

Engaging the ARCP: Prospects for RDI Institutional Strengthening and Sustainability

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July of 1999, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) began implementing a six-year project called the Agrarian Reform Communities Project (ARCP). Funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Project cost is estimated at \$168.9 million.

The Project aims to increase income and agricultural production of agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) in 140 agrarian reform communities (ARCs) through four components: rural infrastructure, land survey, development support services and capacity building.

Anchored within the development support services component is the intervention for institutional strengthening. Implied under the same component is NGO participation. This stems from an ADB NGO-cooperation policy recognizing the 'comparative advantage' of nongovernment organizations in organizing communities and delivering social services.

Through a bidding process at the local level, the ADB awarded in July 2001 to NGO Rural Development Institute of Sultan Kudarat (RDI-SK) the contract to implement institutional development activities for the four ARCs of Masiag, Columbio, Pimbalayan and Lutayan. The contract ended December 2003.

Using Van Meter and Van Horn's model, this study attempts, for one, to show how institutional development implementation fared in the context of a partnership among RDI-SK, the DAR provincial office (DARPO), and the people's organizations. The study also aims to know what's in it for RDI-SK, in terms of organizational development and sustainability.

Three major organizations with different structures and functions were involved in implementing the institutional development interventions: DARPO, RDI-SK, and POs.

The four ARCs share socio-economic conditions of poverty, low income, and lack of alternative sources of livelihood. The four areas also share the same feature of lack of access to basic social services such as health centers, educational facilities, post harvest facilities and farm-to-market roads.

An assessment of the ARCP-institutional development implementation experience indicates the following:

- Project objectives and standards can be classified as output and activity levels given the short duration of RDI-DARPO contracts
- Inadequacy of resources caused the early termination of ID intervention
- Conduct of community consultations and planning workshops were the main processes in communicating development needs and provided the basis for ID interventions
- Lack of enforcement in operating the Agrarian Reform Community Working Group (ARCWG) limited inter-component and inter-agency coordination
- There was lack of policy support or an enabling environment through which ARCP-assisted areas could achieve the needed Land Bank accreditation to access credit support.
- In terms of outputs, RDI succeeded in organizing POs, training, and installing systems for operations and enterprise planning
- Difficulty in achieving significant increases in capital build-up and savings among the assisted-POs in the communities.

Insights gleaned from the engagement revealed the important element of complementing needs and resources.

By engaging the DARPO, RDI acquired legitimacy as a development organization and as partner of government in implementing programs. With RDI handling the institutional strengthening interventions, DARPO focused more on the pressing issue of land tenure improvement.

The nature of RDI as an NGO played a vital factor in supporting other relevant needs of the ARBs. Given its limitation, the institutional strengthening component, however, was unable to provide for other pressing needs in the community such as alternative sources of income. RDI responded to this by tapping its own organizational funds, thereby marking relevance in the RDI-DARPO and the RDI-PO levels of partnership.

Other insights are considered related to program design, some referring to the limited timeframe in NGO contracting, budget and parallel livelihood support. At the operational level, the Project could benefit more from

improvements in: a) enforcing participatory mechanisms such as the ARCWG; b) technology approach in productivity enhancement; and c) infrastructure projects such as farm-to-market roads.

With the termination of NGO services in the implementation of institutional strengthening interventions, challenges confront the RDI, the DARPO and the four project areas.

At the institutional level, this will mean stretching organizational resources at both DARPO and RDI to continue support to the beneficiaries' organizational development needs. This will mean a partnership framework that should be able to maximize the use of available resources and still allows both parties to pursue their own development agenda.

Overall, RDI's engagement with the project provided the organization opportunities beneficial in the short- and long-term periods. Institutionally, the short-term contracts with the DARPO provided RDI the vehicle to expand services and coverage. This will contribute in the long term to the building of PO alliances, thus gaining wider mass support for RDI's development agenda. The partnership developed with the DARPO has been strengthened with the ARCP engagement, which can contribute to RDI's meaningful participation in the wider arena of public policy.

I. RESEARCH OVERVIEW

A. Introduction

What makes an effective partnership? What underlying principles and critical factors make for successful partnerships between NGOs and government particularly in the context of an ODA engagement?

According to David, a University of the Philippines professor of community development, most NGOs in the Philippines in the 1980s was a mixed group of 'voluntary associations performing mostly welfare functions'. This description significantly changed during the ascendancy of Corazon Aquino into the presidency in 1986, which established wider political space and thus facilitated the 'mushrooming' of NGOs all over the country (1990:1).

Since 1986, NGOs have become involved in a 'complex web of relationships' with state agencies that recognized the growing importance of the NGO community. This growing recognition of NGOs' role in development has become a major opportunity (Clark 1994:199).

As institutions, NGOs are critical components of Philippine development because they promise ‘unlimited possibilities’ specifically in the areas of people empowerment, participation and the building of a strong democratic base. However, even as NGOs provide the venue for change, David argues there remain significant obstacles that NGOs confront to realize these goals (1990:3).

Today, one of the many challenges that NGOs confront is in the arena of participation in ODA-funded projects. In a study conducted by Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao Inc. (AFRIM) in 2001 on two ODA projects¹, NGO experiences in partnership left much to be desired.

“They [NGOs] did not feel like partners in the development of the agrarian reform communities,” cited AFRIM’s report (2001:8).

Accounting for much of the factors experienced by the NGOs appears institutional-related, particularly on the limited roles NGOs played in the engagement. Citing NGO experiences in the ARSP, the report disclosed that valid observations by the NGOs on the redundancy of conduit banks in the credit extension services of the project were not taken seriously by the ARSP banking expert.

Given the above experiences and the increasing number of ODA projects in the country, what is the prospect for effective NGO-GO partnership?

This study seeks to bring together the key learning points drawn up from the experience of RDI in that partnership in the context of the ARCP. Likewise, the study hopes to contribute to a better understanding of how NGO participation can be successfully pursued in ODA-funded projects to promote the development of agrarian reform communities.

B. Objectives of the study

This study is part of ODA Watch’s summing up of NGO experiences in ODA implementation. The study aims to assess RDI’s implementation experience in the ARCP by looking at its relationship with, among others, the Provincial Agrarian Reform Office of Sultan Kudarat and the ARCP beneficiaries. It also analyzes how the engagement contributes to RDI’s development and sustainability.

C. Framework

Following the framework on program implementation by Van Meter and Van Horn, the study argues that institutions, their nature, their dispositions,

and the environment where they operate contribute significantly to the performances of RDI, the DARPO and the beneficiaries in implementing the ARCP.

Van Meter and Van Horn's model of implementation study looks into six interrelated variables.

These variables explain the level of performance of the project being studied. These variables include project standards and objectives, resources, inter-organizational communications and enforcement activities, characteristics of implementing agencies, economic-social-cultural and political conditions, disposition of implementers, and performance. The study on RDI's ARCP engagement will revolve on these variables.

