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## **The Reforestation Project in the Nabuklod Reservation**

ELVIRA L. DIZON, F.M.M.

Resistance to development programs in developing areas has been mostly attributed to ignorance, stubbornness, irrationality, or lack of desire for achievement. In his article on "Traditional Values in Philippine Society as Deterrents to Progress," Pelaez (quoted in Madigan) asserts that "what is most important (for development work) is a transformation in our people's outlook in life and society."<sup>1</sup> He further states that:

We must examine the realities of our culture, our attitudes, our traditions and customs. We must avail ourselves of the insights and techniques provided by sociologists who tell us that the organization, conduct and attitudes of society have an important bearing on the drive — or the lack of it — of human beings for a better life for themselves and their families.

We must seek out the deficiencies in the human behavior of our rural people and try to infuse in them qualities required for sustained economic activity such as hard work and industry, self-reliance, risk-taking, rationality, planning, efficiency, love for excellence and achievement.

Thus, whenever resistance to development programs is met, one strategy may be for development planners to increase pressure on the people by persuasion and sometimes, even by force. Such a strategy, however, leads to further tension and frustration among the people and eventually, to program failure. Thus, socio-

This article is a revised version of one of the practicum papers submitted in 1982 for the degree, Master of Science in Applied Sociology and Anthropology, Ateneo de Manila University.

1. Francis C. Madigan, ed., *Human Factors in Philippine Rural Development: Proceedings of the Anniversary Seminar on Economic Development of the Rural Philippines* (Cagayan de Oro City: Xavier University, 1967).

economic programs, which are supposed to bring about progress and an improved quality of life, sometimes fail to improve the people's level of living.

This article analyzes the forces that influenced the effectiveness of a Family Approach Reforestation Project (FARP) in the Baluga Reservation in Floridablanca, Pampanga. It assesses qualitative material gathered at the Nabuklod Reservation Floridablanca, Pampanga for six months, from February to June 1980 and from October to November of the same year. Some of the qualitative data were used to describe Baluga values;<sup>2</sup> another set of data comprising the focus of this study, concerns the impact of the reforestation project in the Nabuklod area.

### METHODOLOGY

After completing an informal inquiry about the status of the FARP in the area, the researcher prepared a list of general and open-ended questions. Twenty-three project participants were interviewed using this interview schedule (see Table ); each interview lasted an average of one and a half hours. The interviews were usually conducted in Tagalog as all the men in the area (except the elderly) could speak Tagalog. In contrast, the Baluga women speak very little Tagalog. The researcher found it necessary to seek the assistance of an interpreter when the discussions or interviews got "too difficult" to be expressed in Tagalog.

Apart from these twenty-three project participants, the researcher had recourse to two key informants with whom she cross-checked much of the information that she gathered from the participants. Much time was spent interviewing these two key informants. One of them was a drop-out of the project; the other was still working with the project when taken as an informant.

Interviews were also conducted with fifteen nonproject participants, and these interviews were supplemented by observations made in the area over a considerable length of time. Several Bureau of Forest Development (BFD) personnel were also interviewed. Four BFD personnel assigned in Nabuklod and nine officials from the Regional office in San Fernando, Pampanga and

2. Elvira L. Dizon, "An Assessment of the Family Approach Reforestation Project in the Nabuklod Reservation and Other Practica Papers" (M.S. thesis, Ateneo de Manila University, 1982).

from the Central Office in Quezon City were interviewed several times. In addition, data were also obtained from documents available in these offices.

<b>Type of Respondents</b>	<b>Number</b>
1. Project participants	23
2. Non-project participants	15
3. Native key informants	2
4. BFD personnel	
a. Local FARP personnel	4
b. Regional/district office personnel	3
c. Central Office personnel	6

In collecting the data, the researcher shuttled from project participants to program managers and from program managers back to the participants. This procedure enabled her to confirm information, to record the feedback of participants and personnel, and to clarify misconceptions. Much effort was taken not to jeopardize the interests of both parties. When pieces of information could not be confirmed, these were taken as "perceptions" or opinions of the respondents.

This article focuses on how the FARP affected the people and their community. To assess such effects, it is necessary to have an appreciation of the social realities in which the Balugas of Nabuklod reservation find themselves. Hence, a brief description of the economic, social and political condition of the Balugas will first be presented as base information for project evaluation.

#### THE NABUKLOD RESERVATION

The Nabuklod Baluga Reservation is located on the boundary of Floridablanca, Pampanga and San Marcelino, Zambales and is on the periphery of the Zambales Forest Reserve. The reservation is about 30 kilometers west of Floridablanca proper. To its east lies Porac, Tarlac and to its southwest, Bataan. Nabuklod has a total land area of 301 hectares.

The Balugas are seminomadic; they may roam around different places at different times, but they always come home to the settlement as their home base. Thus, the Balugas may disappear for weeks or months working on their kaingin, visiting relatives, or hunting. As a homebase, the settlement can also be considered semipermanent. The Balugas may move on to other settlements to

look for a better place for a kaingin, to avoid conflicts with a fellow Baluga, to avoid epidemic or shy away from military pressures. The results of two surveys made in the area give some indication of the settlement's "permanent" state. The total population as surveyed in 1978 was 394 individuals belonging to 94 families. By 1980, a survey made by this researcher showed that the total population had dwindled to 220 individuals belonging to 54 families.

Since 1971 when the reforestation project was established near Nabuklod, most of the Balugas had been employed on an off-and-on basis as wage laborers. As casual laborers the Balugas receive ₱13.00 a day. But since employment is very uncertain, many of them are employed during the rainy season and laid off during the dry season or when the BFD budget is limited.

