Taking Care of the Casualties of Conservation

Improving Livelihoods on Sibuyan Island, Philippines

- An Asian Galapagos
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Forests cover nearly 70 percent of the small Philippine island of Sibuyan. Quite exceptional in a country where deforestation continues at break-neck speed, and 60 percent of all endemic flora has gone extinct. Small wonder then that a large part of Sibuyan has been declared a protected area. But the island is also densely populated, and many people live off the forest, by logging, clearing plots for agriculture, and gathering firewood and other essentials. While the national park service is trying to discourage the islanders from engaging in these activities, WWF Philippines is looking into alternative livelihoods for these casualties of conservation.

‘If we fail in development, we will fail in conservation’

The Philippines probably plays host to more environmental NGOs than any other country in Asia, yet hardly any of them focus on sustainable development as a way of protecting nature. WWF Philippines does - but this creates an image problem for an organisation mainly associated with the conservation of protected animals.

BUREAU M&O

Project staff meeting at KKP Sibuyan’s HQ

Organising credit schemes and training-courses in silkworm rearing or mango production; developing unused land into productive schemes through joint ventures with local landowners — these are not exactly the activities one expects from a nature conservation organisation. On the small island of Sibuyan, however, local people have grown accustomed to this approach to conservation. Here WWF Philippines runs a project with the informative title ‘Protecting the Biodiversity of Mt Guiting-Guiting through the Development of Sustainable Community Livelihood Enterprises’. As the title suggests, unlike most WWF projects world-wide, this one is not about training guards or educating local people - on Sibuyan these tasks have been performed by a competent government agency in recent years. What the WWF does instead is alleviate the negative economic effects of nature protection for the islanders - ultimately for the good of the park.

For Romeo B. Trono, the energetic vice-president for conservation and field operations of WWF Philippines (which is locally known as *Kabang Kalikasan ng Pilipinas* - KKP), there is nothing strange in allowing the government to concentrate on conservation while his organisation acts as a ‘mere’ development agency. ‘Integrating development and conservation efforts is a very suitable and successful approach in the Philippines. For us, the Sibuyan project is a good example of the potential of co-operation between an NGO, a foreign donor and the government.’

But, Trono admits, KKP’s approach creates an image problem for an organisation popularly perceived as being concerned with protecting endangered species. A strengthened communications department is now spreading the message that the Philippine nature organisation has wider concerns. Trono: ‘We assist national and local government, as well as NGOs, in performing sustainable development and conservation. We also stimulate research, capacity building, and provide training. Community-based resource management is one of our main activities.’

Trono worked for many years with the governmental Department of the Environment and National Resources - DENR. He believes that the failure of many environmental organisations in the country - including his former employer - to give greater focus to communities ‘is a main cause of their many failures and the angry reactions they provoke, at least where protection is concerned.’

Despite the government’s not so favourable attitude to sustainable development, KKP does not believe in antagonising national or local politicians. This is partly due to the lessons Trono has learned during twenty years of experience in environmental work in the country. ‘I have received death threats, I have been told that I would be sent home in a coffin, etc. So I learned not to fight politicians, unless there is no other way. It’s better to see who wins the election and then approach him or her.’

The KKP shares his belief in working with the people in power instead of fighting them. Trono: ‘We try to educate them, to have them see situations. And if they do not want this, we will work through the communities. Maybe *they* can convince them by their activities.’

‘You have to realise,’ Trono emphasises, ‘that local government in the Philippines is very powerful. If a mayor in a certain area doesn’t agree with our work, we have a big problem. The conservation project on Sibuyan depends on the government for law enforcement. If there is no proper enforcement, if there is no political will or a lack of resources to protect the area, the project is doomed to fail.’ ▲

IVAN SARENAS

Rice fields, San Fernando

The subtle ruling of the saw-toothed mountain

An Asian Galapagos?

Except for its coast, most of Sibuyan is steep. Rather to its human inhabitants' annoyance, as it places large tracts of land out of reach or makes them otherwise useless. Conservationists rejoice.

To anyone approaching Sibuyan, Mt Guiting-Guiting's domination of the place seems obvious. The island would not exist if seismic forces had not pushed up the earth to create the 2,000-metre-plus giant, which surely must be visible from nearly any spot on the island.

In point of fact, it is not. In spite of its towering presence, Guiting-Guiting rules in quite subtle a manner. Its peak, dead in the middle of the kidney-shaped island, is a rare sight for most of the coastal dwellers. It hides behind an escort of lower tops, such as aptly named Deception Peak. And even those islanders who routinely sail the nearby waters, such as the numerous fishermen, cannot count on Guiting-Guiting's overt company, since it is often shrouded in clouds.

The overwhelming majority of Sibuyanons have never been on very intimate terms with the mountain. They lived, and continue to live, on the narrow plains surrounding the foothills. And though they have always gone inland to reap the fruits of the forest, much of the terrain was steep and rugged enough to keep them from taking home more than could regrow in between their visits - or so it did until recent times. As a result, Sibuyan is among very few Philippine

BUREAU M & O

The indigenous people of Sibuyan normally refer to themselves as Tagabukid (literally meaning 'People from the Mountain')

islands not altogether denuded of their dense forest cover; nearly three quarters of its area is forest land. Even by its very name, the 'saw-toothed' mountain (the meaning of the word *guiting-guiting*) seems to insinuate that the jagged ridge will not tolerate competing saws.

This is not to say that Sibuyan is some sort of unspoiled paradise. With almost 50,000 people perched on nearly as many hectares, no square metre has remained untouched. An estimated ninety percent of the inhabitants live within five kilometres of the seashore. Three small towns and dozens of *barangays* (villages) line the shore, with a fair number of *sitios* (hamlets) thrown in for good measure. As a result, this rural area has a higher population density than the typical green suburb in a wealthy city.

In greenness, too, it beats them. With an annual 2,000 mm. of rain and good soil, Sibuyan is the sort of place where growing crops is easier than keeping vegetation in check. Though no natural forest is left in the lowlands, palm trees, fruit trees, shrubs and home gardens lend it a thoroughly lush appearance, making it hard to believe that anybody could go hungry in the midst of these bounties. In some parts, bright green paddy fields ploughed by *carabao* (buffaloes) shiny with wet mud add to this image of exuberance.

Going inland a tree family called *dipterocarps*, represented here by seven different members, is predominant, as in most of South East Asia. They are typically tall, thick and straight - logger's dreams. Over the past decades, whatever specimens were unlucky enough to be within easy reach of men armed with chainsaws were felled and hauled to the coast. The heavy wooden furniture, beautifully carved in local workshops, is found in all households that can afford it. In the forest, hauling-tracks bear witness to the fact that the logging continues.

Loggers are not the only ones to live off the forest. Others stroll the woods gathering honey, vines, herbs, sticks or firewood. Small bands of indigenous people used to practice swidden agriculture, burning down a patch, growing crops for one or two seasons and then moving on, leaving the plot for the forest to reclaim.

