

Making the most of NTFPs

An ITTO project in the Philippines has provided local communities with training to increase their income from locally available non-timber forest products

by **Arsenio B. Ella¹**
and **Emmanuel P. Domingo²**

Scientist III¹ and Research Assistant²

Forest Products Research and Development Institute
Department of Science and Technology, College, Laguna 4031, the Philippines
(Arsenioella@gmail.com)

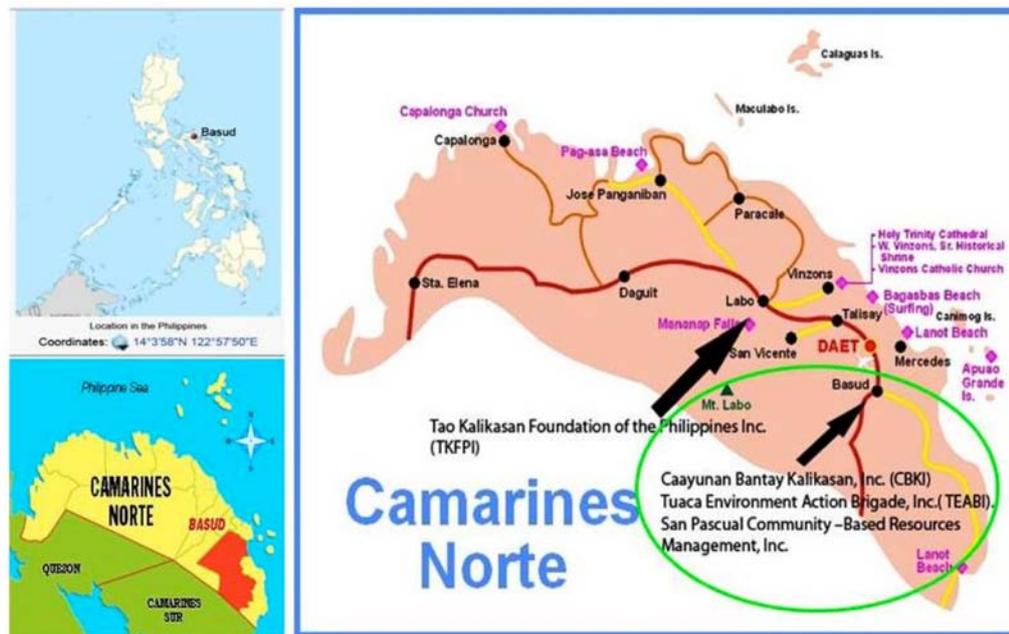


Figure 1. Location of the project sites

Using lessons learned in implementing various people-oriented forestry programs, the Government of the Philippines has developed a sustainable, equitable and holistic approach called community-based forest management (CBFM). Created in 1995 by Executive Order 263, CBFM is a national strategy for promoting social justice and the sustainable development of forestland resources.

As well as encouraging community participation, CBFM and earlier programs have given attention to a wide range of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) found in community-managed areas. The harvesting of NTFPs creates livelihood opportunities, especially if they are marketed as finished products such as handicrafts, wall decorations and other novelty items.

A recently concluded ITTO project—*Sustainable utilization and marketing of selected non-timber forest products to support the handicraft industry and the development of rural communities* [PD 448/07 Rev. 2(1)]—implemented in three CBFM areas in the municipality of Basud in Camarines Norte Province, the Philippines (Figure 1), assisted in this undertaking. The project aimed to promote and develop NTFPs to optimize their commercial potential as handicrafts, ensure the long-term viability of those industries and assist the development of rural communities. The three CBFM areas are Tuaca Environment Action Brigade, Inc. (TEABI); Caayunan Bantay Kalikasan, Inc. (CBKI); and San Pascual Community-Based Resources Management, Inc. (SPCBRMI).

