

Revisiting Lipa City's Local-Environment Planning and Management (Local-EPM) Project: A Documentation of Experiences and Lessons Learned¹

1-Background

Development context

Conveniently located in the outskirts of Metro Manila and at the heart of a fast growing industrial hub—the CALABARZON, Lipa City has become an attractive investment destination. Seventy two percent (72%) of its 20,940-hectare land area is still devoted to rice production and other cash crops and to commercial raising of poultry and hogs but that is changing soon. Another huge mall is now being built in the city-center and middle and high-end residential homes in what used to be prime agricultural lands. The threat of unabated conversion of agricultural lands for commercial and other uses is real especially as Lipa's proposed City Land Use Plan (CLUP) (2004-2008) that would have established environmental safeguards for the city's development remain unacted upon and its zoning ordinance yet to be updated.

Lipa's urbanization began in the 1990s with the development of Batangas province and neighboring Cavite, Laguna and Quezon, collectively known as CALABARZON, into an industrial region. New roads and highways were built, telecommunication and power facilities improved, banking and other commercial facilities sprouted. The infrastructure development continued and in 1997, the LIMA Technology Center, site of light and medium industries geared for the export market, was built in Lipa and neighboring Malvar town.

These economic developments created new and more jobs and new and increased wealth attracting in-migration. Population grew from 160, 117 in 1990 to 218,447 in 2000 or an annual growth rate of 2.2%. That growth is expected to continue or increase in the next ten years. Population density also increased by 75% for the same period and will continue to increase as well.

The growths in the economy and population put pressure on natural resources and basic services. In 1998, when SCP was introduced, these problems were already evident:²

- ❑ Increased and unregulated generation of domestic and industrial wastes found their way into the river systems and groundwater, thereby polluting domestic water sources;
- ❑ Improper siting of solid waste disposal system, contaminating soil and groundwater sources and endangering human health;
- ❑ Overdrawing of groundwater sources, resulting in water depletion;

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² Lipa City's Strategic Environmental Management Framework, 2000

- ❑ Pollution (air and water) from poultry and livestock farms that have untreated wastes and which are improperly sited;
- ❑ Traffic congestion resulting from increased vehicular flow, and
- ❑ Increasing consumption of non-biodegradable products brought about by increased incomes, changing lifestyles, increasing consumerism and fast food culture.

In 2006, the same problems are evident, and most possibly could have worsened.

City governance

The Mayor is the City's Chief Executive Officer. A mayor serves for three years and can be re-elected for another three-year term. The incumbent would have served her maximum term by May 2007. She was signatory to the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) committing Lipa's participation in the SCP.

The Mayor is supported by the City Council, which is charged with the formulation of laws and regulations. The Vice-Mayor heads the City Council comprising seven elected councilors serving for a term of three years and sectoral representatives.

With the City Administrator, the Mayor oversees the operation of 17 departments (Annex 2: Lipa City Organizational Chart). Of the 17 departments, six are directly involved in the implementation of projects geared towards environmental protection³:

- ❑ Office of the City Planning and Development Coordinator (CPDO). A mandated department, the CPDO is responsible for formulating the city development plan, performs monitoring and evaluation of the different programs, projects and activities of the city government.
- ❑ Office of the City Environment and Natural Resources Officer (City-ENRO). An optional department, it is mainly responsible for managing the city's solid waste. It has two divisions: environment and waste management and forests, protected areas, parks, wildlife and mining. Only the first division is fully operational; the second has only one technical staff.
- ❑ Office of the City Community Affairs Officer (CCAO). It is responsible for formulating plans and strategies for the priority programs and projects of the Mayor. It coordinates national and local government affairs; provides assistance to the Mayor in the general supervision of the barangays; formulates programs and projects for the youth and serves as the public affairs office of the city government.
- ❑ Office of the City Agriculturist (OCA). This office, a service department, implements programs and projects on crops, livestock, poultry, and aquaculture.

³ Lipa City Environmental Profile 1999.

- ❑ Office of the City Veterinarian. It supervises the provision of veterinary services to include public education and information on farming system and livestock raising, immunization of animals, maintenance of quarantine system, etc.
- ❑ Office of the City Health Officer. The office implements plans, programs, projects of the Department of Health, coordinates all health activities of the City, supervises the rural health units and provides education for health workers.
- ❑ Office of the City Administrator. It supervises the different departments of the city and has four divisions directly involved in urban management: Urban Poor Affairs, Traffic Management, Economic Enterprise and Permits and Licenses.