Fully fifty percent of Sibuyan's landmass is covered by forest termed secondary, which is generally interspersed with fields, permanent or swidden. Some of it is well on the way to regeneration and has maintained or regained most of its original diversity of species. Other bits have gone most of the way towards conversion to other land uses, and can be considered irretrievably lost.

On the other hand, 23 percent of the island is defined as primary forest. Most of this is a pear-shaped area around the highest mountaintop, with another, much smaller patch surrounding Mt Nailog in the west. Here, in these forests, is where Sibuyan's natural riches find their fullest expression. Advocates of Mt. Guiting-Guiting claim that its plant diversity even surpasses that of other high-diversity places in

the Philippines, leading some of them to speak of 'the Galapagos of Asia'. Exact figures on numbers of total plant species are hard to give, as biologists stumble upon species yet unidentified by the scientific community. In one study, the National Museum identified 1,551 trees in a single hectare. Of the 123 species of these trees, 54 are found only on the island. Figures such as this raise Sibuyan's status as a conservation priority.

Wildlife, and especially birdlife, is much richer than one suspects at first, just touring the coast. In birds alone, there are 131 species. At high altitude diversity is lower, but the species occurring there are more distinctive. Birds share the skies with ten species of fruit bats, including one that is as yet undescribed. On the ground, there is a whole range of reptiles and mammals, including several endemic geckoes and endemic rodents. Macaques are common, even near the villages.

Sibuyan's highlands well deserve to be preserved. Therefore, in February 1996, the Philippine government proclaimed a 16,000-hectare Natural Park (equivalent to the IUCN category of National Park), covering all of the primary and part of the secondary forest. (No such status was granted to the seas around the island, in spite of there equally valuable, species-rich coral reefs and mangroves.) ▲

In 1992, Congress in the Philippines enacted a new law, known as the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act, to rebuild the deteriorated national park system. In the following years, the national government showed an interest in conserving centres of biodiversity. Ten priority sites were identified to become part of a Global Environment Fund-financed nation-wide chain of protected areas. Eight more sites, including one on the island of Sibuyan, were included in a follow-up scheme, funded by the European Union.

One of the smaller inhabited islands of the Philippines, Sibuyan is located at the very heart of the archipelago. Politically, it belongs to Romblon, one of the Philippines' 72 provinces; biologically, it is part of the Western Visayas region. Virtually all transport to and from Sibuyan is by ship. Passenger services link the island to the main island of Luzon four times a week. Smaller ships ply between the nearby islands more frequently.

Burnt mangroves, Cajidiocan

A boom cut short

A naive visitor from Manila or an industrialised country might consider Sibuyan a poor place. According to standard economic indicators, they would be right. Yet, for a while, the island was filled with a sense of vibrancy, of burgeoning economic opportunities. Then the park was proclaimed.

By the looks of it, Sibuyan was doing fine during much of the nineties. Money was pouring into the local economy from Masbate. The mines on the neighbouring island needed a constant flow of timber to support their galleries, and Sibuyan was among the few remaining sources. True enough, logging had been banned here since 1996, nominally cutting off a source of income those entire communities relied upon. However, personnel of both DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) and the Coast Guard were allegedly involved in the illegal trade. Whenever orders came from Masbate, contractors would easily find sufficient men eager to oblige by selecting and marking good trees, felling them, hauling the timber to the coast, taking it aboard their tiny craft and transporting it to the big boat waiting off the coast.

Money was good. One former logger in the settlement of Cross Country, who was interviewed by an anthropologist, thought back wistfully to those days, recalling that he could earn as much as 25,000 pesos a month - more than the average yearly cash income in this part of the Philippines. The pay for haulers was much less, but still attractive for poor upland dwellers.

Apart from the Masbate mines, there was also some local demand, especially from Sibuyan's furniture workshops, which numbered around a hundred. These fine craftsmen needed a great deal of timber for their solid, heavy designs, inherited from Spanish colonial times.

While the logging bonanza brought wealth to some, other sources of income were steady. Paddy fields and coconut plantations remained as before, as did remittances from overseas relatives, traditionally an important resource for many Philippine families. People also continued to collect products of the forests and the shore, such as honey, firewood, seaweed, sea cucumbers and shells. Nito and other thicker vines were collected to be woven into baskets, plates and several ornamental objects, which found a ready market in Manila and even abroad, while sticks were collected to make fences. New opportunities were quickly seized upon. As soon as a demand for tiger grass emerged, some started gathering and selling it to broom makers.

One could tell the island was in an economic upswing; by big things - more cars, more brick houses - and by small - more bicycles and other consumer goods.

The only source of livelihood that ran into trouble was swidden agriculture. The indigenous uplanders were no longer allowed to clear their temporary plots. Unlike loggers, they could not resort to hit-and-run practices; much less could they afford to bribe officials. So it was the very poorest group that was hardest hit by the logging ban - except that many of them were involved in logging, too.

One important source of cash has not been mentioned yet: the fishery. For anyone travelling around Sibuyan, this looked like a low-tech, low-impact activity. Most fishermen rowed their small boats just a short distance out of shore and cast their nets there. No outboard motors, no illegal nets, no significant discards; in a word, a fishery as sustainable as anyone could hope for.

However, there were two details to puzzle the visitor, apparently unrelated to each other or to the industry under inspection. Firstly, a noticeable

number of men in the coastal villages had only one arm, or none at all. And secondly, the island's peace was at times interrupted by a muffled far-away bang.

The explanation, and link between it all, was dynamite. While the small artisanal fishermen landed their modest catches, their colleagues with bigger, motorised craft blasted away on the reefs off-shore, illegally killing and netting fish in far greater numbers, and demolishing the beautiful coral reefs in the process. Originally, the source of the dynamite was the Masbate mines, but Sibuyan fishermen had long mastered the technique of making their own explosives from commercial fertiliser. However, both aboard the ships and in the home industry, accidents would happen - hence the one-armed men. It is also claimed that the fishing village of Otod owes its name to this dangerous practice - the word means 'cut off' in the local language.

However, the victims were just a small unlucky minority. Most men handled the dynamite more skillfully and were amply rewarded for the risk they took - their income made the traditional in-shore fishermen look like suckers.

Pouring cyanide was another popular fishing method. It was mainly practised for catching ornamental fishes, but occasionally fish they had bought in the market would poison a consumer or two and they would die.

Around 1990, with the island economy at a modest level but set for growth, a new breed of dynamic mayors took charge of the three municipalities. The mayors revived a dormant island-wide co-operation forum, and took a number of initiatives, most of them applauded by their voters. Telecommunication facilities, practically non-existent before, were much improved. Some stretches of the road around the islands were cemented at a time when the number of vehicles, particularly motorised tricycles, sharply increased. One part was even sufficiently broadened and patched up occasionally to serve as an improvised air strip. Electricity supply was extended to 20 hours a day in 1998 (but stopped after 3 months. It started again in 2001. Both were election years....) A new pier was built in the town of Cajidiocan. Most of this was financed from central government or foreign funds.

Along with modern infrastructure, the mayors also introduced some new terminology: *sustainable development, conservation of biodiversity, protection of the natural resource base.* Must be the political jargon of the day, the islanders thought tolerantly, and did not pay much attention.