D. Methodologies

The study used the following methodologies:

- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). FGDs were conducted separately among RDI staff involved in the ARCP implementation and representatives of six ARCP-assisted people's organizations. The FGDs aimed to generate perspectives and experiences in project implementation. [Please see Annex 1 for the list of FGD participants.]
- Key Informant Interviews. Key informants were from the DAR Provincial Agrarian Reform Office (DARPO), including development facilitators and an officer from the beneficiaries' development and coordination division (BDCD). Officers of the ARCP area project office and the RDI executive director were also interviewed as key informants.
- Review of project documents and related literature. Project Reports, ARC and organizational profiles, other project-related documents such as ADB policies on NGO cooperation, and literature on NGO participation in ODA-funded projects were reviewed for this study.
- Validation-meeting. The researcher conducted a validation process as a feedback mechanism specifically to clarify and correct assumptions on the collected data. RDI staff and representatives from POs who attended the FGDs participated in the validation meeting.

E. Scope and Limitations

The ARCP is a comprehensive development package with the following designed interventions: rural infrastructure, land survey, development support, and project management and capacity building.

It was through community and institutional development support under the development support component that NGO engagement was cited to facilitate effective and organized community participation. While such component forms the nexus of this case study, the study also cite instances when interrelationships between components are mentioned, especially when relevant to the discussion.

In terms of events, the study relied on the respondents' experiences in the implementation of the community and institutional development support component of the project and *what*, *how* and *why* they think such elements and processes contributed to effective partnership. In terms of process, particular attention was paid on how the cooperation or NGO engagement was implemented in the community and the roles played by the informants in the implementation.

This study is neither an evaluation of the institutional development interventions conducted by RDI nor the implementation of the ARCP. Rather, the study describes and provides insights on how RDI was able to effectively interrelate with the DARPO and the POs and how its performance were achieved given the six variables under Van Meter and Van Horn's model.

II. CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

A. The Project

The Agrarian Reform Communities Project (ARCP) of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) is an Asian Development Bank (ADB)-funded project that aims to increase the income and agricultural production of agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs).

Its goal is also to improve the quality of life of the ARBs by providing basic infrastructure and development support services in the 140 agrarian reform communities (ARCs) in the country.

With total cost estimated at \$168.9 million, the project officially started in July 1999 and is expected to be completed in December 2005.

Table 1: Financing Plan (\$million)

Source	Foreign Exchange	Local Currency	Total Cost	Percent
ADB	40.3	52.9	93.2	55
LGUs		18.4	18.4	11
DAR/National Government	-	26.9	26.9	16
LBP	11.1	19.3	30.4	18
Total	51.4	117.5*	168.9	100

* inclusive of duties and taxes amounting to \$9.5 million equivalent

Table 1 shows the financing plan of the project.²

The project has four components.

First is rural infrastructure, which includes construction of farm-to-market roads, bridges, communal irrigation and water system, etc. This component is seen to improve the mobility of the beneficiaries and reduce the costs of farm inputs and marketing of produce. Support to rehabilitation, upgrading and or construction of irrigation systems is also provided to increase land productivity.

The second component is land survey of about 100,000 hectares of public land. This component will provide support funds for subdivision survey contracts for public alienable and disposable lands distributed under the CARP and expedite the titling. This component is vital because titles cannot be issued without a survey.

The third component is development support, which aims to increase production and income through technical, social and economic support services to the ARBs, cooperatives and communities. Its major interventions include agricultural development, rural enterprise development, community and institutional development and credit.

The fourth component is capacity building and project management and will include the establishment of a Central Project Management Office (CPMO) at the DAR Foreign Assistance Project Services Office to execute the Project. Area Project Offices (APOs) will also be established in Iloilo City for the Visayas, in Davao City for Mindanao and in Cotabato City for the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The APOs would provide technical assistance to LGUs for the formulation and implementation of subprojects.

Table 2 shows the breakdown of cost estimates by component.

Table 2: Summary of Project Cost Estimates
(\$'000 equivalent)

Item	Foreign Exchange	Local Currency	Total
A. Rural Infrastructure			
1. Access Infrastructure	13,600.0	45,208.6	58,808.6
2. Irrigation	5,107.1	10,497.0	15,604.1
3. Potable Water	1,942.9	1,944.0	3,886.9
Sub Total A	20,650.0	57,649.6	78,299.6
B. Land Survey	-	3,085.7	3,085.7
C. Development Support			
1. Agri Development	189.0	994.0	1,183.4
2. Rural Enterprise Dev	-	3,682.3	3,682.3
3. Community and Institutional Development	-	7,727.8	7,727.8
4. Credit	9,800.0	18,200.0	28,000.0
Sub Total C	9,989.4	30,604.1	40,593.5
D. Project Management			
1. CPMO	49.9	3,105.6	3,155.5
2. DAR Provincial Offices	395.6	4,069.4	4,465.0
3. Area Offices	66.1	1,170.3	1,236.4
Sub Total D	511.6	8,345.3	8,856.9
Total Base Costs (A+B+C+D)	31,151.0	99,684.7	130,835.7
Physical Contingencies	2,135.1	6,962.2	9,097.3
Price Contingencies	3,630.1	10,854.2	14,484.3
Interest during implementation	13,115.0	-	13,115.0
Commitment Charge	1,320.3	-	1,320.3
Total Project Costs*	51,351.5	117,501.1	168,852.6

As stated in the project document, communities for ARCP assistance were selected based on the following:

- (a) at least 75 percent of the land area subject for distribution under agrarian reform has already been distributed and titled;
- (b) provincial and municipal LGUs want to participate in the ARCP;
- (c) sufficiently developed people's organizations and farmers express commitment to the project; and,
- (d) the ARC lacks basic infrastructure and support services.

One of the provinces that qualified for the ARCP criteria is the province of Sultan Kudarat, the setting of this particular study. The project document did not cite criteria for NGO selection.

B. Rural Development Institute of Sultan Kudarat

Since NGO cooperation is implied under the development support services component, RDI was contracted to undertake intervention for community and institutional strengthening.

RDI-SK was established on October 1994 by the Philippine Peasant Institute (PPI) as one of its local centers for a regionalization program. In 1996, RDI-SK formed its own board of directors after PPI ended its regionalization program and decided to spin off all its RDIs.

Among the services that RDI provided include: social infrastructure building, productivity system enhancement, advocacy for asset reforms, capability building, policy and action researches and enterprise development. Past and present funding partners of RDI include the Inter-Church Cooperation of the Netherlands, the Foundation for Sustainable Societies Inc., Agrarian Reform Infrastructure Support Project 2, the European Union-funded Support to Agrarian Reform in Central Mindanao, and the ADB-DAR Agrarian Reform Communities Project.

Prior to the Project, the RDI and the DARPO already had previous engagements. In the 1990s, the RDI was involved by DAR in some training projects and in joint planning activities for the plantation workers of Kenram and the First Southern Land Development Corporation. No contracts governed that partnership then.

