

Conflict Management Analysis in an IFMA Site: The Case of Surigao Development Corporation, Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

Forest management is beset by problems such as severe deforestation and forest degradation which eventually affect local livelihood, biodiversity, and ecosystem functions (Kusumanto 2007). Competition for forest resources among different stakeholders and the existence of conflicts among interested parties could also be observed in forest areas. Disadvantaged groups gain public attention and often negotiate formal agreements with powerful stakeholders such as corporations and environmental non-government organizations (Edmunds & Wollenberg 2002). Thus, companies must exhibit conflict sensitivity to understand and anticipate actions to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive ones through peace-building (Prandi & Lozano 2011). To solve conflicts, a behavioral approach called conflict management strategy could be employed (Sportsman & Hamilton 2007).

Conflict management focuses on designing effective macro-level strategies to minimize dysfunctions brought about by conflicts and enhancing constructive operations to boost learning (Rahim 2002). Several researches (Brewer *et al.* 2002; Havenga 2004; Islamoglu *et al.* 2008; Daly *et al.* 2010; and Cahyono and Hartijasti 2012) on conflict management strategies (CMS) have predominantly employed quantitative methods such as the use of statistical tests. Respondents were mostly required to fill out survey questionnaires either developed by or modified from the work of Thomas & Kilmann (1974) and Rahim (1983) to describe their perceived use of CMS. These CMS vary in typologies such as problem-solving, smoothing, forcing, withdrawal, and sharing (Blake & Mouton 1964); accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, competing, and compromising (Thomas & Kilmann 1974); and integrating,

ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to describe the types of conflicts and conflict management strategies in the timber plantation project of Surigao Development Corporation (SUDECOR) in Surigao del Sur, Mindanao, Philippines. Qualitative analysis of conflict management strategies (CMS) employed by stakeholders in the Integrated Forest Management Agreement (IFMA) area of SUDECOR was done based on narratives taken from key informant interviews and the focus group discussion (FGD). The study participants were chosen through snowball sampling technique and were made to narrate their perceptions about problems in the area and their participation in addressing those problems. Narratives were broken down to individual statements that bear on a particular CMS (i.e. accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, competing, and compromising).

Clustering of the statements showed the preponderance of stakeholders' actions that fall under the competing strategy. This reflects the presence of multiple and overlapping interests of different stakeholders in the site, including their desire to impose their will and dominate others who also have a stake in the area. Next in importance is the compromising strategy, followed by avoiding and collaborating strategies. No stakeholder was seen to employ accommodating strategy, which is suggestive of the lack of efforts among stakeholders to generate shared understanding and commitment towards a common objective. The conflicts among stakeholders in the IFMA area stand in the way to achieving progress in the locality. Early resolution of conflicts within the IFMA area before they escalate into unmanageable levels is a priority concern of SUDECOR and the government itself. The study also revealed that using a qualitative approach to analyzing CMS only applies at the micro-level. Use of other methods in analyzing CMS is suggested for macro-level conflict management situations.

Keywords: conflict management strategy, integrated forest management agreement, logging moratorium, qualitative analysis, SUDECOR

obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising (Rahim 1983). However, the use of such questionnaires in assessing the relationship between leadership and CMS may be affected by how the respondents project themselves as managers of conflict situation (Zafar 2011).

In the CARAGA Region, Philippines, Quitoriano *et al.* (2009) studied resource-based conflicts in three ecosystems (i.e., upland, lowland, and coastal) using a qualitative approach. Six major conflicts were identified, as follows:

- conflict between IP communities versus all other users of ancestral domains over overlapping tenurial instruments;
- Conflict between IP communities and the government over the utilization of natural resources that are subject to IP ancestral domain claims;
- Tri-party conflict among the farmers, Irrigators' Association, and the National Irrigation Authority over insufficient supply of irrigation water and illegal connections;

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- d) Conflict between farmers versus intermediate actors over prices, capital, technology, and support services;
- e) Conflict between municipal fishers versus mining companies over damage to marine habitats attributed to mining operations; and
- f) Conflict between municipal fishers versus illegal fishers over incompatible methods of fishing.

Conflict management styles could be studied in relation to demographic characteristics as exemplified in the work of Islamoglu *et al.* (2008) in Istanbul, Turkey. In this study appropriate statistical tests were employed to determine significant differences in conflict management styles among groups that belonged to different demographics (e.g. gender, marital status, having children, education, tenure, and position of the individual). The results showed that except for position, no other demographic variable was related to the conflict management styles. Middle level managers used accommodation and avoidance styles more than first line and upper line managers. First line managers used the competition style more often than upper and middle-level managers. However, positions did not matter when it came to the use of collaboration style of conflict management. Since this paper focuses on the SUDECOR IFMA site, it was the stakeholders in general who were described according to the dominant strategies they employed instead of focusing on specific demographic characteristics such as tenure or position.