To their surprise, however, the new words turned out to have practical significance. The three mayors set out on a crusade against Sibuyan's money-makers, logging and blast fishing. Of course, these had been illegal for some time, but who bothered? Now, all of a sudden, the coast guard started patrolling the shores and seas of Magdiwang and Cajidiocan, announcing it would file a case against anyone caught using dynamite. Also the authorities started confiscating sawn lumber whenever they chanced upon it. They advertised the change of policy, too: signboards sprang up all over the place, prompting people to protect the forest, be planters, not loggers and similar slogans. Financed from outside the island, of course, people murmured, and right they were.

As the notices were on coconut wood, they rotted soon enough. But more was to come. In 1996, a protected area was officially proclaimed - again on the mayors' initiative. One year later, a national park authority (National Integrated Protected Area Programme, NIPAP), entered in full force, building an office and hiring staff, bringing in a Land Rover and deploying a little armada of motorcycles and a dozen park guards - some of them former loggers. That was when people economically dependent on timber became concerned. From now on, their source of livelihood, of wealth even, was under serious threat.

Nothing but don'ts

And it was not just the loggers. Rumour had it that NIPAP would not allow anything to be collected in the park. No sticks, no vines, no vegetables, no honey, no nothing. As one vine-weaver put it: 'With the protected area, there's nothing but don'ts.'

This time, nearly everybody was affected, and many were hit hard. For no matter how well Sibuyan had been doing for a number of years, and no matter how fertile the place was, many people's livelihood was quite precarious, depending as it did on free, common resources - exactly the resources they were now barred from using. Especially in the highlands, people had little to fall back on. Many continued much as before; some because they would not face a severe decrease in their - usually modest - incomes, others because the alternative was starvation. Some of those who have not continued as before have moved on to activities that are hardly less harmful. Since the mangrove forest is not part of the protected area, logging seems to be on the increase there. Yet, it would be unfair to think of them as environmental vandals. Actually, there was some awareness of environmental degradation. People were worried by increasing floods, the heat of the midday sun becoming more intense, forest products becoming scarcer, and they had half an idea that logging and other forms of exploitation were to blame. Also, an increasing number of the island's 65 rivers were running dry when the rainy season was over - which was ironic, as in recent years many bridges had been built to make the road an all-weather facility. As one islander sharply remarked: 'Bridge there is, river no more.'

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Nails on the road

In Sibuyan, with thousands of people living at close quarters but without local news media, rumours are quick to spread and hard to correct. Anybody threatening powerful vested interests is likely to discover just how dangerous this grapevine can be when manipulated by experts. Some elected officials openly supporting the protected area paid the price by losing the elections, while the governmental agency NIPAP - in charge of enforcing conservation - struggles with a negative image.

The loggers' willingness to give up their destructive practices on Sibuyan is not due to the activities of the KKP, but to NIPAP. Twelve rangers - based at three guard posts - patrol the forests, monitoring all illicit activities, especially timber poaching. In some parts of the island it is unusual to encounter anything illegal, but elsewhere, for instance in España - near the project's model farm - there's a lot more to keep them busy. Often they hear chainsaws and go in search of the source of the noise, or they chance upon piles of fresh logs, waiting to be hauled. In either case, the NIPAP guards make a point of hauling the timber themselves. Confiscation is seen as a good way to hit the timber contractors economically.

'We give the owner three weeks to reclaim the timber,' forester and Protected Area Superintendent Manuel Romero explains at the agency's Sibuyan headquarters . 'Then it will be sold.' The success of NIPAP's activities can be seen in the sharp drop in confiscated lumber in recent years. 'Illegal logging has not yet completely stopped,' Romero says, 'but we are pretty sure it has almost completely disappeared from primeval forests. Only secondary quality timber remains. This is used for construction and furniture, and is mostly extracted from private lands. But timber export is impossible nowadays.'

The NIPAP superintendent thinks there are still some five organised groups on the island which are involved in logging activities. 'They are not very active, but they are monitoring us, just as we do them. Mostly they work on Sundays, in the night, when there is least chance of being caught.' The employers have virtually no chance of being caught, Romero admits. 'For us it is almost impossible to catch the big fish. These capitalists will stay out of the way, they do not get their hands dirty. Which means we cannot prove anything, although we have a pretty good idea who they are. The ones which are caught are the poor guys. They have to pay the fines.'

The effects of NIPAP's crackdown on logging should not be underestimated. In one of the surveys conducted by the KKP at an early stage of their work, two families who continued logging after the 1986 ban were interviewed. 'My family depended on me for their daily needs,' one man said. 'It was my responsibility to fulfil them and selling lumber was the only way I knew to do it. The money it brought in was worth all the risks I took.'

Another man was not so lucky. His pile of logs was found and confiscated. 'We pleaded with them to return them,' the logger's wife related, 'but they wouldn't. We were to buy rice and send some money to our children who are studying in Manila. Instead of earning some money, we have ended up with a debt, because the buyer of the timber had forwarded us 2,000 pesos. We have no idea how we can pay it back.'

No wonder local resentment against NIPAP and its guards has been intense, especially in the first years of their operations. 'In the beginning it was hard,' confirms superintendent Manuel Romero. 'Especially for someone from the island itself, like me. When I went to the communities, the reactions were very negative. I got a lot of threats. We were like enemies. In that time the park rangers were very active, there were a lot of confiscations. People reacted by putting nails on the road, and flatted the tire of our cars. Mostly there were just threats and luckily no serious incidents happened. But these loggers and hauliers have guns, and our rangers don't. That's why they are afraid to go out alone. They always patrol in groups. And if necessary, we get assistance from local policemen.'

Still Romero feels much has been achieved. 'There is without doubt a very positive change of attitude with the population. Thanks to information and education. Many people now understand the need for conservation. Especially students, thanks to the fact that we pay many visits to schools, together with the KKP.'

The NIPAP rangers have been instructed to inform and educate the communities, but in such a way that people will not feel threatened, explains Romero. 'We tell people that we no longer tolerate tree-felling, and explain biodiversity and the purpose of the protected area to them. We have also instructed the rangers not to confiscate vines or nito for the time being.'

Notwithstanding these instructions, many people on the island still complain about the NIPAP rangers being too strict when it comes to confiscation. There are rumours that they still confiscate much-needed products like honey and nito. Some people complain that they find the rangers threatening. 'The big problem here,' says the KKP's project leader Chrisma Salao, 'is the lack of clarity over what will be allowed and what not. NIPAP has achieved a lot, they have built a fine infrastructure, organised the legal framework, etc. But on the ground, alongside their patrolling activities, at the end of the project they should have assured some form of sustainable use to cover the demand for wood of the local communities. They didn't succeed there. You need permission for all amounts of wood, and most of the local folk do not have the capacity to deal with the bureaucracy involved..'