Under the ARCP engagement, RDI was contracted out by the DARPO to conduct institutional development activities in the ARCs of Masiag, Columbio, Pimbalayan and Lutayan from July 2001 to December 2003. NGO engagement was done at the local level through a bidding process, which RDI won after competing with Davao-based NGOs.

C. Profiles of the ARCs

The ARCP in Sultan Kudarat is implemented in four ARCs: barangay Masiag in the municipality of Bagumbayan; barangay Datalblao and Bantangan in Columbio; barangay Pimbalayan in Lambayong; and, barangays Lutayan Proper, Bayasong, Palavilla, Blingkong and Tamnag in the municipality of Lutayan.

Table 3 - The ARC Municipalities

MUNICIPALITY	CLASS	IRA	TOTAL LAND AREA (has)	POPULATION (individual)
Lutayan	4th	39,599,265	27,100	43,877
Lambayong	3rd	45,031,945	32,482.62	51,192
Cumbio	3rd	53,476,582	92,615	25,097
Bagumbayan	3rd	59,668,795	68,000	53,044

RDI's involvement in the ARCP started in July 2001 for communities covered under the Bagumbayan and Cumbio municipalities. In 2001, ARCP implementation was expanded to include the ARCs in Lutayan and Lambayong municipalities. The contract engaging RDI for institutional strengthening interventions ended in December 2003.



Figure 1: Map of the 4 ARCs in Sultan Kudarat

Table 4: Profile of the ARCs

ARC	BARANGAYS COVERED	POP (HH)	ETHNIC GROUPS	DEVELOPMENT NEEDS
Masiag, Bagumbayan	Masiag	1,154	Hiligaynon, Ilocano, Cebuano and Maguindanaon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · poor and impassable farm to market roads · unsafe drinking water · inadequate post-harvest facilities · lack of alternative sources of livelihood · lack of classrooms · lack of health facilities · insufficient electric power supply
Lutayan	Lutayan Proper Blingkong Bayasong Palavilla Tamnag	4,143	Maguindanaon, Ilonggo, Cebuano, Ilocano, B'laan, T'boli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · poor farm to market roads · inadequate post harvest facilities · lack of capital for livelihood projects · inadequate social services such as health facilities, potable water supply and classrooms · low farm productivity
Cumbio	Datalblao Bantangan	646	Maguindanaon, B'laan, Cebuano	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · poor farm to market roads · low agricultural production · lack of post harvest facilities · absence of electricity · low income
Pimbalayan, Lambayong	Pimbalayan	489	Maguindanaon, Ilonggo, Ilocano and Cebuano	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · low income · low price of farm produce · lack of farming technology · low productivity · high cost of transportation

Source: Municipal Planning and Development Offices of the four municipalities

Ethnic groups such as the Ilonggos, Maguindanaon, Ilocano, B'laan, Cebuano and the T'bolis live in the nine barangays covered by the ARCs. RDI conducts community organizing in these ethnically-diverse communities.

These communities were able to identify their development needs through participatory action planning and barangay consultation workshops facilitated both by the ARCP and RDI. As can be inferred from Table 2, the four ARCs share common development needs such as poor farm-to-market roads, inadequate post harvest facilities, low income, lack of alternative incomes and inadequate social services including potable water, health facilities and classrooms. These became the basis for ARCP interventions.

Table 5: Profile of People's Organizations

Name of Coop/ ARBO	# of Members	Capital Build-up Generated (as of December 2003)	Savings Generated (as of December 2003)
ARC Masiag			
Kipuso	32	26,200	4,612
Kalupe	22	6,200	1,700
Kawayan	27	7,150	1,690
Nalum	65	11,350	-
Upper Alas-as	17	6,500	800
Lower Alas-as	32	12,850	7,300
Dinaga-an	17	1,000	-
Kalasadan	20	2,000	-
Marbempco	358	1,088,890	127,032
ARC Lutayan			
Kalayaan ARB MPC	24	22,000	-
Bayasong ARB Credit Coop	33	13,980	-
Tamnag ARB MPC	34		-
Lutayan Proper ARB Credit Coop	73	63,000	-
Kalayaan Irrigators Association	83		-
Kapisanan ng mga Kababaihan sa Blingkong	284		-
Palavilla SCF MPC	73	111,781	-
Palavilla Irrigators Association	91		-
Lower Lutayan Community Irrigators Association	48		-
ARC Columbio			
Upper Telafas ARB MPC	20	12,500	-
Lower Telafas ARB Coop	35	12,400	-
Lamlutay ARB Coop	20		-
Datablao Irrigators Farmers Assn	69		-

Lasak ARB MPC	23	10,200	-
Libertad ARB Credit Coop	57	17,900	-
New Bantangan ARB Credit Coop	30	15,000	-
Datai Blao ARB MPC	-	-	-
ARC Pimbalayan			
Pimbalayan ARB Credit Coop	38	12,800	-
Women (RIC)	197	-	-
Pimbalayan Irrigators Assn	162	-	-

Source: RDI 2003 Annual Report to the DARPO

D. Peoples' Organizations in the ARCs

RDI serves a total of 37 POs in the four ARCs. These POs have membership ranging from a low of 17 to as many as 358. RDI organized the formation of these POs, except for the pre-ARCP Palavilla MPC and MARBEMPCO. [See Table 5]

An RDI report shows that ten or 34 percent of the 29 POs have yet to generate capital build-up requirements while 23 POs or 79 percent of the 29 POs have yet to generate savings. CBU and savings rates are prime institutional strengthening indicators under the ARCP.

While RDI's report described various schemes practiced by POs in generating CBUs, the most common is the retention of dividends. This refers to the member's dividends from the net income of the cooperative's operations. Other forms include communal farming and communal labor. A certain percentage is retained from the income of these activities and is added into the member's CBU level.

**The rice fields
in Lutayan
ARC**



RDI's report points to poor economic situation and skepticism of cooperative members as source of the cooperatives' difficulty in generating savings.

E. The Institutions at Play

The DARPO, the RDI and POs are the three major players involved in the implementation of the institutional strengthening component of the ARCP.

The DARPO is the government agency mandated to implement the country's agrarian reform program in Sultan Kudarat province. It exists as part of the national bureaucracy and, therefore, hierarchical in nature.

The DARPO is headed by the provincial agrarian reform officer (PARO) who reports to the regional director who in turn reports to the DAR's central office headed by the DAR Secretary. The DARPO gets a share from the national agency's budget as allocated in the General Appropriations Act.

The RDI-SK, on the other hand, is a nongovernment organization implementing development interventions. RDI has a vision of "self-determining communities whose development is founded on equity, ecological sustainability, gender equality, respect for people's rights and cultures, democratized household, economic and socio-cultural and political empowerment of the marginalized rural sectors and peoples." By nature, NGOs are small organizations characterized by flexibility and responsiveness. RDI belongs to this category and is the opposite to the bureaucracy type of organization to which the DARPO belongs.