Even when employed as wage laborers, the Balugas continue to maintain some of their kaingin fields. They usually plant rice, corn, lima beans, sweet potato, cassava, taro and yam. The Balugas may work on a particular clearing for one or two years after which they look for another one. Sometimes they simply change the crops they cultivate and stay longer in one area. All members of the family work in the kaingin. A family may have two to three kaingin fields at a time; sometimes two or more families may help one another in working one kaingin field and share equally in the harvest. Ordinarily, a kaingin will not be more than one hectare.

Some Balugas (around seven of them at the time of the study) who own carabaos are able to engage in plow farming. Their fields are usually within the village, while the kaingin areas are in the interior of the forest. Some who do not own a carabao and want to engage in plow farming manage to rent a carabao for ₱10.00 to ₱15.00 a day. Most of the Balugas desire to have a carabao because they recognize that their kaingin system requires more labor and gives lesser yield.

The Balugas do some trade with the lowlanders. They either exchange or sell their products like bananas, banana blossoms, lima beans, bitter melons, cogon and bamboo. But in those transactions, the Balugas usually receive the short end of the bargain as the prices are dictated by the lowlanders. The lowland merchants also sell their wares at double or even triple the market price. A few Balugas manage to sell their products directly to the

market or give them to their trusted Pampango friends (a rare breed) to be sold in the market. Some Balugas also trade with the Aetas in the interior of Zambales.

The Balugas also deal with numerous local moneylenders who charge exorbitant interests on loans. Since the Balugas have no clear grasp of the value of money, they remain for the most part, ignorant of their plight. Hence, many of them remain perpetually in debt. The Balugas who work with Pampango families as domestic servants or farm helpers usually receive a miserly amount in exchange for their labor. Baluga children very often get paid once a year.

The Balugas usually group themselves in small migrating bands composed of five to ten families with no recognition of an overall authority. But this traditional political arrangement has been radically altered owing to two factors. The first is the transformation of Nabuklod into a barangay which consequently established an "over-all" authority over the area. A set of barangay officials includes a *Kapitan*, five councilmen, a police chief, three policemen and a Civil Home Defense Force unit. The second is the intensive military operations aimed at counteracting the New People's Army in the area. In order to have full control over the peace situation in the area, the military ordered the Balugas to live close to one another and align their houses along the dirt road. Given these changes, a new political consciousness is slowly emerging among the Balugas. There is now a growing awareness of belonging to a particular area of residence and of being a part of larger society. There is also a growing and painful recognition of an overall authority exercised by the government and the military over their lives.

The Baluga society is basically egalitarian. There is no differentiation in ascribed or achieved status. Nobody presumes to have any authority over one group or another. Neither is any one band higher in status than the other bands. Recently, however, a gradual differentiation has been developing between a group of Balugas called *Aetang Dawyan*, living in the lower slopes of the mountain and nearer to the center of town and another group of Balugas, called *Aetang Bukil* living in the interior of the mountains. The Bukil are claimed to be fairer and taller; people say they have more to eat since there is still plenty of food that can be gathered in their surroundings. However, the Bukil are looked down on by the Dawyan since they are more ignorant and maintain many

of their traditional customs.

The Balugas have been objects of "off-and-on" assistance from the government and other private welfare agencies for decades. In 1975, the government built a school for the Balugas. In 1978, when the military ordered the Balugas residing in Camachiles (another Baluga settlement nearby) to settle in Nabuklod, another school building was put up to accommodate them. In 1981, three years after, the Balugas of Camachiles had all gone back to their former settlement and left the schools empty.

A National Cottage Industry and Development Authority (NACIDA) project was introduced in the area in 1978. Around twenty attended the seminar irregularly. At the end of the seminar, each participant was given equipment for making brooms. The rest of the equipment was deposited with the Kapitan for safekeeping and for future use. By 1981, the equipment had still not been used and had become rusty. The Balugas claimed that materials for making these "tambo" brooms were not so abundant anymore in the area.

A lay missionary put up a consumer's cooperative in Nabuklod also in 1978, but after a year of operation the missionary left the place. The Balugas claimed that he ran off with their money.

Although the lowlanders have gotten more and more used to mingling with the Balugas in the town, discrimination against the Balugas persists. The Balugas are treated with contempt and disdain. Hence, the Balugas feel like second- or third-class citizens in the midst of the lowlanders. They also feel that the larger society is becoming increasingly hostile to them. When two Balugas died mysteriously in an irrigation project, for example, no investigation was conducted and the police immediately dismissed the incident as an accident. Similarly, when a Baluga woman died suddenly after taking medication prescribed by a town doctor, the police did not question the doctor about the incident. In another case, a Baluga was beaten by his lowland employer and died later as a result of the injury he received. Again no investigation was made, and the wife of the victim was too helpless to bring any charges against the employer.

The Balugas are becoming more and more a part of the wider society as a result of wage labor, employment in the towns, dependence on the market, involvement in the school and in the Church. However, although the Balugas seem to be getting their share of

the benefits of modernization because of this involvement, they are ironically becoming more miserable as they find themselves more dependent on others and are losing much control over the decisions that affect their lives. Moreover, they are becoming aware that they are indeed relegated to the lowest segment of that modernized sector of society. This situation prevailed when the FARP program entered the scene in August 1979.

#### THE FAMILY APPROACH REFORESTATION PROJECT

The Family Approach Reforestation Project (FARP) was first established in Malaybalay, Bukidnon in 1974. As of this writing, there are nine such projects scattered all over the Philippines, most of them concentrated in Luzon.

The FARP was adopted from *taungya* farming which originated in Burma a century ago. There, tribal people were given pieces of land to cultivate for two years. In turn, the recipients would plant "teak" stumps in their land before abandoning it for another clearing. This concept of *taungya* farming has evolved and has taken several forms depending on the conditions and culture of different geographical regions.