Progress in setting the exact boundaries of the protected area has been slow. And so has the development of the buffer or multiple-use zones around this area. The governmental Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which has final responsibility for the protected area, seems particularly slow to develop management plans which would clearly define the rights and obligations of the people living within or near the protected area. This has meant that, so far, the project's strategy of organising groups and assisting them in applying for available resource tenure such as community-based forest management plans, has not been successful. Salao: 'Initially it seemed that all forest-based activities would be banned. After extensive discussions with NIPAP and the Department this was modified into the idea of developing management plans in co-operation with local stakeholders. But development here has been slow. Community-based management is just not a priority of the government, I suppose.'

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'The worst enemy of nature is a man with an empty stomach'

"Save the seas and the forests, vote Doy Rios." The mayor of San Fernando proudly points to an old election poster, hanging at the wall of his garden. "That was my slogan in 1992. Many people were against me, there was much resistance. The situation was dire at the time. For me it has always been clear that, to make the conservation a success, you needed to offer alternatives to the local people. They have to live, you know. I am convinced that the worst enemy of nature is a man with an empty stomach. So I am very much in favour of the KKP project. I have even leased two lots of my land to the project, in a joint farming venture '

According to the mayor, illegal fishing and logging on the island are two sides of the same coin. 'If you go down on logging, people will turn to dynamite fishing. That is how it works here. So you should combine enforcement on both fields. The coast guard have a patrol boat here. They are very active. Only recently two fishing boats were confiscated and samples sent to Manila for investigation. Traces of dynamite were indeed found. But I would say things are pretty much under control now.'

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Solving the Sibuyan livelihood puzzle

On Sibuyan, when it comes to conservation, the government agency NIPAP wields the big stick while the KKP dangles the carrot. Alternative livelihood schemes as well as agricultural joint ventures must lure away the islanders from their profitable, though destructive activities.

Tree nursery in model farm

Requests for data quantifying the effectiveness of their work do not embarrass KKP-personnel on Sibuyan. The figures are publicly available and widely known. In three and a half years the project has extended credit for business initiatives (mostly related to agriculture, or trading and retailing commodities) to 253 individuals. In the same period it has convinced 26 landowners to enter into joint ventures on farm development, and reached probably more than 300 other islanders in training sessions, workshops and study tours. The total approved loans amounted to Ph.P 2.5 million (US$ 63,000) at the end of 2000. In addition, 21 more groups have been organised and are lined up for credit assistance.

Impressive figures. However, Sibuyan has a population of 50,000. What about the others, is the obvious question, what should they be doing in the meantime? ‘First of all,’ says project leader Chrisma

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The newly built office of the KKP-project in baranguay Espanya is combined with a model farm. The farm is one of the project's joint ventures and is located on land leased from a local landowner. Four hectares of the farm have been opened up and developed into a nursery of agroforestry crops, cash crops and poultry. The farm receives frequent visits from students, farmers and community groups, amongst others.

Vicky Rotoni was one of a group of women in her community who attended a KKP-workshop on chicken farming three years ago. After the workshop, the group applied for a loan under the credit program. For Vicky, things went pretty smoothly, with her husband devoting less time to his logging activities and instead helping her to build the hen houses and assist with the regular cleaning activities. The money they earned has been used to expand the small shop the family also runs. At the time we spoke to her, however, she had put the chicken business temporarily on the back burner because of low market prices. The supply of frozen chickens is stored in the freezer at the project's office (the only storage capacity available), awaiting up-turn in the market.

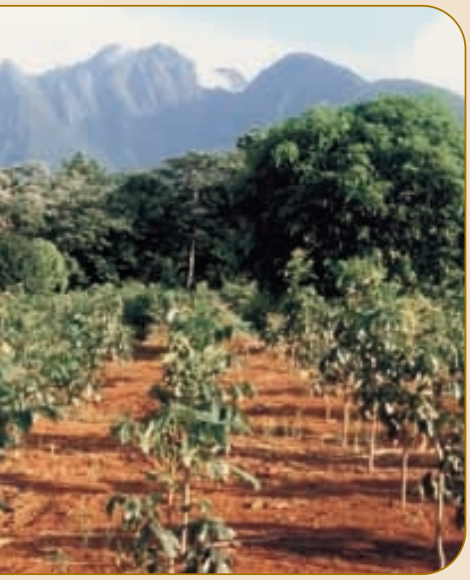
Rotoni is less satisfied with the performance of her credit group. 'We had a lot of problems in the group,' she says. 'At one time money was stolen. And after a typhoon destroyed many hen houses, several members of the group decided to quit the program.' Because of this experience, Vicky Rotoni is more in favour of the credits being handed out on an individual basis, the way it works with a regular bank.

BUREAU M & O

Another farm near Magdiwang was formerly a poorly maintained mango farm. It didn't require too much effort to convince the owner that he would profit from a joint venture with the KKP project. Today, fourteen people earn a daily income here, with up to 70 day labourers during planting or harvesting time. In total 28 crops are cultivated on the thirteen hectares which are now under the joint venture construction.

Crops which have been introduced include tomatoes, egg plant, ampalaya, papaya, carrots, lettuce and asparagus. The duck pond and the cultivation of animal feed are all elements in the goal of integrated farming. On the first floor of the farm building are four guest rooms as well as a class room. Here groups of students and farmers attend one or two-day courses on the several aspects of modern farming. Nearby farmers are obviously encouraged by the developments on this farm - there is a waiting list of farmers in the neighbourhood who have offered their lands for incorporation in the joint venture enterprise.

Mulberry fields and silk worms are new to Sibuyan. Sericulture in the Philippines is traditionally practised in the Luzon area. The KKP-project has organised a training program as well as a small study tour to this region introducing the technical aspects of a business which can be quite profitable. A pilot project on the island was started on lands that had been



JOSE NOEL DUMAOP

unused since the land reform of the Cory Aquino regime. Now the surrounding hills are planted with mulberry trees, giving them the appearance of a large tea estate somewhere in India or Sri Lanka. The mulberry leaves are used to feed the silk worms, after which the production of cocoons takes place, followed by the reeling and spinning of silk thread. Some forty people are involved in this joint venture project, many of whom used to earn their income as loggers or charcoal producers. Now, these trees are interplanted with pineapple which serve as hedgerows to control soil erosion.