In the context of the ARCP, RDI is an independent intermediary organization contracted out by the DARPO. Based on the nature of its services, the RDI was to conduct the necessary institutional strengthening interventions among POs, the intended beneficiaries of the DAR's agrarian reform program and the ARCP.

POs are groups that are community and or sector-based in membership. Members of the ARCP-assisted POs are agrarian reform beneficiaries being organized by RDI. POs are a critical factor in the ARCP implementation and in the whole agrarian reform program. While they are beneficiaries, their full participation is a basic requirement to achieving the Project objectives. The development of POs is ideally anchored on their vision that provides them direction and purpose.

Vision Statement of Pimbalayan ARB Credit Coop

“ A strong, steadfast, progressive and self-reliant cooperative founded on active officers and members who are actively working to respond and address the needs of each member and non-member and, more importantly, as instruments of unity towards holistic community development. ”

The three major players have different socio-political functions.

As the government’s implementing arm, the DARPO is tasked to deliver the agrarian reform services, including land distribution and other support services to ARBs. This function serves as a government’s approach to address the age-old issue of poverty in the country. Constrained, however, by the rigors of the bureaucracy, the DARPO may not be able to effectively deliver all services expected of it, particularly in the area of ARB organizing. Thus, the DARPO saw the need to engage NGOs (in this case RDI) who have the experience and expertise in community organizing and development.

As the contracting agency, the DARPO is also expected to provide the necessary financial and human resource. In the case of implementing the ARCP institutional strengthening component, the budget for NGO engagement comes from the Government of the Philippines (GOP). Based on the contract signed, RDI is paid for personnel costs as well as the costs of training activities for the ARCP-assisted POs. The DAR development facilitators (DFs) serve as the agency’s frontline in the ARC. DFs coordinate the implementation of the ARCP in the four communities. They work closely with community organizers of RDI and the POs as well.

RDI’s role in the ARCP is defined based on the agreed terms of reference (TOR). The TOR sets out the engagement objectives and the expected outputs. The latter is used to measure RDI’s performance. Primarily, RDI is tasked to conduct institutional strengthening interventions such as organize ARBs and capacitate POs in planning, resource accessing and membership expansion. These interventions are necessary to socially prepare POs and ARCs in self-management.

RDI also brings into the engagement, along with its experiences and expertise in community organizing, its development perspectives. For example, in the area of agricultural development, the principle of organic farming practices is integrated into the framework. RDI also provides support funds to POs for alternative income generating activities.

The POs, being the nexus of development interventions by both the DARPO and RDI, is tasked to plan and determine their development needs as well as the management of their own organizations and projects. With support from RDI, DARPO and the ARCP, the POs are expected to apply their knowledge and skills acquired from the ARCP-institutional strengthening interventions.

What the POs bring into the engagement is also varied. They contribute time and labor as counterparts to ARCP activities. They provide ideas in designing development assistance. They also contribute funds and participate in organizational activities. All these they do to achieve the ARCP project goals.

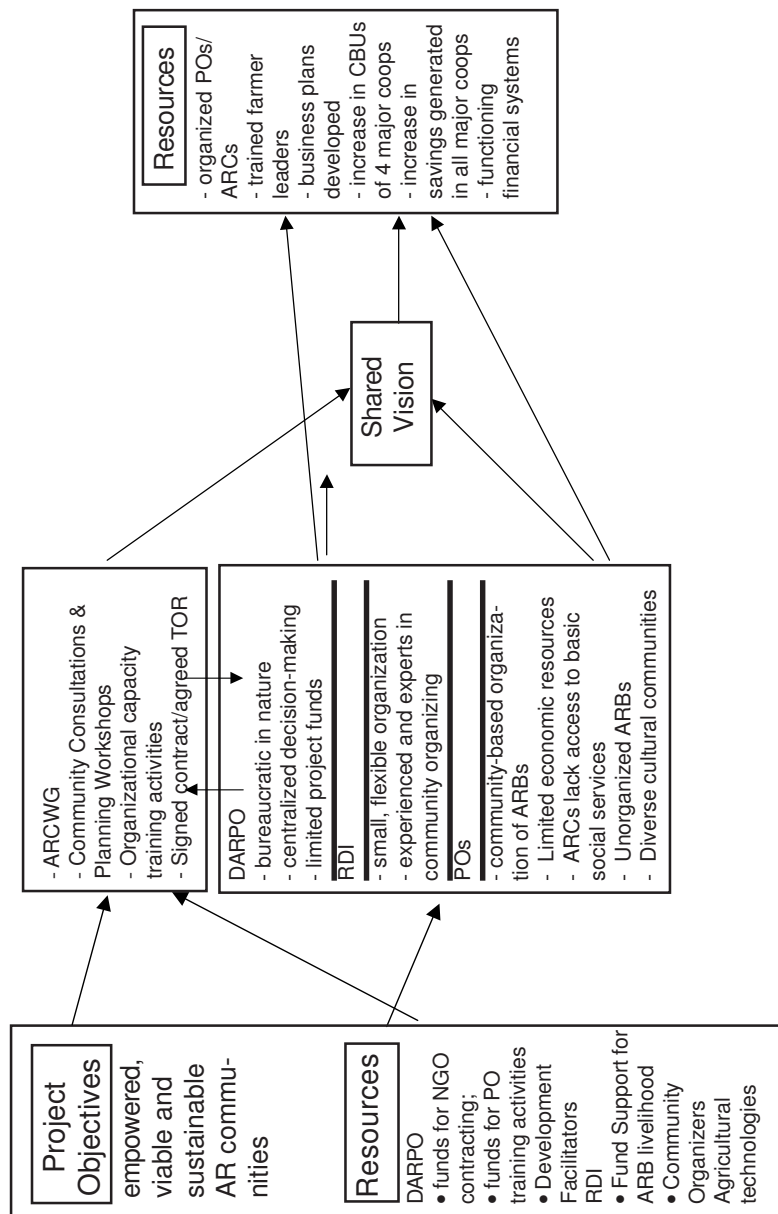
F. Policy on NGO Partnership

In 1998, the ADB approved a policy on cooperation with NGOs. Such policy essentially manifests the Bank's perspectives on NGOs as significant players in the development processes. It also recognizes competencies of NGOs as partners in development.

The Bank also defined three broad areas of cooperation where NGOs can participate: loan and technical assistance; programming and country-level work; and, policy development work.

Following the approval of the ARCP in 1999, ADB's policy on NGO cooperation was clearly practiced. The ARCP project document strongly emphasized the importance of NGO participation in the Project as they have the 'comparative advantage in community organization and organizing delivery of social services' (ADB 1998:24). Partnership therefore plays an important element in the implementation of the ARCP.