It is also important to deduce the underlying causes of conflicts and its effects on the local people. Yasmi (2003) studied two settlements (i.e., Loreh and Langap) in West Kalimantan, Indonesia regarding the residents' views on logging and mining activities in the area. These conflicts as well as the causes of tension with the mining companies was triggered by water and air pollution and soil degradation that emanated from mining operations. The conflicts arose because of the perceived adverse impacts of logging on residual vegetation. Apart from these damages, an oppressive 'military-like' approach and access to land were considered to have aggravated the conflicts between local people and the logging companies. Between the local people and the mining companies in Loreh, the underlying causes of conflict were air and water pollution, compensatory facilities (e.g. clean water, electricity, and compensation fee), moral degradation, and soil degradation. Meanwhile, damaging tree species, oppressive approaches in dealing with farmers, and access to land were the underlying causes of conflict between the local people and the logging companies both in Loreh and Langap. Similar to Yasmi's study, this paper also extracts the underlying causes of conflict in relation to the participants' motivation in using a particular set of strategy within the IFMA site.

Yasmi *et al.* (2006) evaluated the implications of the dynamics between stakeholder conflicts and forest decentralization policies on the future of forest management. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews, field observations, and workshops to determine local stakeholders' understanding of policies and how these were implemented, as well as their impacts on forest management and conflicts. The study revealed that decentralized forest management introduced several major problems such as the conflict between the local and central government due to their different interpretation of decentralization regulations and due to the central government's revocation of the local governments' authority to issue logging permits. Lack of trust between the local people and the

government stemmed from the conflict between the two parties which later manifested in re-centralization approaches by the government. The study further exposed the continuing power struggle between the central and the local government officials.

The Surigao Development Corporation (SUDECOR) Integrated Forest Management Agreement (IFMA) site whose forest resources are shared among various stakeholders is not exempted from the existence of conflicts. Although SUDECOR has been employing sustainable forest management, problems of insurgency, unclear access rights, conflicts of indigenous peoples, and logging companies' limited attention to the concerns of IPs on basic timber harvesting support such as transportation for hauling logs were observed (Carandang 2011).

Thus, this study was conducted to describe the conflicts and conflict management strategies in SUDECOR's IFMA in Surigao del Sur, Mindanao, Philippines. Qualitative analysis through participants' interview and FGD was done to capture the conflict management strategies being employed by SUDECOR stakeholders. Research questions centered on the relevant issues related to IFMA, and how these issues relate to stakeholders' participation in various phases of project management.

METHODOLOGY

Data Gathering

Information were gathered through key informant interviews, focus group discussion, and secondary data gathering. Eight (8) focal persons were identified through snowball sampling or chain referral sampling (Johnston & Sabin 2010) wherein the key informants provided information about other possible key informant interviewees. The research team primarily identified SUDECOR officials as key informants because the company manages the issues and concerns raised by all the stakeholders and attempts to provide solutions by deploying financial, technical, and human resources. As such, the Corporate Communication and Community Relations Officer of SUDECOR who was designated as the company's point person was interviewed. The latter then directed the research team to include as interview respondents SUDECOR's Company Forester (CF), the Management Committee Chairman, and the previous Foreman of SUDECOR's Forestry Department. Local government officials were also identified since they implement governance structures and mechanisms and coordinate with DENR in addressing issues raised within the barangay. As such, the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Officer, two Barangay Captains who both serve as chair of the People's Organization (PO), and another PO Chairman not affiliated with the barangay council were also interviewed upon referral by previous interviewees. Indigenous peoples (IPs) who manage ancestral lands within the concession and benefit from SUDECOR's financial, technical, and human services were also considered. The Company Forester helped in inviting the IPs to the FGD but no one came during the schedule. Nevertheless, twelve former SUDECOR workers participated in the FGD. Questions pertained to issues or problems in the IFMA site and how these relate to stakeholders' participation in various phases of the site's management. The FGD participants were also asked to make recommendations *vis-à-vis* the problems they observed.