Traditionally, wild seaweeds are gathered on the reefs of Sibuyan at low tide and eaten as vegetables or processed to make gelatine. In recent years, the seaweed has become scarce as more and more people have taken up its

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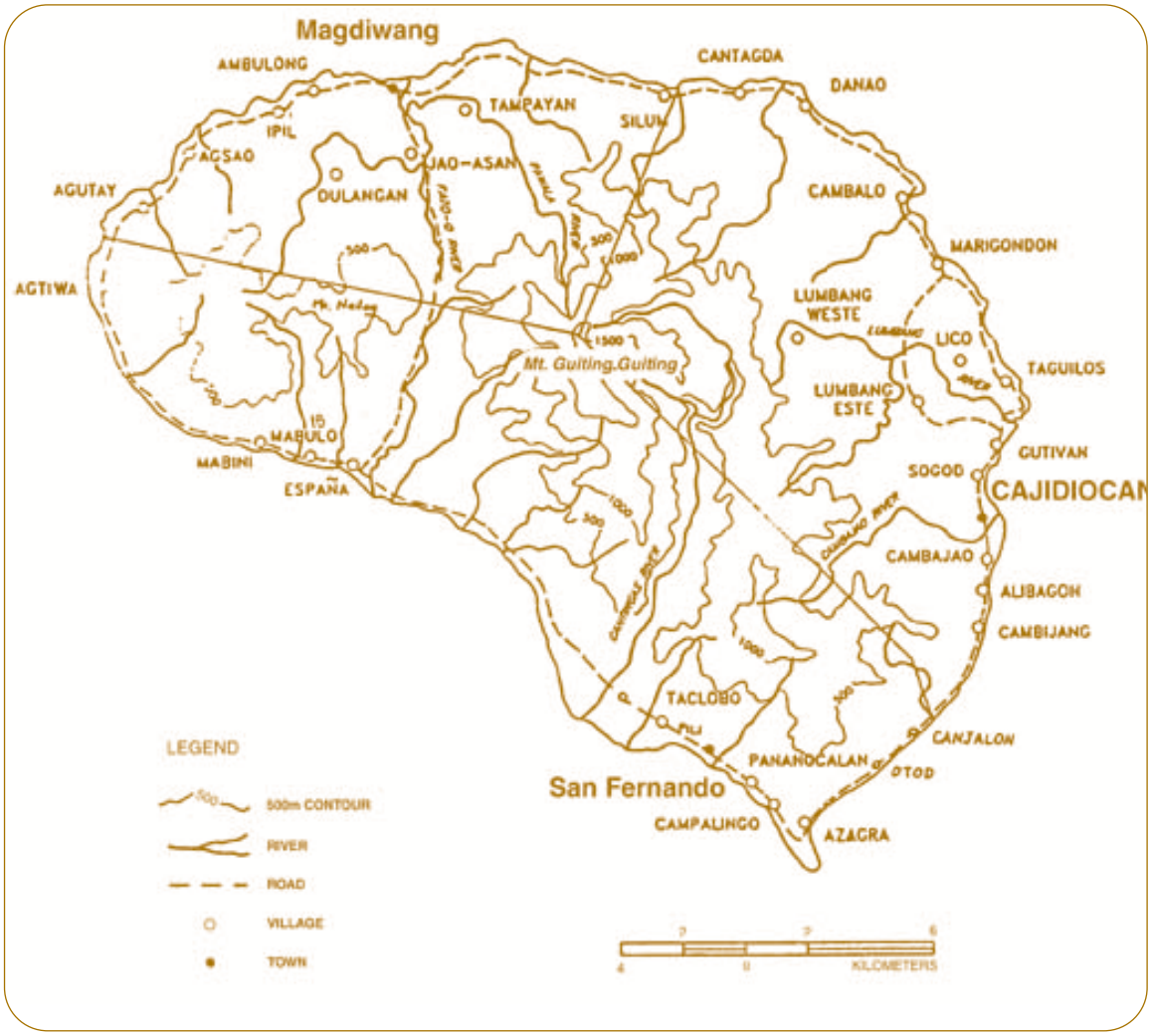
collection. A study tour on the possibilities of seaweed culture organised by the KKP project raised considerable interest and led to several initiatives for establishing seaweed farms. The technique is simple: cages made of wood and nets provide support to the salty crop as it floats in the sea. While the weeds are growing, they require no special attendance.

However, the seaweed farms have met with a varying degree of success. There were two main causes of failure. High seas caused by typhoons and the south-west monsoons have occasionally broken the rafts and lines. It was also observed that after a few months in a specific area, the seaweeds became infected with a disease that covered them with white spots and caused poor growth and brittleness. According to one expert who was asked by the project to study the phenomenon, this may be caused by the traces of dynamite and cyanide in the water due to illegal fishing. However, the disease has been reported to be widespread and has affected vast areas of seaweed farms in the country.

We meet Jupiter Romero during a walk around the project's model farm. He is clearing his land. Like so many others on this island, Romero knows as much about the logging practices on the island as about destructive fishing methods. He was one of a group of 22 participants on a study tour the project organised on the subject of coastal management. Now he talks with all the fervour of the convert: 'For the first time I've seen the beauty of the coral reefs. I realised they have been God-created and men may never destroy these, like we do with the dynamite fishing.' Romero swears that he will never again do anything to harm the rich natural resources of his beautiful island. Regrettably, some of his neighbours still do. 'It's easy money, that's why,' he says. 'A coconut filled with fertiliser is enough to do the job.' However, patrol activities are heavy, he says, and fewer and fewer people are willing to take the risk.

Fisherman Rene Ronito Rosas is a member of one the first credit groups the project helped to organise on the island, Sitio Kabitangahan Interest Group or SKIG. He applied for a loan of 25,000 pesos to buy a new boat. Ronito finds it hard though to pay for interest and relief, because of small catches of fish. 'Dynamite fishing has chased away all the fish,' he believes.

CHRISMA SALAO



Salao, 'it's not as if everybody on the island used to live from destructive activities. Far from it. But yes, we are targeting a much larger group than we have reached so far, and eventually we hope to attract their attention too. However, this is the best we could hope to achieve in our first years, and we are building measures to sustain the project's services in the long term. We are pretty satisfied with the results.'

Considering the constraints within which the KKP has worked, she is probably right. At first many of the islanders associated the KKP with the much disliked government agency, the NIPAP. When, after considerable time, people were better able to distinguish between the two, the expectations of many islanders rose to unrealistic heights. In itself this was not so strange as the KKP was the first developmental organisation to work on the island. Some people seemed to expect the KKP to solve all the problems related to the economic activities displaced by the protected area. Salao: 'Our field staff had to dampen down people's expectations in these cases, explaining that we do not hand out money and that we only give loans to well-considered alternative livelihood schemes.'

Another problem turned out to be the project's emphasis on organised groups as the basis for the alternative livelihood schemes. It was assumed that working in groups would provide the maximum benefit for the people. 'People pooling their efforts are more effective,' says Salao. 'The value we are trying to inculcate is not individualism, but mutual help to become successful.'

The KKP also has two more pragmatic reasons for preferring groups - they enable more people to be reached with limited manpower, and, in the absence of collateral, peer pressure encourages a good repayment regime. 'With individual loans, it would be much easier for people to cheat,' says Salao. 'They could claim that their source of income got somehow washed away, even though they might have gambled their money away. If someone goes astray now, the other members act as checks and balances.'

However, the project's mixed record of success and failure with different enterprises is partly due to the islanders' unwillingness to be organised into groups. This may be due in part to the fact that the islanders feel more comfortable as individuals or within their own family group, and partly because

CHRIMA SALAO

Corn field at Camadlayan joint venture farm, Cajidiocan

they feel that credit groups could threaten the existing social structures within the community. 'For our credit programme to groups, the success of the enterprises mostly depended on the quality of the organisation,' project leader Salao explains in carefully chosen words. 'That is to say, groups that were well-managed were generally successful in implementing their livelihood projects.'