Though not directly involved in city planning, the Metro Lipa Water District (MLWD), a quasi government agency (GOCC), is a key stakeholder in the management of the city's water resources. The agency is responsible for extraction and distribution of water to households and establishments in Lipa and nearby towns.

History of participatory approaches

Prior to the Local-EPM Project, a mechanism for community participation in city governance was in place. Called *Sipag-Lakas*, regular assemblies were held in each of the city's 72 barangays where the heads of all line departments of the city government—Health, Education, Agriculture, Agrarian Reform, etc and barangay officials and other local leaders discussed issues and concerns pertinent to the barangay. These consultations put emphasis on what the city government can do and not what the barangay LGU and the community can do or what they can both do together.

Lipa has no history of social movements and mass actions; it is not in the culture of Lipeños to protest in public or complain against those in authority. There are no strong and autonomous civil society organizations (CSO) that could put pressure on government. The few NGOs and peoples organizations that are around are government-initiated or backed, civic organizations like the Rotary, or religious groups. This absence limited the LGU's choice on which CSO to engage in the implementation of the demonstration projects.

It was only in 2003 that autonomous NGOs like Pusod, Inc. with expertise in watershed protection moved its base in Lipa. One of Pusod's programs, *Balikas*, a local newspaper, is becoming a mouthpiece of environmental advocates. It was *Balikas'* critical write-up on the city government's violation of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act because of its failure to close the city's open dumpsite as mandated by the law that prompted the Mayor to act on the mounting garbage problem and make it one of her flagship programs. Pusod with other stakeholders in the city convinced the Mayor to hold a multi-stakeholder strategic planning where she participated in to address the solid waste issue (see 4.1.5).

2-The SCP in Lipa

The Global SCP⁴

The SCP is a global technical co-operation activity of the United Nations. It works at city level in collaboration with local partners to strengthen their capacities for environmental planning and management (EPM). Each city-level SCP project is adapted to the particular needs, priorities and circumstances of that city; nonetheless, all SCP partner cities follow a common approach and all are implemented based on the following principles:

- ❑ Central focus on environment-development interactions;
- ❑ Broad-based participation by public, private and community groups;
- ❑ Concern for inter-sectoral and inter-organizational aspects;
- ❑ Reliance on bottom-up and demand driven responses;
- ❑ Focus on process: problem-solving and ‘getting things done’; and
- ❑ Emphasis on local capacity building.

The SCP process (Diagram 1) consists of a sequence of activities phased as follows:

The First Phase (assessment and start up) is a 6 to 9-month initial period, which normally includes the following main activities:

- ❑ Identification and mobilization of project participants and partners;
- ❑ Familiarization of project partners with the core EPM concepts and SCP approach;
- ❑ Preparation of the Environmental Profile (EP) and initial identification of priority environmental issues;
- ❑ Review of available resources, tools and information and initial design of an environmental management information system (EMIS) specifically adopted to the city’s needs;
- ❑ Working out the organizational structure, work plan and operational procedures for the project;
- ❑ Organizing and holding the city consultation; and
- ❑ Establishing the Issue-Specific Working Groups.

