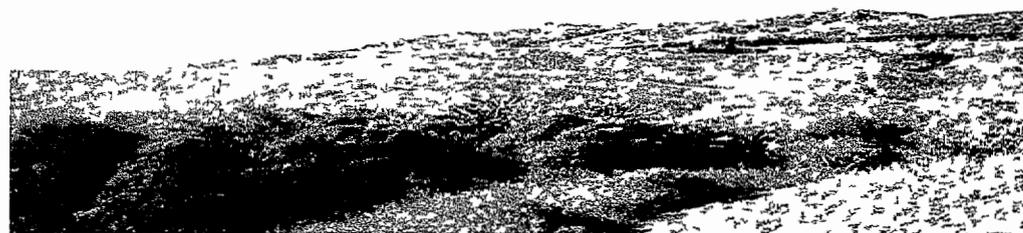
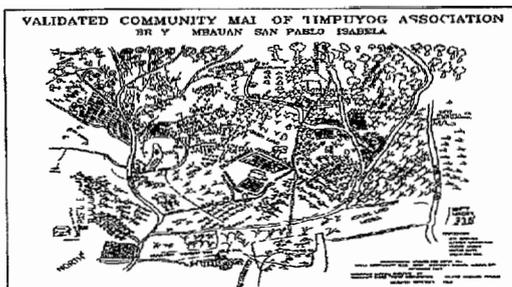


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COMMUNITY BASED FOREST REGENERATION  
AND RELATED RESEARCH PROJECT  
*COMFREP*

**MID-TERM PROGRAM REPORT**  
*July 1997 to January 1999*



COMFREP is a collaboration between PLAN International, the United States Agency for International Development, and the Isabela State University through the Cagayan Valley Programme for Environment and Development

**PLAN International**  
**COMMUNITY BASED FOREST REGENERATION**  
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**COMMUNITY BASED FOREST REGENERATION**  
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Name of Grantee	PLAN International
Project Description	Strengthening the Center for Excellence in Community-Based Forest Regeneration and Related Research in Region 2
Grant Number	492-A-00-97-0047
Activity Title	492-0444
Grant Amount	US\$ 785 650 00
Effective Date	July 21, 1997
Completion Date	July 20, 2000

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**PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The Cagayan Valley Program for Environment and Development (CVPED), PLAN International - Philippines and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Region 2 discussed the prospect of establishing a Community-Based Forest Regeneration and Related Research Project at the Isabela State University's College of Forestry and Environmental Management (ISU-CFEM) in Cabagan, Isabela way back in March 1995. The project would compliment existing conservation and resource management activities being done in the Northern Sierra Madre. However, the long-term vision is for ISU to become a 'Center of Excellence' in community-based forest regeneration in Northern Luzon.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Community-Based Forest Regeneration and Related Research Project is a joint undertaking between PLAN International and CVPED with initial funding for three (3) years from the United States Assistance for International Development (USAID). PLAN International, the primary recipient, handles the project administration and infuses its own fund of US\$ 350,000 00 to dovetail its regular community development activities with the research component of the project. The Isabela State University's College of Forestry and Environmental Management and Leiden University, through CVPED, carry out the action-research part.

## **PROGRAM ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS**

The project is constantly undergoing a learning process where activities and issues are reflected upon and analyzed in the hope that a better strategy and approach is developed. Much has happened in the project during the last 18 months such that what was determined at the beginning has evolved into a more responsive and contextually appropriate strategy. Yet, despite the changes and modifications that have occurred along the implementation process, the spirit and objective of the project steadfastly remains. The process has been difficult since the nature and approach of the project is unlike any other environment and development-focused project.

The current state of project activities are now much in-line with the basic framework that was initially developed (Appendix B Project Operations Framework). The backlog that resulted during the first 12 months of project implementation has been responded to with relative success. Much of the crisis and conflicts arising from the field are now manageable. The project is now more capable of pursuing intensive community work as well as research activities. Project activities during this period may be understood in three major aspects: Organizational set-up, Community Organizing, and Research (Appendix C Time Line of Major Project Activities).