So far, livelihood-fund operations have achieved a repayment rate of approximately 56 per cent. An external mid-term evaluation of the project concluded this to be 'a satisfactory achievement at this stage', considering the constraining factors. The project staff however, have decided to put greater focus on fixing the problematic accounts and improving the payment performance.

It has also been decided to reward good payment behaviour. A new loan package will offer an incentive to good payers by offering a lower interest rate, and provide an opportunity for individuals whose payment performance exceed those of their group. The decision to create this new package is, however, also the result of the project's inability to connect the credit scheme to the official banking system, due to the high interest rates of the local rural bank. Salao: 'Our original idea was that 'good' creditors could graduate to the regular bank lending system, but this has not happened. The bank's current loan interest rates are 29 per cent per annum. Since this interest is prepaid the effective rate of interest for one year amortised over 12 months is 41 per cent. This is much higher than the project's effective rate of interest which is only 19 per cent. So the project offers the islanders the best option.'

Most recently informal lenders were reported to have lowered their interest rates to match that of KKP, indicating that market forces are at work though on Sibuyan.

Joint ventures

Besides the credit programme, the project's joint venture projects for farm development have recently met with great interest on the island. These joint ventures have become the major vehicle for the project's agroforestry component. Agroforestry crops are inter-cropped with cash crops for added income and faster cash returns. Training sessions conducted under the project's Enterprise

NORMAN JARAVATA

One of many school visits

Development Program were related to the cash crops: mango production, sericulture, coffee plantation, as well as integrated farming systems.

In September 2000 an aggregated area of more than 100 hectares had been brought under joint venture agreements. At that time the project temporarily stopped contracting new lots for farm development. Enterprise manager Vic Regala explains that they decided to develop the existing joint ventures rather than continue expanding. 'At first many landowners were sceptical but now they've seen what it looks like, they come to offer us their land. We can not handle this at the moment. We will devote all of 2001 to the establishment and operation of the farms, in order to turn them into profitable enterprises.'

At the same time the project can look forward to another challenge: successfully phasing-out the involvement of the Manila-based KKP and replacing it with a local non-governmental organisation that will take over the project's activities. From the beginning, the WWF Philippines has emphasised that the Sibuyan project should in time become 'inherently' sustainable. During the course of its implementation, the project team perceived the need to extend the project assistance to more and more people. Hence the phase-out plan to establish a local NGO that ideally will be sustained by the livelihood earnings.

'It will not be an easy task,' says Chrisma Salao. 'There's no tradition of NGOs on the island. That is why we have to create one, there's no existing local institution suitable for project hand-over. The biggest challenge is to find experienced and influential people to run the organisation. Almost all of these people are in one way or another connected to politics on this island. And becoming involved in political feuds is something we should avoid at all times.'

Putting more emphasis on capacity-building might be the answer. 'In the second half of 2001 we will devote considerable time and effort to establishing relationships with newly elected officials after the May-elections,' Salao says. 'We will orient the new officials regarding project objectives, activities and accomplishments. At the same time we will inform and train independent locals in what it takes to run a non-governmental organisation.' The actual handing over of the project is envisaged for September 2002. If this succeeds it will be a great achievement. Not many comparable projects have been successful in sustaining their activities with full local ownership, within five years of implementation. ▲

'There is no doubt that the livelihood programme contributes to the reduction of destructive activities. There is a very strong link between these destructive activities and securing a livelihood, and all stakeholders recognise WWF's role in providing sustainable livelihood options.'
(External mid-term evaluation)

Rolando Tan:

‘The best community organiser is a slow one’

KKP community organisers have acted as the links between the alternative livelihood concept and thousands of disgruntled islanders literally cornered by the protected area.

Thirty-seven year-old Rolando (‘Lando’) Tan has worked as a community organiser in eight of the San Fernando’s municipality’s twelve *barangays* over the past years. After the reorganisation of the project’s structure, he now acts as a marketing officer, focusing on the joint venture projects. In his years as a community organiser, he helped to establish nine groups. Before he joined the KKP, he co-ordinated the co-operation forum for the island’s three municipalities. Before that, he worked as a community organiser in Manila.

NORMAN JARAVATA

Left: Rolando Tan

‘People thought I was a local government official,’ he says. ‘In my old job, I would inform them about projects such as the proclamation of Mt Guiting-Guiting Natural Park and I would carry out surveys. I did not work in a participatory way at the time.’

‘I decided I would take my time to change people’s perception of my position,’ he says. ‘My approach was to try and live with them. I would not talk much about any problems, I was not campaigning, I would just be there and do what they did. Play cards, go fishing, whatever. At first, I did not even mention I was now with the KKP. I just mixed and listened. Under cover, you might say. I also gathered their views about foreign projects. These were quite interesting. For instance, when they heard about the natural park and then about WWF coming here, there were rumours that the island had been sold wholesale to the European Union.’

‘Then I began to look for formal and informal leaders in the communities. Some of them were loggers or businessmen, and some had a position in the local church. It was back to stage one, in that I would once again have to live with them, drink with them and listen to them. After a while I would call them *nanay* and *tatay*, literally ‘mother’ and ‘father’, which are respectful ways of addressing people you know well. At the same time I would be on the lookout for opportunities for them, government activities that might help them. For instance, I might hear that the Department of Agriculture had a swine dispersal scheme. So I would go to them and say, hey, that is a good way of making some money - the government is offering cheap pigs! After all, there were no KKP funds at the time.

After several months, people had some trust in me. The first interest group was created. I would not say I organised them. They organised themselves, with just some slight prodding on my part. I do not want to be manipulative. I think that is too easy for us to slip into organising groups and making suggestions in too obtrusive a way. My fear is that if I operate that way, the groups will not last. They will handle the funds, and that is it.’

For Tan, the best community organiser is a slow one. But if the groups organised by him, or by themselves, handle the funds properly, what is the problem? ‘For me, a community organisation is a success if they develop both economically and socially,’ he replies. ‘Let me give you an example. Though we have many rivers here, there are problems with drinking water. The reservoirs higher up on the mountain will be full with rain water, but the outlet may get clogged. However, nobody takes the trouble of going up to unclog it. It is only when people lose their temper and go up there themselves that it gets unblocked. There is no co-operation. I think the communities do not just need a livelihood, but also social activities, some unity, so as to achieve more. If it is real community development, it will trigger cultural and other changes. For instance, at present, come election time, money talks. I hope that in the future, people will be aware that voting is worth more than the price of your vote. I know that all of this is not the task of the KKP, but I do think it is important. When the project ends, the KKP will no longer be here in Sibuyan. But the communities will. And so will I.’ ▲

Sibuyan's 'mountain people'

'It's hard to be uneducated'

IVAN SARENAS

Despite more than twenty years of service, the project's Land Rover easily copes with the steep road and its many potholes. When it becomes necessary to use stretches of the river as an alternative, it takes these too in its stride. But then it's over. The road ends at a small settlement. From here on there's nothing more than a small up-hill track. Sometimes the going is easy, but for long sections the track's steepness and muddy soil mean that it is barely passable. The leeches are an annoyance, but the scenery is peaceful and at times (especially when we glimpse the mountain peaks) overwhelming.

