

CEPF Small Grant Final Project Completion Report

Complete the following report worksheet to provide CEPF with an overall summary of the results of your project. Within the narrative section, responses should be concise, but include sufficient detail to present a clear understanding of the development and progression of this project.

Date of Report (MM/DD/YY)
August 11, 2004

Organization Information

Project Name

Establishing an Educational Nature Park to Build Local Capacity for Restoring Wild Habitats

Project Dates (as stated in the contract agreement)

January 2003 to December 2004

Partners

Palawan Conservation Corps has completed the project with the help of the following organizations:

- **Partnership with the City Government.** Since the establishment of the Palawan Conservation Corps, the City Government of Puerto Princesa, Palawan, is a major partner in developing projects and programs of PCC. The City Government also donated 7.4 acres of land for the creation of Nature Park.
- **City Agriculturist Office.** This office offered us seedlings and contact information on how to acquire other hardwood seedlings in the City proper. They also allowed us the use of their tractor for leveling the land and bringing water for irrigation where the Hardwood Nursery now stands.
- **Consuelo Foundation.** The construction of the Information Center would not have been completed had it not been for the sponsorship of the training, building tools, and construction materials for the project. Consuelo Foundation supported the hands-on Carpentry/Masonry training of our out-of-school youths (Batch 4 & 5) with the final project being the construction of the kiosk during the summer of 2003.
- **TESDA.** This quasi-government agency provided the trainer for the five-week training cum production for the Carpentry/Masonry training. The youths who have completed the training and hands-on work were further screened through two separate examinations before they received their certification of completion. This certificate provided the youths with proof that they can skillfully earn from this training/trade.
- **EarthCorp, USA.** PCC hosted an international workcamp in the summer of 2003. The goal of this camp was to construct the Hardwood Tree Nursery and to build relationships with other international organizations. International and local participants worked mainly on trail construction, nursery, and restoration work in a watershed area with indigenous peoples and communities. The EarthCorps volunteers in the US who joined the work camp were selected on the basis of their knowledge on restoration, ecology, soil erosion, planting plans, trail work, stewardship and bio-engineering techniques.

Partners (continued)

- **US Peace Corps and AID/PASA.** US Peace Corps, Philippines support the PCC by sending 2 Peace Corps volunteers every year. Peace Corps volunteer, Jammie Stauffer, worked on the Hardwood Tree Nursery for two years until its completion with the arrival of the EarthCorps volunteers during the summer 2003 Work Camp where the nursery was prepped. Through the Aid/Pasa grant that was sourced through Peace Corps, the PCC was able to organize a group of 40 participants for the restoration of the Jungle Trail at the National Park beyond the confines of the PCC training site.
- **CARPUS (Germany).** The four German volunteers supported PCC's establishment of the organic farm through a vermi-culture training and organic farming training among staff and community members from Bgy. Salvacion. The hands-on training and field trip to several organic farms in the city proper inspired the participants to consider organic farming as an alternative to slash and burn farming.
- **Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park.** The PCC conducted a trail building workshop in May 2004 among youths and Peace Corps staff at the Jungle Trail in So. Sabang, Bgy. Cabayugan. The PPSRNP allowed us the use of the Central Park Station as their counterpart in the trail construction project.

Project Description – Provide a brief description of the project your team implemented.

The Palawan Conservation Corps developed an Educational Nature Park on the 7.4 acres of land donated by the City Government of Puerto Princesa. It began in January 2003 and ended in July 2004. The project included five main activities:

1. **Construction of an Information Center.** The 400 square feet Information Center is complete. The open-air kiosk is made out of concrete flooring and galvanized iron roofing. Its cement walls extend two feet from the ground. This was built by the out-of-school youths of Batch 4 & 5 during the summer of 2003. The labor and construction became part of the required practical application of the five-week Carpentry/Masonry certificate training of TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Association). Through the additional funding from Consuelo Foundation, each youth also received their own set of carpentry tools.
2. **Reproduction of Educational Materials.** Park signs and interpretations have been installed along the trail leading to the Information Center where billboards and posters feature the six Philippine ecosystems. Several organizations contributed their own educational materials for the Information Center. These materials have not been installed at the Information Center since it is not yet capable of securing these materials from robbery, bad weather conditions and termites.
3. **Expansion of the Hardwood Tree Nursery.** The PCC together with EarthCorps, USA held its first International Work Camp during the summer of 2003 where international volunteers came to Palawan to build the nursery and do restoration projects. EarthCorps staff and volunteers raised their own funds for the trip to the Philippines. With Jammie Stauffer, PCC's Peace Corps volunteers, the internationals helped the staff and youths to level the nursery site and build the nursery beds with their bare hands for three consecutive weeks at the RAC. Two separate wells were constructed to support the nursery's irrigation needs, especially necessary during hot summer seasons.