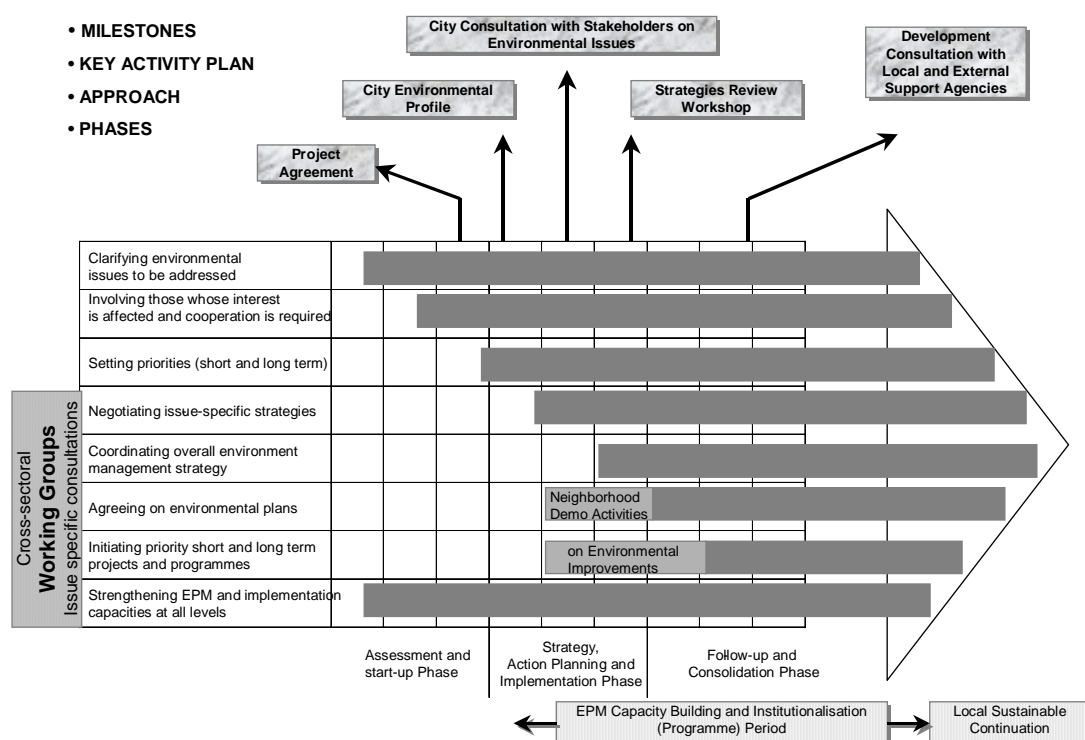
The Second Phase (Strategy and Action Planning) is an 18 to 36-month period of intensive analysis, discussion and negotiation within the Issue-Specific Working Groups. During this period, each of the agreed priority issues are further elaborated and developed, to reach a consensus on appropriate strategies for that issue. The strategies are then developed into action plans, which can be agreed by the organizations and groups involved in implementation.

Small-scale demonstration projects are undertaken to test the approaches developed and to show what can be done through the SCP process. In addition, some of the action plans could produce investment or technical assistance proposals. Institutional capacity building and human resource development are carried out during this phase.

⁴ Culled from UN-Habitat SCP sourcebooks.

The Third Phase (Follow-up and Consolidation) is an open-ended follow-up and implementation period, which begins towards the end of Phase Two and carries on for an extended time afterwards. The strategies and action plans coming out of the working groups are further elaborated, especially to build toward an over-all citywide environmental management and urban development strategy. Investment proposals are to be worked out in detail, subjected to rigorous analysis, and pursued vigorously with funding sources. Institutionalizing the EPM and remaining training and institutional development activities are carried out. Finally, national workshops and meetings are held to explore ways of extending SCP activities into other cities, building upon the experience gained in the project.

Diagram 1. SCP Environmental Planning and Management



The Local-EPM Project

The SCP was implemented in the Philippines through the “Strengthening Local-Environmental Planning and Management (EPM)” project. Funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the three-year project was executed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) through the Project Management Coordinating Unit (PMCU) in partnership with the League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP).

The project aimed to enhance the capability of the local government units (LGUs) in secondary cities on participatory environmental planning and management. Three cities—Lipa in Luzon, Tagbilaran in the Visayas and Cagayan de Oro in Mindanao were selected to demonstrate the SCP approach.

Staffed by specialists (IEC, Cap B, GIS, Project Monitoring) and headed by a Project Manager, the PMCU provided technical assistance, organized and coordinated the capacity building inputs, evaluated the progress of project implementation at the city level and provided the venue for sharing learning and experiences of the demo cities with local and international networks concerned with Sustainable Cities.

The LCP's main task, on the other hand, was to lead the advocacy and networking for the project and promote the replication of the lessons and experiences from the project.

