
CONCEPT NOTE

KEY PROJECT DATA

Title: Growing Canopies, Strengthening Communities_

Implementation Period: 1 January – December 31, 2021

Project Reach: 4 countries

PROJECT GOAL

The main goal of the project is to strengthen marginal communities whose survival depends on the sustainability of their natural resources and increased cultural rootedness. Growing trees is a community endeavor that enhances ecological and social strength of communities. Stronger communities have better chances of not being forcibly displaced by abusive exploitation of natural resources and aggressive development policies. Most of the marginal communities involved in this undertaking are indigenous peoples living close to forest spaces in areas where Jesuits and JRS work in Asia Pacific. JCAP and JRS will grow 40,000 trees on the 40th anniversary of Fr. Arrupe's founding of JRS.

RATIONALE

Forced displacement in marginalized and indigenous communities in Asia Pacific had led to urgent protection concerns. Community activists in Cambodia, Viet Nam, the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia have suffered persecution defending their community's survival and their natural environment. The communities are subjected to aggression and pushed to abandon their homes where they have lived for generations. The cultural and environmental integrity of their communities are pressured, threatened and disrespected. The future of their community is at stake.

In Cambodia, economic development has increased pressure on forest communities around Prey Lang forest, a protected area that experiences intrusion from strong business interests. In the past years, community activists have been forced to flee to seek protection while other community members feel threatened. In forest communities in southern Philippines, indigenous communities have practiced management of their natural resources such as assisted natural regeneration of endemic trees to enable their community to grow as they promote cultural and environmental integrity. Marginalized communities in Indonesia, Thailand and other parts of the region experience similar threats to their communities and are working to protect their environment and culture.

INVOLVEMENT

The inspiration of this project also draws from Pope Francis who has exhorted the world to care for our common home in his 2015 Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si*. He says, "Many intensive forms of environmental exploitation and degradation not only exhaust the resources...but also undo the social structures which...shaped cultural identity and their sense of meaning of life and community." (145) We are called to an ecological conversion and live a life that respects and promotes integral ecology.

The Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) of the Society of Jesus has outlined their apostolic goals for 2019-2029. Fr. Tony Moreno, the President of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific, encouraged Jesuits and mission partners, to “pursue synodality in the UAPs (showing the ways to God, walking with the poor and excluded, accompanying the young people and collaborating in the care for the common home)” as an area of conversion. During the extended consultations in October 2020, JCAP has identified the destruction of the environment and debilitating poverty that are further aggravated by the coronavirus pandemic as areas of action.

This project is an inspired response to these calls. This project is a collaboration of the Jesuit Refugee Service Asia Pacific (JRSAP) and the Jesuit Conference in Asia Pacific (JCAP) committees on Reconciliation With Creation (RWC), Indigenous Ministry (JCIM) and Youth Ministry/MAGIS.