Implementing the ARCP Institutional Strengthening Component
Diagram 1. Framework for Analysis



III. IMPLEMENTING THE ARCP INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING COMPONENT

A. Project Standards and Objectives

RDI was mainly contracted for the ARCP's institutional strengthening component. This engagement spanned 29 months (July 2001 to December 2003) and aimed to strengthen agrarian reform communities, particularly the ARCP-assisted peoples organizations.

As basis for project standards and objectives, the study refers to the performance indicators or targets stated in the terms of reference signed between the RDI and the DARPO. Since 2001, contracts with RDI were renewed on a yearly basis. The study also noted two to three months lull period after expiration of contracts. The lull period was blamed to delay of funds intended for NGO contracting from the national government. This, however, did not stop RDI from providing continuous intervention to the ARCs. During this 'lull', RDI project staff were paid in full and debited from RDI funds.

The indicators presented by the study serve as reference for the institutional strengthening work performed by RDI. This is based on the last contract signed covering the ten-month period March to December 2003.

The 2003 annual accomplishment report submitted by RDI to the DARPO states the following specific objectives 'in pursuit of empowered, viable and sustainable communities in the ARC. (RDI 2003:1)

1. Sustain agrarian reform beneficiaries and non-ARB organizing by enhancing their capacities to develop, implement and sustain appropriate business plans or agri-enterprise plans
2. Sustain credit accessing activity with the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) and other financing institutions
3. Consolidate what has been achieved in the past two years and further enhance the capacities of partner cooperatives to expand membership and generate internally -sourced funds
4. Organize other strategic organizations in target ARCs in close coordination with MAROs and development facilitators.
5. Conduct ARB profiling in Masiag, Columbio, Pimbalayan and Lutayan

From the same document, the following serve as result indicators or expected outputs for the project objectives:

1. At least six business plans developed through a participatory process involving cooperative members;
2. At least 20 leaders (five from each ARC) trained and with acquired skills and knowledge in feasibility study preparation and business planning and management;
3. Five potentially new accessing cooperatives having completed the LBP's capacity building program;
4. Five cooperatives accredited with LBP and qualified to access loans from LBP or other financing institutions;
5. Organized additional ARBs totaling 150 in Masiag, 50 in Columbio, 300 in Pimbalayan and 100 in Lutayan;
6. Ten-percent capital increase of major partner cooperatives in each of the four ARCs;
7. Increased savings of five percent in all major partner cooperatives in each of the four ARCs;
8. Registration of seven newly organized cooperatives with the CDA;
9. Functional financial management system in all major assisted cooperatives and irrigators association;
10. Manual of operations in all major assisted cooperatives and irrigators association (IA); one IA organized each in Lutayan and Pimbalayan; two IAs with clear organizational structure, policies, systems and procedures, legal personality and officers with well-defined functions;
11. All assisted IAs have clear operations and maintenance plan to sustain the community irrigation system; 1 women association with appropriate enterprise development plan; and,
12. Profiled 1,000 agrarian reform beneficiaries in the four ARCs;

The framework from which this study anchors insists on the importance and clarity of project standards and objectives. It requires certain technicality in that standards and objectives should be 'self-evident and easily measurable' (1975:464). As a variable, it serves as basis for determining the level of performance achieved.

Applying this variable to RDI's ARCP engagement, one is confronted with two types of project standards. First is the results-level output. This

refers to the enhanced capacities of ARBs in the development and implementation of business plans as well as enhanced capacities of partner cooperatives in membership expansion and generation of internal resourced-funds.

The other type of project standard is the activity-level output, which includes organizing strategic organizations in the ARCs and the profiling of ARBs in the four communities of Masiag, Columbio, Pimbalayan and Lutayan. It is important that contracting parties understood this type of project standards so that accountabilities in terms of outputs are easily identified and considered in their appropriate context and, thus, have direct relation to inter-organizational communications and enforcement activities. As Van Meter and Van Horn simply put, objectives are easily carried out when these are clearly communicated and supported with ‘action-forcing mechanisms’ (1975: 466).

Project objectives are further defined quantitatively using measurable indicators. For example, the TOR clearly states how many leaders should have been trained and how many newly-organized cooperatives should have been registered with the CDA.

Outputs can also be qualitative as demonstrated in numbers 3 and 9. By clarifying outputs, both RDI and DARPO are guided on how performance will be assessed.

Formulating project standards and objectives was a challenging process. ARCP, as a nation-wide agency project, follows national targets.

In the initial contract, targets for institutional development were very high and considered unrealistic given the limited timeframe. RDI was compelled to conduct numerous training activities as identified in the contract, affecting POs with cases of “trainingitis”³. RDI expressed this concern to the DARPO and succeeding contracts included these concessions. In the later part of the engagement, RDI was able to provide inputs in the formulation of project standards and objectives that were more achievable and reasonable given the limited timeframe.

B. Resources

Resources committed by DARPO included fund support for RDI mobilization and personnel costs as well as funds for PO organizational and agri-technology training activities. By end of December 2003, a total of Php3 million⁴ were spent for this specific engagement, inclusive of management fees and the cost of training activities for ARBs.

The DARPO also provided development facilitators who RDI community organizers, the POs and ARBs directly coordinate with on ARCP matter and other concerns. The MARO, as a structure, is another important resource particularly in facilitating inter-agency meetings needed for implementing activities.

Resources committed by RDI, on the other hand, include experienced personnel in community development and agricultural extension and a variable amount from its own organizational budget for support to the ARBs' livelihood projects. For Upper Alas-as of the ARC of Masiag, an assistance of P10,000 was provided for their goat-raising project.

Resources, which can either be funds, personnel or incentives, facilitate the administration or execution of project objectives. Achieving targets may significantly be affected without this important resource. For example, the lack of fund support for PO capacity building activities has direct impact on the functionality and viability of POs.

As an IS intervention, community organizing process requires interpersonal relationship skills, communication skills, leadership and the appropriate development orientation. The DARPO and people's organizations recognize this strength in RDI, which greatly emanates from their 'home-grown' talents. Based in the community, the RDI staff are extensively exposed to the different cultural practices of Christians, the Moro and the indigenous peoples. Given the cultural diversity of the four ARCs, one can only imagine the complexity of the mix of strategies required to effectively organize these ethnic groups!

While the IS component is thriving in human and technology resources, it is however, constrained by insufficient funds. According to the DARPO, budget for this component is considered GOP counterpart. As such, it is basically dependent on the availability of funds from the national office. Thus, on ARCP's 5th year of implementation, or after December 2003, the component was shelved in the absence of fund support for NGO contracting.

C. Inter-organizational Communications and Enforcement Activities

The project employed several mechanisms in terms of inter-organizational communications. The Agrarian Reform Community Working Group or ARCWG is one mechanism established in each of the four ARCs to facilitate NGO and PO participation.