We see no signs of human settlements during several hours of climbing. Traces of human interference, however, are much in evidence. For long stretches a worn out slot runs alongside the track - used by haulers as a chute for logged trees. Looking around once again, one notices the absence of mature trees on the gentle slopes. This is all secondary forest, stretching at least as far as the eye can see.

It's already the end of the day when we arrive at a wooden guesthouse, which has recently been built with the support of the project. During the last half hour of our hike we've seen some isolated cottages and small plots with cassava and sweet potatoes and fruit trees. Our guide Demetrio Romion, institution building-officer for the project, also points out plots with vegetables and abaca seedlings (a fibrous plant quite similar to the banana tree.).

As the evening falls, more and more people gather at the guesthouse to greet the visitors from the 'lowlands'. Loads of coconuts are brought in as refreshments, while preparations are made for the evening meal. In the meantime we talk with Ramon Regala, chieftain of the local community organisation. Soon the conversation focuses on the conservation issue: do he and his people, living near or within the protected area, pose a threat to biodiversity, as many people living on the lowlands of the island claim? Regala fiercely rejects the accusations. His people have not practised swidden agriculture since 1996, he says. At that time a government representative told them that their traditional practice of burning down a patch forest, growing crops for one or two seasons and then moving on, leaving the plot for the forest to reclaim, would henceforth be illegal. 'We keep to the law,' Regala says, 'so we stopped this slash-and-burn.' Although this causes problems with the low-fertility of the lands here, he adds.

Demetrio Romion joins the conversation, adding that, 'unlike loggers these people cannot resort to hit-and-run practices. Much less can they afford to bribe officials.' Thus it was the very poorest group that was hardest hit by the logging ban.

Which is also a thing of the past, chieftain Regala says. 'We're not involved in illegal logging. We do not have chainsaws, or other equipment you need. It's the lowland-people who have these. They come up here to do the logging. We object to this, not directly to the loggers because most of them are armed. But we complain to the captain of the *barangay*. He is the one who should take measures. The problem though is that we can't provide proof of what we've seen. We do not have cameras, or radio to alert the authorities. So each time when we complain they ask us: "Do you have evidence of this?" We don't.

'Sometimes the problem is much bigger,' Romion adds quietly, 'like when they find out that the illegal logging has been financed by a major or a captain, precisely the person they are supposed to go to with complaints.'

Medicines in the forest

While dinner is being served - rice with *ulang*, freshly caught river prawns - the conversation turns to the subject of the conservation agency NIPAP, not a very popular organisation here. 'NIPAP says our land is a protected area,' someone says. 'They threaten to throw us out of here. If nobody will help us, we have to go.' Others disagree. 'We will never go,' another man says, 'we will fight for our rights. We have been here for a long time, this is our land.'

NIPAP was invited to debate the issue, chieftain Regala claims, 'but they did not show up. People here have never been informed about the exact borders of the protected area, NIPAP should have done that.'

Which doesn't imply they resist the need for protection itself. The subject shifts to the wildlife that has disappeared. Several men contribute with stories of giant bats, with a two metre wingspan, wild boars, wild chickens, etc. All of these have disappeared from this area, partly due to heavy logging, but also because of (subsistence) hunting by a growing amount of people. 'Hunting is still practised here,' Romion adds. 'It's our job to convince them that protection is needed. More and more people are coming to accept this, they now know that KKP is sincere in this.'

Time for another subject. How is life here in this harsh location, far away from basic social services like health care and education? Purita Romano, a charming middle-aged mother of five children, replies that health care is not the problem: 'We have our own medicines here in the forest. And when they are not enough to help somebody recover, we can take him or her down to the clinic in the village.' The real problem is the lack of educational opportunities, she says. 'We know from our own experience how hard it is to be uneducated. That's why we want our children to go to school. But that means you have to send them down, and find someone where they can stay during the

week. That is very expensive.' With three children attending primary school and one at the local high school (he wants to work in the computer business), all available family income goes to education.

This income consists of the money she and her husband earn from selling prawns and *nito* plates at the market in the nearest barangay, plus what she earns for helping her brother on his farm. Her brother and sisters are already participating in project activities, which here means assistance with the introduction of new crops like abaca, coffee and vegetables. In return for the project's help, the beneficiaries have to promise to treat the land in a sustainable way. 'These new activities are a way to get out of our poverty', Purita Romano says. 'Someday we might even build a school here.' ▲

IVAN SARENAS

Joint venture partner Nicolas Racho cutting abaca in Haguimit, Cajidiocan

Indigenous or not?

How indigenous is Sibuyan's indigenous community? And what role should they play in the conservation area, if any at all?

When talking about their diverse ethnic minorities, Filipinos generally speak of 'IP' (Indigenous People) or 'ICC', jargon for 'Indigenous Cultural Community'. The indigenous people of Sibuyan normally refer to themselves as *Tagabukid* (literally meaning 'People from the Mountain'), while non-Tagabukid refer to them as *Mangyan*. Mangyan has derogatory connotations such as being uneducated or dirty. Consequently the KKP project at first attempted to reinforce the use of the word

Tagabukid in the place of Mangyan. However, it soon became apparent that this created confusion particularly among the upland non-indigenous dwellers in Sibuyan, who also call themselves Tagabukid. To be as precise as possible, KKP-project people consequently refer to *Sibuyan Mangyan Tagabukid*, also to distinguish the Sibuyan indigenous people from the more popularly known Mangyans of Mindoro.

However, the confusion on how to name the Sibuyan indigenous community clearly indicates the problems surrounding the definition of 'indigenous' in Sibuyan. One reason for this is that the facial features or cultural customs dividing the ICC members from the lowland dwellers are not easily observable to outsiders. The former tend to be poorer and have less formal education. Many 'lowlanders' flatly deny that the indigenous people are entitled to a special status. Mayor Doy Rios of San Fernando for instance claims to be in favour of well-defined rights for the indigenous community, however at the same time fiercely denies claims that these were the first inhabitants of his island. 'How would they know,' he asks, 'these people haven't been to school, they do not have written histories. I know for sure that many others settled here before them.'


BUREAU M & O

Tagabukid burial grounds

To obtain more information on this subject, the KKP project has sponsored research by a group called Anthropology Watch. Besides the anthropological studies, genealogical surveys were conducted as well as a census. Through these studies it was verified that the indigenous people of Sibuyan do qualify for a special status under Philippine law. Spanish colonial documents from the 19th century mentioned the Mangyans of Sibuyan and gave a detailed list of local Sibuyanons. They also revealed that Sibuyan was an abaca-producing area at the time. (Obviously these abaca farms were neglected since and KKP is trying to revive the industry on the island now.)