One such project was formally inaugurated near the Nabuklod Baluga reservation in Barrio San Ramon, Floridablanca, Pampanga on August 1979. The project was envisioned to ameliorate the living conditions of the Balugas residing in the vicinity. It has the following objectives (as provided for in their project proposal):

1. Promote job opportunities as a source of income for the unemployed settlers of Nabuklod reservation;
2. Produce raw materials for livestock and cottage industries;
3. Reforest at least 100 hectares of denuded lands within the watershed of South Gumain River within a period of two years;
4. Promote forest conservation consciousness among the settlers of the Negrito reservation and to encourage them to appreciate the importance of trees in their daily lives through actual raising and planting of trees; and
5. Promote better cooperation/coordination between forestry personnel and the community.

The FARP involves twenty-five or more participants who sign a contract with the Project for two years to reforest three to five

hectares of land. Although the heads of the families sign the contract, all family members of the participants are allowed or encouraged to help the family head in work on the land allotted to them. Thus, the project has the label "Family Approach" project.

All seedlings, fertilizer, and other necessary supplies and materials are supplied by the Bureau of Forest Development (BFD). The seedlings are raised by the participants in their own backyards, while technical personnel of the BFD are assigned to coordinate and supervise the activities of the participating families.

All activities are done on a contractual basis or a piecework system (*pakyaw*). After every major activity, an inventory is undertaken to determine the quality and quantity of work done and the corresponding amount to be paid. Payments are made in four installments or after every major activity has been accomplished.

The first payment is made after the area has been fully planted with 1,666 seedlings per hectare. The activities involved are the construction of trails, transporting of seedlings, brushing, digging of holes, staking, planting and fertilization. The amount given is based on ₱0.10 per seedling planted or ₱166.60 per hectare.

The second payment is given three or four months after planting that is, after an inventory of the seedlings that survived the planting has been conducted. The activity involved is the construction of firelines, including the protection of the established plantation. The amount to be paid is ₱.60 per surviving seedling and the third payment is made after weeding, cultivation, replanting and fertilization. The seedlings to be used for replanting are provided by the BFD or the families themselves. The amount to be paid is ₱0.07 per seedling or ₱116.60 per hectare.

The fourth and final payment is given after the family has cleared or weeded its assigned area and a final inventory of the living seedlings/sapling has been conducted. The amount to be paid is ₱0.03 per seedlings/sapling that survived. The total amount to be given for plantation operation is ₱312.00 per hectare assuming a 100 percent survival during the turn-over of the plantation area to the government. All in all, the amount paid per hectare is ₱595.20 at 100 percent survival count.

The BFD personnel first conducted a census in the Nabuklod Reservation to determine the number of families willing to join

the Project. Although only a few families were willing to participate, the BFD personnel proceeded with a three-day seminar to explain the nature of the Project, the requirements of the labor contract, the objectives and the procedures of the entire program to the whole community. Later the BFD personnel (composed of a senior forester and his two assistants – another forester and an agriculturist) decided to delegate the responsibility of screening families (who are willing to join the project) to the Barangay Captain of Nabuklod. The Barangay Captain campaigned to convince families to join the project and was able to recruit thirty-three out of fifty-two families to sign a contract with the project for two years. Enthused by the promise of many benefits (as assured by the Barangay Captain), the Balugas started the work energetically.

After working for three months, the Balugas found that payment for their labor was on a quarterly and not on a monthly basis (a regular reforestation project which has been operating nearby since 1973 was paying monthly wages). However, the contract which they all signed clearly specified quarterly payments. This was aggravated by the fact that the quarterly installments were almost always delayed by close to two weeks. Even after realizing that the actual mode of payment was quarterly, the Balugas continued to expect and clamor for monthly wages. Thus, the Balugas usually grumbled that their salaries were two to three months late.

The Balugas were also disappointed that each family did not receive a carabao. They thought that by signing the contract with the project, they would be entitled to receive one carabao plus a weekly ration of several *gantas* of rice. But no carabao was given and the supply of rice issued was very minimal. The BFD personnel were able to supply irregularly the thirty-three Baluga participants with only around three to four cavans of rice every month. As a result, the Balugas started to become demoralized and gradually dropped out of the project. After a year, seventeen out of thirty-three participants left the project. At the end of December 1980, twenty-six dropped out, leaving only seven participants in the project. Some of the drop-outs tried to join the nearby regular reforestation project but were refused on instruction of the officer-in-charge of the FARP.

A few Balugas who dropped out of the project claimed that

some BFD personnel threatened to sue and imprison them for not honoring their contract. But the Balugas just laughed it off saying:

Paano naman kaming mapreso, hindi naman namin maintindihan kung ano ang pinirmahan namin? Hindi naman kami marunong bumasa at sumulat. Saka may katwiran kami dahil hindi naman kami binabayaran sa oras.

(How can we be held responsible for a contract whose provision we don't even understand? We don't know how to read or write. Besides, we are justified for not honoring the contract since they do not pay us on time.)

Alarmed by these developments, the BFD personnel called for a dialogue with the people. The people aired their complaints and demanded a monthly payment of salaries, and if not possible, an adequate weekly supply of rice. But the BFD personnel refused to concede these requests. They reasoned that the mode of payment was an important element of the project, and it was beyond their power to remedy the situation. They also claimed they did not have enough funds to provide a weekly ration of rice. The BFD personnel then tried to remedy the situation by hiring daily wage workers and scrapping the contractual arrangement.

Upon learning that the project was hiring daily wage workers, some former Baluga participants reapplied, thinking that daily wage workers would receive monthly salaries. In fact, a daily wage arrangement only meant that the laborers got ₱13.00 a day, but received it every three months or so. The Balugas became even more disgruntled when the daily wage of the nearby regular reforestation project increased by ₱3.35 to include a daily living allowance, while that in the FARP remained only ₱13.00 a day. Caught in such a situation, the Balugas worked on the Project on an off and on basis. When they needed some cash, they worked on the Project; otherwise, they stayed away.