3.Characteristics of Lipa

3.1.1 Initiation and objectives for participating in the SCP

Lipa was not included in the short list of demonstration cities, but because of the aggressive interest shown by the city government—a City Council resolution signifying the LGUs interest and financial commitment to the project as well as commitment to strengthen the City-ENRO—Lipa was chosen. In deciding on the inclusion of Lipa, it was the thinking of the selection committee comprising the Project Steering Committee, the Inter-Agency Technical Working Group and the PMCU, that with a new Mayor with an overwhelming electoral mandate in office, the chances of project success would be better. Thus in December 1998, the City Mayor signed the Memorandum of Agreement for the implementation of the project (Annex 3: Activity Milestones). Enhancing the city government's capability in environmental planning and management was the LGU's stated objective in participating in the project.

3.1.2 The Local-EPM process in Lipa

Phase 1: Assessment and start-up

Lipa generally followed the sequence of activities prescribed under the SCP. Phase 1 took 12 months, three months longer, because of administrative problems and delays in fund releases both from UNDP and the LGU. Recruitment of competent staff also took time. Though expertise required were available within the LGU, department heads did not want to release the staff to the project.

After the legal structure for implementing the project was in place and the core EPM staff on board, stakeholder identification and mobilization began with the preparation of the Environment Profile (EP). Stakeholders were extensively involved in the data collection and analysis (see 4.1.1). They were organized into Task Forces, one for

each activity sector. Two general assemblies (with over 50 participants) and series of meetings on the city's activity sectors were initiated after they were oriented on the EPM project by the EPM staff. It was only in the latter part of the EP preparation process that a local consultant was tapped to assist in the review of data collected, identify gaps, and write the draft report. But the quality of the consultant's draft report was sub-standard causing delays in its completion. A technical review committee comprising some members of the TWG and the EMP Unit was organized to revise the draft EP. The EP saw publication only in the last quarter of 2000. Because of the delay in its completion, the EP was not used in the action planning of the issue TFs.

Phase 1 culminated with the conduct of the city's first citywide environment consultation (CC) where six environmental issues and one management concern were prioritized:

1. Land use conversion
2. Managing solid waste
3. Managing recreation and green space
4. Managing water resources
5. Servicing unplanned settlements
6. Managing air quality and traffic congestion
7. Institutional framework for mainstreaming EPM

The activity Task Forces⁵ were beefed up after the CC, new members were brought in, and these functioned as issue-specific working groups (see 4.1.5).

Phase 2: Strategy and action planning

Phase 2 began in January 2000 with the transfer of project management from City-ENRO to the Office of City Planning and Development Coordination (CPDO). The LGU leadership decided that EPM was planning and therefore the responsibility of the CPDO.

Phase 2 essentially focused on capacity building and action planning. The seven issue TFs formulated their respective action plans after a series of meetings and workshops (see 4.2.2). A donors' forum was organized to present the action plans. Two of the action plans—solid waste management and water resources—were developed into full-blown investment proposals. An Integrated Solid Waste Management Project was submitted to the Japan International Coordination Agency (JICA) but the budget was considered too small, below their funding priorities. Scouting for other donors was not aggressively pursued after the initial rejection. The investment proposal for managing water resources is currently being firmed up by the Metro Lipa Water District (MLWD).

Two demonstration projects—the community-based solid waste management (CBSWM) and the Barangay Environment Rehabilitation and Development (BERDE)—were implemented. The UNDP provided P900,000 for these projects. Neither demo project was upscaled or replicated.

⁵ Task Force was the operational term used in Lipa for the working group.

The Local-EPM Project ended with the termination of the UNDP support in the first quarter of 2002.

3.1.3 Implementation arrangements

The legal structure for implementing the Local-EPM project was established with the signing of Executive Order 99-09 by the City Mayor and Special Ordinance 07-99 by the City Council. These acts created the EPM Unit, established an Advisory Council and the Technical Working Group (TWG), and defined their functions. The project was directly under the Office of the Mayor with the Mayor designated on paper as overall EPM Unit Head and the City Administrator, Project Coordinator (Diagram 2).

The EPM Unit

Special Ordinance 07-99 provided for the staffing of the EPM Unit as follows: Project Coordinator, Project Manager, Project Action Officer, EPM Specialists (3) and Administrative Officer. Their salaries were paid for by the LGU including the Unit's maintenance and operating expenses (MOE) (Table 1).

