

A Policy Brief on the Costs of Land Use Planning in the Philippines

Environment and Rural Development Program

Context

Land is not only of cultural and historical significance, but is a source of political power due to its productive assets. With a majority of Filipinos dependent on the rapidly dwindling natural resources for their livelihoods, land use planning offers a tested and affordable strategy needed to address economic, social and environmental concerns.

Of the total 30 million hectares land area of the Philippine, nearly half is titled to mostly private owners, thus classified as Alienable and Disposable (A&D) land. On the other hand, 52% of the land is legally classified as forestlands under the stewardship of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). With only 7 million hectares of forests remaining this vast area in the public domain is more readily characterized by conflicts of interests and rapid degradation of natural resources. These problems along with food insecurity, insufficient water supply, sprawl of informal settlements and high disaster risk are consequences of inefficient land management.

For two decades the Philippines has attempted to pass a national land use legislation that would prioritize and synchronize long-term environmental sustainability, local productive capacity and overall social equity. Population growth and climate change pose even more competition on the limited available land, thus adding urgency for a comprehensive National Land Use Act for the rational governance and sustainable utilization of land and natural resources of the Philippines.

- **Land use planning remain sectoral and fragmented in approach**

Unsound and inefficient land use planning as well as resource governance spans across

ecosystems from ridge to reef. Specifically, these encompasses conflicting legislation and authority, overlapping tenure claims and conflicts of interest, weak enforcement of zoning ordinances for critical areas, limited resources of Local Government Units (LGUs). Land use planning is an interactive process based on the dialogue amongst all stakeholders aiming to define sustainable land uses.

- **Co-management of forestlands as defined in the Local Government Code is key**

Rendering forestlands 'open access' has intensified resource exploitation by an array of actors. Further complicating the situation is that at least 25 million people live on these public forestlands without legal tenure and most often in dire poverty. Clearly, various policies are already in place for the participation of communities in the protection, rehabilitation, management and utilization of forestlands, but implementation of these policies remain program-driven by nature.

- **Implementation and monitoring of measures to realize the agreed land uses remain limited**

Most land use plans focus on built-up and agricultural areas. Even on A&D land, boundaries and zoning ordinances are often unclear or not enforced, leading inter alia to conflicts and conversions to non-agricultural lands (e.g. for mining, bio-fuels or foreign direct investments). The current predicament of the people, resource mismanagement and resulting degradation are failures on part of the state, effectively constituting a major policy risk.

Recommendations

Systematic land use planning must be rolled out nationally

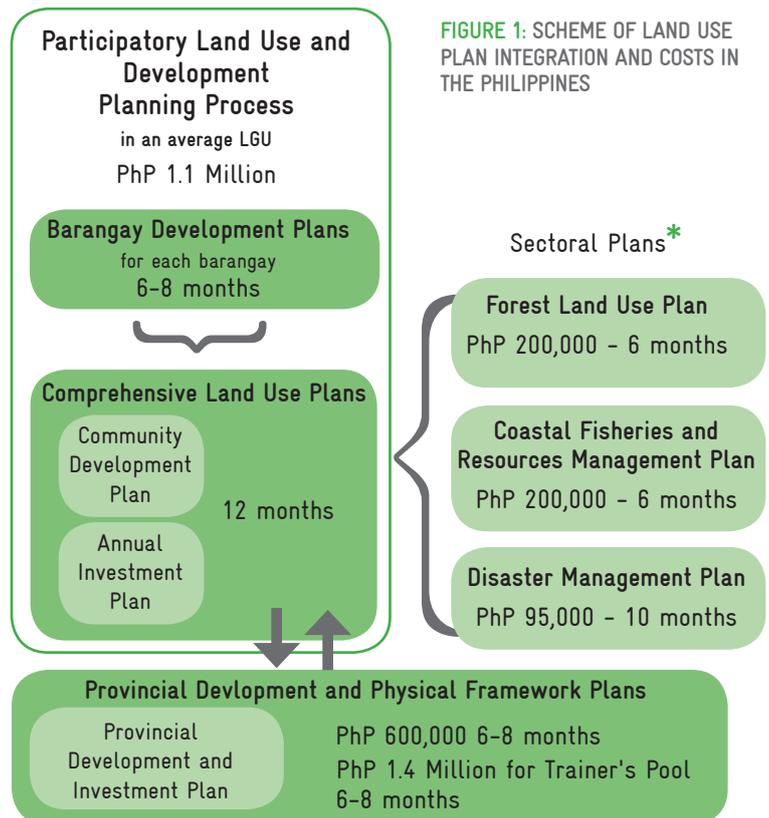
- A country-wide boundary delineation, particularly of forestland areas, which is especially necessary if Executive Order 23 ('log ban') is to be implemented.

Salient points of a comprehensive National Land Use Act

- **Implement** countrywide coherent, effective and integrated land use planning;
- **Secure** land tenure and use rights for upland communities;
- **Expand** co-management of forestlands between DENR and LGUs; and to
- **Resolve** conflicting legislations, especially in coastal management.

Main costs (all cities and municipalities)

- **Comprehensive Land Use plans through the Participatory Land Use Development Planning** (138 cities and 1,496 municipalities)
Cost: PhP1.8 billion
- **Integration of Forest Land Use Plans into the Comprehensive Land Use Plans** (85% of LGUs that have forestland area)
Cost: PhP260 million
- **Integration of Coastal Fisheries and Resources Management Plans into the Comprehensive Land Use Plans** (all LGUs with coastal access)
Cost: PhP200 million
- **Integration of Disaster Preparedness Plans**
Cost: PhP150 million
- **Trainer's Pool** that support planning at all levels and create great efficiencies as well as for their Provincial Development and Physical Framework Plans.
Cost: PhP1.1 billion



* This figure excludes costs for sectoral planning for social, economic, infrastructure and institutional.

Expected Benefits

The benefits of land use planning are evident and should be harnessed, including:

- Having a clear framework for the improved management and protection of natural resources;
- Boundary disputes are reduced through delineation and ordinances;
- Development needs can be voiced and budgets allocated appropriately; and
- Basis of tenure security for uplands population as incentive for sustainable management.

Ultimately, overall sustainable management of the nation's resources depends on the respective owners exercising their rights and duties to protect, develop and use their land areas.

For more information

Dr. Walter Salzer

Program Director and Principal Advisor

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

2B PDCP Bank Center, V.A. Rufino corner L.P. Leviste Sts. Salcedo Village, Makati City, Philippines

Phone +63 2 892 9051 local 101

Email walter.salzer@giz.de

Fax +62 2 892 3374

Website: www.enrdph.org