Initiated by the PARO, this group meets monthly to discuss and monitor the status of project implementation and clarify and resolve implementation

issues. It also provides stakeholders the opportunity to meet other ARCP implementers (such as the NIA and the LBP) and learn about project updates.

The ARCWG is an ideal structure for inter-agency coordination. However, enforcing the ARCWG as a participatory mechanism has been constrained by lack of resources. By the year 2003, the ARCWGs have not been functional, except for ARC Masiag.

The ARBs and POs' main process in communicating their development needs and plans is through community consultations and planning workshops facilitated by RDI and DARPO. Results of these exercises become the basis for ARCP interventions. Usually, these consultation and planning workshops are conducted locally to enjoin broader participation from the ARCs.

The conduct of organizational training activities provides the necessary input on PO development. This capacity building mechanism enforces project standards and objectives in terms of achieving the desired output of enhanced PO capacities in organizational and project management.

However, as illustrated by the Van Meter and Van Horn model, this variable is also directly affected by the availability of resources. The lack of needed implements hampers the mechanisms for communications and enforcement activities.

A contract renewed annually formally governs the engagement between the DARPO and RDI. Aside from the fees, this document stipulates terms of reference, particularly the expected responsibilities to be performed and the outputs to be achieved by both parties. As a legal document, it enforces the execution of the signed agreement.

This contract, however, does not deter RDI from fulfilling its other organizational mandate. Contract or no contract, RDI continues to provide development interventions to the four ARCs. It provided not only institutional strengthening activities but also other relevant services to the ARCP-assisted areas.

D. Characteristics of Implementing Agencies

As part of the national bureaucracy, the DARPO is tied to its mandate and hierarchical nature. Its decision-making processes are centralized and its functions are compartmentalized according to specific divisions. The DARPO's total 118 staff are governed by an employer-employee relationship and paid according to the set salary grade of the government.

DARPO staff competencies are geared towards managing the agrarian reform program and not necessarily community organizing. The institution requires legal documentation of all partnerships it enters into.

RDI, on the other hand, enjoys a smaller and more flexible organizational structure that can easily adjust relative to the needs of the environment where it operates. It has 15 staff whose main expertise is community organizing. RDI also enjoys a pool of community volunteers.

By being less bureaucratic in nature, RDI practices consultative decision-making and allows staff to decide on the strategies that they find workable in their respective areas of coverage.

Fulfilling their ARCP engagement, RDI notes that they perform even beyond the contract. Because they live in the communities they work with, they are always in direct contact with the project beneficiaries. RDI also taps its own organizational resources to address practical and small, simple needs of the ARBs –livelihood support, for example– that are excluded from the institutional development contract’s coverage. RDI’s role has thus expanded to include supporting productivity systems aside from conducting institutional strengthening activities.

In the context of the ARCP, people’s organizations are the main recipients of the development interventions. Although considered partners, POs rely on RDI and DARPO for technical assistance in developing their organizations and access to basic services.

E. Economic, Social and Political Conditions

As a project, ARCP’s goal to alleviate poverty implies a general assessment that the economic conditions in the ARCs are relatively poor. The same can also be said from the ARBs’ savings mobilization rates (RDI 2003 Accomplishment Report) at only 8.56-percent overall increase in the four ARCs (RDI 2003:6). These mean the beneficiaries have limited economic resources from which they can generate savings.

Belonging to the third and fourth income class, beneficiaries in the four ARCs also face lack of water, health facilities, livelihood and infrastructure support, or the basic requirements for a higher level of quality of life.

Coupled with this is the intermittent violence in some areas in the ARCs. For example, residents in the crossfire between MILF and government forces were eventually displaced from ARC Pimbalayan.

Addressing this development needs require enormous resources from all sectors of the society. However, making adequate and frequently available these resources, especially within DARPO as the ARCP executing agency, remains an important consideration since implementers have experienced difficulties in funding the needed interventions. Political support in terms of increasing the agency's budget has not been achieved given that the national government is operating on a re-enacted budget.

F. Disposition of Implementers

Based on Van Horn and Van Meter's framework, the execution of the project, in terms of implementers' ability and willingness, may be affected by three elements: cognition (comprehension, understanding) of the policy; the direction of response toward it (acceptance, neutrality, rejection); and, the intensity of that response.

These elements were manifested in the implementers' response to the project. In terms of cognition, particularly on the stated project standards and objectives, all three shared the same understanding on the need for institutional development interventions as an approach to empowering ARCs.

Likewise, DARPO, RDI and the POs shared the same vision of a better quality of life among ARBs.

Specifically for RDI, the institutional strengthening interventions are perceived as a good program for beneficiary development. While the approach is group organizing, RDI performed this task cognizant that individual community members could access basic social services in the long term. This element of shared understanding contributes significantly to easier project implementation.

The second element refers to the direction of the response to the project. Van Meter and Van Horn explained that implementers may accept, stay neutral or reject some aspects of the project (1975:472). For example, failures in the execution of project policies may occur if they are not favorable to the implementers.

From the ARCP experience, varied type of directions of responses can be observed from each of the three institutions at play.

During a focus-group discussion, PO members expressed strong feelings against LandBank's accreditation criteria, seen as stringent and hamper ARBs' access to livelihood support. As of end December 2003, only two of five

targeted cooperatives were able to complete the LBP capacity building program yet these two cooperatives were still unable to secure LBP's accreditation.

With limited funds for institutional development, the DARPO had no choice but to stop NGO contracting.

The third element is the intensity of responses.

Van Meter and Van Horn assert that the intensity of implementers' disposition affects project performance (1975:473). The intensity of RDI's response to the development needs of the ARCs is demonstrated by its continued interventions even after its contract with DARPO ended. This disposition reflects fidelity in the shared vision.

Likewise, the intensity of the ARBs' responses to the project can be gleaned from their participation in community organizing activities, particularly in capital build up and generating savings. As shared during the FGD, appreciation of the project was generally high among the four ARCs.

E. Project Outputs

The project achieved the following outputs by end of December 2003:

1. Six POs drafted six business plans;
2. Trained 40 leaders from four ARCs on business planning and management;
3. Two of five target cooperatives completed Landbank's capacity building program;
4. A total of 375 additional beneficiaries (62.5 percent) in the four ARCs of the target 600 ARBs for membership expansion;
5. Over-all increase by 12.72 percent on CBU generation in the four ARCs, based on January 2003 baseline figures;
6. Facilitated CDA registration of four cooperatives in Lutayan, Columbio and Pimbalayan ARCs;
7. Defined MARBEMPCO 3-year plan and 1-year operational/rehabilitation plan;
8. Functional financial management system in all assisted coops;
9. Manual of operations in all assisted coops;
10. Organized one irrigators association each in Lutayan and Pimbalayan

ARCs and registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC);

11. Organized and strengthened two women organizations in Blinkong and Pimbalayan; gained MLGU accreditation with defined organizational structure, systems and procedures and enterprise plans; and,
12. 811 ARBs profiled from the four ARCs; profiles collated, completed and submitted

The RDI report cited that facilitating LBP accreditation and the generation of CBU and savings were the outputs most difficult to achieve.

