

**Workshop 7: Engaging Communities: IFAD's Experience, Lessons  
Learned and Implications**

**Engaging Communities: Moving from Advocacy to Affirmative Action: Two NGO Cases  
from the Philippines**

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**E**specially after the 1986 People Power Revolution, Philippine NGOs have emerged from society's margins, to carve their niche in political life – undertaking various roles that have gained increasing recognition by communities, government and multilaterals.

A review of records of the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) show a total of some 60,000 registered non-stock, nongovernmental institutions. Of this total, 50,000 are NGOs while the remaining 10,000 are people's organizations (POs). Also, there are 35,000 registered cooperatives.<sup>1</sup>

The above SEC figure, however, includes all *registered* organizations that are loosely defined as “non-profit,” do not operate as part of the government structure, and thus includes civic clubs and professional associations. As many of these can hardly be termed as “development-oriented”, estimates of *development-oriented* NGOs place them at 3,000-5,000.<sup>2</sup> There is a sizeable labor resource (estimated at over 100,000 workers) within the Philippine NGO *development* community.<sup>3</sup>

**NGOs and POs.** The distinction and interaction between NGOs and POs is particularly significant, because Philippine NGOs see their primary role in building up strong, viable and autonomous people's organizations. NGOs help POs organize for self-reliance by providing various support services, including access to resources (organizational, technical, logistical, and managerial), linkages and advocacy. There is a deep NGO tradition in the Philippines of organizing disadvantaged sectors and communities towards developing greater self-reliance and empowerment. Indeed, the life and evolution of development NGOs is inextricably intertwined with people's organizations and people's movements, performing support functions and providing professional services within the context of the assumed primacy of POs.<sup>4</sup>

Since 1986, NGOs have flourished under the new democratic space. Yet NGOs themselves had to undergo a difficult transition in unfamiliar political terrain – moving

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<sup>1</sup> Garde, E. & Navarro, N. “*A Rapid Assessment: The Role of NGOs in Rural Development*”, Vol. 1, 1996. p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Estimates based on interviews, although 3,000 may be more realistic, due to multiple and overlapping memberships.

<sup>3</sup> Gonzales, M. “*The Philippine Development Assistance Program*,” an article in “*Learning from Diwata, PCHRD, and PDAP: CIDA's NGO Support Programmes in the Philippines*”. CIDA:1994. p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> This link between NGOs and people's organizations is currently under review in an ongoing paper commissioned by the Association of Foundations entitled “*Philippine NGOs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: In Search of Relevance/ Key Trends in Philippine NGO Engagement*”, draft version of March 2005.

from protest to pro-action, from an anti-dictatorship stance towards defining concrete social legislation and policy alternatives. National issue-based coalitions emerged, focused initially on four basic themes – *agrarian reform, peace, foreign debt, and environment*. This paved the way for some of the most progressive legislation in history – i.e., on agrarian reform, indigenous people’s rights, urban development housing, social and electoral reforms. But the real challenge has been to translate these legislated reforms into reality at the local level. Hence, development NGOs in the Philippines began to focus not only on advocating on issues of poverty and governance, but also on building up alternative practice and paradigms of the development visions that they advocate. NGOs/POs have learned that their ability to achieve concrete gains lies in their ability to accept incremental changes and reforms.

NGO distrust of government gave way to new forms of critical collaboration. GO-NGO consultative bodies and joint programs emerged at various levels. Active NGO participation in electoral politics, however, had a sobering effect, as the so-called “NGO vote”, “women’s vote”, and “green vote” did not muster sufficient numbers for a nationally elective post. NGOs had underestimated the deep entrenchment of traditional patronage politics. Some NGOs thus shifted their electoral trajectory towards local elections, scoring meaningful victories at municipal level. Today, most NGOs no longer pin their hopes on a new political leader and party emerging at the national level, but seek to build more lasting legacies, particularly at the grassroots. The long-term agenda is to develop a concerned and active citizenry, irrespective of the government in power.<sup>5</sup>

***From the margins to the mainstream, national to local.*** There has been a collective strategy by NGOs to move away from the margins, and into the mainstream of the nation’s social and political life with more confident, pro-active agendas. “*Mainstreaming*” has demanded new NGO capacities – i.e., in policy work, in dealing with bureaucracies – which NGOs had to learn the hard way.

With the passage of the Local Government Code, increased NGO efforts have shifted from the national to the local; and networking has become increasingly *area-based*, rather than *sector-based*, and involving multiple sectors. New questions have come into play – how to introduce reforms in communities characterized by patronage politics, weak local capacities, and resistant local cultures.

Presented below are two different case examples of NGO engagements with local communities. The *first* is a community whose environment and livelihoods are threatened by rapid development and urbanization. The *second* is a traditional community of sugarworkers who face numerous issues and options as they become new owners of their land under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). With each case, we also highlight some lessons on empowerment.

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<sup>5</sup> However, NGOs did participate in two People Power events that ousted two Philippine presidents, in 1986 and in 2000. As of this writing, the NGO sector remains divided over current opposition calls for the removal of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo – which some political analysts have come to label as “People Power fatigue”.