These payment problems never reached the BFD Central Office in Quezon City. When asked why this problem was never reported, a local BFD agent replied, "With this alternative arrangement of hiring daily wage workers, we foresee that we are still on our way of achieving our goal to reforest 100 hectares of land and since this is all that the management is interested in anyway, why do we have to report the drop-outs which could not affect our goal? " Forestry officials in the Central Office confirmed that they received no reports of drop-outs or of any payment problems with the Balugas.

Official records show that the FARP terminated last August 1981 with the following results: survival rate of trees planted — 74 percent; total number of hectares planted — 90 hectares. The assessors claimed that the 74 percent rating was satisfactory since the average survival rate in the Family Reforestation Projects all over the Philippines is 80 percent. On the other hand, the 90 hectares planted out of the 100.5 hectares target goal was also considered an achievement since the remaining 6 hectares that were not planted were really unfit for tree planting. Overall, the Project fared well on the level of achievement.

However, on the implementation level, the assessors admitted one major failure of the project. The project staff converted the project into a daily wage system (from the original contractual system) without notifying the Central Office. As a direct result of this, project cost per hectare was increased by ₱1,500.00. (The average cost of planting one hectare of land on a contractual system is ₱2,500.00).

## ANALYSIS

This section attempts to analyze the performance of the FARP. Specifically, it seeks to answer several questions about project operations.

### DID THE PROGRAM MEET A NEED OF THE PEOPLE?

The disappearance of forest cover, the loss of game and exploitation by the lowlanders left the Balugas in a miserable condition. Although they managed to maintain their kaingin operations, these have been carried out in distant places where farming required more time and effort. Harvests declined; hunting was severely limited to some species of birds and reptiles; and fishing was confined mainly to small fish, shrimps and shellfish in the streams or rivers. Opportunists, patrons, merchants, moneylenders from the lowlands continually took advantage of the Balugas. Given these conditions, the need in the area was for added income. The FARP was presented as one solution to the problem, a project which would generate income for the Balugas, and thus improve their living conditions.

The FARP did provide a temporary source of income for the

project participants. However, the benefits gained from such additional source of income were almost negated by an overwhelming demoralization over the quarterly mode of payment and the accompanying delay in the release of installment payments. In short, the economic benefits received were not commensurate with the social cost that the Balugas paid for them. Wages were supposed to be paid by installments every three months and yet these were further delayed by one or two weeks more.

As one Baluga lamented:

Oo, kumikita nga kami pero kung ganyan naman ang trato nila sa amin na palagi na lang huli ang suweldo, hindi bale na lang na mawala na ang project, nakakaperhuwiso lang. Mas gusto pa naming magkaingin o magsarulan kaysa maghirap sa kakaasa sa wala.

(True, we are earning income from the project but if that is how they treat us, with all the delay in our salaries, we do not mind losing the project. It is just creating too much trouble for us. We prefer to have our own work in the kaingin or plow farming than to suffer so much uncertainty.)

Often the Balugas did not believe that their salaries were delayed, and suspected that the local BFD men were cheating them. Since the Balugas had experienced so much exploitation, they were apt to suspect any outsiders. When asked whether they could survive without the project, another Baluga man readily answered:

Wala na ba kaming sariling isip upang hindi makapagtrabaho ng aming sarili. Maghahanap kami ng aming sariling paraan upang mabuhay. Mabuti pa ang sariling trabaho kaysa paalila sa mga taong nagpapahirap sa amin.

(Haven't we got our intelligence to work for us? We find our own way of earning a living. It is so much better to have our own work than to subject ourselves to those outsiders who just make us suffer.)

As a whole, then, did the FARP meet the need of the Balugas to ameliorate their miserable living conditions? It might have helped the Balugas to earn some additional income, but a majority of the Baluga workers did not believe they were actually helped by the Project. They repeatedly stated that they did not care about the project; they were more concerned with owning a carabao of their own so that they could practice plow farming and drop out from the project.

Several factors then diminished the impact of the project in ameliorating the living conditions of the Balugas. Because of the installment nature of the salary payments, the Balugas learned to

buy goods on credit. Many unscrupulous traders and merchants took advantage of this situation. As a result, Balugas remained in debt most of the time. Not quite used to a money economy and unable to compute, they were cheated without their knowledge. Sometimes uninvited moneylenders and merchants entered the Balugas' house and took anything which would serve to cover the debt. A Baluga informant related how a merchant took a big kettle from another Baluga family who owed him ₱3.00 worth of dried fish. Another merchant hacked down the house of a Baluga debtor and took all the materials which she could salvage, leaving the Baluga family homeless. Indeed, many Balugas were forced to hide in the mountain to ward off debt collectors.

The Balugas also lacked the habit of saving. They claimed that when they signed the contract, they were promised that they would each receive a carabao. The BFD staff, however, denied that they ever made such a promise. What the staff actually said, so they claimed, was that the Balugas could save enough money from the income that they would receive from the project to buy their own carabaos. But the Balugas lived mainly for the present. The salaries they received disappeared in less than a week. They spent for themselves and whenever possible, paid off creditors or helped their relatives.

In the final analysis, the need of the Balugas, the amelioration of their living conditions, could not be limited to mere generation of added income. More than this they needed to be liberated from the exploitation of the lowlanders. This was a need which the FARP did not recognize, and thus was unable to meet effectively. As Korten emphasizes, "The answer to poverty lies not in relief, but in increasing the capacity of the poor to meet their own needs."<sup>3</sup>

In an exploitative structure, providing the Balugas with an added income without "building their capacity to meet their own needs" at the same time would not prove very helpful since exploiters would be able to "siphon off a bigger haul" from the Balugas. Furthermore the FARP, being a two-year terminal project, served mainly as a "respite" for the Balugas, a sort of a "relief." The nature of the project was not primarily designed to

3. David Korten, "Community Organization and Rural Development: A Learning Process Approach" (Makati: Ford Foundation, and Asian Institute of Management, 1980), p. 53.

assist people to build their capacity to meet their own needs, but only to execute a "national project." The provision of income appeared to be an incidental goal.

