

## **Institutional Aspects of Policy Implementation and Management of the Philippine Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program**

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### **Executive Summary**

The paper begins with an introduction to the Philippine agrarian reform program, considered to be one of the longest-running agrarian programs worldwide, making it the widest in terms of land area coverage. Starting in 1902 with a law that simply set ceilings on land ownership, the program has evolved into the current *Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program*. The paper moves on to explain why the program is comprehensive such that it covers all kinds of agricultural lands, regardless of crops planted (earlier decree issued in 1972 covered rice and corn lands only) and that aside from transfer of land ownership, the program also provides support services (i.e., farm-to-market roads, irrigation, credit, pre and post harvest facilities, etc.) to the program beneficiaries to ensure that the farmers are able to make their awarded lands productive. “Comprehensive” also suggests “diversity” as the program is comprised of diverse program interventions carried out by an equally diverse set of implementing agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.

The paper moves on to define the program’s policy making and implementation mechanisms at various levels which are legally mandated to operationalize the program—what these different agencies and organizations are, their respective roles and functions in CARP policy implementation and management, how their services and activities are coordinated so as to effectively complement one another, and the various arrangements for monitoring and evaluating their respective contributions to the CARP.

The presentation highlights the adoption of “convergence” as its key program implementation strategy and the “complementation role” of the civil society organizations, the program’s monitoring and evaluation system and the regulatory environment, bureaucratic control, transparency and openness of various program actors.

Finally, the paper presents valuable insights and lessons drawn by the author in implementing CARP in the Philippines, having been with the Department of Agrarian Reform as Undersecretary for Field Operations and Support Services in 1998-2001 and as Executive Trustee of the Agrarian Justice Foundation which extends legal assistance to both CARP program beneficiaries and implementers.

- For a program to be a truly “centerpiece program” of Government, no less than the head of Government must head the highest policy-making and coordinative body of the program and must actively be involved in meetings and key program events. This is to demonstrate his/her full support in the program implementation;
- Even the most difficult problems in implementing the program could be solved if various program stakeholders put their heads and hands together to address such problems;
- Special bodies such as a “Task Forces” organized for specific tasks and timeframe could be more effective than a standing committee as such committees are pressured to perform their assigned tasks as effectively and efficiently as they could;
- For standing committees such as the PARC ExCom and TechCom, PARCCOMs and BARCs to work effectively, a spirit of transparency and openness must prevail in its meetings in order to foster a collaborative atmosphere and ensure the effective complementation of work by the various agencies implementing a common program.

Second Regional Policy Dialogue on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development:  
The Case of the Philippines  
30 May 2007

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