

GEF-UNDP-SGP-OP 5 Programme Launch

21 May 2014

Ballroom B, Crowne Plaza Galleria, Quezon City

MESSAGE

Mr. Maurice Dewulf
Country Director, UNDP

Senator Legarda,

Secretary Paje,

dear colleagues and friends in the social development and natural resource conservation community

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the launch today of the Fifth Operational Phase of the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme in the Philippines.

As you all know, UNDP has always been committed to support community initiatives towards the conservation and protection of biodiversity in the Philippines.

The Small Grants Programme is the main vehicle for this, and this thanks to GEF's support.

But this time, we are not only continuing the SGP. Being a so-called GEF upgraded country, the SGP in the Philippines will graduate to a bigger programme.

First, unlike the first four operational phases of SGP (SGP 1 to 4) which were part of a global SGP pot, the SPG-5 in the Philippines is now a separate country programme. SGP-5, therefore, follows a project document that is specifically and especially designed for the Philippines.

Secondly, it is now funded through a Philippine Government allocation from the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Third, whereas SGP-4 only had 1.8 Million US Dollars, the Fifth Operational Phase of SGP is a 4.5 Million US Dollar grant-making project.

Thus, from around 40 projects per phase back then under SGP 1 to 4, SGP-5 is expected to support at least 60-80 projects in the next four years.

Fourth, SGP-5 in the Philippines is solely focused on biodiversity conservation.

But what is most important about the SGP, irrespective of its size, is that it is 'the' programme in the biodiversity sphere that directly reaches out to civil society organizations and local communities.

And this is the very essence of the Small Grants Programme; and for this reason, the SGP will always be regarded as very special program within the UNDP and Philippines portfolio.

The SGP is designed to be flexible enough to be driven by the aspirations and needs of people on the ground. It is this flexibility that allows the SGP to be relevant and useful to poor Filipino communities that are in need of interventions.

Through the years, the SGP has proven useful in addressing extremely important environmental events, issues and challenges. It has also helped communities innovate on natural resource management approaches. Some small projects funded by SGP have also become the bases for bigger endeavors that seek to change the way we do things, or to impact on policy and policy change.

We are proud to note e.g that a SGP project on a locally managed conservation area in Polillio Islands, and various initiatives supporting the management of conservation areas by indigenous peoples, have helped design the New Conservation Areas in the Philippine Project or NewCAPP.

Similarly, SGP-supported marine protected areas established and managed by local stewards have contributed a lot in the development of the soon-to-be-implemented project on Marine Protected Area Networks.

These initiatives are all about community level action. Indeed, community empowerment is the centerpiece of SGP. Through this programme, local stakeholders in the remotest of villages can demonstrate the impact they can achieve on biodiversity conservation policy and practice.

These communities, therefore, are not mere recipients of project funds. They become agents of change – an affirmation of the fact that we have long realized: that natural resource-dependent communities are in truth the best managers as well as guardians of their resources.

For this, the UNDP is both humbled and proud to be a partner, with Government, of non-governmental organizations, people's organizations and other community-based organizations in conservation and development through the Small Grants Programme.

Let me thus also take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to the SGP success in the country all these years, from the members of the National Steering Committee to all the grantees who made a significant dent in natural resources management in their own innovative ways.

As we roll-out SGP-5, we hope that you, our partners, can already come up with catalytic and creative projects that we can work on together in the next four years. We shall be happy to see all of you and work again with you in pursuing your conservation and development work.

Once again welcome to SGP-5 Launch!