The 10,000 sq. ft. nursery presently includes hardwood seedlings of the following species: Narra, Kamagong, Apitong, Molave, Amugis, Mahogany, and Kalamantian. Some seeds were bought from the Manila Seedling Bank while seedlings were either donated by the City Agriculturist Nursery or collected by the youths from the Experimental Forest managed by the PENRO (Provincial

Environmental and Natural Resources Officer) in Bgy. Simpucan, PPC.

Project Description (continued)

4. **Completion of Trail around the Nature Park.** The Palawan Conservation Corps has already started a 200 ft. trail at the proposed park even before the CEPF began its support. This trail was initially built as a demonstration area for the restoration trainings that PCC does in the community level. Trail building helps control soil erosion, minimize damage of native plants and increase safe access to parks users and a hands-on training for corpsmembers in bio-engineering techniques, stream restoration, plant propagation, and identification and volunteer management.

The trail maintenance work was supplemented by lectures among the out-of-school youths enrolled in PCC's annual 6-month residential program. The trail structures were also built for safety and preservation of the trails, which included a small bridge, check steps, water bars and ditches. This trail leading to the Information Center was also improved during the International Work Camp in 2003.

5. **Volunteer Events: Restoration Training at Bgy. Simpucan and at the Jungle Trail at the National Park (PPSRNP).** The trail building at the PCC training site is just the venue for youths to learn about proper trail maintenance in preparation for the actual restoration at the community level. In June 2003, the youths together with the international EarthCorps volunteers spent three days with the indigenous tribes of Bgy. Simpucan to help them manage their watershed area through soil erosion control.

In the summer of 2004, the second International Work Camp was held at the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park. The 10-year-old Jungle Trail needed repairs and the PCC staff conducted a 12-day restoration training to prevent further erosion in the area and to re-route the trail to make it safer for hikers. The participants included Peace Corps volunteers and their staff from several other provinces, youths from NGOs in Palawan, and staff from the city Agriculturist Office and the National Park. Peace Corps through an AID/PASA grant primarily sponsored this project, while CEPF partially funded the honoraria of one trainer and some trail building supplies.

Narrative Questions

1. What was the initial objective of this project?

The general objective of the Educational Nature Park was to enhance the appreciation and working knowledge of various stakeholders and concerned groups on the value of native plants and terrestrial ecosystem protection and conservation.

A. **Restoration.** The PCC would like to restore the area's natural beauty as a tropical forest, with focus on native trees, shrubs and small plants. We believe by restoring the land will minimize deforestation, siltation and bring back the natural habitat of wild animals.

- Complete the 5,000 ft. trail around the Park leading to the Information Center
- Plant 5,000 native trees and shrubs
- Expand the Hardwood Tree Nursery with sufficient irrigation
- Complete the construction of the Butterfly Garden

What was the initial objective of this project? (continued)

B. **Education.** The goal of this project is "learning while building". The first educational nature park will help the corpsmembers as well as local community to understand the various ecosystems.

- Construct a modest Information Center for educational instruction
- Train our corpsmembers on: bio-engineering, soil erosion control, trail work, stream restoration, plant propagation and identification, nursery work, and volunteer management.
- Increase the level of awareness on environmental protection, conservation, and bio-diversity.
- Produce education materials for distribution to students and communities
- Install interpretive signs throughout the park and trails
- Train corpsmembers on stewardship and maintenance

2. Did the objectives of your project change during implementation? If so, please explain why and how.

Generally, the Hardwood Nursery and Information Center project objectives did not change much from the original proposal. What was more noticeable was the extent of accomplishments given very little funding for the project. Some examples follow: (1) the construction of the info center was not intended as part of a technical skills training on Carpentry/Masonry for the youths; (2) two international work camps were hosted by PCC which facilitated the accomplishment of activities (nursery and restoration projects) with less labor expenses and finished even sooner than expected; (3) the trail maintenance originally intended only for the PCC nature park was extended to the Jungle Trail at the PPSRNP. In all these instances, PCC did not expect that funding from other organizations would supplement the CEPF projects.

