



ADOPT-A-CREEK PROJECT OF DOLE PHILIPPINES: ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION OF THE LOCALS IN BARANGAY MALAGOS, CALINAN, DAVAO CITY, PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of the Adopt-a-Creek Project as one of the corporate social responsibly programs of Dole Philippines in Malagos, Davao City, Philippines in the context of environmental changes and the participation of the locals living beside the Cogan creek. This study aims to determine the level of participation of the residents in the Cogan creek in the Adopt-a-Creek Project of a multinational company. The study also seeks to understand the lived experiences of the locals living in the banks of the Cogan creek since the establishment of the banana plantations in their community by Dole Philippines. Results of the study show that most of the participants are not aware of the project and have not participated on its different activities. Based on the shared lived experiences of the participants, the project was mostly participated by the employees of the plantation of Dole Philippines, Barangay officials, and some students. The locals experience negative impacts of the company's banana plantation such as the distinctive odor of the chemicals used as pesticide and also suffered surface runoff due to the plantation's modification of natural waterways for the latter's drainage system. The tree planting activity of the project only utilized one variety of plant disregarding other varieties that could promote a dynamic ecosystem in the area. This study argues that the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines should involve the full participation of the locals in its different activities at the same time maximizing their capabilities and their roles in the sustainability, protection, and conservation of their environment.

Keywords: Adopt-a-Creek Project, banana plantation, participation of local community

Introduction

Globalization has resulted to the influx of multinational companies in the Philippines and consequently has changed the agricultural landscape and the way of life of its local communities. Thousands of hectares of lands were converted to massive modern farm lands or plantations for bananas, pineapples, mangoes, sugar, and other high valued crops. These multinational agribusinesses promise to deliver local employment, economic benefits, and improvement in the standard of living. However, Shiva (2000) has unfolded the disasters of globalization especially on agriculture and the culture of the locals. Shiva argues that these corporations are now trying to introduce genetically engineered seed which leads to the increase of costs and ecological risks. She added that, in the name of increasing food production, the rich diversity and the production of food through the sustainable systems are being destroyed. The so called “high yields” of agriculture do not result to more production of food and nutrition but rather the destruction of diversity and soil fertility.

In response to the alarming environmental concerns, actions were initiated by these corporations to address the impact of the side effects on the environment brought by their plantations. According to Chand (2014), multinational companies establish code of conduct and they also strive to achieve some social missions in order to do businesses ethically, minimize negative environmental impacts, raise public attention on certain issues, raise funds and donations, increase employees’ job satisfaction, and more. These tasks are the responsibility of the corporation’s special unit called the Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR. As pointed out by Kaczmarek (2014), the concept of CSR connects a commitment to social and environmental issues by way of business and in the relations with stakeholders.

Despite the creation of CSR as a way to address different issues and concerns associated to these corporations in relation to its stakeholders and the environment, these companies are not still off the hook. Porter and Kramer (2011) viewed these companies as primary cause of environmental, social and economical problems. Environmental distresses, their relationship with workers in such aspects as wage inequality, and participation of the community in its planning and activities in achieving sustainable development are still issues that still have a long way to go. It is always the question of whether companies are taking CSR action seriously because of the need to act proactively, because of image, or imposed by the law (Stojanović, Mihajlović, and Schulte, 2016).

Participation of the local communities in the different activities of CSR has also been a big challenge for these corporations. According to Berad (2011) there is a lack of interest of the local community in participating and contributing to CSR activities of companies. Local communities have little knowledge about CSR and no serious efforts have been made to make them aware about CSR and establish confidence in the community about such initiatives. The situation becomes worsen due to lack of communication between the company and the community at the grassroots.

According to Cornwall (2003), some community projects do not involve participation and empowerment of the marginalized especially women especially during the planning stage. Participation in development must empower the voice and choice of the marginalized people. Chambers (1995) argues that in the development process, the locals should be involved. Different initiatives made by these corporations must involve the people which will maintain or enhance their capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable opportunities for the next

generation; and which contributes net benefits at the local and global levels and in the short and long term.

This study aimed to discover how the *Adopt-A-Creek Project* of Dole Philippines at Malagos, Baguio District, Davao City brought changes to the surrounding and the way of life of the local community living near the Cogan creek. It also explored the level of participation among the locals in the activities of the said project initiated by Dole Philippines.

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on the different theories pertaining to issues or problems in the environment, participation of the people in the community to the development programs, and projects doled-out to communities intended for the benefits of these multinational companies. Shiva (1993) discusses how the existence of modern farming in some communities leads to the introduction of synthetic pesticides and insecticides. This study is also supported by the theories of Chambers (1995) and Cornwall (2003) which argue that development should consider the engagement of the local communities most especially people who are considered marginalized.