## CASE 1: TASK FORCE MACAJALAR IN NORTHERN MINDANAO

*Towards the end of the 1980s, the Northern Mindanao region experienced rapid economic growth due to a confluence of factors – infrastructure growth, in-migration due to rising conflict in other parts of Mindanao, and increased speculative capital investments due to development plans for establishment of a new “Cagayan-Iligan Industrial Corridor”. With these, the environment and livelihoods of local/traditional farming and fishing communities came under massive threat and dislocation.*

*In response, local citizens launched an environmental network – **Task Force Macajalar (TFM)** – that first started with advocacy and protest, and later on combined these with affirmative action in community-based natural resources management (CBNRM). As a citizens network, the creation and growth of TFM was largely spontaneous and unplanned. Until today, it remains loosely-organized with an estimated 50,000 adherents clustered around 75 organized groups. TFM and its main organizer, CART, have since been recipients of the local Xavier University Environment Award, and of the International 1995 United Nations 50 Sustainable Communities Award.*

In the mid-1980s, Northern Mindanao emerged to become one of the three major growth centers in Southern Philippines, with Cagayan de Oro City (CDO) as its commercial and industrial hub. The coastal city of Cagayan de Oro, fronting Macajalar Bay, became a major industrial port and an entry point for new migrants and settlers. From a 3<sup>rd</sup> class city in the 1970s, CDO’s population burgeoned to nearly half million by the late 1990s. But rapid economic growth also spawned increased land speculation, illegal logging, sea piracy, destructive fishing and mining practices, shipping and industrial pollution.

In 1993, Cagayan River suddenly turned brown and heavily silted, and coastline communities experienced heavy flash floods – the first in the city’s memory. This was later traced to uncontrolled mining and logging activities upstream. At the time, an estimated 5-20 trucks carrying illegally-cut logs from the Lanao Watershed were monitored to pass nightly through Lumbia Airport Road – just one of five major thoroughfares into the city. Within the city itself, industrial pollution became a major problem. In 1994, poor city residents took to the streets in protest after communities around the Cagayan Corn Products factory suffered nausea, vomiting and two infant deaths. In 1995, fishermen discovered dead fish scattered across their coastlines, which they later attributed to chemicals spewed out into Macajalar Bay by the Del Monte Canning Factory and numerous factories along the coastline.

Cagayan de Oro City lies along a narrow coastal strip – between Macajalar Bay to the north, and a stretch of mountain ranges to the south. Barely three percent of the city area is highly urbanized. The rest of the land is occupied by upland farmers and *lumads* (indigenous people) who constitute the “unseen half” of the population. Increasingly pushed into ecologically-marginal uplands, poor farmers and *lumads* subsist mainly on corn production along hillside slopes with very low yields of 0.75 to 1.5 tons per hectare. Poor farming practices further degrade the soil and strip its forest cover. The forestlands of CDO have been logged three times over. Until 1997, *lumads* occupying some 2,000

hectares (some within the city's watershed) were themselves threatened by the further encroachment of illegal loggers and land speculators.

## **The Growth of an Alternative People's Network**

*Early beginnings.* The Center for Alternative Rural Technology (CART) was first established in 1989 by a group of young professionals, with a small core staff of four (4) people. It began its work by organizing upland farmer & *lumad* communities, assisting them in securing land rights through Agrarian Reform, and by introducing agricultural credit and technology projects. However:

- Expansion was slow and uninspired;
- CART felt that whatever project gains it was making among a few upland communities was being negated by larger environmental and policy issues;
- Livelihood-oriented projects proved weak in instilling environmental awareness and discipline among farmers. As soon as projects and funds ceased, farmers reverted to their old practices.

*Growth of a people's network.* In 1993, CART began to shift its approach and focus, and organized its first public mobilization. Some 300 men, women and children mainly from CDO's poor farming communities set-up an all-night vigil along Lumbia Airport Road, barricading the road against the entry of illegal logging trucks. The farmers confiscated two trucks filled with illegally cut logs, a pick-up truck, and arrested six logging workers. It marked the city's first public/media exposé of this illicit logging trade and the full extent of bureaucratic corruption. This one-night, citizens' vigil yielded far more arrests than the many military and government checkpoints along the same highway over the previous 10 years! However, the seized trucks and logs were eventually released, and government continued its inaction against illegal logging. This only further fueled the people's spirits. In the ensuing years, they began to set-up people's checkpoints, documented illegal logging activities, and negotiated with local and national governments, the police and military, and engaged the public through mass media (print, radio, television and public meetings).

CART began enlisting the support of the youth through Earth Day public concerts as well as World Food Day activities. In March 1997, over a thousand people from different sectors took part in an overnight vigil, seizing two illegal logging trucks and later occupying the main Cagayan-Iligan coastal highway for three hours in a public display of non-violent protest.

Over the years, CART began to take on other issues of environmental pollution as well, filing numerous cases in behalf of public interest. Two key examples were against the Del Monte Canning Plant and Cagayan Corn Products Factory. Both factories were eventually closed down by government, and were allowed to resume only after paying the imposed fines and installing the proper waste treatment facilities. About 22 factories were later documented as discharging pollutants into Macajalar Bay.

In 1993, CART also began its organizing work among fishing communities, and it was among the fisherfolk that CART found the highest concerns for the environment. Fishing communities often became the victims of soil erosion and water pollution caused by upstream logging and mining that emptied into the bay. Also, numerous industrial factories operated along the coastal road, dumping their effluents into the bay. Within the bay itself, fishermen using illegal methods (i.e., cyanide and dynamite), trawler boats and pirates operated within the municipal waters, depriving small fisherfolk of their daily catch and livelihoods. As a direct response, and using a refurbished fishing boat, CART enlisted the support of fishing communities to conduct patrols against illegal fishing. CART organized the fishermen into *Bantay-Dagat* volunteers (deputized sea wardens) – with as many as 200 small boats patrolling the bay each night. After the first six months, fishermen reported that their daily catch increased by over five times.