3. How was your project successful in achieving the expected objectives?

Aside from having a capable working staff, our project became very successful because of the partnerships involved, the timing of the activities, and the sharing of resources that resulted from these partnerships. The project was integrated into the residential training program that PCC hosts for six months every year. Within this residential program, the youths who are trained for restoration work receive other trainings that supplement their conservation efforts.

The funds for the Hardwood Nursery, Nature Park, and Information Center were supplemented by other funding sources for training and restoration work originally intended for the residential program. The project would not have been immediately realized if the City Agriculture Office did not allow the use of their tractor for the nursery, if the EarthCorps internationals did not spend for their fare to do volunteer work in Palawan, if we did not have supplies for the TESDA training on Carpentry/Masonry, and if we did not have support from other organizations for the educational materials – to name a few.

The driving force of this project is the out-of-school youth in our residential program. Their interest and dedication is of primary importance in meeting our objectives. Without their presence, it is difficult for PCC to plan projects and map out methods that will encourage the youths to play a major role in conservation. It is also quite difficult to complete the projects without their volunteer efforts as much of the activities are labor-intensive.

4. Did your team experience any disappointments or failures during implementation? If so, please explain and comment on how the team addressed these disappointments and/or failures.

There were several unexpected situations we encountered that made it difficult for us to complete some of the activities as scheduled. Some of the more challenging issues were addressed with much creativity and perseverance.

Information Center. The construction of the information center was facilitated by the technical skills training for the youth but we encountered a few accidents where some youths would get cuts from mishandling the tools or get hit by hammer heads coming off its handles. We had to purchase and replace the tools for the construction. Termites also appeared at the time we did not have enough funds for maintenance of the info center so we put rock salt at the ends of wood posts as preventive measure instead of using the more effective solignum to coat the posts. At present, the info center still needs much reinforcement to be able to secure the information and education materials from bad weather, termites, and theft.

Education Materials. Termites also infested some of the education materials. These materials could still be reconstructed and burned evenly at the sides and mounted on boards to give it a fresh, creative look. Brochures were not printed (for Phase II) because the nature park and info center still needs improvement before it can be worthy of promotions.

Hardwood Nursery. To our disbelief, there were no hardwood trees available at the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) and other related government agencies that may have been our main source for the hardwood seedlings. There was a national campaign for trees that can be readily available through the Luntiang Pilipinas (Green Philippines) promoted by then Senator Loren Legarda that apparently turned out to be a hoax since the local agencies admitted that it really had no seedlings for distribution. Instead, we organized a wildlings collection among the youths in Bgy. Simpucan at the PENRO's Experimental Forest which turned out to be a field day for them as well. And we also managed to buy some seeds at the Manila Seedling bank and UP Los Banos (University of the Philippines), which was surprisingly easy to bring back to Palawan by plane. This would not be allowed if we transported seeds from Palawan to Manila.

We also had a shortage of water at the training site for two months during the summer in 2003 and 2004. The worst draught at the RAC (Rural Agricultural Center) was in 2003 when the water shortage affected not only our residential program but also our nursery and organic garden. We hired laborers to source out water to dig two separate wells near a stream to bring but it was not enough. Water for the nursery was being hand-carried by the youths to keep the seedlings alive. To prevent another water shortage for the nursery in 2004, water irrigation was improved and a water simple catchment was installed to conserve rainwater and most seedlings were temporarily relocated to the nearby stream where it is easier to regularly water the plants.

Trail Building and Volunteer Events. The only set-back we encountered during the volunteer events on restoration and trail building was when the international volunteers were rushed to the hospital due to parasite ingestion at Bgy. Simpucan after the 5-day camp. It seemed that the water-borne parasites were found in the juice that the indigenous people offered during the restoration. Both trainers and participants consumed the purified water that the team brought such that they ran out of supplies on the second day. Unmindful of the water, they drank whatever was available because the site was too far from the city proper to replenish the stock. The Filipino staff and youth counterparts did

not have difficulty adjusting to the water but the internationals vomited during the ride back.

Disappointments/ Failure (continued)

Fire at the RAC. Early in November 2003, a fire broke out in the middle of the night. One of the buildings of the Rural Agricultural Center was totally consumed for reasons yet undisclosed to PCC staff and the public eye. The City Government seemed to have chosen to keep this incident confidential. Only the youths and one staff member were around to douse the flames and save an adjacent building from burning up; no RAC staff was around. We managed to prove to authorities that we did not start the fire. Nonetheless, this incident made us realize that we lacked the necessary equipment to save our property if the flames were blown by strong winds in the direction of our dormitory. We then purchased a fire extinguisher and two patrolman lamps with the CEPF funds as precautionary measure.

