One of the interventions identified to improve the effectiveness of tree nurseries is the introduction of nursery accreditation and seed certification programs. The need to forge a linkage with the local government units (LGUs) has been emphasized in order to achieve this, and the ACIAR Seedling Enhancement Project has established a linkage with four LGUs on Leyte Island. To formalize the partnership, a memorandum of agreement has been signed stipulating the specific roles of the LGUs and the Seedling Enhancement Project. Aside from conducting training workshops, demonstration nurseries have been established to help improve the capability of extension workers and nursery operators in producing high quality tree seedlings. This paper describes the process of forging partnerships between project researchers and LGUs in developing and implementing the mechanisms for accrediting forest nurseries.

INTRODUCTION

The ACIAR-funded project entitled Enhancing Tree Seedling Supply via Economic and Policy Changes in the Philippines Nursery Sector (the ACIAR Seedling Enhancement or Q-Seedling Project) aims to implement local-level policy changes in conjunction with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and other relevant agencies to improve the operational effectiveness of the nursery sector. In a series of workshops with various stakeholders conducted as part of the implementation of this project, nursery accreditation and seedling certification were among the interventions suggested to promote sustainable forestry production and the use of high quality planting stock, and also to improve the financial viability of forest nursery enterprises.

To help achieve this goal, the necessity to forge partnerships with local government units was emphasized. The reason for this is that, with the advent of the Local Government Code of 1991 in the Philippines the LGUs are mandated to plan and implement development projects themselves, especially those that relate to agricultural productivity and natural resources management. Likewise, experiences in development project implementation reveal that a project has a better chance to succeed when various sectors collaborate and integrate their efforts and resources (Nagawa et al. 2004).

This paper describes the process of forging a partnership between the ACIAR Seedling Enhancement Project (known locally as the Q-seedling project) and the LGUs in order to develop and pilot-test the mechanisms for accrediting forest nurseries.

The Shared Goals of the Partnership

To implement the nursery accreditation scheme, the seedling project has forged a linkage with four municipalities on Leyte Island, namely Libagon in Southern Leyte Province, and Bato, Isabel and Palompon in Leyte Province. The development priorities of these municipalities run parallel with the objectives of the seedling project. To formalize the partnership, memoranda of agreement (MOAs) were signed between Dr Jose Bacusmo, the
Visayas State University (VSU) President, and mayors of the four municipalities (Figure 1). Each MOA specifies the roles of the LGU and the seedling improvement project. Briefly, the role of the project is mainly to provide technical assistance in establishing nurseries that will enable farmers to produce high quality tree seedlings. For each municipality, the partner LGU spearheads the development of model nurseries and capability development activities. Box 1 outlines the roles of the seedling improvement project and the partner-LGUs in promoting farmers’ skills in producing high quality tree seedlings and in designing and implementing the nursery accreditation policies.

**Figure 1.** Signing of MOA to formalize the partnership between the Q-seedling project and the LGUs

**Box 1.** Roles of the partners and the Q-seedling project stipulated in the MOA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of the partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Spearhead the identification of sites for model tree nurseries and potential nursery operators who will participate in small-scale farmer trials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Support the establishment of model tree nurseries, including sourcing of quality seeds and other forms of support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Assist in the design of training programs for current and potential nursery operators and identify participants for these training programs using the criteria set for the purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Provide staff who will take charge in the monitoring of tree nurseries and in the training programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Spearhead the provision of the nursery operators with assistance in marketing their tree seedlings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ensure that the tree nurseries established in selected sites operate on a sustainable basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Develop and implement policies to ensure that only high quality planting materials will be used in the tree planting and reforestation projects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of the seedling improvement project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Provide technical experience in the establishment of the tree nurseries in selected sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Spearhead the design of modules and support of materials required for training programs on the production of high quality seedlings for extension workers and nursery operators and provide resource persons for this training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Work with the partner in the identification of training participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Provide funds for seedling improvement project staff travel, food and accommodation during training, site visits and related activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Assist in the design and development of policies to control the quality of planting materials in the municipality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Partner-LGUs**

The municipality of Isabel aims to rehabilitate its watershed to provide its residents with a water supply. The development of a sustainable water supply in Isabel is an urgent task.
because Ormoc City (which supplies Isabel with a water source) plans to cut off the water service to Isabel to cater for the growing water needs of its own residents.

Palompon, neighbour to Isabel, also aims to rehabilitate its watershed. Part of this watershed has been a site for mining by PhesChem since 1982. However, in 2008, the mining company, including its workers, was driven out of the municipality.

Palompon’s drive to rehabilitate its watershed areas has gained support from the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP). This year, DBP approved the municipality’s proposal entitled ‘Palompon DBP Forest’. As part of this project, Palompon aims to rehabilitate about 185 ha of its timberland. As in Isabel, the seedling improvement project will play an active role in producing high quality tree seedlings.

The municipalities of Bato and Libagon in Southern Leyte both aim to produce seedlings for their continuing reforestation projects and to supply schools with seedlings for their tree planting projects. The support given by these municipalities to the schools is in line with their efforts to cultivate the culture of environmentalism in residents at an early age.

