR that specifies intended activities. Meanwhile, the people on the front line of forest management and protection are paid in meals instead of wages. Such management of development funds has contributed to CBFM success in Buenavista. This arrangement, however, does not coincide with the concept of decentralisation, whose policies have empowered barangays to determine the use of development funds like those originating from 'internal revenue allocation'. Fund management may be decentralised at the barangay level through a 'Fund Management Committee' that is accountable for the funds.

But due to fund misappropriation, one of the people's organisations, BADAKA Inc. in the Dumayop Watershed Project, failed miserably to deliver. The comprehensive development plan in this sub-project site was implemented in 1995 and focused on reforesting open and denuded forestlands for watershed protection and agroforestry to generate income for local people. According to the Project Completion Report (PCR, 2003), people's organisations performed poorly in project implementation; mobilisation funds were mishandled; members were divided into factions; and some members lost interest in participating because of discontentment with management. The crux of the problem was drawing local people's attention toward money-related matters at a time when funds were readily available. The poor performance of this people's organisation was reflected in the reduction of the original CBFM area by almost half, coupled with drought and fire in the project area.

In Kalahan reserve, all seven barangays have collectively and effectively managed the development funds and generated income under the mandate laid out by Kalahan Educational Foundation without any constraints since the early 1970s. However, in recent years, the new decentralised regime has generated conflicts in the community as political elements seek to dominate local institutions in order to control development funds. As elsewhere in the Philippines, such funds are seldom audited at the barangay level. Consequently, two barangays in Kalahan reserve, Malico Pangasinan and Santarosa, want to establish a separate entity so that they can utilise development funds as they see fit. Such politicisation of ancestral domains in the Philippines weaken local community management because most have yet to establish themselves as institutions.

4.4. Conflicting positions in decentralised institutions

The Dumayop case is a clear example of decentralisation where views differ between DENR parties, particularly the Regional DENR Office and the CENRO. At project conception, the CENRO wanted to allocate the project area to each of the nine sitios in the hope that this strategy would result in effective management of small areas. Through this strategy, development funds would have been directed to each sitio, but the Regional DENR Office opposed it. They considered the entire project area a watershed, with management under a federation of people's organisations from all sitios. Likewise, the funding agency, Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan and subsequently JBIC, was also against dividing the project area among sitios. However, the CENRO continued to resist the plans proposed by the Regional DENR Office and persisted in allocating management of the project area by sitio. The CENRO's stand was well supported by the National Forestation Development Officer with DENR supervising the disbursement of funds/loans.

In reality the division of project area by sitio did lead to project fund misappropriation, thus reducing overall community interest in the project. Originally PHP 46 million (US\$ 947,253) were allocated for this project, but this was later reduced as people's organisations did not meet their targets. Conversely, the federation of people's organisations in Buenavista was allocated only PHP 1.5 million (US\$ 30,896) seed money. Even when project funds were distributed by sitio in the Dumayop project, the federation existed in name only. One of the reasons for this is the diffusion over a large geographical area in the Dumayop. Moreover, both the people's organisations and the federation were weak. The interviewed CENRO staff members argued that, for the CBFM programme in the Philippines to be effective, people's organisations need to be strengthened or oversized federations are likely to fail.

4.5. Role of local government units

LGUs played a relatively minimal role in managing decentralisation reforms in the case study sites. In Buenavista, the federation works along with the LGUs but it is DENR that controls most of the project activities. For example, all the hired technical staff members for community organisation by International Tropical Timber Organisation for both phases of the project were supervised by DENR. Similarly, LGUs have a minimal role in the management of the Kalahan reserve, as it is an ancestral domain.

The Dumayop Watershed Project failed for several reasons. Given that watersheds transcend political boundaries, questions have been raised over the LGUs' capability to run such projects (Geollegue, 2000). Moreover, the Sub-Project Management Officers assigned by DENR to the area were transferred to other positions six times during the project duration, which derailed project activities and contributed to the lack of supervision and poor performance of people's organisations. However, political intervention

at the municipality level appears to be the dominant reason for project failure. The President of the federation and his followers in the four sitios, located in Bagabag Municipality (CBFM 1), and its former Mayor had different political affiliations. Owing to this political rivalry, project proposals under Dumayop Watershed Project in these sitios were not endorsed. Most of the funds were utilised by the sitios in Quezon Municipality (CBFM 2). Even development projects like water supply and road construction were affected in Bagabag Municipality. Political support for the CBFM project was only realised when a new Mayor in Bagabag was elected who had the same political affiliation as that of the federation's president.

4.6. Counterproductive centralised policies

As discussed earlier, Presidential Decree 705, which is the major forestry law of the Philippines, has not been annulled despite its conflict with decentralisation reform. As this decree continues to be enforced, constraints are imposed on ancestral domain, which recognises the forests rights of indigenous people and secures land tenure. This decree mandates that all natural resources, even in titled lands, are state property. This implies the need for DENR permission to harvest trees in ancestral domain forests. DENR still retains the power to issue resource use rights, such as annual allowable cuts and mining rights (TPEGP, 2002), and also controls tree harvesting on private property.