The LBP accreditation is important because it would facilitate ARBs' access to credit support. Credit support is one of ARCP's major components but is lodged within Landbank's facility. ARCP-assisted POs faced difficulties securing accreditation because they cannot achieve guidelines within the given timeframe.

The Landbank required a Certificate of Good Standing from the CDA, granted only to cooperatives with at least three years of operations. Sadly, this requirement cannot be applied to the ARCP-assisted cooperatives since they were organized by RDI mid-2001 to 2003 and only two (Palavilla and MARBEMPCO) of the 28 POs in the service areas were existing before the ARCP.

Generating CBU and savings are important standards for PO viability. Achievement of this standard is largely affected by existing economic conditions of the ARBs. With poor economic conditions, generating CBU and savings was least of the ARBs' priority. Thus, PO leaders and managers had to be creative in identifying mechanisms to ensure collection of CBUs and savings from the membership.

The critical factor cited by both DARPO and RDI in the achievement of outputs is the high level of partnership developed between the DARPO and RDI and between RDI and the POs.

During the interview, development facilitators described their partnership with RDI in positive terms. They attribute this to the nature of RDI as an NGO, which is able to immerse well in the culturally diverse communities they serve and with clear development goals of community mobilization and empowerment⁵.

They also appreciated RDI's efforts in complementing their community development work. RDI workers relate well with communities of diverse cultures.

Rhea Betque of the DARPO's BD CD⁶ reported that RDI maintained its good standing in the DARPO in the three years of its engagement. Proof of this is the fact that among the provinces where the ARCP is implemented, Sultan Kudarat DARPO stands out as the only one whose NGO partner was not changed since 2001⁷. Furthermore, the partnership with RDI is so institutionally entrenched in the DARPO that whoever sits as the PARO head will likely maintain the same regard on RDI.

RDI seriously pursued coordination with the DARPO, in whatever ARC activity, from simple community meetings to conduct of training. The DARPO and RDI also share a sense of confidence between them. RDI staff cited instances of management fees being paid on time even if RDI reports are a bit delayed.

On the other hand, PO members described their partnership experiences with RDI as very satisfactory⁸. They said RDI facilitated the development of



The community organizers of RDI

their organization, mobilized their ARCs into action through community planning, and trained them in management, sustainable agriculture technologies and business planning. RDI also helped provide them with livelihood support projects. More importantly, RDI continued implementing institutional strengthening interventions even after the contract with the DARPO has ended. RDI performed these because, the PO members said, the local NGO staff not only know but also feel their needs and aspirations.

RDI describes their relationship with the DARPO as collaborative. This level of partnership has been achieved over long years of joint projects, organizing plantation workers and strengthening ARB organizations. There were occasions when they were at opposing ends but they have always maintained communication as well as respect for their respective positions. RDI's record of accomplishment has long been established with the DARPO even before the ARCP implementation began.

At this point in the ARCP implementation, it is difficult to ascertain if the general objective of empowered, viable and sustainable agrarian reform communities was achieved given that the project is continuing. A major concern here, however, is looking at how government prioritize support for institutional strengthening interventions for ARCP-assisted organizations. This is clearly manifested in the short-term duration of engaging NGO partners.

IV. PROSPECTS FOR RDI INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

A. Insights from the Engagement

THERE are emerging generalizations in the RDI-DARPO relationship in the context of the ARCP implementation. The study argues strongly that both institutions who both share the goal of agrarian reform derived considerable developmental benefits and advanced their respective interests through the engagement.

For RDI, implementing the ARCP in partnership with the DARPO, has brought it legitimacy as well as acceptability as a development force in the province. This element of legitimacy implies institutional strength, including capacity to engage the bureaucracy in implementing development programs. In the long run, this will provide opportunities for RDI to expand its services and participate in policy level work on agrarian reform. On the other hand, RDI's participation in the project gave DARPO the opportunity to focus more on the pressing issue on land tenure improvement.

In operational terms, the partnership between RDI and DARPO can be described in two levels: contracted service delivery and a shared vision of bringing about broader socio-political and economic change.

B. Contracted Service Delivery

UNDER the contracted service delivery arrangement, the DARPO acts as the subcontracting entity paying for RDI's services that, in turn, helps DARPO meet its own objectives. With this arrangement, a fee for service relationship exists.

This relationship implies that DARPO recognized RDI competency to carry out the deliverables.

An important layer under this contract is the element of sub-grant which facilitates direct funding for identified training activities. Aside from paying RDI management fees for the institutional strengthening contract, DARPO directly releases to RDI funds for the conduct of training activities. This mechanism provides RDI greater control over designing, implementing and managing the conduct of these activities.

Consequently, it facilitates project ownership within RDI with the opportunity to contribute in-house expertise on the different modules on organizational development.

C. Working beyond Contracts

UNDER the second dimension, the RDI-DARPO and RDI-PO partnership is beyond ARCP implementation, in that it is based on a common-shared goal of bringing about socio-political and economic changes through agrarian reform. Past and current experiences with the DARPO attest to this level of partnership that both entities can work together even in the absence of a contract that governs the partnership.

This shared goal is being strengthened with RDI's Executive Director sitting as Chairperson of the Provincial Agrarian Reform Coordinating Committee (PARCOM). Strategically for RDI, involvement in this policy recommending body is an opportunity that bears significantly on popular interests. The DARPO, likewise, expects RDI to be the people's 'mouthpiece' and effectively articulate opinions and positions on issues concerning the masses.

The moral ascendancy of the RDI as an NGO played a significant push in performing roles beyond the institutional strengthening contract. The agenda

of bringing about socio-political and economic changes in the communities they organize is evident in the livelihood support it provides and in the alliances it facilitates for the ARCP-assisted areas beyond December 2003, the close of their IS contract. RDI continued with its work with the ARCP communities beyond 2003 to help sustain the development momentum achieved by the POs they have organized.

An important mechanism established by RDI to sustain ARCP gains is the development of a provincial alliance called *Katipunan ng mga Samahan ng Maralita Sa Kanayunan–Alyansa ng mga Maralita sa Sultan Kudarat*. Leaders of three organizations from the ARCP-assisted areas are KASAMAKA co-convenors.

For RDI, the need for this umbrella organization is imperative not only for sustaining gains but more importantly, for serving as a catalyst and ally in bringing about broader socio-political and economic changes in the area.

A second mechanism strongly pursued by RDI involved participating in the EU-funded Support to Agrarian Reform in Central Mindanao (STARCM) Project. With this, the RDI-SK was awarded in May 2003 a contract to strengthen peoples organizations in the ARCs of Masiag, Columbio and Pimbalayan (the ARC of Lutayan is the only ARCP-assisted site excluded in the STARCM contract).