**Capacity Building of Nursery Managers and Establishment of Demonstration Nurseries as an Offshoot of the Partnership**

One of the requisites for nursery accreditation is capacity building of the nursery operators to adopt best management practices. The partnership between the seedling improvement project and the LGUs has led to the implementation of *Hands-on Training on High Quality Seedling Production Technologies* in each municipality. A training package was developed to inform the nursery managers of the importance of using high quality planting materials and to improve their skills in the production of high quality planting stock. The training involved lectures and practicum where participants gained skills in applying the technologies. The number and nature of the training participants in each municipality are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1. Participants in the Q-seedling production training series**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Types of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isabel, Leyte</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Nursery operators, extension workers, representatives from the private sector, faculty members of VSU-Isabel Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palompon, Leyte</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Farmer-leaders from the communities covered by PhesChem mining, extension workers, a high school teacher and a high school student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bato, Leyte</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Farmer-leaders, extension workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libagon, So. Leyte</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Nursery operators, extension workers, LGU nursery managers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

True to the provisions of the MOAs, the training series were conducted on a cost-sharing basis. The LGUs took charge of the participants’ fares and food, while the Q-seedling project provided the resource persons and materials.

Demonstration nurseries are being established in each municipality. These nurseries are not designed to produce large quantities of seedlings for free distribution. Rather, they are designed to:

a) showcase the simple and appropriate practices to produce high quality planting stock;
b) demonstrate the low quality of the seedlings produced following the common
unsound practices of smallholders versus best management practice;
c) serve as the hub for distributing nursery extension material including information on
sources of high quality germplasm;
d) serve as distribution points for germplasm from selected sources; and
e) possibly, eventually serve as display centres of commercial seedlings from private
nurseries.

Updates on the Implementation of the Nursery Accreditation Scheme

The municipality of Palompon passed a municipal ordinance implementing the nursery
accreditation scheme in September 2009. This ordinance is being used to ensure the
production of high quality seedlings for the Palompon’s DPB Forest Project. In support of the
implementation of the policy, the Q-seedling project has designed a primer on the process of
nursery accreditation. Among other things, the primer highlights the importance of
accrediting tree nurseries, requirements for accreditation application, steps in the
accreditation and criteria for accrediting tree nurseries (Gregorio et al. 2009). In September
2009, the nurseries established by farmers in the five barangays which are sites of the
Palompon’s DBP Forest Project were evaluated using the guidelines stipulated in the
municipal ordinance.

Interviews with farmers in March and April 2010 showed that the farmers who established
nurseries following the best management practice for forest nurseries have earned income
from their nurseries and have other social benefits (see Gravoso et al., this volume).

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Region 10 (Northern Mindanao),
has also embraced the accreditation of forestry seedling nurseries, and the regional
executive director is expected to issue a memorandum order to bring about the
implementation of the nursery accreditation policy. This move is in line with the
implementation of the reforestation and update rehabilitation projects, including the Upland
Development Project (UDP) that requires millions of tree seedlings to be planted to reforest
the denuded areas of the country. In Mindanao, the implementation of the accreditation
scheme will focus on the areas covered by the Community and Environment and Natural
Resources Office (CENRO) in Malaybalay City. Under this scheme, only accredited
nurseries can participate in the bidding to provide tree seedlings for the reforestation project.

Efforts to implement the nursery accreditation policy are now underway in four municipalities
in the southern part of Mindanao, namely Malungon in Sarangani, Kiblawan in Davao del
Sur, Tampakan in South Cotabato, and Columbio in Sultan Kudarat. These municipalities
are affected by the proposed mining operation by the Saggitarius Mines Inc. In these
municipalities, about 6 M seedlings are required for its buffer planting.

At the time of this writing, meetings were being held with the local government officials. In
these meetings, it was agreed that each municipal ordinance will be submitted for review
and approval by each municipal council.

On 5 May 2010, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources issued Department
Administrative Order No. 2010-11, series of 2010. Otherwise known as ‘Revised Regulations
Governing Forest Tree Seed and Seedling Production, Collection, and Disposition’, this
administrative order requires the use of high quality seedlings in reforestation and tree
farming projects. Details of this national policy are discussed in Cacanindin (this volume).
CONCLUDING REMARKS

Support of the local government units in the implementation of nursery accreditation has already been elicited. From Leyte, the initiative to promote nursery accreditation has expanded to the southern part of Mindanao and throughout the Philippines through the issuance of DAO 2010–11. However, a number of further steps will be required to promote the growing of high quality seedlings by nursery operators and the use of these seedlings in timber plantations and reforestation projects. At present, only a few of these nursery operators are aware of the value of high quality seedlings. Even timber dealers lack sufficient knowledge regarding seedling quality. There is an urgent need for the implementation of a strategic communication campaign aimed at promoting improved seedlings. In this campaign, the salient provisions of DAO 2010–11 should be included.

As the nursery accreditation scheme is being implemented, monitoring activities will be conducted. Among the important information that will be gathered will be the most significant changes farmers experience in adopting the best management practices and the impact of nursery accreditation on their nursery operation as a means of livelihood.

REFERENCES