### **ORGANIZATIONAL SET-UP**

On June 1998, after almost a year of project implementation, the project established its own project management office at the Environmental Information Center. Prior to this arrangement, the project shared a designated space with another project making it difficult to conduct project activities. The move into a separate office allowed greater movement and coordination.

Following the Execom's Fourth Meeting, a tripartite body composed of representatives from USAID, PLAN, and ISU initiated a thorough review of project activities and developments. The review was brought about by existing and potential project operational concerns that had serious effect on the over-all project activities. Discussions revealed the need to affect project management and impose modifications on the over-all project management structure. Hence restructuring efforts were initiated on May 1998 which resulted in the re-definition of key project positions and the addition of new personnel. The new project organizational structure was presented and approved during the Execom's Fifth Meeting (Appendix A COMFREP's Organizational Set-up).

### **COMMUNITY ORGANIZING**

The final selection of project sites was only accomplished 8 months after the project began. As such, organization efforts, capability building, and determining strategic priorities were not immediately pursued. This delay inhibited much of

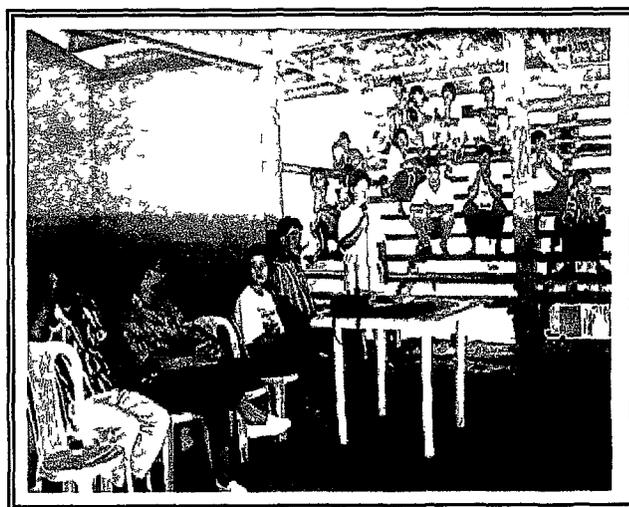
project activities since it was prescribed that research and project activities be initiated by communities. By April, the following communities were selected as project sites

- ◆ Lapi, Peñablanca, Cagayan
- ◆ Limbawan, San Pablo, Isabela
- ◆ Antagan I, Tumauini, Isabela
- ◆ Campamento, Diffun, Quirino
- ◆ Cabua-an, Maddela, Quirino

The communities have submitted their resolution committing their services to the project. Areas for development have also been identified. However, inconsistent project presentations and the lack of coordination between project management and field staff have inhibited effective organizing efforts. This was a great concern in the case of Cabua-an where communities became confused as to the purpose and approach of the project due to contradictory interpretations presented by various project personnel. The crisis, however, was properly managed and communities have regained their confidence in the project.



*COMFREP's Project Manager Dr. Roger Guzman and Project staff participating in a discussion with Cabua-an community members*



*CDS Judy Lazo facilitating a meeting with barangay officials in Campamento*



*COMFREP's Finance Assistant Carlos Santos explaining to community members financial aspects of the Project Design Outline*

Much of the activities during the last six months were primarily focused on establishing the necessary organizational element crucial for communities to conduct development and regeneration work. Hence, during this period extensive work with communities have led to the establishment of the basic organizational structure, policy, and capital build-up in project sites. The following table presents basic aspects of established POs in project sites.