Although the approach is slightly different from that of ARCP institutional development framework, the engagement is still an important resource in sustaining ARCP interventions in these communities.

These insights reveal the varying roles and potentials of RDI as a development institution. RDI engages partnerships strategically, even giving more than what are expected, to pursue its development agenda of people empowerment. To a certain extent, RDI participation in the ARCP implementation contributes to the sustainability of the project.

D. Conceptual and Operational Issues

GIVEN the strength of RDI in community organizing, difficulties were still encountered in achieving targets. The difficulties experienced can be classified in both conceptual and operational terms.

At the conceptual level, a 10-month contract period is short or not enough to organize and strengthen community organizations, especially since sustainability mechanisms are lacking. DARPO and APO Institutional Development Officers explained that NGO-led institutional strengthening

interventions are part of a six-year project cycle. The contract period also does not realistically reflect the very nature of community development as a continuous process. Literally, community development does not end when contracts end.

Secondly, to use Landbank's qualification guidelines so that POs could access credit support may not be achievable given the ARCP context. Based on RDI's terminal report of December 2003, only two of five targeted cooperatives completed Landbank's capacity building program. However, these cooperatives were still unable to secure Landbank's cooperative accreditation. These accreditation guidelines could have been negotiated within the ARCP to facilitate beneficiaries' access to credit. The DARPO, however, understood RDI's level of achievement on this specific output: RDI has no control over some project policy issues.

Thirdly, while institutional development is a crucial component for POs, its implementation could have been more effective if there was parallel livelihood support. Not only would the approach build POs' capacity in terms of project management but, more importantly, there would have been direct intervention to provide alternative sources of income. For example, the development of business plans could have been more relevant if these had immediate fund support.

Issues in coordinating other ARCP components e.g., agricultural development, arose when the ARCWG stopped meeting beginning 2003. For example, RDI was unaware of who the DARPO and barangay selected as beneficiaries for the agricultural development component, thereby confusing targets of RDI's community organizing work whether they should be organized or not to avail of projects. The ARC group could have provided a venue to discuss such issue.

RDI and agricultural development implementers also differ in technology approach on productivity enhancement. While RDI advocates for organic way of farming, the use of synthetic inputs for farm production is demonstrated in the ARCP-assisted areas. Area project officers claimed that there are no rules governing ARCP's agricultural development frameworks on productivity enhancement methods. They said the approach is tactical rather than strategic, depending on on-site conditions. This conflicts with RDI's sustainable agriculture framework. Aside from reflecting lack of coordination among implementers, this situation sends mixed signals to the project beneficiaries.

The participants also expressed disappointment over the delay of infrastructure projects, especially farm-to-market roads. In particular, participants from Lutayan said that very bad road conditions doom their chances for better market prices of their produce.

The DARPO and Area Project Officers blamed the delay in infrastructure development to the project policy requiring equity from LGU proponents.

E. Positive Scenario

THE ARCP contract allowed RDI to expand operations and services, increased its visibility and acceptability to the local government, enhanced its legitimacy as a development player, and expanded the major roles it played and continuously plays, e.g., from implementing projects to contributing in formulating project and public policies.

F. Challenging Scenario

Engagement in the ARCP also brought about financial challenges in RDI operations, especially during the three months between the end and beginning of a contract.

During this renegotiation period, RDI shouldered staff salaries while continuing interventions on behalf of the Project. RDI did not get refunds for whatever it spent during the renegotiation period.

Despite limited resources, RDI did not downscale or stop operations in the ARCP-assisted areas.

G. Institutional Roles

The challenges posed in the RDI-DARPO-PO partnership lies on the institutional roles each one perform.

RDI, for one, needs to pursue two main tasks: strengthening the organization and pursuing socio-political and economic changes. DARPO, for another, has a role to play in creating an enabling environment for RDI to work on.

More appropriate mechanisms can be established to tap RDI's experience and expertise not only in the planning and implementation of their programs and services but also in the general policy-making processes.

Nonetheless, challenges faced by the ARCP-assisted POs remain overwhelming. Given their current organizational development stage, POs need all the support they can get from both RDI and DARPO.

The need to go beyond the contracted service delivery arrangement may be the only realistic option.

Only from the POs viewpoint can the relevance and effectiveness of both institutions be truly assessed.

V. CONCLUSION

RDI's engagement in the ARCP provides lessons in partnership building and meaningful NGO participation in the wider arena of ODA-funded projects.

The NGO's experience in working with government bureaucracy reveals how partnerships can be forged. Unlike negative experiences in other GO-NGO collaboration, the ARCP shows a viable partnership between the RDI and the DARPO.

This partnership, however, did not happen overnight and developed sans difficulties. Even at the onset of the ARCP engagement, this partnership was rocked with disagreements over project objectives and standards. Transcending from a situation of discord, both parties moved to a more amiable working condition. Such level was achieved when DARPO gave RDI the flexibility and discretion to use more appropriate strategies to better achieve project results.

An important element that can be gleaned in the RDI-DARPO relationship is the recognition and respect for each other's capacity. As manifested in the sub-grant mechanism, DARPO provided RDI a certain degree of control in implementing organizational-related training activities for the POs they both serve.

In spite of the positive relations RDI had with the DARPO and the POs, difficulties were experienced in the areas of project resources and in the enforcement of participatory mechanism such as the ARCWG. Some expected project outputs were not achieved due to the restrictive policy guidelines enforced by other stakeholders such as the Landbank and the CDA.

On the whole, implementing an ODA-funded project such as the ARCP remains to be very financially challenging. On its fifth year of implementation, NGO services for institutional development have been terminated due to lack of project funds. This is critical because institutional development as an intervention contributes to the project objective of "empowered, viable and sustainable communities in the ARC."

Implementing an ODA-funded project is also challenging in other respect: is the NGO-GO partnership valid and feasible?

With increasing collaboration, such partnership remains valid. What is most challenging is making this partnership fully operational. Despite difficulties doing so, partnership still has real value as a philosophy underlying institutional development.

According to Goyder, the partnership could be sustained if it goes beyond funding, to a real long term commitment to the development of both institutions and the public they serve (1998: 3). This happened in the ARCP in Sultan Kudarat. It can happen elsewhere, especially where there is compatibility of vision, goals and objectives between and among the partners concerned.

This was what occurred in the RDI-DARPO-PO collaboration; a feat too rare in practice.

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Endnotes:

- ¹ The ODA projects were the Agrarian Reform Support Project (ARSP) and Agrarian Reform Community Development Project (ARCDP). p. 151
- ² www.adb.org. p. 154
- ³ *training-fatigue*. p. 167
- ⁴ *P3,034,886.98*. p. 167
- ⁵ Interview conducted on March 29, 2004. p. 173
- ⁶ The BDCD is tasked with the ARCP institutional strengthening component. p. 174
- ⁷ Interview conducted on June 7, 2004. p. 174
- ⁸ FGD conducted on March 29, 2004. p. 174