These fisherfolk communities later constituted the core of a region-wide movement – which came to be known as “Task Force Macajalar” (or TFM). Macajalar Bay itself came to symbolize the “common environment” of this emerging people’s movement. “*Save Macajalar Bay*” became the rallying point for this movement.

TFM today is a loose network of some 75 people’s organizations with an estimated mobilize-able force of 50,000 people. Its constituency now includes over 10 coastal villages, 15 upland villages, and 7 lumad groups in 5 villages around the city. Other groups consist of small farmers, fisherfolk, market vendors, drivers, and residents from the city’s former garbage dumpsite. This mass-based network also involves the city’s middle-class (university, media and professionals) not just as support groups, but as actual environmental stakeholders. As a multi-stakeholder coalition, TFM currently includes Xavier University, Radyo Bombo, media correspondents for Manila-based dailies, and local citizen organizations. CART currently serves as chair of Task Force Macajalar.

A unique feature of CART’s operations over the past 12 years (1993-2005) has been its ability to link environmental protests with affirmative action in its efforts to build a broad public constituency for the environment. It has been able to build partnerships among poor communities (e.g. farmers, fishermen, vendors & lumads), and between these communities and the city’s growing middle class (students, professionals, media). A key approach to CART’s environmental advocacy has been to treat environment issues as “survival questions of the poor”. CART chose to address those “felt” environmental issues that people could more readily relate to (e.g., logging, illegal fishing, industrial and marine pollution). Given the seriousness of the prevailing environmental issues at the time, CART encouraged citizens to take on direct action (direct law enforcement and court action) in response to government inaction – such as through setting-up of *Bantay-Dagat* sea patrols, and people’s anti-logging checkpoints.

With only four full-time staff at the start, CART initially had to rely heavily on a core of student and community volunteers, eventually transforming a limitation into a strength, as its constant enlistment of public support led it to build a broad environmental constituency. As all of CART’s prime movers are natives of the city, it was able to build

upon a sense of individual stakeholdership. Also, CART took a conscious stance away from the “project-led approach” that characterized much of NGO thinking and activities at the time. By 1998, the TFM network had an estimated 500 local core leaders.

### **Moving from protest to affirmative action**

With their involvement in environmental advocacy, local farming and fishing communities easily began to embrace CBNRM activities. CART began by linking-up with local village councils, who provided local office space and meeting areas. CART also introduced “*lakbay-aral*” (study tours) among communities, identifying local “best practices” and “indigenous technologies” on farming, fishing and forestry. It linked up with Xavier University and local governments for technical support, training and resources. Emphasis was given to technologies that required low external input, and which local communities could easily replicate on their own. In 1997, CART established a 7-hectare “*Farmers Academy*” – built from its own local savings, and managed by farmers themselves. All “trainees” were encouraged required to pay in kind; they brought their own food, and paid their course fees through donations of seeds, seedlings, feeds, chickens and goats.

***Land and resource tenure.*** Ensuring the security of land and resource tenure of farmers, *lumads* and fisherfolk became a top priority. For *lumads* and upland farmers, CART negotiated with government for the granting of Integrated Social Forestry (ISF) lease agreements for 50 years. Farmers and *lumads* also came to be officially designated as “forest guards” – setting up people’s checkpoints against the transport of illegal logs into the city. For the fisherfolk, CART negotiated for “rights-of-way” to the coastlines, and for government to officially appoint fishermen as “Deputized Fishery Wardens” with the right to enforce fishery laws within a seven-kilometer distance from the shore.<sup>6</sup>

***In the uplands,*** CART introduced sustainable agriculture and agro-forestry, integrated farming with cattle fattening and goat raising. Farmers were encouraged to diversify crops, to practice contour farming, and to recycle organic materials into the soil. Trading centers (“*bagsakan*”) were set-up to assist in marketing activities. City volunteers conducted medical missions, nutritional courses, and established community-based primary health care centers.

***Among coastal communities,*** CART embarked on a major coastal resource management program. Fishing families volunteered their own money and labor to build elevated “guard houses” overlooking Macajalar Bay. Fishing communities stopped illegal fishing and patrolled the bay waters, reforested mangroves, and established fishing cooperatives and cooperative stores. They engaged in anti-pollution campaigns among coastal communities and factories. Because of its initial success, CART was later contracted by government to implement an ADB-funded Coastal Resource Management Project (from 1996 to 2001) along a 150-kilometer stretch across the Northern Mindanao coastline,

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<sup>6</sup> The seven-kilometer distance from the shore falls under the category of “municipal waters” that is under the direct jurisdiction of the local municipal government.

covering Macajalar and two other bays. For this project, CART recruited 52 full-time staff to work with some 50,000 people along the coastline.