PROJECT SITE	PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATION	NUMBER OF	AREA OF	BASIC	ORGANIZATIONAL
Lapi Peñablanca Cagayan	Farmers Association for Reforestation Movement	112	2,200 has	✓	₱ 1,000 00
Limbawan San Pablo, Isabela	Timpuog Association	172	1,250 has	✓	₱ 2,300 00
Antagan I, Tumauni, Isabela	Upland Agroforest Farmers Association	20	1,000 has	✓	₱ 1,200 00
Campamento, Diffun, Quirino	Salinong Ti Campamento	55	1,000 has	✓	₱ 700 00
Cabua-an, Maddela, Quirino	Cabua-an Community Development Organization	32	350 has	✓	₱ 300 00

## RESEARCH

Three main research activities were conducted during this period: community profiling, community mapping, and market scanning. Community profiling proceeded during the initial phase of the project prior and after the selection of project sites. Interviews and secondary data gathering was conducted. Initial drafts of the profile have been reviewed and data gaps have been identified. Community mapping activities have proceeded in all sites where forest and land resources were identified as well as the communities' site proposal for development and management. The activity was particularly important in the case of Limbawan. Expired pasturelands were located in the proposed project site. The community wanted to utilize the area for their agroforestry and other development activities. The community maps locating the area of conflict was presented to the DENR by the community. As a result, applications for renewal of the pasturelands were denied and the community was provided a document recognizing the community

as proper stewards of the area. Market scanning activities have been initiated in major business centers and localities pertinent to the transport and processing of goods and products near project areas. The market scanning activity will be the basis for determining the major elements and strategies in the community resource management plan.



*Community members of Lapi making sure that details and features of their area are carefully placed on the map.*



*ESSC's Community Mapping Coordinator, Mr Jojo Pareño explaining the community mapping process during a presentation in Limbawan*



*Community members of Cabua-an putting the final touches on their community map*



*CDS Judy Lazo trying to get information during a market scanning activity in Diffun Quinno*

## **OTHER PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

***CVPED Students*** The involvement of CVPED students in the research activities began last June. Although there is yet the need to clarify and integrate CVPED research concerns with the project's action-research mode, an MS student interested in organizations of community based forest management, chose a project site as one of his case studies. Mr Wim Prins looked into the various dynamics of organization focusing on conflict management as the key indicator. Mr Prins visited Lapi, Peñablanca and interviewed community members. Also, soil samples were taken from identified areas in Limbawan, San Pablo. The soil samples will be analyzed to determine fertility and other concerns regarding appropriate land use.

**COMFREP's Scholarship Project** The project was a result of a commitment made by previous project staff to communities. The scholarship was intended to invite community members to participate in the project and at the same time realize the development of a 'cadre' of community based forest regeneration experts in the region. The project is supporting 19 students coming from communities working with the project. The fund is subsidizing the tuition fees, lodging expenses, book allowances, and other pertinent costs directly related to their education (Appendix E Breakdown of Scholarship Fund). PLAN will be subsidizing the costs for the first year of the activity after which, a review and evaluation will be conducted. All scholars are taking up BS Social Forestry at the College of Forestry and Environmental Management at ISU-Cabagan.

### FUNDS MOVEMENT

From September 1997 (actual start of project operations) to December 1998, funds movement amounted to only US\$ 117,380.00, approximately 16% of the project's total project budget provided by USAID or about 10% of the total project budget. For the 18-month period, about 25% of the proposed budget have been utilized. Of the total expenditure, 49% was spent on staffing requirements, 17% on equipment, 21% on maintenance and other operational costs, and only 13% on project field activities. Moreover, budget counterparts from PLAN International and CVPED has not been significantly utilized. The significant lack of funds movement has been recognized as a major issue. However, it is understood that the issue is part of a broader project implementation concern. During the initial phase of the project, before the re-structuring, funds movement amounted to about 18% of the total budget allotted for that period. There was a significant increase in funds movement after the re-structuring. Following the project's re-organization, funds movement has increased dramatically and amounted to approximately 53% of the budget proposed for that period. Of this, 49.2% were spent on staffing requirements, 14% on project activities, 8.5% on equipment, and 28.3% on maintenance (Appendix D Distribution of Expense per Major Budget Component and Appendix E Project Budget vs Actual Expenditure). Nevertheless, there is still much work that needs to be done if more effective funds movement is desired. For the coming period, as communities will be more capable in initiating project activities, a responsive funds movement system and capable administrative support mechanisms will be explored.

### PROSPECTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The general objectives for the next twelve months will basically cover two major areas of activities namely administration and operations. Activities particular to administration will primarily enable the necessary personnel, structural and systemic support project operation requires. The main objective of project operations for the coming year will be to initiate long-term and sustainable

activities in five key result areas Center of Excellence, Sustained Peoples Organization, Enterprise Development, Grassland Rehabilitation and Forest Resource Stabilization, Networking and Linkaging Specifically, the general objectives for each operational key result area for the year are

- ◆ **Center of Excellence** To establish Isabela State University's College of Forestry and Environmental Management as an information and research center such that innovative and socially responsive research approaches are developed that may be utilized by various institutes, agencies, and communities in the region
- ◆ **Sustained Peoples Organization** To enable and empower communities to initiate and implement resource management strategies such that a self-sustaining socio-economic activity is pursued
- ◆ **Enterprise Development** To facilitate the communities' capability in participating in a sustainable market economy where resource management systems are both economically sound as well as ecologically viable
- ◆ **Grassland Rehabilitation and Forest Resource Stabilization** To ensure the proper use of forestlands by enforcing proper land use management approaches and protection measures
- ◆ **Networking and Linkaging** To establish and sustain proper working relations with agencies and institutions critical to the region's land use and forest resource management systems

## CONCERNS AND ISSUES

### MODIFIED FUNDS MOVEMENT SYSTEM

One reason why project funds have not been moved as expected is because the social base from where project activities must be initiated, has not been established Another cause for the current pace in funds movement is the continuous learning process the project has been experiencing especially in terms of determining direction and strengthening its organizational capabilities However, during the last period, the project has been able to establish the capabilities of communities to initiate and implement project activities It is important at this stage to ensure that community initiatives are supported and sustained Movement of funds for the coming period will have to be able to be more active and responsive Hence, efforts will be directed towards looking into the proper structural, procedural, and personnel support mechanisms

### PROJECT ACCOUNTABILITY

The present organizational structure of the project was developed primarily to not only ensure effective project implementation but to also operationalize greater collaboration between key institutions Key to these objectives is the position of the Project Manager The Project Manager is the link between Isabela State University

and the other partners especially concerning project implementation. The position thus requires the person to not only facilitate proper working relations but to take greater responsibility in the administrative and operational implementation of the project. In essence, it is with the Project Manager that various project directions are integrated. However, there seems to be a relative lack of clarity in responsibilities and confusion regarding project accountability due to limitations within the organizational structure and some aspects of the collaboration. Basically, what needs to be addressed is how Isabela State University can gain greater responsibility for the project. Efforts in the coming period will try to explore ways into articulating the role and responsibilities of the Project Manager.

### **ACTIVE COLLABORATION**

One of the challenges presented by the project is the involvement of various institutions involved in social development and forest resource management. It was originally thought that the project would serve as the venue and opportunity for institutions willing to learn and explore non-traditional ways of doing participatory research, social development, and forest resource management. The project has so far been able to establish the proper working dynamics. However, in order to proceed more effectively, working relations among the project's different institutional counterparts must be strengthened. In light of what the project has been able to achieve and what directions it has proposed, greater dialogue and articulation of institutional commitment, especially in terms of financial and operational support, must be pursued. For the coming period, venue for discussing institutional concerns will be initiated.

### **PROJECT EXTENSION**

COMFREP was originally designed as a three-year project mainly to equip Isabela State University in developing and applying innovative socially based scientific research that will be the basis for determining appropriate regeneration and other forest management strategies. Unfortunately, the demands of the project, the maturity it requires, and the critical reflection it necessitates, requires a longer period of implementation. This is especially crucial given the backlog and unaccomplished expectations that resulted in the project's initial stages of implementation, a learning process. Hence, it is appropriate that the project extend for another year at no extra cost. It has been determined that there is much work and adjustments for the project to actually take root and stabilize itself in order that objectives are accomplished. Over all, the events of the past 18 months have been a learning experience. The failures have not only disclosed the limitations and difficulties of the project but have more importantly opened up new challenges. There is now a deeper appreciation of the process such that a sense of learning, openness towards evolution and the acknowledgment of culture in science and development are facilitated.