Objectives:

This study meant to explore the impact of the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines in Malagos, Davao City in the context of environmental changes and the participation of the locals living beside the Cogan creek. Specifically, this aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Determine the demographic profile of the participants who live beside the Cogan creek.
2. Determine the level of participation of the residents near Cogan creek to the activities initiated by Dole Philippines under the Adopt-a-Creek Project.
3. Discover the different environmental changes brought by the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines in Malagos, Davao City based on the testimonies of the residents.

Method

This study used a mixed method research design which employed a descriptive research to determine the demographic profile of the respondents and their level of participation to the activities involved in the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines. This study also employed participatory action research to collectively discover the issues associated to the implementation of project. This study conducted key informant interviews directly with 10 residents living near the Cogan creek located at Malogos, Baguio District, Davao City.

Means and percentage were used to quantitatively analyze the data of the demographic profile and the level of participation of the respondents. A thematic analysis based on the answers of the participants was used to qualitatively analyze the issues or problems linked to the operation or implementation of the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the demographic analysis and the level of participation of the residents located in the banks of Cagan creek who are supposedly the recipients of the Adapt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines. It is also presented here three case studies which discusses the lived experiences of the residents and their thoughts about the said project.

Demographics

As shown in Table 1, most of the respondents who were interviewed were females (80%) and only 20% were males. Table 2 shows that most of respondents belonged to the age group of 40 years old and above.

Table 1. Percentage of Sex and Age of the respondents

Sex	N	%
Male	6	20
Female	24	80
Total	30	100

Table 2. Percentage of Age of the respondents

Age	N	%
20 to 29 years old	2	7
30 to 39 years old	10	33
40 years old and above	18	60
Total	30	100

Activity Status

Presented in Table 3, 80% percent of the participants who happened to be females were all housewives. They do not have employment or livelihood for they take care of their young children and do the household chores while their husbands or partners are at work. Twenty (20) percent of the participants who were males were employed and have a livelihood.

Table 3. Percentage of activity status of the respondents

Activity Status	N	%
Unemployed	24	80
Employed	6	20
Total	30	100

Level of Participation

As shown in Table 4, out of the 30 respondents of this study, only 20% were aware of the Adapt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines. They were also able to participate in the different activities of the said project. Eighty (80) percent of the participants were not aware of the project and were not able to participate in its activities.

Table 4. Level of participation of the respondents

Level of participation	N	%
Participated	6	20
Not able to participate	24	80
Total	30	100

Lived Experiences

Case 1

Sarah Cabanda, a 27 years old housewife who lives in the bank of Cagan creek could still recall their past activities in the creek before the plantation of Dole Philippines came in their community. She said that she and her mother used to go to the creek to wash clothes and her brothers fetch its fresh water to be used for cleaning and to water their potted plants.

She could still remember that the water of the creek will overflow during heavy rains when the washed-out leaves, twigs, and log clogged the culvert. When the water subsides, on the next day, her family and some residents cleaned the clogged materials in the creek.

When Sarah was asked if she participates in the activities of the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Doles Philippines, she responded:

“We do not participate in the clean-up drive and even the tree planting activities of that project. I am not even familiar of the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Doles Philippines. I just remembered that there were some people from other places went in the creek and did some cleaning and tree planting. Most of these people were Barangay officials and other government workers, college students, and workers from Dole Philippines. I could not remember that my family and my neighbors participated or joined in those activities conducted by Dole Philippines.

I could not remember that somebody from Dole Philippines informed us about their project, its purpose and its activities.”

When asked about the changes made by the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines, she said:

“We saw some changes in the area. There are now lots of mahogany trees in the banks which are products of their tree planting activities before. But the creek still overflows. I also noticed that when the plantation started to exist in the area, during heavy rains, some water do not directly go to the creek. It flows in others areas such as in the vicinities of my neighbors’ houses and on the road. We already informed the Barangay officials about this but the problem still occur until now.”

Case 2.

Another housewife was also interviewed for this study whose family also lived near the bank of Cogan creek. **Michelle Baleng**, 33 years old, unemployed, and has 4 children was asked if she and her family was aware and participated in the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines. She said:

“My husband works in the banana plantation of Dole Philippines. We were informed about the Adopt-a-Creek Project of the company. My husband and I were able to join the different activities of the project together with the other workers of Dole Philippines and Barangay officials. We removed the clogged materials in the culvert and also removed the stones that might cause the clogging of the creek.”

Michelle was asked on what makes her motivated and her family in joining the activities of the said project. She responded:

“Dole Philippines gave my husband a job as a labourer in their plantation. They also gave us a parcel of land as a tenant. We are so thankful for them because not all people here in the community were given the chance to work. The land that they gave us is already a bonus. The clean-up and tree planting activities is for the benefit of the residents living here near the creek and also for the improvement of our surroundings. Now, we noticed that the river bank has lot of mahogany trees that are products of the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines. The problem about flood has not yet been resolved but this has already been addressed to the Barangay. We will just wait for the result”

Case 3.