Three senior staff from three city departments—the City-ENRO, CPDO and the Office of the Cooperative Development Officer (OCDO)—were deployed to constitute the core staff of the Unit. Although an ordinance was passed by the City Council creating regular positions for three EPM Specialists, staff recruited for the position, highly competent, could only be hired as casuals. Full staffing of the Unit was completed in June 1999. With the termination of the project in early 2002, the regular staff returned to their mother units. The EPM unit moved office three times during the duration of the project.

The Advisory Council

The Advisory Council was created to provide over-all direction and set policies for the project. It was headed by the Vice-Mayor and comprised two members of the City Council's Committees on Health and Environment, heads of departments of the city government, representatives of NGOs, people's organizations (POs), academe, religious, business.

The Vice-Mayor co-authored with the TWG Chair a number of ordinances and resolutions supportive of the EPM project. The Advisory Council however failed to provide the necessary policy directions. It only convened four times, most of those times, the department heads only sent their representatives who could not provide substantive contribution to discussions and had no decision-making authority.

The Technical Working Group (TWG)

The EPM Unit identified a consultative group, called Technical Working Group, which assumed several functions: think tank, planning team, advisor, and assessment group. The TWG was a big support group for the project. The members brought in information and expertise in various fields: environmental planning, public information, city planning, public administration, and social mobilization, among others. Chaired by a City Councilor who also headed the City Council's committee on environment and health, the TWG comprised senior managers of LGU/NGA, social and environmental activists and faculty members of the De La Salle University in Lipa. They met regularly, at least once a month, and worked pro-bono.

Diagram 2: Implementation structure of the Local-EPM project in Lipa, 1999.

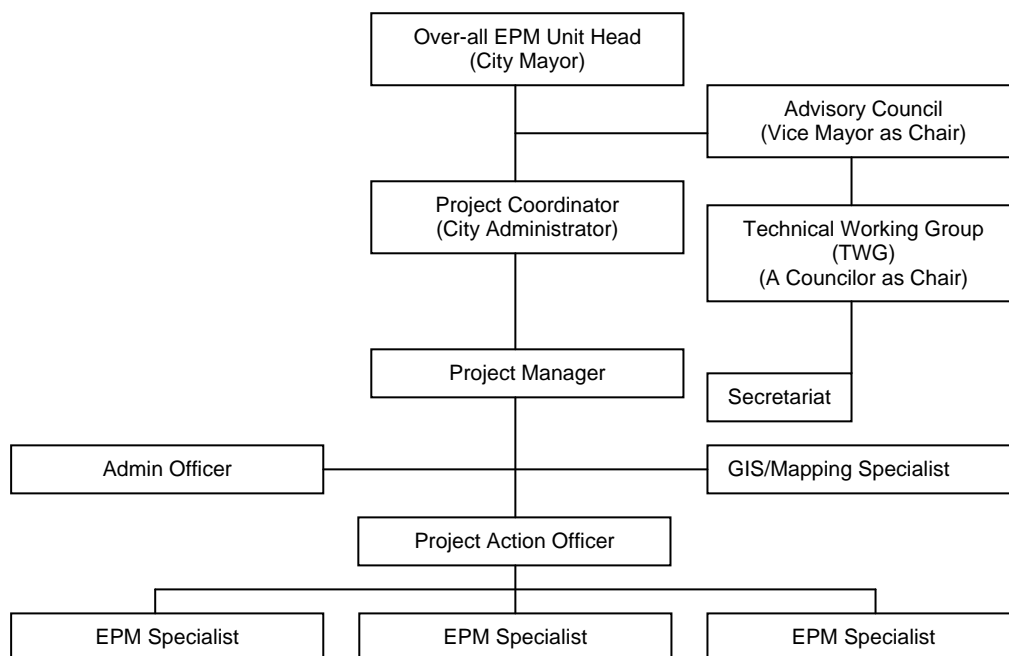


Table 1. LGU counterpart for the Local-EPM Project (1998-2002)*

Year	Personnel	MOE
1998	6 permanent	Data unavailable
1999	4 permanent, 6 casual	Data unavailable
2000	10 permanent, 7 casual	P180,000
2001	11 permanent, 4 casual	P268,000
2002 (early part)	9 permanent, 3 casual	P256,550

*Office space and other facilities were also provided.

Source: CPD