Data Analysis

The first step taken to evaluate the stakeholders' perceptions of conflict management strategies involved creating units of analysis adapted from Behfar *et al.* (2008). Complex interview transcripts were broken down into single statements, each containing only one idea. Originally, 15 distinct interview and FGD narratives were gathered in the study. Upon breakdown of the narratives, 34 separate statements were generated. For example, the following narration by the Foreman of SUDECOR's Forestry Department: "During the 1980s, the forest guards were able to roam around the forests when these were not yet occupied by members of the New People's Army (NPA). But nowadays, DENR personnel could no longer be seen patrolling the forests as they try to avoid the NPAs. Policemen are now the ones guarding the forests and when they see some illegal activities, they immediately report the same to the DENR. However, when DENR would request for more policemen as forest guards, no additional policemen were being deployed" was broken down into three separate sentences that exemplify different ways of managing conflict, thus:

- (1) During the 1980s, the forest guards were able to roam around the forests when these were not yet occupied by members of the New People's Army. But nowadays, DENR personnel could no longer be seen patrolling the forests as they try to avoid NPAs;
- (2) Policemen are now the ones guarding the forests and when they see some illegal activities, they immediately report the same to the DENR; and
- (3) However, when DENR would request for more policemen as forest guards, no additional policemen were being deployed.

The second step entailed clustering the statements and labelling each cluster according to the five conflict management strategies by Thomas & Kilmann which served as *a priori* codes or general themes identified earlier in the study. This was also used to avoid researcher bias since it was the research team who assigned the cluster where a given stakeholder's statement should fall. The last analytical procedure identified the stakeholder with whom to attribute a particular conflict management strategy based on the narratives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of the Study Site

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through Department Administrative Order No. 1999-53, defines Integrated Forest

Management Agreement or IFMA as a "production sharing contract entered into by and between the DENR and a qualified applicant wherein the DENR grants to the latter the exclusive right to develop, manage, protect and utilize a specified area of forestland and forest resources therein for a period of 25 years and may be renewed for another 25-year period, consistent with the principle of sustainable development and in accordance with an approved Comprehensive Development and Management Plan, and under which both parties share in its produce." One such agreement is IFMA No. 06-2009 which was devised between the DENR and SUDECOR on November 4, 2009 in the province of Surigao del Sur in Mindanao, Philippines. The IFMA covered the same area previously granted to SUDECOR through Timber License Agreement (TLA) No. 56-1 that expired on June 30, 2011. Thus, the TLA was converted to an IFMA after being evaluated by the DENR on the performance of the TLA. Figure 1 shows the IFMA belonging to SUDECOR located in the province of Surigao del Sur. It is a coastal province located in the northeast coast of Mindanao and is within the CARAGA Region which is part of the Eastern Mindanao Timber Corridor.

SUDECOR covers a total area of 75,671 ha and its concession area falls within the Municipalities of Madrid, Lanuza, Cortes, Tandag, Tago, Carmen, and San Miguel, extending approximately 30 km in length and 50 km at its widest stretch. It is approximately 809 km away from Manila and 260 km away from Cebu (SUDECOR 2010).

The timber lands in SUDECOR are classified as mossy, virgin, and residual forests. There are also open lands where IP settlements are located and which became part of the certificate of ancestral domain titles (CADT); the rest are forest lands. Major changes in the land use, forest management, social aspects, as well as the occurrence of natural calamities in SUDECOR, as identified in the FGD, are shown in the company's timeline (Figure 2) from the 1950s to 2002.

Based on its Comprehensive Development and Management Plan (CDMP 2009), SUDECOR aims to effectively and efficiently manage its 75,671 ha forest land using the principles of sustainable forest management as it advances socio-economic benefits while reducing poverty level in the area. It practically aims to improve the management approaches, strategies, and practices therein so that the production of timber resources can be sustained over the long term without compromising the sustainability of the biological diversity, land and water resources, and other environmental and socio-economic services in the IFMA area and its vicinities.

SUDECOR identified five relevant approaches to achieve the aforementioned objectives:

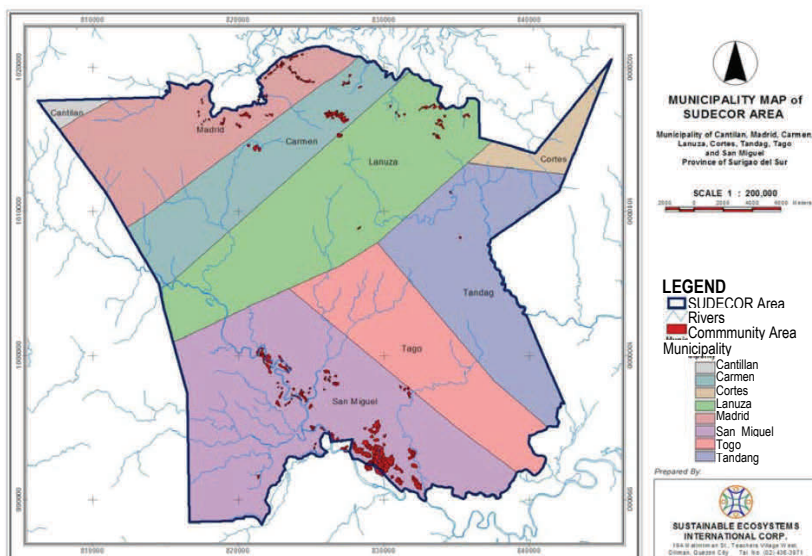


Figure 1. Map of SUDECOR IFMA site (SUDECOR CDMP, 2010).