### **Some practical lessons in empowerment**

1. ***Challenge, and create a “culture” for conservation.*** CART took on a “*confrontational approach*” by bringing hundreds of people into the streets in protest. This had two net effects: (a) it encouraged the “silent majority” to gain the courage to speak out; and (2) it “shamed” those few community members who were engaged in illegal activities. In cases of resource conflicts, change cannot be brought in by “projects” or “seminars” alone.
2. ***Advocacy itself requires a multi-stakeholder approach.*** Environmental problems often require a multi-stakeholder approach. This case involved an entire “*watershed*” that affected upland communities, city residents, coastal communities, and those who depended on waters of Macajalar Bay for their livelihoods. Networking became necessary to enable communities:
  - To understand the inter-relatedness of their problems (uplands & coasts);
  - To negotiate inter-sectoral agreements (e.g., city residents realized the need to support upland communities to ensure the stability of their water supply); and
  - To build a constituency of numbers, in order to effectively negotiate with government, law enforcers and the private sector.
3. ***Start on “felt” environmental issues of the poor.*** CART selectively focused on those “environmental” issues that directly affected poor people’s welfare, livelihoods and survival – i.e., illegal logging, illegal fishing and pollution – not on “urban water supply” or “biodiversity conservation”.
4. ***Focus efforts “downstream” where the major problems are, and where people are most likely to act.*** While CART started its work among upland farmers and *lumads*, it later realized that coastal fishing communities downstream were the most affected. Fishing communities thus later formed the “core” of a sustained environmental movement that took its name from the slogan “*Save Macajalar Bay!*” Since most people tend to be “fence-sitters,” focus on those sectors that are the first ones most likely to act. Once a “critical mass” or constituency is created, others will follow.
5. ***Mobilize people not just for protest, but to undertake direct action.*** In this case where environmental problems had already reached serious proportions, CART mobilized people towards undertaking direct law enforcement – i.e., anti-logging checkpoints and sea patrols. Although many issues do not require such an extreme response, this was a calculated risk taken by CART, based on its local assessment and direct interactions with local communities. Community-based resource management is about good governance, undertaken by people themselves.

6. ***Understand and build on the POWER of the poor.*** Because of its small staff, networking became a natural, and often the “only” available option for CART. It mobilized the power of the poor, in terms of:
  - The power of physical numbers (hundreds of people on the streets);
  - Voting power leveraged in negotiations with politicians and public officials;
  - The ability to sympathize with others who are also poor (donating food & services);
  - The power of collective faith (“the situation can only get better” because “we have nothing more to lose”); and
  - The capacity to do direct, physical work (collective action).
7. ***Undertake advocacy within.*** Protest and affirmative action are closely inter-linked. While it may appear that advocacy actions are mainly directed at *external* government officials and law enforcers, this is only partly true. In fact, most advocacy efforts are actually directed *internally* – or “downstream” among its assisted poor communities, in efforts to build a broad constituency for the environment. If each collective action is followed by group reflection (“action-reflection”), this can lead to gradual changes of community values and culture.
8. ***While advocacy creates “leaders”; CBNRM needs “managers”.*** Ideas and values need to be “personified” in “natural leaders” whom people can relate to. Advocacy through networking creates many natural leaders. Such informal local leaders provide the broad vision, commitment and discipline needed for motivating communities. However, translating protest into concrete field programs requires organizational and managerial capacities which “informal leaders” and “visionaries” may not have. Thus, training may be necessary to building the capacity of local organizations.
9. ***Ensure tenurial rights: ensure “rights” before “responsibility”.*** Local POs had to negotiate with government to ensure the security of land and resource tenure of farmers, *lumads* and fisherfolk. Upland farmers were later granted 50-year land leases under the Integrated Social Forestry (ISF) program, while fishing communities were given access to the coasts and were deputized as “Fishery Wardens” to enforce fishing laws in municipal waters. People will take care of their environment only if their rights to land and water resources are ensured.
10. ***People-to-people exchanges can be an effective tool*** in motivating and sharing conservation/ production practices, organizational strategies and community responses. The very structure of a network – being loose, composed of independent affinity groups, and having non-hierarchical structures – encourages exchange, mutual learning and local adaptation. Once community recognition is given to local innovators and practitioners, they may be encouraged to share their knowledge, as local trainers.
11. ***Involve other sectors not just to work “for” the poor, but as stakeholders themselves working for “their own” livelihoods and survival.*** Local middle-class professionals saw as direct stakeholders in the local community, and provided technical and

organizational skills. In this case, many middle-class residents of Cagayan de Oro City saw themselves as environmental stakeholders, in view of, i.e.:

- Periodic flooding in the city
- Threat of reduced and contaminated water supply
- Visible effects of rising water and industrial pollution
- Fear of possible escalation of resource conflicts
- Desire for an overall cleaner environment

12. ***A multi-stakeholder approach brings different perspectives to bear on the same issue.*** There may be conflicting views or initial distrust among groups. Local fishermen, for instance, blamed upland farmers for the siltation of their rivers and traditional fishing grounds. Yet when communities adopt new rules & approaches, this may initially displace certain sectors of their livelihoods. In the uplands, for instance, farming communities had to adopt new rules regarding wood harvesting for use in house construction and for firewood. Local networks provide venues for people to share information & concerns, and to negotiate solutions mutually acceptable to them. (*See Annex B: Tips on Building Civil Society Networks.*)
13. ***Even within the same community, different sectors are likely to see issues and solutions differently, e.g., between women and men.*** In mapping exercises that we conducted among coastal fishing families in Macajalar Bay, the men expressed the problems of fishermen in terms of water pollution, declining fish catch, illegal fishing and destruction of their mangroves and underwater corals. On the other hand, the women fisherfolk expressed their concerns in terms of flooding, lack of potable drinking water, low incomes that resulted in poor nutrition and poor education of children, and the lack of alternative sources of livelihood. While the men looked out into the sea, the women looked inward into their community.
14. ***States create bureaucracies; markets create corporations; but networks are often created by civil society organizations (NGOs and community-based organizations).*** (*see Annex A: Bureaucracies, Corporations and CSO Networks*)