## SUMMARY

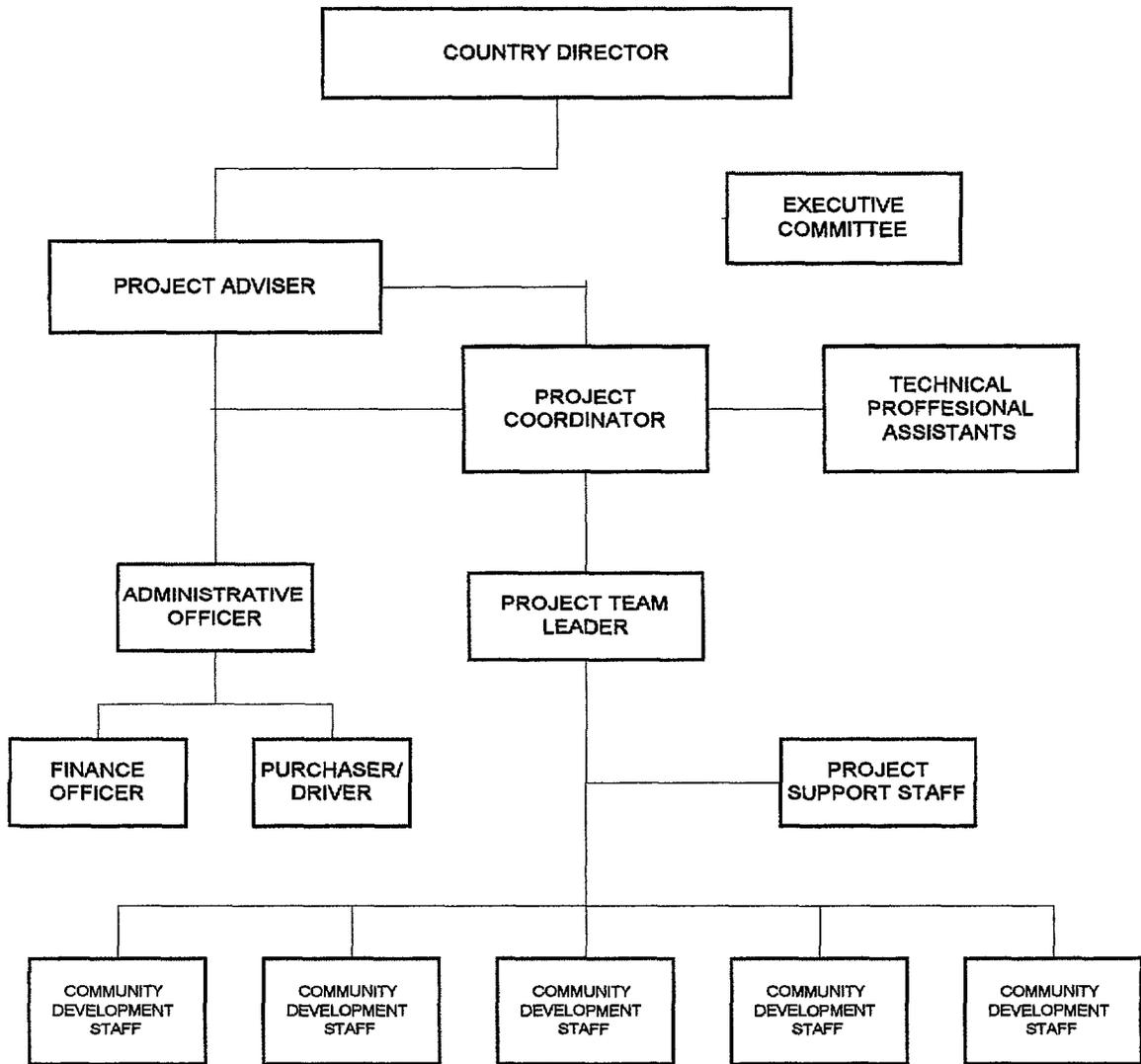
It has been 18 months since the project began and much has happened in terms of clarifying project concerns and establishing the structures and systems in support of operations. It has been a continuous learning process especially in terms of articulating and operationalizing the nature and orientation of the project: exploratory, community-driven, and enterprise based. During the last period, there were extensive discussions on clarifying project directions and activities on the field proceeded with greater awareness, reflection and integration. The experiences and learnings gained during the last 18 months have enabled the project to secure its capabilities and assess itself in light of what is expected.