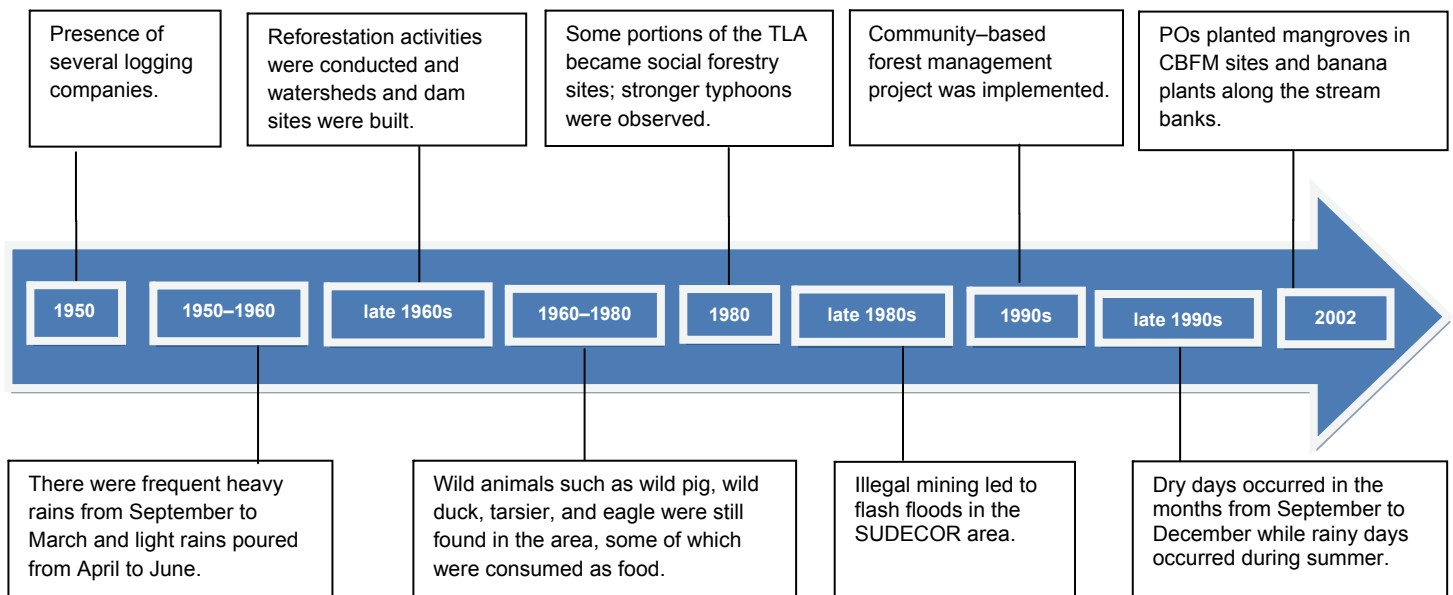


Figure 2. Timeline showing various changes in SUDECOR's land practices, forest management programs, social, and natural calamities.

- (1) holistic and systems approach to integrate various factors, processes, and components of a forest ecosystem into the company's management and operations;
- (2) watershed and ecosystem approach to SFM planning and implementation;
- (3) participatory approach in solving conflicting interests among the various stakeholders;
- (4) equitable access of resources and opportunities among all stakeholders; and
- (5) co-management strategies to enhance the roles of DENR, LGUs, and other stakeholders in sustainable management of the production forests in SUDECOR.