## **CASE 2: LAND REFORM AMONG SUGARWORKERS IN CAPIZ, PANAY ISLAND**

*In the Philippines, land has traditionally been the dominant source of wealth, prestige, power and economic privilege. Hence the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) was instituted in 1988. Yet with agrarian reform, sugarworkers living under a 19<sup>th</sup> century hacienda system have suddenly been thrust into today's 21<sup>st</sup> century of globalization. The twin challenges that sugarworkers face are enormous. On the one hand, they must learn to survive on the land without the financial capital, support services, patronage and protection that used to be provided by their landlords. On the other hand they are now expected to compete in a rapidly globalized market.*

*This case study describes how NGOs work with sugarworkers, as well as the conditions, emerging issues and land management options faced by former sugarworkers in haciendas, as they become new owners of the land under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). It focuses on NGO engagement*

*with peasant families in three former sugar haciendas in Capiz Province. CARRD's pioneering work in Capiz province has been assisted by the International Land Coalition, based at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)*

**I**n 1998, the Department of Agrarian Reform formally launched the second phase of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program<sup>7</sup> – shifting its focus from public lands towards the more difficult *private* lands.

In a country where land spells wealth and local political power, the Program's past seven years has been marked by growing landlord resistance, harassment and violence. Field implementation has been hampered by, i.e.: (i) the vast political, social and economic influence exerted by the local landed elite over those who implement agrarian reform in the province or municipality; (ii) hesitancy and fear among some tenants and rural workers to subject their tilled land to agrarian reform because of inadequate government support like credit, infrastructure and other support services; and (iii) continuing political patronage, dependency, fear, and a deep sense of "*utang-na-loob*" (debt-of-gratitude) that have traditionally characterized agrarian relations between tenants/ workers and their landlords.

***Reforming sugarcane lands*** in particular, has been problematic. Often considered by AR advocates to lie at the "heart and soul" of agrarian reform in the Philippines, sugarlands are marked by, i.e.: (i) *long standing feudal relations in haciendas*<sup>8</sup> that date back 250 years to the Spanish colonial period yet continues to this day; most of the workers are themselves descendants of past generations of sugarworkers; (ii) *extreme poverty among workers in sugar haciendas* that rank them among the bottom 30% of rural families who suffer chronic food deficit; and (iii) *a long history of peasant-led insurgency*, rooted in underlying agrarian conflicts.

### **NGOs move from protest to field action**

As early as 1995, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) already sought the assistance of NGOs and farmer-organizations under *Task Force Sugarlands* to pioneer the organizing and identification of potential beneficiaries among landless sugarworkers in sugar haciendas. Priority was given to those lands foreclosed by banks and those offered under Voluntary-Offer-to-Sell (VOS). Although DAR's program was abruptly discontinued after 6 months, two institutions – the Center for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (CARRD) and the *Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka* (PAKISAMA) – continued to work in Capiz province on their own. CARRD established

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<sup>7</sup> Established in June 1988, CARP is a wide-reaching program that seeks to improve land tenure over 8.1 million hectares, covering 27 percent of the entire country. It seeks: (a) to improve tenure and transfer land ownership to tenants and farmworkers in 4.3 million hectares of private lands; (b) to award land titles to tillers of 2.5 million hectares of public lands; and (c) to grant land-user rights to occupants of 1.3 million hectares in the uplands, under the Integrated Social Forestry Program.

<sup>8</sup> "Haciendas" are plantations, first established during the Spanish colonial period.

a provincial federation of 10 farmer organizations — the *Alyansa ng mga Benepisyaryo ng Repormang Agraryo sa Capiz* (ABRAC).<sup>9</sup>

Capiz province is among the 44 poorest provinces in the Philippines,<sup>10</sup> with 36% of its population in poverty.<sup>11</sup> In 2000, Capiz ranked 41<sup>st</sup> among 77 Philippine provinces in the 2000 Human Development Index<sup>12</sup>. It is composed of 473 barangays, 16 municipalities and one chartered city, Roxas City, with an economy dependent on five major commodities – rice, sugarcane, coconut, fruits and vegetables, and marine products. Apart from the Capiz Sugar Central in the municipality of President Roxas, the province has no major industries.

Between 1995-2001, CARRD organized sugarcane workers in 10 haciendas with extreme difficulty. There was extreme poverty everywhere (four “hunger months” each year); low education levels among sugarworkers (average of 4 years schooling among household heads); no productive assets or other sources of income (all were dependent on the landlords for daily wage labor); and lack of basic facilities in local communities. NGO workers, farmer leaders and even DAR government workers were constantly harassed and threatened. Yet the greatest difficulty came from the sugarworkers themselves. As recalled by a farmer-organizer from ABRAC<sup>13</sup>:

“In some of the areas, the farmers did not believe in agrarian reform at all. There were some groups, such as in Culilang, President Roxas where the farmers never believed that AR would ever take place. There, a powerful landlord controlled them... In other areas, people only joined organizations with the belief that these were just a channel for receiving dole-outs... They had very little initiative for self-help. They did not attend meetings unless it was clear that they could receive something in return...

“In other cases, (potential) beneficiaries were afraid to have themselves identified... There was resistance by landlords, and a feeling of *utang-na-loob* among farmworkers. Farmworkers feared that they would lose their chance to work. If only the awarding of lands could come faster... but no, the process itself takes months or years... Where else could the sugarworker find work in the meantime?