What is basically needed, therefore, in balancing beneficiaries' needs and program concerns, is the effort to analyze the real needs of people, a diagnosis of the situation and not merely a "projection" of the project's own need.

#### DID THE PROGRAM CONSIDER THE BENEFICIARIES' CULTURE?

Wishing to adopt the project into the Baluga culture, BFD planners thought of a "family-oriented" approach and one which was also based on a contractual mode of payment (*pakyaw*).

The Baluga family was a complete productive unit. They hunted, fished and gathered food as a group. When the *kaingin* system began, the whole family continued to work together. Such family orientedness, characteristic of the Baluga, and for that matter of most Filipino families, was known to the project officials and was therefore adopted in the project. The family approach implied that the family need not split up since they could continue to work together on the project. But things did not work out as planned. Many Balugas did not understand that they could earn more if they accomplished more (*pakyaw* system) with the help of their families. Others were not motivated to earn more. Besides, many wives and their children preferred to work on their *kaingin*, while the husband worked on the project. What happened instead was that most of the time, the participants worked alone, and only if they could not report for work, would they send a family member to replace them.

Such a situation began to alter the traditional family roles among the Baluga. The father seemed more often separated from the family as his time was taken up by his work on the project. The responsibility of rearing the children fell more heavily on the mother. Such a condition contributed also to the lessening of the time for "common activities" of the whole family. The father, becoming less dependent on the family in terms of economic interest, slowly drifted away and associated more with his co-workers. In such a situation, as Herbert Ian Hogbin points out:

The only activities left for the family is sexual relationship of husband and wife, the provision of emotional security for the children, cooking and

maintenance of households. Having no vested interest in a common production they are not united by any other economic interest.<sup>4</sup>

Another change in family roles affected by wage labor concerned age roles. In wage labor, older men were discriminated against and younger men were usually more favored. Hence, in receiving wages, younger men tended to command more respect and status than the older men who were not working at all. Such a situation created some amount of tension and conflict between the young and the old.

The BFD planners recognized the "well-known" irregularity of the Balugas when it came to wage labor, and they devised a strategy to adjust the project accordingly. The project was operated on a contractual basis. Workers were paid for the amount of work they had accomplished for each phase of project operation. With this arrangement, the management foresaw that the Balugas could join the project without severely disrupting their rhythm of life. The Balugas could still go off once in a while, roam around the mountain, work on their kaingin, go fishing, hunting, gathering and visiting their relatives. The management also knew that with this arrangement they would not have a hard time in following up the Balugas and in seeing to it that they reported for work regularly. Strict supervision was not necessary and the Balugas were left free to decide when to work.

The Balugas, like other minorities, are a "leisure" people. Their lifestyle could perhaps be traced to a pattern of traditional economic subsistence, days and weeks of gathering, hunting, fishing. When they had enough food, they rested and consumed the food they had. One Baluga said,

Nuong araw ang mga Baluga ay kain ng kain buong araw. Walang oras ng pagkain. Kung maubos ang pagkain maghahanap na naman sila.

(In former days the Balugas just eat the whole day, there is no set time for meals. When there is no more food left, they go off again to look for more.)

Thus, the Balugas had no notion of working hard in order to save for the future. The future would take care of itself. There was no need to gather more than they could consume since nature preserved the food well and they could easily gather more.

This pattern of behavior (not to be misinterpreted as "laziness")

4. Herber Ian Hogbin, *Social Change* (London: Fostry Drury Lane, 1958), p.48.

augured well for the contractual nature of the FARP as the Balugas could do their work leisurely without being pressured. Hence, when comparing the FARP with the regular reforestation work where workers are hired on a daily wage basis, a Baluga man observed:

Sa Dangas (regular reforestation project) sisigawan ka ng mga "watchers." Masyadong mabagsik sa trabaho. Hindi makatayo ng dalawang minuto na walang ginagawa, aapurahin ka. Pero sa "Family Approach," hindi sila masyadong mabagsik sa trabaho. Mas gusto namin ang ganun, hindi mabagsik sa trabaho.

(In the regular reforestation project, they yell at us and rush to us to finish the work. One cannot even stand for two minutes without doing anything. In the Family Approach however, they are not very strict and we prefer it that way.)

Thus, in the nearby regular reforestation project, the Balugas complained that the watchers treated them virtually like slaves. This was one feature where the Family Approach had an edge over the regular project. The Family Approach, because of its contractual nature, did not pressure workers to accomplish a certain amount of work.

The FARP started out in the right direction in its effort to integrate itself with the characteristic behavior of the people through the family approach and contractual nature of the project. However, the family approach did not work out as planned. Moreover, feedback from a BFD official indicated that it was precisely the seminomadic trait of the Balugas that slowed down the operation and caused much difficulty in the Project. The feedback showed that a contractual nature was more suited to a group of "sedentary" people already engaged in a permanent and main livelihood. In this case the project could very well serve as a "sideline job" where people could easily spend their extra time and augment their income. In Nabuklod, however, the Balugas have no permanent occupation in the area. They disappear for weeks or months looking for some means of livelihood in other areas. Hence, there was a great tendency to neglect their responsibilities in the project as they had to work first for their everyday survival. And this was exactly the reason why the contractual mode of payment did not succeed. Because of the heavy drop-outs and irregularity of the Balugas, full responsibility for the assigned lots could not be entrusted to them. This situation

forced the staff to transform the project into a daily wage system, meaning that the workers were paid based on the number of days they reported for work and no longer on the amount of work performed or accomplished. Nevertheless, wages were still released quarterly.

However, based on a general assessment made on FARP projects in general, the BFD also reported several advantages accruing to them as a result of the contractual mode of payment. These were: 1) with its contractual nature, the FARP project involved less supervision on the part of the government because most of the responsibilities have been entrusted to the families; and 2) the average cost of establishing a hectare of plantation was lower than the rate under the present system of hiring laborers (the cost of planting a hectare in the FARP is ₱3,600.00 while in the daily wage system, it is ₱4,580.00).