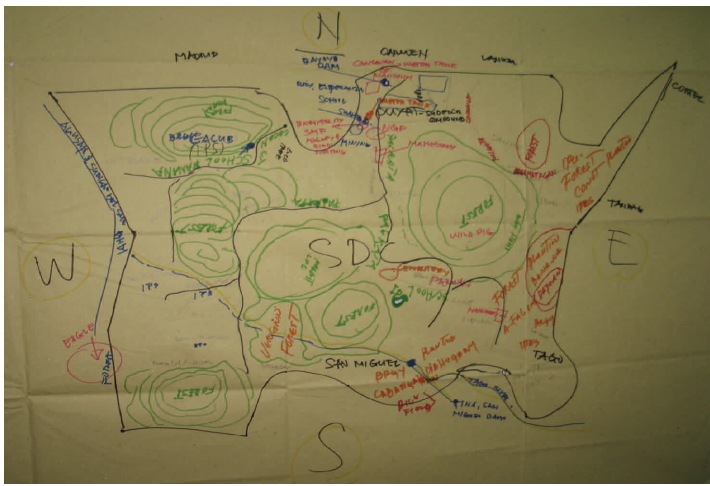
Also stated in its CDMP is that SUDECOR and DENR shall become proactive in ironing out issues and concerns of all stakeholders before the problem arises. SUDECOR aimed to follow the existing traditional or customary justice system of the IPs through the *Katarungang Pambarangay* Law and/or exercise settlement with IPs through the Council of Elders/Leaders in resolving conflicts that may arise. These were the conflict management resolution and strategies planned by SUDECOR as

shown in their CDMP. This also ensures that SUDECOR continues its sustainable forest management in the area as it has done since it started operations in 1959. The company gained national and international recognition as a model for sustainable forest production in the Philippines and had become a site for various government-funded projects showcasing sustainable forest management and its components such as recognition of IPs' rights and establishing clear boundaries and use of forest lands (SUDECOR 2009).

However, problems had been affecting the operations of SUDECOR IFMA site. Executive Order (EO) No. 23 issued by President Aquino in February 2011, which declared a moratorium on the cutting and harvesting of timber in the natural and residual forests, restricted movement of machines and equipment in the concession area and even led to the suspension of the company's operations. Furthermore, the IP communities apparently did not want SUDECOR to continue its logging operations within what they claimed is their ancestral domain area. The other allegations of the IPs included the following:



SUDECOR employees during the focus group discussion.



A community map produced by SUDECOR employees after the focus group discussion.

- a) delays in the release of salaries of IPs and harvesting done by SUDECOR in areas covered by Integrated Social Forestry;
- b) bulldozing by the company of the IP's burial grounds;
- c) harvesting by the company of falcata trees owned by the community within the IPs' *kaingin* sites; and
- d) unfulfilled promises by the company to relocate the IPs or construct their houses (Carandang 2011).

Analysis of the Conflict Management Strategies

The analysis showed that all types of conflict management strategies, with the exception of the accommodating strategy, were employed by the stakeholders in the SUDECOR IFMA. Five statements reflecting the use of avoiding strategies conflict management are shown in Table 1. This strategy refers to the failure to address the parties' concern to resolve the conflict due to withdrawing from possible dysfunctional effect of confrontation (Rahim 2002). These narratives imply distancing oneself from active responsibility, taking passive positions during confrontations, and withdrawal from conflicts.

Table 1. Conflict management strategies employed by various SUDECOR IFMA stakeholders that were clustered under avoiding strategy.

No.	Narratives of study participants
1	The DENR forest guards could no longer be counted on to protect the forests because they stay away from areas occupied by members of the New People's Army (NPA).
2	Concerned DENR staff do not promptly act on reports about illegal logging and lumber activities.
3	In view of the implementation of EO 23, SUDECOR totally stopped the operations in the area. There were also problems in money-generation activities.
4	The main problem experienced in the community was the "forced removal" of workforce when SUDECOR stopped its operations.
5	Policemen are not being deployed despite DENR's requests for more policemen to help the forest guards in forest protection activities.

The inability of staff members to act promptly on reports about illegal logging, and forest guards staying away from areas occupied by NPAs were seen as avoiding strategies. The non-deployment of policemen to help the forest guards, even upon request by the DENR, was likewise seen as one. Such inaction could imply that both the DENR and the police force were ill-equipped to deal with conflicts in an IFMA setting. The implementation of EO 23 may also be considered an avoiding strategy since it led to the stoppage of SUDECOR's field operations and the compulsory removal of the workforce. In this case, avoidance was more obligatory on the part of the company than deliberate because they were left with no choice but to distance themselves from the others to avoid conflicts. In general, the stakeholders of the SUDECOR IFMA site employed

avoiding strategies so as not to become involved with problems amidst hostile situations.

The statements categorized under compromising strategy are shown in Table 2. This strategy involves give-and-take attitude of both parties to reach mutually acceptable decisions (Rahim 2002). In general, the narratives imply give-and-take alternatives or options to assure acceptability and provide mutually beneficial results among the stakeholders.

Table 2. Conflict management strategies employed by various SUDECOR IFMA stakeholders that were clustered under compromising strategy.