Critical to the project's operations and prospects was the effort initiated by the Executive Committee toward re-aligning the project according to the spirit and direction of discussions held 4 years ago. On May 1998, the project was restructured to not only include new personnel but also to establish greater clarity and integrity in project operations. The field staff underwent a series of meetings and workshops assessing research and community organizing activities as well as understanding PLAN policies. The succeeding months were primarily spent on stabilizing relations with communities and sustaining institutional linkages.

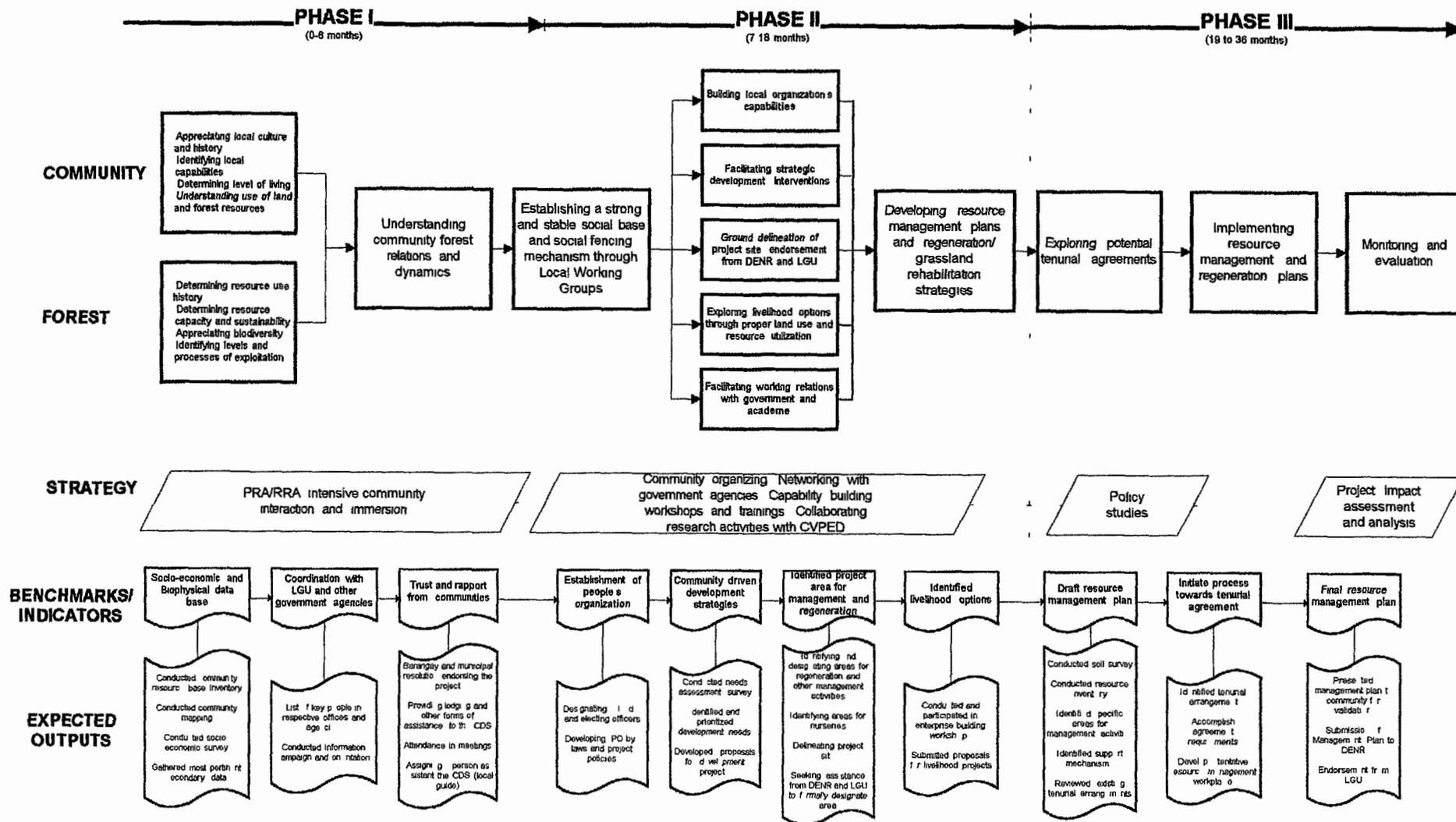
Now that the proper social base has been established and is now capable of determining project activities, it is imperative that the necessary administrative, financial, and operational support mechanisms are in place. Issues such as greater funds movement, project accountability, leadership, and trust will be addressed in order to sustain the previous period's accomplishments. Efforts will now focus on greater operational efficiency vis-à-vis administrative support to sustain and strengthen community initiatives.