One participant stood out when it comes to noticing the changes brought by the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines in Cogan creek. **Bryan Binagata** is a 34 years old and a livestock farmer. He and his family is also a resident near the Cogan creek. He was asked if he and his family had a chance to participate in the Adopt-a-Creek Project. He said.

“We are not aware of the project. We just saw long time ago some personnel or officials from the Barangay and students from different schools worked with the employees of Dole to clean the creek and planted some trees. I think they planted mahogany seedlings.”

When asked if there were invitations for them to join the activities in the project, Bryan responded:

“No. We did not receive any information inviting us to join those activities. But we clean the creek at our own decision especially when it is clogged which causes water to overflow.”

Bryan was also asked on the changes made in the surroundings before and after the conduct of the activities of the Adopt-a-Creek Project. He said:

“Before, when we were still kids, we saw fishes in the creek. I was always tasked by my parents to fetch water from the creek for bathing and cleaning purposes. Though we do not drink the water in the creek, we could still say that the water is fresh and clean during those times. Now, kids do not play anymore in the creek. Nobody fetch water in the creek anymore or wash some clothes. We could smell the chemicals used by the plantation and it has a distinctive odor. My neighbors keep on complaining about the smell and we address it already to the Barangay officials.”

“Wala jud kabag-uhan nahitabo. Mas nilala pa gani karun. Sauna, ang pag-overflow lang sa sapa ang amo naandan kung grabe ang ulan kay tungod magbaba ang mga dahon ug ang mga sanga sa kahoy. Karun, dili lang sa may sapa ang mag baha, pati ang kalsada ug ang among tugkaran magbaha. Sukad naabot ang plantation sa Dole sa amo lugar, nagbuhat sila ug ilang mga drainage para protektahan ang ilang mga saging. Gi-divert nila ang dagan sa tubig ug kami hinuon ang naperwisyo.”

“Nothing has changed. The situation became worse when the plantation came. Our problem before was just the overflowing of water from the creek when heavy rain occurs. But now, the plantation made their own drainage system to protect their babana plants and the flow

of water was diverted to other areas. Now, there is flood on roads and even our front and backyards.”

The stories coming from the words of the participants make us realize that the Adopt-a-Creek project of Dole Philippines in Cogan creek, Malagos, Davao City was only participated mostly by their employees, the local government unit thru the Barangay personnel, and students. The local residents especially those who are living near the creek were not involved in the activities of the project. They just voluntarily do the cleaning of the creek as part of their usual routine after a heavy rain. Most of the participants of this study noticed some changes in their surroundings but mostly the changes are negative.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study explores the impact of the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines in Malagos, Davao City in the context of environmental changes and the participation of the locals living beside the Cogan creek. The findings of the study revealed that most of the respondents were females and do not have employment or livelihood compared to male participants. Based on the results, only few were aware and were able to participate of the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines. Most of the participants of the study were not informed or made aware of the said project and were not able to participate on its different activities. Based on the lived experiences of the participants, since the establishment of banana plantation of Dole Philippines, they have experienced the negative environmental changes and its negative impacts in their community.

The project initiated by Dole Philippines as part of their corporate social responsibility could have provided positive impressions to some stakeholders but it was not translated to the empowerment of the locals (Nussbaum, 2011) especially on the context of the protection and conservation of the environment. The tree planting activities of the said project only used mahogany plant and did not consider other plants to be planted in the banks of the creek. It only promotes monoculture by disregarding other plants which might also be beneficial to the residents and to other animals (Shiva, 1993). The activities associated to the Adopt-a-Creek Project of the company will supposedly create environmental development in the community but there are no evidences of full participation of the residents along the creeks. This type of “false charity” (Freire, 1970), can be denied if there is a genuine participation of the local community (Cornwall, 2003) that would result to an environmental and social development which will uphold the voices and choices of the marginalized people (Gascon, 2017).

To genuinely involve the locals in the Adopt-a-Creek Project of Dole Philippines, the company must religiously invite them and include them in the planning stage for every activity that the project will undertake. More advocacy programs or activities should be made to inform the public especially the locals for them to participate in the Adopt-a-Creek Project. The company will also conduct other activities or programs involving the residents about sustainability, conservation and protection of the environment in order for the locals to better understand the goals and the message of the Adopt-a-Creek Project. Tree planting activities should not limit the type of trees to be planted. Other types of trees especially trees that provide fruits should also be considered for it will not just protect the landscape of their surroundings but also provide a room for interaction between plants and animals making the ecosystem more dynamic and vibrant.

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