No.	Narratives of study participants
1	The DENR staff would react to reports by merely saying that there are no more logging operations because of EO 23 implementation.
2	Despite meetings with mining corporations emphasizing the mining guidelines in their contracts, the corporations did not comply.
3	Community members ceased from engaging in dynamite fishing when they became members of a PO, which also entitled them to become recipients of CBRMP.
4	To put an end to illegal fishing through the use of dynamites, efforts were made to raise fingerlings, shrimps, and prawns and to culture oysters.
5	There is mangrove rehabilitation and crab fattening in CBRMP. The objective is to sustain the members and prevent them from leaving the PO by providing them with livelihood opportunities.
6	The PO implemented ordinances such as prohibiting the cutting of trees.
7	There are coastal management programs for monitoring and evaluation.

When the DENR staff would react to reports by simply pointing out that there are no more logging operations because of EO 23, such a stance, although similar to an avoiding strategy, can also qualify as a compromising strategy. In this case, the premise is that DENR personnel were convinced that the EO was effectively being implemented and that it was unnecessary to jump into or even verify the existence of a conflict situation. As for SUDECOR, their meetings with mining corporations to clarify provisions stipulated in their bilateral agreements or contracts is also seen as a compromising strategy, even if most mining companies failed to comply with contract provisions.

Finally, when POs perform the following: a) implement ordinances such as prohibit the cutting of trees and development of coastal management programs; b) terminate illegal fishing by providing alternative livelihood such as raising fingerlings, shrimps, and culturing oysters; and c) sustain PO members by conducting mangrove rehabilitation and crab fattening, all these are seen as compromising management strategies. In general, the stakeholders of the SUDECOR IFMA site employed compromising strategies to maintain positive relationships amidst potentially hostile situations.

The nineteen statements categorized under competing strategy are shown in Table 3. The strategy refers to one party's orientation to achieve its objective while ignoring the need and expectations of the others (Rahim 2002). In general, the narratives show the stakeholders' courses of action to exercise control, enforce rules that sustain high results, and oppose deviation. SUDECOR is seen as employing a competing strategy when it conducts the following:

- a) report to DENR when illegal miners enter their concession;
- b) enter into contract with IPs to do reforestation; and
- c) strictly guard the forests to reduce illegal activities in the area.

Policemen helping the forest guards by reporting to the DENR illegal activities observed within the forest area is seen as a competing strategy to deal with conflicts within the site. The following activities attributed to IPs, were all categorized under competing strategy:

- a) declaring a mountain in within the SUDECOR area as belonging to the ancestral domain even after the company had established boundaries to delineate areas that belong to the company and those belonging to the IPs;
- b) harvesting falcata within the boundaries of SUDECOR;
- c) shifting to mining activities which resulted in immediate payment of salaries although they were previously contracted by SUDECOR to plant rattan as an income-generating activity
- d) declaring ownership of some forest lands by invoking community approach to mining with NCIP's approval;
- e) engaging in logging, land conversion, and swidden farming;
- f) choosing forest areas outside of the CADT to be utilized for mining; and
- g) opposing SUDECOR's monitoring activities by allegedly bringing weapons during community assembly meetings.

Non-legitimate stakeholders of the SUDECOR IFMA site, such as illegal loggers and miners, predictably employ a competing strategy when they occupy forest areas, even entering the site from the rear without the proper documents. Their objective is to illegally extract lumber and undertake mining activities. Armed men such as members of the NPA also employed competing strategy when they encroached into the company's boundaries in 1981, and committed arson in 1986 that severely damaged 19 heavy-duty, company equipment. This was repeated in 2009 when some company machinery were set on fire. In general, the stakeholders of SUDECOR IFMA site employ competing strategy to seize control of whatever situation they found themselves in.

The three statements that qualified as collaborating strategy are shown in Table 4.

This strategy was mostly associated with diagnosing and solving problems to arrive at acceptable solutions for both parties (Rahim 2002). In general, the narratives under this strategy imply exploring all facts and alternatives to reach shared understanding and synthesizing all ideas to address the problem and generate commitment. All of these statements were attributed to the company, SUDECOR. Thus far, SUDECOR exhibited willingness to collaborate with other stakeholders by:

- a) entering into agreements (MOAs) that laid down the IP's employment rights and allowed harvesting in the logging areas;

Table 3. Conflict management strategies employed by various SUDECOR IFMA stakeholders that were clustered under competing strategy.