Project training in value-added NTFP products Tiger grass

The most important product in the San Pascual community is tiger grass (*Thysanolaena maxima*), known locally as “tambo”. Tiger grass can be grown as a main crop or interspersed with fruit trees and other perennial crops; it thrives at medium to high elevations, particularly on hill slopes and in logged-over areas. The main harvestable component is called panicle, which is a branching inflorescence in which small flowers are borne along an elongated axis.

Tiger-grass plantations are located within a 30-minute walk of San Pascual village. The panicles usually develop between October and December and are harvested when the stalks reach 70 cm in length. Around 75% of the San Pascual community—both men and women—are involved in collecting the panicles over the three-month harvesting



New broom: Community members receive training on the production, collection and processing of tiger grass for handicrafts.

Photo: A. Ella, FPRDI

season (January to March). Harvested panicles are sun-dried for 2–3 days and then shaken or patted to remove the seeds, after which they are bundled to form sturdy brooms or “walis tambo”. These are sold at a wholesale price of PHP [Philippine Pesos] 120 per piece (US\$2.80) and a retail price of PHP 150 (US\$3.50) in nearby Daet, the capital of Camarines Norte Province. Families earn an average of PHP 5300 (US\$123) per month from the sale of tiger grass during the lean season. The government is now promoting tiger-grass farming to boost the country’s broom industry. Tiger-grass production and broom-making are important sources of livelihood for farmers and forest settlers in this CBFM area.

Anahaw

Another important NTFP in all three communities is anahaw (*Livistona rotundifolia*). In aggregate, 42 hectares of land is planted to anahaw in TEABI, while the species grows naturally in CBKI and SPCBRMI. Anahaw is used widely as a roofing material, but seminars on anahaw harvesting, propagation, weaving, bleaching and dyeing conducted under the project have alerted the communities—especially the women—to the possibility of developing lucrative backyard industries by weaving anahaw leaves into fancy fans and other decorative items. The fans sell for PHP 7 (US\$0.20) each. Although the industry is new, families could sell an average of 100 anahaw fans per month, generating a monthly income of PHP 700 (US\$16.30) on a contract basis.

work experience—on sustainable resin-tapping practices. Manila elemi resin has a wide range of uses, for example in pharmaceutical products such as plasters as well as in printing inks, lithographs and perfumes. Locally, the resin is used in torches, for starting domestic fires, and in the caulking of boats.

The training provided by the project was a tremendous success. The trainees showed their enthusiasm by participating actively in discussions, hands-on exercises and work experience in the field. The development of Manila elemi resin-tapping as an alternative livelihood option for farmers and pili growers has two major strengths: the supply of resin is expected to be plentiful because of the large number of *Canarium* trees growing in the area; and farmers and pili growers are now trained in the proper methods of Manila elemi resin-tapping.



Tapping the resource: Community members receive training on improved tapping of *Canarium* trees for Manila elemi resin. Photo: A. Ella, FPRDI



Helping hand: Members of the project communities receive training on harvesting, processing, propagation, weaving, bleaching and dyeing of anahaw for handicrafts. Photo: A. Ella, FPRDI

Manila elemi resin

Another economically important NTFP is Manila elemi resin, derived from pili (*Canarium ovatum*). Camarines Norte is in the Bicol Region, which contains 72% of all productive, naturally growing pili trees in the six regions in which the species occurs. But pili farmers in Bicol don’t tap the trees for resin, instead cultivating it for its kernel, an important ingredient in candies and confectioneries. The ITTO project provided people in the three CBFM areas with training—including hands-on exercises and

Conclusion

The ITTO project taught new methods for making use of NTFPs in the CBFM areas of three communities through seminars, hands-on training and work experience. The communities are now better equipped to boost their livelihoods while managing the forest resource sustainably. The strengthening of locally based producer organizations has also increased the potential for long-term commercial success by boosting market power and providing producers with ongoing technical support. The project identified several areas where further work would help fully harness NTFP resources, including the massive propagation of the three species discussed in this article (*Thyrsanolaena maxima*, *Livistona rotundifolia* and *Canarium ovatum*) to expand their plantation areas; and the construction of farm-to-market roads to CBFM sites to help local people get their goods and products to market.