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Headline: Philippine forest project gets carbon credits

Byline: Karen Boncocan

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Planting activity at one of the reforestation sites in Quirino. Photo by Conservation International-Philippines

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MANILA, Philippines—A breakthrough for the environment sector of the Philippines has recently come in the form of a local reforestation and agroforestry project that gained international recognition for providing “real, additional and permanent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.”

The Quirino Forest Carbon Project (QFCP) of the Conservation International-Philippines has been acknowledged under the Verified Carbon Standards (VCS) program, a global standard and quality assurance system at the forefront of accounting greenhouse (GHG) emissions reductions in the voluntary carbon market.

The project was accepted in the VCS program after its implementation design standards were approved in June by a third party auditor, the Rainforest Alliance. Last year, it was also awarded a Gold-level under the Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) Standards for including community and biodiversity benefits in implementing the project.

Implemented in a 175,943-hectare protected area in the province of Quirino called the Quirino Protected Landscape (QPL), the project sits amid a rich biodiversity—endemic and threatened flora and fauna. It supports the sustainable development of nearby provinces. The project envisions to produce long-term lessening of greenhouse gas emissions by restoring and protecting the QPL.

QFCP is the first forest carbon project in Asia to receive both VCS and CCB accreditations.

Romeo Trono, country executive director of Conservation International-Philippines, said that this was the first time that a project in the Philippines or in Asia has achieved a claim on carbon credits under VCS.

He said that with this development, agencies and companies in the country will be able to acquire carbon credits from local reforestation projects.

Trono said most carbon credits in the country came from the renewable energy sector.

Calling the project a “breakthrough for GHG removal,” Conservation International said that the forestry sector will not be the lone beneficiary of the project but local communities as well.

“It is a three-pronged approach to helping the country by providing communities with alternative livelihood from the reforestation and agroforestry efforts, while simultaneously contributing to mitigating climate change and protecting threatened biodiversity,” Trono said.

He explained that coordination is being done with local communities in implementing the project, “letting them enjoy livelihood benefits while also providing practical, affordable solutions to climate change concerns.”

Aside from proposing an alternative income and promoting the protection of plant and animal habitats, Trono said the project also helps ensure that a steady supply of water is available for the communities by maintaining the watershed.

Under the project, 177 hectares of agroforestry and reforestation parcels will be set up within Integrated Social Forestry (ISF) farms to be managed by volunteers from the local community. The volunteers are persons who agreed to have their land used in the project for the next 23 years.

Preparing the hole for tree planting. Photo by Conservation International-PhilippinesThe QFCP has planted fruit trees like lanzones, rambutan and citrus trees as well as indigenous trees like molave, kalantas, narra and balakat gubat in 41 hectares of land. Fruit trees will continuously be planted on 136 hectares of land in villages covered by the project this year.

Preparing the hole for tree planting. Photo by Conservation International-Philippines

The project expects to remove 31,771 tons of carbon dioxide in the entire duration of the project while providing benefits to 96 households.

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Conservation International has teamed up with Moretrees, a non-profit carbon offset provider. The project, according to Conservation International is a “very good example of invoking partnerships with the private sector in addressing simultaneously community development, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation/adaptation for sustainability.”