#### DID THE PROJECT FACILITATE COMMUNICATION?

When the BFD officials introduced the project, no consultation with the Balugas took place. Rather, the project, as pre-planned in the Central Office, was "imposed" on the people. The Balugas, in fact, did not seem to have fully understood several provisions of the project.

But in all fairness, one attempt was made to encourage participation. The project staff, for instance, utilized the Barangay Captain, also a Baluga, to recruit project participants. This appeared to have paid off as thirty-three Balugas signed up for the project, though it was learned later that the Kapitan was able to convince many to join because he promised many benefits which were really not part of the project. On another occasion, the staff again employed the Kapitan as the *capatas* (foreman/overseer) in the project. The staff hoped that with the Kapitan at the helm, the Balugas would be more inclined to comply with the regulation. The Balugas alleged that to motivate the Kapitan, the staff was very lenient with him when it came to his work in the plantation area. Others reported that the Kapitan got paid even if he did not work. When the supposed benefits, as allegedly promised by the Kapitan, did not materialize and wage payments were very much delayed, many started to blame the Kapitan for convincing them to join the project. The Kapitan became defen-

sive about it and tried to suppress the people's complaints. But he was unable to do anything when the Balugas started to drop out of the project.

The staff appeared to overestimate the role of the Barangay Captain in the reservation. A Barangay Captain or the whole barangay local government for that matter was a superficially imposed political structure in the Baluga culture. In contrast, the Balugas did not have a history of an over-all authority. They used to live in small bands and lead lives independent of other bands. Family heads or elders in the band were recognized as informal leaders of that band. These bands were not even united as a single political unit. Today, the Balugas appear to acquiesce to authority, especially government authority. But this is a result of past negative experiences where they learned they were helpless in face of the government authority and therefore had to submit out of fear.

From the moment of its inception, the project suffered many setbacks as a result of miscommunication. The people thought, for example, that by signing the labor contract with the project, they would each be entitled to receive a carabao, a weekly ration of rice, and land of their own. The BFD denied that they ever promised any of these. When the supposed "promises" were not fulfilled, the people got demoralized and were frustrated.

Similarly, the project provided that periodic meetings between the local FARP staff and the Balugas be held to discuss prevailing problems regarding the implementation. Such follow-up meetings were never held. When asked why such meetings were never held, the BFD staff claimed that it was too difficult to call the Balugas for meetings.

Furthermore, it seemed that the Balugas were hesitant to voice out their complaints and were sometimes indifferent to authority. They knew too well, based on past experiences, that the government was too powerful to yield to their demands. Some were actually afraid to express their opinions as they had seen the military pick up people who were critical of the government.

Moreover, the Balugas have had occasions to doubt the trustworthiness of some BFD men. The Balugas alleged that some BFD personnel had encouraged them to give bribes in exchange for favors, e.g. putting on record that the Balugas reported for work even if they did not. A Baluga even expressed his appre-

hension that they might be receiving lesser wages than they were supposed to receive. Another one discovered that the name of his father who used to work in the project continued to appear on the payroll list. Also, a later investigation revealed that the project staff did not report the dropouts to the Central Office. It seems that the staff continued to submit the original payroll list even as they hired and paid another set of workers. Suspicions like these added to the apathy and the indifference of the Balugas in expressing their opinions and complaints to the project staff. Such apathy was taken by the staff as a "given" and no further attempt was made to reach out to the people and correct the situation.

On another level, communication between the local project staff and the central office remained weak. Glaring evidence of this was the fact that the Central Office was not even informed of the almost 80 percent dropout rate of participants in Nabuklod. On many occasions the Central Office, with negligible success, had nagged the local project personnel to submit their inventory earlier. On the other hand, the local project staff complained of the delay of papers in the Central Office because of red tape.

Although the staff neither established communication channels adequately with the people nor allowed much of people's participation, it was flexible enough in some instances to change original plans in response to particular situations of the beneficiaries. One was in connection with the responsibility of raising the seedlings. The original design of the FARP called for the participants to undertake the responsibility of raising seedlings in their own backyards. When this arrangement did not work out, the staff recognized that the Balugas could not be relied upon to raise their own seedlings. The project staff decided to plant the seedlings themselves.

There are cultural reasons for the failure of the seedlings sub-project. To the lowlanders, the Balugas cannot be trusted to fulfill their promises, and as such are undependable. But this pattern of behavior can perhaps be traced to the Baluga's history. The Balugas have been nomadic people, engaged in slash and burn agriculture, and they tend to resist any imposition of obligation or argumentation. They may try to meet some obligations but not to the extent of burdening themselves too much.

But there remained one major need which the BFD's "decision-

making process" proved inadequate to meet. The expressed need was to be paid monthly and on time. The staff, however, failed to take this problem seriously and refused to acknowledge the possibility that they could do something to revise their manner of payment in accordance with the people's demands. In fact, in their early assessment of all FARP projects in the Philippines, the FARP staff stated that the quarterly payment system was advantageous because "unnecessary delays in the monthly payment of services rendered by families can be minimized if not totally avoided by scheduling the payments in installment periods instead of the usual monthly system." However, what made things worse, was that even with the quarterly payments, unnecessary delays were still being incurred.

On the possibility of making monthly payments, one BFD official said that a recommendation to this effect "seemed" to have been made, although no action was taken. The official also did not seem to expect any action on the recommendation in the immediate future.

On the release of payments on time, several BFD personnel did not seem to see any difficulty in revising the procedures so as to effect a more timely release of payments. But no action followed this belief and the procedures remained unchanged. Obviously, something seemed to be amiss in the decision-making process. Everybody seemed to recognize the problem and the necessity for correcting it, and yet nobody took the initiative or made a move to correct the situation.