In Kalahan reserve, local people are required to submit a logging plan to secure harvesting permits from DENR. This is a cumbersome process involving high bureaucratic transaction costs. To offset such costs, people often fell more trees than permitted. This means unsustainable harvesting in forests managed under ancestral domain, which could be seen as illegal logging by environmentalists and NGOs. Therefore, the continuation of these old policies may be considered counterproductive for ancestral domain, potentially eroding its significance because the new Executive Order 318 suggests that DENR has no role in forest management in such titled lands.

Furthermore, DENR's control over natural resource use in ancestral domain marginalises the role of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, leading to the presence of two government agencies in the same forestland, which is a burden on local institutions. It could also pave the way for abuse by indigenous people. At present, as this commission is inactive in the Kalahan reserve, the Kalahan Educational Foundation has taken its place in enforcing forest policies. However, local people in Kalahan face the dilemma of abandoning traditional forest management and utilisation to keep pace with changing forest policies. For example, they do not respect new conservation-oriented policies, and it takes much time to explain the policies and convince them.

5. Conclusion

By assessing the policies, institutions, and programmes that facilitate decentralisation, and analysing the site-specific conditions drawn from case studies undertaken in Nueva Vizcaya Province, this study shows that interrelated issues that challenge decentralisation in the forestry sector in the Philippines have not yet been resolved, this despite government policies to distribute natural resources fairly and promote decentralisation for over three decades. Implementing more practical policies and developing institutional conditions to support decentralisation reforms are still a major challenge. The goal is to ensure communities receive sustainable income from rehabilitated forests and tree plantations by providing market linkages, equitable intra-community benefit-sharing arrangements and participation, and efficient arrangements to extend or renew individual and community-based forestry contracts and resource use permits.

This study highlights the effects of increasing government involvement at different levels that drive decentralisation reforms. There are conflicting authorities in the forestry sector with almost identical functional responsibilities at various levels, and also similar administrative structures. There are local government units, which are central to decentralisation reforms, and the Community-based Forest Management (CBFM) projects that straddle municipalities and barangays. There are also numerous people's organisations in large projects representing specific local communities under the umbrella of a federation. This mixture of governance, and the high number of actors and stakeholders, affect the pace of decentralisation reforms and make it difficult to assign or identify accountability. From an institutional economics perspective, increasing the levels of government to promote decentralisation requires more levels of administrators and higher implementation costs. This implies that decentralisation is a complicated process that needs site-specific intervention, as the case studies show.

Resource scarcity hinders decentralisation, so the Philippine government needs to establish transparent procedures by assigning accountability at all levels. The case study of the Dumayop Watershed Project revealed that even this well-funded project failed on many accounts. Some of the reasons were the conflicting positions of institutions during project planning, ineffective co-ordination of people's organisations, and ill-conceived involvement of incompetent NGOs. However, it was overlapping administration and forest management boundaries, politicisation of local institutions, and, more importantly, the misappropriation of funds that caused the failure. Such challenges in large-scale decentralisation reforms emphasise the need for bridge-building to develop cooperation and synergy for solving common-pool resource (CPR) problems. While the literature has numerous examples of self-governing collaborative institutions for small scale CPRs, large-scale collaboration in CPRs should not be neglected (Dengler, 2007).

The study also shows how the politico-economic gains or self-interest of a few can affect decentralisation processes (see, Ribot et al., 2006). One reason for the Dumayop Watershed Project failure was the firm grip of political elements on decentralised local institutions and, therefore, the project funds provided by donor agencies. The decentralisation process in recent years sparked conflicts in Kalahan reserve, the first communal forest lease agreement in Asia. Here political elements sought to dominate local institutions in order to control development funds. This implies the need to build downward accountability in decentralised local institutions (and NGOs) by increasing their capacity and establishing rights and duties in decentralised administrative systems.

This study shows that decentralisation reforms require highly capable community organisations and self-management capacity. That is, grass roots decentralisation institutions such as people's organisations in the Philippines' forestry sector should ideally correspond to Ostrom's (1990) eight design principles (and new ones expanded by her and others), which are illustrated by long-enduring CPR institutions. The case studies demonstrate that people's organisations and the collective initiatives of local communities with long-term goals contributed most to decentralisation success. The capable local leadership in Kalahan reserve implemented effective forest management on their own accord. Local people successfully undertook initial forest rehabilitation measures without any external intervention using the traditional method of pooling resources and proving that suitably empowered communities can achieve sustainable forest management. Likewise, the Buenavista case study showed that systematic external intervention helped local communities implement the CBFM project.

The success of decentralisation reforms also requires securing local livelihoods, as the cases studies of Buenavista and Kalahan reserve demonstrate. Providing secure local livelihoods

through agroforestry, and a host of forest-based, agricultural, and non-agricultural activities tailored to local conditions has created the right circumstances for effective decentralisation. It shows that contextualisation and site-specific interventions/adaptive management help sustain this new forest management regime (see, Lejano et al., 2007). These are factors behind the success of decentralisation in forestry management, and should be promoted in the Philippines. Such outcomes also show that local places themselves have the capacity to promote sustainable development (see, Gibbs, 2005). To conclude, interventions at the local level that promote rural development contribute to decentralisation and to the capacity for self-management.

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