No.	Narratives of interviewees
1	Miners who illegally enter the IFMA area of SUDECOR are reported to the DENR.
2	Reforestation was contracted to the IPs and illegal activities that hamper management of the area were reduced since SUDECOR had been strictly guarding the forests.
3	Police officers who guard the forests immediately report to the DENR any illegal activities being done within the forest area.
4	Manobos in the area declared that the mountain located within the SUDECOR area belongs to their ancestral domain even after the company had established boundaries to distinguish which part of the mountain belongs to the company and that of the IPs.
5	Falcata planted by SUDECOR within its own boundaries are being harvested by the Manobos.
6	The planting of rattan from the 1950s to 1974 with SUDECOR buying the harvest was encouraged as an income generating activity. However, those contracted to plant rattan stopped since they were tapped for mining which afforded the Manobos with immediate salaries.
7	IPs can apply for CADC and CADT. However, the IPs resorted to mining when their CADC or CADT application was disapproved.
8	IPs declared ownership of some forest lands through 'community approach to mining' which had NCIP's approval.
9	IPs engage in illegal logging and land conversion.
10	For places not covered by CADTs, the elected IP leader would choose to settle within forest area that can also be utilized for mining.
11	When IPs engage in <i>kaingin</i> to convert forests to non-forest uses, these were immediately reported to the municipality.
12	IPs generally contend that they had previously used the site for <i>kaingin</i> purposes.
13	IPs oppose SUDECOR's monitoring activities, evident in community assemblies where some IPs would allegedly bring in guns.
14	Implementation of EO 23 opened a venue for illegal activities in the forests. An area of 1,000 ha in Gakub was invaded by illegal loggers to extract timber.
15	Illegal miners who entered the concession of SUDECOR were reported to the DENR.
16	The miners did not formally write a letter-request to SUDECOR to undertake mining operations in the concessions; instead, they entered the area from the back without the proper documents.
17	There were incidents of armed people inside the forest areas and of encounters with NPAs.
18	During the 1950s to 1980s, SUDECOR peacefully existed and operated in the area. But in 1981, encroachments into the company's boundaries started. In 1986, burning in Bakaka—an severely damaged 19 heavy-duty, company equipment stationed in San Miguel.
19	In September 2009, the NPAs burned some company machinery in Puyat.

- b) providing transportation allowances to the IPs during *barangay* meetings while reminding IPs to secure their own allowances during the actual operation of the programs; and
- c) holding conferences with stakeholders that enabled consensus-building and led to the recognition of IPs' roles as co-owner and co-managers of the forests.

Table 4. Conflict management strategies employed by various SUDECOR IFMA stakeholders that were clustered under collaborating strategy.

No.	Narratives of interviewees
1	Since IPs are also the CADC holders, SUDECOR entered into a memorandum of agreement that laid down the IPs' employment rights and allowed harvesting contracts in the logging areas.
2	SUDECOR provides the transportation allowances for IPs during <i>barangay</i> meetings but not during the actual operation of the programs.
3	Conferences were held with stakeholders that enabled consensus-building and recognized NCIP's roles as co-owner and co-managers of the forests.

Communication through meetings and conferences and the crafting and signing of formal agreements such as the MOA contribute to reaching a shared understanding of what is best for all parties in a conflict management setting.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the approved CDMF of SUDECOR, the company is enjoined to initiate the conduct of semi-annual technical conferences or consultation meetings with LGUs, NCIP, the IPs, and the DENR. This strategy is important to preempt escalation of issues and potential conflicts among stakeholders. The resolution of conflicts must conform to the existing traditional or customary justice system of the IPs and the local communities' traditions as well as the local *barangay*'s system of addressing similar concerns. Also basic to conflict resolution is the compliance of SUDECOR with the fundamental conditions laid out in the tripartite MOA forged among SUDECOR, the IPs,

and the NCIP of Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC).

The analysis found that the predominant strategy for managing conflicts in the IFMA site is the competing strategy. This has been used as a strategy by the IPs, illegal miners, illegal loggers, and members of armed groups such as the NPA as most of them lacked the legitimacy to operate in the site. In response to such actions or threats, SUDECOR and the peoples' organizations knowingly or unknowingly employ the same strategy by reporting illegal activities and strictly implementing ordinances and programs despite opposition from IP groups and other stakeholders. The plan to have more consultations has taken a backseat in the strings of events that happened in the area.

DENR personnel, on the other hand, were seen as employing an avoiding strategy in performing their tasks; they were generally passive and appeared least concerned in dealing with problems in the area. SUDECOR, which had the largest stake when it comes to ensuring peace and order in the area, employed collaborating strategies in an effort to nurture partnerships and share responsibilities, albeit to a limited extent, with other stakeholders. POs mostly employed a compromising strategy as they worked towards achieving a balance between being able to pursue permissible livelihood options for its members while ensuring that stakeholders conducting illegal activities do not expand or become more profitable than the legitimate ones. Predictably, IPs, armed people, illegal loggers, and illegal miners employed competing strategies to achieve their ends, and policemen serving as forest guards are left with no choice but to use the same strategy in curbing proscribed activities in the site.