***The land transfer processes*** took between 3-7 years (some cases are still pending until today). The first haciendas were “Hacienda Carmencita” with 98 worker-beneficiaries, and Hacienda Santo Nino with 58 beneficiaries. Here, CARRD organized workers into cooperatives; and although the farmer-beneficiaries were given their Certificates of Land

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<sup>9</sup> ABRAC or the *Alyansa ng mga Benepisyaryo ng Repormang Agraryo sa Capiz*.

<sup>10</sup> National Statistical Coordination Board, *Poverty Statistics: 44 Poorest Provinces*, [http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/2000/44\\_poorestprov.asp](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/2000/44_poorestprov.asp); July 15, 2003

<sup>11</sup> Peace and Equity Foundation, *Philippine Provincial Poverty Indicators* (N.p), unpaginated

<sup>12</sup> PEF. *Philippine Provincial Poverty Indicators*.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Mario C. Kilayco, Secretary-General, Alyansa ng mga Benepisyaryo ng Repormang Agraryo sa Capiz (ABRAC), 7th February 2000. As cited in Quizon & Arostique, *Case Study of Collective Farming in Hacienda Carmencita, Capiz Province*, 2001.

Ownership and Acquisition (CLOA), all they had was a piece of paper. In November 1998, the workers decided to take physical control over the land. Conflicts and cases of harassment arose, as both the landowner and the Sugar Central insisted that the farmers lease-back the lands to them. Farmer loyalties were divided. Agrarian reform had cut-off longstanding feudal relations between tenants/ farmworkers and their landlords on whom sugarworkers had traditionally depended for production inputs, credit, personal favors and political patronage. And in the absence of services for production support, or access to banks and extension services, farmers found it difficult to cultivate their lands productively. Hunger began to stalk the communities.

A similar situation was encountered by sugarworkers in Hacienda Santa Ana in 1999. Even after being awarded their land certificates (CLOAs), farmers here were prevented by landowners from cultivating their newly-awarded lands. Some 70 workers from ESMAC cooperative invaded and began to cultivate the lands; their leaders were arrested and imprisoned. It took a year before the farmworkers were able to take over Hacienda Santa Ana, once the court cases against their leaders were dismissed.

***Making the lands productive.*** A first major issue that confronted the local farmers' cooperatives and CARRD was how to make the land productive without the financial capital and support services that used to be provided by the landlords. Meanwhile, landowners sought to regain control over the lands through *leaseback* agreements with the farmers. Under a leaseback arrangement, the farmers would revert into their former status as paid plantation workers, in exchange for fixed land rental payments from the former landowners.

On the basis of local consultations, CARRD drew up separate collective-farming arrangements with the three local farmers' cooperatives. After a series of negotiations with the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), a memorandum of agreement was forged wherein CARRD would act as "interim farm manager" on a fixed-term basis until the workers gained sufficient capacity, skills and confidence to manage the farms on their own. Profits would be distributed among farm workers. Apart from farm management, CARRD would assist in local capacity-building – i.e., agricultural & technical extension, organizational strengthening, and livelihood assistance. CARRD also provided its own "counterpart" loan, as a means to convince the Land Bank to finance needed production loans for sugarworkers who had no experience in linking up with banks.

In summary, the NGO helped in identifying local beneficiaries, organizing and strengthening farmer organizations, documenting and monitoring local cases, extending legal education and legal assistance, directly providing support services in credit, training, extension and health, and setting-up post-harvest and off-farm livelihood activities. They have also been able to mobilize substantial resources in support of agrarian reform beneficiaries.

**Questions of impacts and changes.** A 2003 NGO rapid impact study conducted in the above three haciendas generally reveal that:<sup>14</sup>

- **Incomes.** Farmer-household incomes in the haciendas have significantly doubled or tripled, two years after acquiring the land under agrarian reform and making them productive. Despite such improvement in incomes, however, incomes remain below poverty threshold levels, although the severity of the poverty impact (e.g., hunger months) has been somewhat reduced.
- **Social organization.** Local farmer cooperatives have been established in the three haciendas. However, the local communities themselves remain divided because of divided loyalties to their former landlords. About half of the total farmer-beneficiaries now cultivate their own lands, while the other half have leased-back their lands, but still without any written contracts.
- **Changing land management schemes.** Looking back, *collective farming* was seen by workers as a transition strategy that was needed to enable workers to access credit from the Land Bank, and to instill discipline among workers as they become new owners of their land. However, the overall trend has been a shift towards *individual household farming*, which has shown to have higher productivity, higher cane quality and higher incomes for farmer-households, compared to collective farming.

## Reflections on community empowerment

1. **The vital role of NGOs in agrarian reform.** In this case, the role of NGOs in AR has been emphasized on four aspects: (a) as constituent expressions of political will to pursue social reforms and legislations; (b) as direct service-providers and resource-mobilizers; (c) as development facilitators, mediators and convenors among different stakeholders and implementing agencies; and (d) as capacity-builders among farmers and beneficiary organizations. Moving from protest towards affirmative action has demanded new roles and capacities from NGOs and other members of civil society.
2. **NGOs as a countervailing force.** At the local level, civil society and NGOs indeed play an important role as a *countervailing third force* to both State and Market mechanisms that are often controlled by a landed elite. NGOs and POs have been able to directly work among agrarian reform beneficiaries without having to pass or to be dependent on the layers of local power brokers and officials. Being external to the community prevents the NGO from being beholden to local power structures.
3. **Building organizations and federations of the poor.** CARRD's experience has shown the need for agrarian reform beneficiaries to come together under independent organizations. A major role of NGOs is to organize AR beneficiaries into independent and autonomous organizations. AR beneficiaries themselves must have the capacity to negotiate with, and to counteract the well-entrenched power structures

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<sup>14</sup> Taken from Quizon, A., Riguer, G. and Arostique, A. *Comparative Land Management Schemes in Three Former Haciendas in Capiz*. CARRD, ANGOC and ILC, August 2003. Only selected key findings are summarized here.

in their community. Further, it is important to build farmer-federations, for solidarity, mutual support and assistance. In Capiz, this group is ABRAC, which is a provincial federation of agrarian reform beneficiaries supported by an NGO.