The Balugas also demanded that if monthly payments were really impossible, at least they be given an adequate supply of rice every week to sustain them until they got their payments. Again, no action was taken to meet this request effectively.

#### DID THE ORGANIZATIONAL SET-UP MEET THE TASK REQUIREMENTS?

The organizational set-up of the Bureau of Forest Development did not seem to have helped much to fulfill the FARP's requirements. For one, proper remuneration of workers was badly neglected. This neglect can be traced to the organizational set-up which blocked the effective implementation of the project. The first difficulty was that the budget allocation for the FARP was,

after seven years of operation, still operating on a quarterly basis instead of the usual "comprehensive system" whereby the budget for particular projects is released at the beginning of each fiscal year. When asked for the reason why the FARP never adopted a comprehensive system, one BFD official replied that there had been a recommendation to that effect. But again, no action was forthcoming.

When asked if BFD employees could prepare the necessary papers ahead of time so that payments could reach the Balugas on time, several replies were given. First, some BFD personnel said that the papers could be prepared earlier. If an early release was possible, why did they have to delay the papers? A BFD official replied that they did not know the money failed to reach the people on time. Thinking that everything was in order, they did not bother to change their usual operation. Second, the clerk-in-charge confided that oftentimes, when he tried to prepare the release papers earlier than the usual time, he was told to prepare them later. Third, and because of some "political reasons," some "juggling of funds" within the Ministry of Natural Resources took place and so the papers had to be delayed pending further instructions on adjustments to be made.

Several reasons were also given why there was no chance to speed up the release of papers once it was initially worked out in the Reforestation Division. Any initiatives of employees to follow up papers for example, were looked upon with suspicion. One clerk remarked, "Others might suspect that I have a vested interest here if I help to follow up the papers." Another one said, "My boss told me I had no business following up papers. It was the job of the liaison officer and not mine."

Interviews conducted in the BFD office in Quezon City showed that nobody seemed able to locate where the "buck" stops. When the researcher tried to trace why the release papers were getting bogged down, she was referred from one office to another with one section laying the blame on another section. The BFD local project in Nabuklod laid the blame on the Central Office, while the Central Office claimed that perhaps the Regional or the District Office shared a bigger part of the blame.

When the possibility of revision of operational procedures was presented in order to solve the recurring delay of wages, some reiterated that nothing could be done about it as it was part of

the whole system. Those who had innovative ideas were willing to discuss possibilities for change. Later, however, these people balked, politely referred the researcher to another office, and begged not to be quoted.

#### WAS LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVE?

The local project staff in charge of the FARP in Nabuklod seemed to have no clear grasp of the nature and objectives of the project. And at least in the beginning, one said he was not even clear on the mode of payment of the project.

With reference to the project's objectives, it appeared that the main objectives as perceived by the staff were mainly to achieve their target goal of reforesting at least 100 hectares of denuded forest land. This objective overrode others such as the amelioration of the people's living conditions. Hence, when twenty-six participants dropped out of the project, the staff did not think it important enough to report it to the Central Office. They claimed there was no need to do so since by hiring daily wage workers they were still assured the project could reach the target goal on time.

The project staff also seemed to have had only a vague awareness of their roles and functions in the achievement of the overall objectives of the program. They went to the area irregularly and stayed only for a few days a week. Even a seminar or training program for participating families never materialized. The agriculturist assigned to instruct the people on agricultural techniques claimed that it could not be pursued as the people were not interested. The district officer-in-charge of the FARP seldom visited the area. The assessor from the regional and central office only looked into the number of hectares reforested without bothering about conditions of the workers, the manner of payment or the relationship of the personnel with the people.

As a whole, the BFD project personnel in the area relied heavily on the program's blueprint. Thus, when confronted with the demands of the people that went against the "blueprint," they always fell back on "that-was-not-part-of-the-Program" replies. Furthermore, they did not receive much direction on how they could successfully achieve the project's objectives given the limitations of the setting.

## DID THE POLICIES ACCORD WITH THE TASK REQUIREMENTS?

The actual operating policies of the project seemed to contradict the task requirements of the project. For one, the project was originally planned to be participatory in nature and yet as shown, people's participation was very limited. Some efforts toward participation were made but only to favor the organization itself and not the people. Second, the task requirement to look into the welfare of the people was virtually negated by organizational policy, contained in Section 53 of the Revised Forestry Code, which states:

Kaingeros, squatters, cultural minorities and other occupants shall, whenever the best land use of the area so demands as determined by the Director, *be ejected and relocated* to the nearest accessible government resettlement.

This provision, which gives direction to all operating policies of the project reflects a particular ideology which goes against people's participation. This contradiction between the avowed objective of assisting people and the detrimental policy of ejecting people "whenever the best land use of the area so demands" revealed itself in the daily operation of the project, and the Balugas were quick to perceive what Korten calls the "hidden agenda."<sup>5</sup> They felt that after reforesting the area, the government would eventually eject them. Although the BFD men assured the people that they would not be ejected, and the trees would really belong to them later, the people remained skeptical. The Balugas felt that the project did not really intend to help them improve their lives. They suspected that the project was mainly interested in hiring cheap labor to reforest the denuded land.

When asked about the possibility of ejection, a local officer replied that the reforested area could only be opened to loggers after fifty years. Hence, there was no immediate possibility of ejection. Another official nonchalantly replied, "Don't worry if ever they are ejected, they would merely be resettled in other government land. They will not be abandoned." These attitudes and policies suggest a greater priority placed on the good of the country over that of the good of local communities.

5. Korten, "Community Organization."

## RAMIFICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

Aside from the issues considered thus far, other unintended and unanticipated effects that resulted from project operation also deserve attention. Such effects either reinforced existing structures or created new situations which the Baluga culture had no definite way to handle.