5. Describe any positive or negative lessons learned from this project that would be useful to share with other organizations interested in implementing a similar project.

Aside from the necessity to share resources with partner organizations to have a multiplier effect on the community, several lessons can be learned from the implementation of our project so that it can be easily replicated in other areas by other organizations.

Project Planning and Site Development. First, all projects and activities for small grant projects must be in line with the major strategies and objectives of the implementing organization so that resources can be maximized. Second, the site for the construction and installation of the nature park must be physically safe, secure, and have the necessary documents. We have a MOA with the City government for the use of the training site where the PCC holds its various projects and activities. Unfortunately, it is also quite accessible to neighboring individuals who can freely enter the premises because there are no gates and security guards in the 36-hectare government property. And lastly, PCC needs to take extra caution in guarding physical property and important documents. Pest control is also a problem that needs to be anticipated during construction and in keeping records and valuable instructional materials, especially in remote areas.

Trainings and Volunteer Events. The restoration trainings must be handled and taught by competent staff and trainers and the participants must be carefully selected, depending on the objectives of the project. It must be completed before the rainy season begins in June because malaria is more prevalent at this time and soil erosion is most likely to occur and is best prevented than corrected. The effort and expenses incurred in the planning, coordination, and execution of the activities is an enormous effort such that the quality of the job must not be sacrificed. Precautionary health measures should likewise take precedence over cultural niceties when conducting trainings among local communities, especially for international volunteers or trainers.

Nursery Development. When identifying a site for the nursery, it is best to construct it near a stream or where water is abundant. It must be accessible to the care-takers but not too near an area where trespassers can gain from its easy access. This is also true for other resources in the area. Moreover, it is best to assign an expert in the field who will take charge of the propagation of the seedlings and who has a working knowledge of what kind of species is best to germinate to avoid raising and distributing seedlings that will siphon much of the water from its neighboring plants. It was learned that before the gemelina was mistakenly planted at the RAC in the late 1980's, draught was not a problem even during the summer months.

6. Describe any follow-up activities related to this project.

The Educational Nature Park will eventually be open to the public for environmental education and camp site for the youth. It will help in the education of the youth on the different ecosystems, show the importance of natural habitat for wild animals existing in the region, and what they can do to sustain it.

The Hardwood Tree Nursery will feature premium endemic species and will be the source of seedlings for reforestation projects in the barangay level. In September this year, PCC will coordinate with several barangays regarding the upland reforestation project initiated by the City government. PCC hopes to be able to supply the hardwood seedlings needed by the barangays (local villages). The youths presently enrolled in the residential program (Batch 7) will again collect wildlings in preparation for this event.

Improvements to the Information Center needs to be constructed in order for most of the education materials to be kept safely inside for accessibility and viewing. The four walls of the kiosk will be made from bamboo panels to secure the premises. The roofing will have cascading window roll ups that will adjust to different weather conditions. Inside the kiosk, several billboards and cabinets will be installed where the materials will be placed for safekeeping.

The collection of more educational materials will still be in progress, the highlights being a city-wide campaign for interactive educational materials, called the EnviMuseum Competition. PCC will host a competition among the youth for the best projects to be showcased at the Information Center after the campaign.

In addition, PCC intends to present another proposal to CEPF for the Phase II of the project. Although the proposal still needs fine-tuning, the activities just mentioned and improvements to the initial project may be included as part of the new proposal. The brochures that will showcase the nature park and its many possibilities will also be included.

7. Please provide any additional information to assist CEPF in understanding any other aspects of your completed project.

The Educational Nature Park is a work in progress. There is still so much to be improved on, not only in the construction and trail building but also in the efforts to improve the educational resources in the Information Center. It is the vision of PCC to be able to extend its information campaign for biodiversity conservation to other community members, the youth, and tourists. It can also provide the much-needed hardwood seedlings for reforestation in nearby barangays.

Eventually, school children and nature lovers will be interested to spend a few hours to visit the Information Center and Nature Park where they can hold day trips or overnight bonfire camps. There is also a possibility that this project can be self-sustaining if donations, entrance fees, or fees for service can be charged for the tours/camps. Its site is located near the main road that leads to the Underground River. It is fairly accessible by foot (one kilometer into the property) and if the roads are improved, it can be a great ecological attraction by itself in the future.

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