# APPENDIX A

## COMFREP'S ORGANIZATIONAL SET-UP

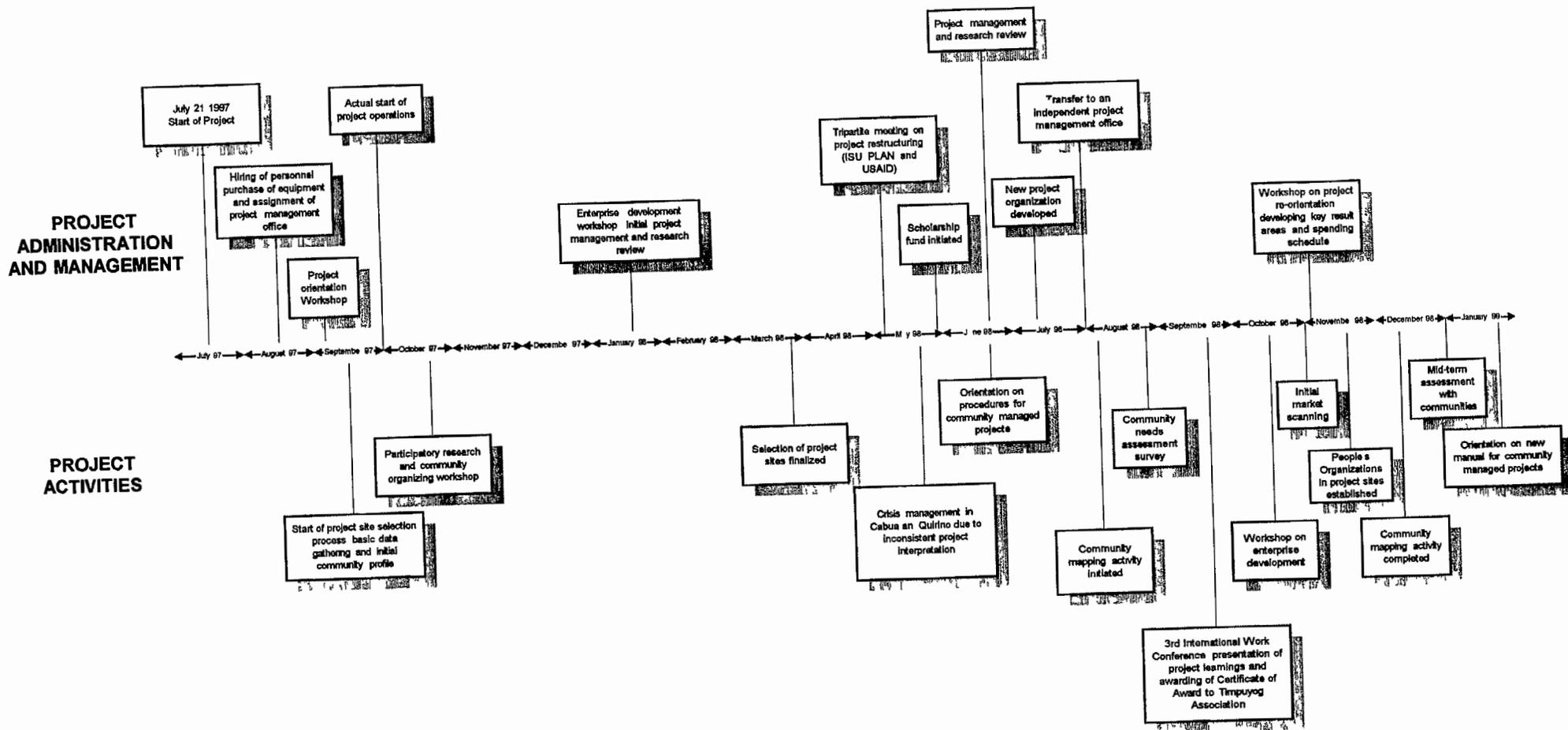


# APPENDIX B



APPENDIX C

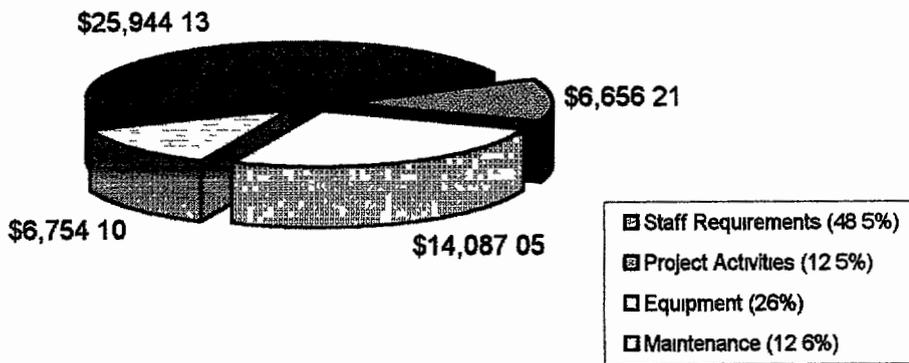
TIME LINE OF MAJOR PROJECT ACTIVITIES



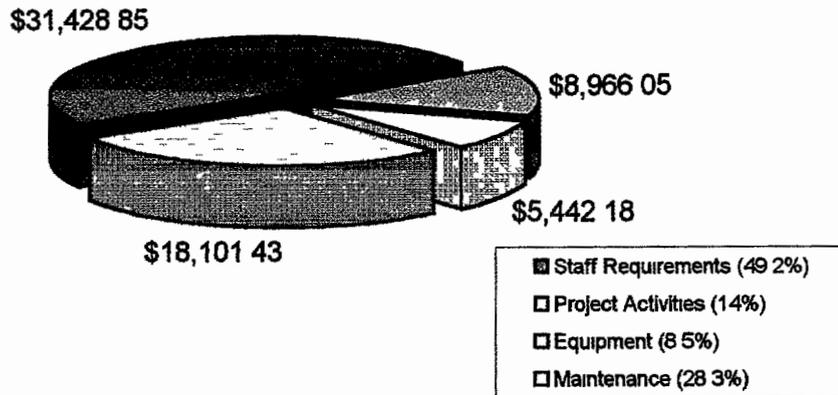
# APPENDIX D

## DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENSES PER MAJOR BUDGET COMPONENT

Fiscal Year 1998



First Half of Fiscal Year 1999



# APPENDIX E

## PROJECT BUDGET vs ACTUAL EXPENDITURE