Basically, the Baluga society is an egalitarian society. Deprivation, when it occurs is not so greatly felt as everyone more or less shares the same condition. If somebody has the "misfortune" of accumulating more wealth than another, it is simply worked out through levelling mechanisms like sharing or gift-giving.

The establishment of the project introduced the practice of wage labor and the beginning of capital-labor relationship. The government represented the capital and the Balugas, the labor. This relationship formed a differentiation in an otherwise egalitarian society such that the Baluga participants became a distinct class of wage laborers dependent on capital.

Working for somebody has always been humiliating for the Balugas. Before the establishment of the project, the Balugas worked as farm or domestic helpers for the Pampango lowlanders, especially during dry season when they had no other means of livelihood. A Baluga informant, described his experience of working for a lowlander family.

Ang makipagtrabaho sa mga Kapampangan ay nakakahiya, para kang alila. Pagkatapos ng trabaho, pakakanin at bibigyan ng isang gantang bigas. Hindi ba 'yan parang alila? Nakakahiya.

(Working for the lowlanders is very humiliating. One feels like a slave. After work, they give you a meal and pay you a ganta of rice. It is very embarrassing. Isn't that being like a slave?)

The Balugas were sensitive to any sign of condescension from the lowlanders. Having been independent and free in the past, they resisted anything that would force them to become dependent on others. Necessity, however led some to work for others, and this they did grudgingly.

Because of their involvement in the project, the Balugas learned to buy goods on credit from the Pampango merchants in the area. Normally, goods were sold in the village at almost double their market price. When these goods were bought on credit, the price was again doubled by the merchants. The delayed payments and

the inability of the Balugas to compute their salaries, or budget their expenses, meant that the Balugas stayed perpetually in debt. Creditors or traders (usually Pampangos) exploited this and created further tensions in an already strained relationship. For example, Balugas who managed to raise some produce were forced to sell it to their creditors (who were also merchants) as payment for their debts. In these transactions, the creditors dictated their prices. Meanwhile, the merchants, knowing that the Balugas were already receiving income from the project, introduced other consumer goods in the village, and encouraged the Balugas to buy them. This, plus the increasing contact with townspeople and with the market, markedly increased the Balugas' expectations which their meager salary could not meet.

Wage labor rendered the Balugas dependent on an outside "decision-center." They became practically at the mercy of the bureaucratic structures of the Bureau of Forest Development. Rotstein suggests that in such a situation there is an "emergence of remote decision-centers centralizing power over life and death issues in the hands of narrow technical elites."<sup>6</sup> Such dependence on an outside decision-center also replaced much of the traditional dependence of the Balugas on patrons. Moreover, this new type of dependence seemed to be

... less tolerable than the old as the peasant has even fewer means of pressing his claims than he did within the traditional institutional framework. His loyalty to the new system is understandably limited.<sup>7</sup>

In their precapitalist subsistence economy, however, the Balugas were independent producers who were in control of their own lives and production. They were free to make decisions for themselves and did not have to submit to any outside power. They chose their own crops, decided how much to produce, when to stop working, and when to rest. Such a transition from independence to almost total dependency in their work and in their lives seemed almost traumatic for the Balugas, especially since such dependence was based on very vague terms.

Although the Balugas claimed preference for their kaingins and could still manage to till them while working in the project, many among the younger people (from age twenty below) were begin-

6. Abraham Rotstein, *Beyond Industrial Growth* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

7. Korten, "Community Organization," p. 43.

ning to be alienated from their traditional means of work. With the increasing work opportunity in the reforestation projects or in the town, with an education that alienated them from their traditional type of work, and the decreasing yield of a kaingin, many young people started shying away from working in their kaingin. With all these it could be predicted that the subsistence economy would soon deteriorate. Already, food production in the area had started to dwindle, predisposing the Balugas to purchase food from the lowland merchants and from the town market. This change led to a modification of their diet and further resulted in a deterioration of the level of nutrition of the people, as evident in the prevalence of sickness among the people, especially among children.

The data suggest that poverty among the Balugas did not so much result from their lack of jobs, but seemingly from the very exploitation of those who had access to power — the lowlander opportunists, the patrons, landlords, merchants, moneylenders, military and government officials. The FARP ignored or failed to diagnose properly the basic root of the Balugas' poverty. They perceived the Balugas to be an isolated entity detached from the wider society while they were becoming very much a part of it. The project, therefore, primarily focused on individual promotion, that is, providing opportunities for income for several families without "touching" the structures of inequality existing in their external relationships with lowlanders.

## CONCLUSION

In an operational sense, the Planning and Evaluation Committee of the BFD considered the FARP in Nabuklod successful as the project was able to plant 90 out of the target goal of 100 hectares. Furthermore, the 74 percent survival rate of the trees planted was considered satisfactory compared to other reforestation projects in the country. According to the BFD, the only weakness of the project was its deviation from its original contractual basis to a daily wage basis, a deviation which cost the BFD an additional expense of ₱1,500.00 per hectare or a total of ₱135,000.00.

But how did the FARP fare relative to the sociological and anthropological factors involved? Herein lies the core of this

assessment study. Indicators for such assessment have been provided as follows: sensitivity to felt needs of people, participation of people in planning, implementation and evaluation of the program, utilization of the local culture in the implementation of the program, adoption of a bottom-up program, competent leadership, and the "fit" of policies to task requirements.

As the previous discussion indicated, the Project did not fare very well in all the above indicators. For one, the program did not actually meet the real need of the people. It seemed to solve the need for more income, but actually reinforced the structures which breed poverty. People's participation and the utilization of local culture were pursued in some limited way but it turned out to be self-serving strategies which were more intended to redound to the benefits of the Project and not the people. The Project was a heavily top-down arrangement leaving little space for the creativity of the people to be used. Thus, while the Project generated some temporary benefits like an increase of income, it also quite ironically, led the people to greater dependency and exploitation.