4. ***Building multisectoral linkages.*** Especially on highly contentious issues such as agrarian reform, it is critically important to build tripartite linkages among NGOs, POs and government. In the case of Hacienda Carmencita, this government-NGO partnership was first instituted at the national level, through the short-lived Task Force Sugarlands of 1995-96. This gave local recognition and legitimacy to the organizing efforts of the NGO.
5. ***Strengthening the capacity of change agents at the frontlines.*** In the end, it is the community organizers on the field who often face and decide on very practical problems: How do you ensure the participation of equally-poor farmers who may be non-beneficiaries in programs or organizations? How do you deal with those equally-poor farmers who remain loyal to the landlord, and oppose agrarian reform efforts? Where can farmers find the capital to make their lands productive, once their dependence is cut-off from their landlords and patrons? How do you deal with local officials on whom the farmers must now depend on for support services, yet who are landlords themselves? It is the community development worker who faces daunting task of seeking ways for farmers to resolve local conflicts, to organize themselves, and to build their local capacities and awareness. This requires new skills – as conflict-mediator, consultant, confessor, and linkage-builder.

## **NGO ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATIONS: REVIEWING SOME EMERGING ISSUES AND TRENDS IN THE PHILIPPINES**

Indeed, especially after the 1986 People Power Revolution, Philippine NGOs have become major advocates of social, political and economic reform. Many have moved from protest into affirmative, on-field action – building up alternative practice and paradigms of the development visions that they advocate; and acting as part of civil society's countervailing “third force” to the abuses of the State, and to the excesses of the Market.

Until today, the Philippine NGO community continues to critically review its role and relevance. Starting in March this year (2005), the Association of Foundations (AF) has embarked upon a study of Philippine NGOs. The AF study, with the tentative title of *Philippine NGOs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Searching for Renewed Relevance*, is focused on the theme of Philippine NGO engagement with five major publics: (1) with client communities and POs; (2) with each other; (3) with government (national and local); (d) with donors; and (e) with the business community. The study is intended to be a forward-looking piece for the NGO community itself.

With regards to NGO engagement with client communities and POs, some trends and issues have been noted in ongoing discussions and written drafts:

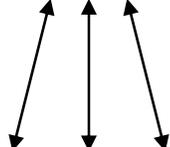
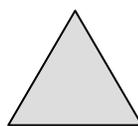
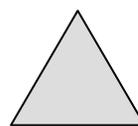
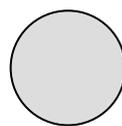
- There is a shift away from *issue-based* community organizing, towards *service-provision* to communities. Issue-based organizing was considered appropriate in the 70s and 80s as a means to address the neglect and abuses of an unresponsive and repressive government. On the other hand, organizing-cum-service is now considered more appropriate, as government is now viewed as generally “weak” and unable to provide for its citizens.
- One difficulty with the new organizing-cum-service provision approach is that it tends to view the community as an undifferentiated, homogeneous mass, instead of as an arena of competing groups and interests. This leads to the exclusion of the poorest and most vulnerable groups within the community.
- Despite the stigma of dole-out associated with the provision of services, NGO work in this area continues to be a major social contribution, given the persistence of poverty and inequality in the Philippines.
- There has been a gradual disappearance of donor funding programs for NGOs that are “responsive”, that is, where funds are provided for projects initiated by NGOs. Hence, there has been a significant reduction in external donor support for direct community work of NGOs. There are fewer Philippine NGOs today working directly among communities.
- Increasingly, a large part of the NGO work in organizing communities now occurs within the context of a *service-contract* relationship between a government project and one or several NGOs, often under a donor-funded project. However, extreme preoccupation with outputs – a trait often found in government bureaucracies – can lead one to forget the “transforming” character of the organizing process, which is to build a community of individuals united to a common vision.
- NGOs have made major contributions in building social capital and political empowerment. However, NGO efforts in community enterprise/ economic development, with the exception of micro-finance, have either been marginal or outright failures. NGOs still have to strengthen linkages with the private sector community.
- NGOs have made a major contribution in framing the development debate, as evidenced by the now wide acceptance of the terms “sustainable development”, “growth with equity”, “participatory development”, and “good governance” in policies and public pronouncements. However, the continuing challenge lies in translating policies into concrete action and governance systems.
- Over the past 10 years, there has been a strategic shift in the strategy of some NGOs and personalities – towards formally engaging in partisan, electoral party politics.

While NGOs have remained divided on this issue, this has raised questions regarding the “empowerment role” of development NGOs and POs, since Philippine-style electoral politics can be highly divisive. The motivations and advocacies behind the organizing activities of NGOs can be questioned.