Thus, the motivation to use a particular set of strategy within the IFMA site can be grouped under three underlying causes of conflicts. The first has to do with ownership of forest lands in the area. IPs claimed that the land is part of their ancestral domain, hence they conduct mining activities believing that they are merely exercising their rights on their land. The second cause is related to the first, where SUDECOR, having been presumably granted by government the right over the land through the IFMA, would impose rules that IPs are mostly unwilling to follow. Hence, IPs have been reported to undertake harvesting of trees such as *falcata*, within declared boundaries of SUDECOR, and convert forest lands to non-forest uses. Lastly, conflicts likewise stemmed from activities such as illegal logging and mining, dynamite fishing, and land conversion presumably perpetuated by non-legitimate stakeholders who had little respect for authority nor fear of the consequences of their acts. The presence of armed people who could not be prevented from encroaching upon SUDECOR "properties" or who could resort to violent means such as arson had made the situation in the IFMA site much more untenable. Without strong support from DENR, the police, and the local people, SUDECOR's problems could worsen and the tasks of maintaining peace and order and managing and protecting the resources within, become more complex.

Suffice it to say that the multiple stakeholders with varying stakes or claims on the IFMA site employed the conflict management strategies as they saw fit, IPs and illegal operators employed competing strategies that were likely to be opposed or to produce risky outcomes. On the other hand, government personnel tend to employ strategies that avoid face-to-face encounters that may unduly risk their lives. However, competing and avoiding strategies may worsen conflict, as the former may



An interview with the Chairman of the Management Committee in SUDECOR.

escalate the existing problem when stakeholders do not take mutually beneficial alternatives while the latter may make matters worse when the conflicts were not immediately acted upon. Meanwhile, efforts seen to improve work relations, harmonize activities, and generate shared understanding, involvement, and commitment by SUDECOR were considered to best exemplify collaborating strategies because they entailed stakeholders working in partnership in achieving short-term objectives. The challenge relies on maintaining understanding and commitment among the stakeholders in a longer span of time. The efforts of peoples' organizations to enter into a compromise during conflicting situations imply their endeavor to sustain their operations despite the withdrawal of support from SUDECOR upon the latter's stoppage of operations due to EO 23. On the other hand, the non-existence of accommodating strategy should be carefully observed in future researches as this was not identified among the strategies employed by any of the stakeholders in the present study.

The conflicts among stakeholders in the IFMA area is a stumbling block in achieving progress and social justice in the locality. Early resolution of conflicts within the IFMA area before they escalate into unmanageable levels is a priority concern of the SUDECOR management and the government itself. To minimize conflicts, there is a need for more consultations and dialogues that could lead to increased acceptability of government-mandated tenurial rights over the land, fair access to income-generating opportunities on the land, and consequently, more equitable sharing of benefits. The DENR needs to step in and be more proactive in helping the stakeholders resolve the conflicts within the bounds of the law.

When SUDECOR's 50-year license expired, the government awarded it with an IFMA in recognition of its role in sustaining the forest, thereby pre-empting the conversion of the concession into an open-access area that would be even more prone to forest degradation. However, government may have underestimated the seriousness of the claims of IPs on the land in extending SUDECOR's privilege, leading to conflicts in the area. These problems can be partly addressed by opening up non-logging based livelihood opportunities and building up the capacity of stakeholders to successfully implement them. For future studies, researchers may focus on conflict resolution strategies. Regarding the method employed in studying the conflict management strategies, the study revealed that using qualitative analysis would not address SUDECOR's problems at the macro-level. Use of such methods applies to micro-level conflict management strategies in terms of third party consultants or external experts mediating among smaller groups inside the concession. The study found no concrete evidence on the effectiveness of conflict management strategies as conflicts seem to worsen through time. Use of other methods in qualitative analysis is encouraged to better understand conflict management and resolution in SUDECOR.

The findings of the present study are in agreement with the results of Islamoglu *et al.* (2008) that position in the organization could dictate the conflict management styles employed. Statistical tools can help verify this preliminary finding, as no attempt was made to correlate SUDECOR IFMA stakeholders' demographics with the conflict management strategies that they employed. Lastly, the study suggests that SUDECOR must review its CDMP for the possibility of evolving a combination of strategies to address both the social aspects and the biophysical environment of the IFMA site.

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