- An increasing number of NGO personalities are joining government, national and local, whether as elected officials or bureaucrats. An increasing number of cause-oriented and special-interest groups are taking advantage of the party-list system to join the Lower House of Congress. Thus far, however, these party-list groups have had limited impact on the legislative agenda.
- On the positive side, it must be acknowledged that Philippine NGOs have made significant contributions to government policy and action programs, particularly in the areas of gender equity, agrarian reform, indigenous peoples land rights, community-based resource management, community health, and others. □

## ANNEX A

### Bureaucracies, Corporations & CSO Networks

	Bureaucracy	Corporation	CSO Network
Who creates it?	State	Private Sector	Civil Society
What holds it together?	Rules & hierarchy	Management & organization	Common values
How is it organized?	Specialized & dependent units	Specialized & dependent units	Self-reliant & autonomous affinity groups
What characterizes its organization & structure?	Officials  Rank & file	Managers  Employees	Networks  Affinity groups
			
	Specialized tasks	Specialized tasks	Multiple roles
How are decisions made?	Centralized & controlled	Centralized & controlled	Distributed & independent
	Top-down	Top-down	Horizontal
What are their main driving forces?	Tasks & outputs	Products & profits	Relationships & people

*Source:* A.B. Quizon. "Networking and Alliance-Building". Training materials for SEARSOLIN, October 2001, Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines.

## **ANNEX B:**

### **In Review: Some Practical Tips on Building Civil Society Networks**

#### ***Why establish networks? What are their purposes?***

- To create a “critical mass”; to address social change; to mobilize public interest on issues
- To gain higher profile for programs for advocacy, research and action
- To share resources, in order to achieve greater institutional and program sustainability
- To increase capacity to address larger problems that no single sector or group can address on its own (e.g., environmental and social issues)
- To create an atmosphere conducive to experimentation and shared risks, mutual sharing and learning which would not be possible within a hierarchical structure

#### ***What are some common characteristics of networks?***

- Networks provide venues for social interaction; often based on face-to-face encounters
- They are flexible and voluntary, not rigid institutions, not hierarchical nor bureaucratic
- They are based on interpersonal commitment and shared goals
- They build on diversity, and respect the independence of “partners”
- Networks have many leaders; they move according to shared values and agreed strategies, rather than by specific decisions

#### ***What are people’s motivations for networking?***

- To break off from one’s isolation; to gain the courage that comes from knowing that other people are also willing to address the larger issues that one faces
- To gain access to groups, information, resources, technology and practices
- For mutual exchange, new learning, insights and understanding
- To have the opportunity to share, to contribute, and to have impact on the larger community, and hence improve one’s “self-worth” in the process
- To create greater margin for experimentation & shared risks
- To create greater bargaining power, to be able to negotiate effectively with power structures

#### ***What are some conditions for success in networking?***

- Flexible, internal management
- A sense of “ownership” – a sense among partners that they are working *within* a network, and not *for* the network
- Recognition of internal diversity; decisions are reached through discussion and mutual agreement
- Shared agreement; clear goals and focus;

- Simple and non-complicated rules and structures, i.e., structures that are based on natural “affinity groups” rather than forcing people to fit into structures
- Ability of leaders for managing change
- Ability to pursue “*continuity with change*” – that is, that leaders are able to pass on their leadership positions, vision and skills to successor-generations, and then take on new roles within their communities
- Practical networking tools (communication, negotiation, management)

***What are some common conditions for failure in networking?***

- Donor-driven networks, where local groups or communities are “required” or “enticed” to work together under a project or through offers of donor funding
- Network leaders start to exercise “control” over members
- Complicated structures, rules and processes

***What are some common risks in networking?***

- Costs in money, time and energy
- Exclusivity: leaders and members wanting to corner positions, funding and resources
- Doing too many things, taking on too many agendas just in order to accommodate the variety of concerns of network members
- Cliques
- Center → member; rather than member → member
- Creating new “standards” for individual performance, which tend to stunt innovation, risks and volunteerism
- Co-optation of network leaders once networks become very successful

***Finally, three key lessons in networking:***

- Start small
- Celebrate victories and achievements
- Share credit (it’s free anyway).

## About the Speaker

Antonio “Tony” B. Quizon served as Executive Director of the Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC) for eight years (1990-98), and was subsequently elected to its Board in 1998. He has spent the past 30 years working with Philippine social movements, and with NGOs in the Philippines and Asia. He received academic training in Sociology and in Development Management.

In the mid-1970s, he first worked as a community organizer among landless upland farmers; he was twice arrested and imprisoned by the Marcos regime for his social and political involvements. With the restoration of democracy in 1987, he played an active role in the peasants’ lobby for agrarian reform with the Congress and the Executive, which led to the enactment of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) for the Philippines. Seeking to link local action with global advocacy, he co-initiated the NGO Campaign on the Asian Development Bank, which later grew to involve over 200 groups and individuals from some 40 countries. He later represented Asian NGOs at the World Bank-NGO Committee, as well as at some 20 international and regional bodies, including Asian regional preparatory work for the various United Nations Summit conferences.

Tony also served as consultant on occasion for various UN, international and local organizations – with research and published works on issues related to NGOs, agrarian reform and rural development. Currently, Tony Quizon is involved as Board member and volunteer in several Philippine and Asian NGOs – engaged in farmer assistance, environmental and anti-logging campaigns, agrarian reform and resettlement, and sustainable agriculture. Among these are: CART in Northern Mindanao, Philippines; ICDAI in Quezon Province; CARRD which pursues agrarian reform in three provinces; and SEARICE, which promotes community-based plant genetic resources conservation in Asia. □