After learning these results and following a series of consultations, the Sibuyan indigenous community decided to apply for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title. Indigenous communities in the Philippines have been able to make such application since the ratification of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act by the Congress in October 1997. Applications are sent to the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, supported with as many documents and other evidence as possible. The Sibuyan indigenous community made its application in September 2000. A map showing the extent of the claim was also submitted. This map (the first one ever to be drawn) was constructed after a perimeter walk with indigenous leaders. An official response is still awaited (the National Commission seems to be struggling with a burden of governmental bureaucracy as well as limited funding), although unofficially it has been said that the Sibuyan claim has been signed by the NCIP Commissioners.

In the meantime, the KKP project is concentrating on capacity building and awareness raising. The project staff is planning to conduct several trainings such as on conflict resolution, conducting meetings, documentation, lobbying and advocacy. Also the project will assist in the reorganisation of the tribal councils, creation of a women's committee, and strengthening of the IP organisations. Slowly the focus thus will shift from working mainly with the indigenous leaders to working with all members of the seven IP community clusters on Sibuyan.

A recent information campaign focused on the people's rights and responsibilities under an Ancestral Domain. Fifteen para-legals were identified who were specially trained in this subject. As part of the capacity-building process, the project conducted a study tour with some twenty community leaders in November 2000. One group visited the Kankanaey-Bago Ips of Bakun in the Cordillera Mountains in northern Philippines, the other the Tagbanua in Coron island, Palawan. Both IP groups have already been awarded Ancestral Domain certificates, and are implementing management plans in their areas. Anticipating approval of the Sibuyan IP claim, the project is now also facilitating the preparation of such an Ancestral Domain Sustainable

Development and Protection Plan.

Project leader Chrisma Salao explains the decision to focus on capacity-building and empowerment of the Sibuyan indigenous community, rather than pouring all project resources into their Ancestral Domain application. 'The authority to issue the Ancestral Domains lies with the government and is therefore subject to bureaucracy and political changes. Also the application could not be of much use if the Sibuyan Mangyan Tagabukid are unable to use their resources and enforce their rights.'

BUREAU M & O

Constructing the first map showing the extent of the claim

Her remarks hint at the huge gap between the project's viewpoint of the future role of the Sibuyan IP and that of the NIPAP. The project regards the indigenous people as one of the primary stakeholders in the conservation of Mt.Guiting-Guiting. Because they dwell on the slopes of the mountain range, they could be considered as the gatekeepers of the forest. NIPAP on the other hand, as the first responsible institution for the conservation of the area, has large problems with the Sibuyan IP's Ancestral Domain claim overlapping with the protected area. Salao: 'We held several meetings with the top management and staff of NIPAP regarding the Domain. In the end, their General Management Plan still indicates that if the IPs of Sibuyan are not awarded an Ancestral Domain after five years, NIPAP's strategy will be rezone the overlapping areas from multiple use to restoration zone.

NIPAP co-ordinator Dr Arthur Tansiongco says that, 'at this stage', he just wants to emphasise the need to co-ordinate the IP's claims with local government. 'All stakeholders in the conservation process should be brought together, not just the indigenous people.' We must not forget that this is a very delicate issue, says Tansiongco. 'The indigenous communities are entitled to resource use, and also property rights. But many poor people here on the island do not have a piece of land. They are not very enthusiastic, to say the least, about the IP getting property titles to large parts of the island.'

Mayor Doy Rios of San Fernando also has problems with the IP's application. 'They should be awarded rights,' he says, 'but now they claim half of the protected area. We can't allow that. This way they will control water resources on this island, which affects lowland people. We have to sit down and talk about these issues.'

But the issue stems from the IP exercising their right to self-delineation under IPRA. Project leader Salao sighs that 'many people on the island have problems with the IP standing up for their rights.' A few years ago, she says, 'you wouldn't find IP-leaders being as vocal as they are now. One *barangay* captain was really vocal against the rights of IPs, and the indigenous people in his area stood up against that. That's really upsetting the status quo on the island. Local leaders are worried about that. They accuse the IP of turning the sword against them.' ▲

DGIS-WWF Philippines Sibuyan project goals

The project goal is to protect the forests in Mt. Guiting-Guiting through the development of sustainable enterprises in Sibuyan Island. The enterprises are expected to divert people from ecologically destructive livelihood activities. The project objectives are

- to assist communities affected by protected area in improving their social, political and economic conditions through:
  a. formation and/or strengthening of community organisations
  b. tenurial access and security
  c. equitable sharing of economic benefits
- to establish baseline information on the natural resources outside the protected area for community-based resource management
- to develop community-based livelihood enterprises that will contribute to the reduction of destructive activities which are dependent on forest-based resources.

Building long-term sustainable livelihood options

Will Sibuyan's protected area preserve its natural bounty? The result of the KKP project is not the only factor on which this depends. Nor is its success guaranteed. But its role is vital.

The KKP's effort to make the Sibuyan national park a success by trying to overcome the human threat makes much sense. Most stakeholders agree that the frequency of illegal logging has declined. Of course, the NIPAP's patrols have provided a strong incentive for people to 'go straight' - much stronger, in all likelihood, than any number of lectures on long term well being and the interest's of future generations - however true and necessary.

Ongoing enforcement is a condition for the effective implementation of the Sibuyan conservation project. However, this is an issue surrounded by much uncertainty. NIPAP was given a last minute reprieve by the European Union's eleventh-hour decision in the beginning of 2001 to extend its involvement for another two years. The agency had at that time already ended all of its activities on the island. Two extra years however do not mean that the danger of an end to enforcement - most probably resulting in the speedy return of heavy illegal logging practices - has been averted. It just means there's some more time for the KKP to build long-term sustainable livelihood options, and to help create a local organisation which can manage these. While avoiding any direct involvement in enforcement activities, the KKP's role here seems to be to push for the involvement of communities in the management of the protected area.

Most stakeholders agree that the project has succeeded in positively influencing the islanders' perceptions of their natural environment. However, these positive perceptions are also being put at risk by the growing number of German settlers whose houses are made of marble and hardwood (*narra*), which is subject to illegal logging. The immigration of the, mostly retired, Germans started after ads appeared in German newspapers, enticing people to build their own holiday homes on an 'idyllic unspoiled Pacific island'. Many Sibuyanons are fascinated by their display of a degree of wealth and prosperity never before seen on the island. As a result, the natural environment is again at risk.

While the immigrants could cast a shadow on the island's future, some form of ecotourism might add a welcome source of income to Sibuyan's economy. At present, only a handful of islanders make a living by providing accommodation for visitors and there is clearly a potential to increase this source of revenue without harming the fragile ecology.

Ecotourism could offer an extra stimulus to the alternative the project is trying to offer the islanders. At the moment, it is still too early to say whether the new sources of income created by the project will make up for the loss of the old ones. The illegal activities have always been highly profitable, and they remain attractive options for the economically hard-pressed. Blast fishing typically yields catches two to three times as large as responsible fishery methods. Logging is a great money-maker compared to almost anything available to the law-abiding citizen.

Once again this means that there is great need for effective enforcement in the short term. Extra attention should be directed to marine conservation. While illegal logging may have ceased, the increased incidence of dynamite fishing in the area demands attention. The conservation of Mt.Guiting-Guiting's forests cannot be considered a success if it is at the cost of Sibuyan's coral reefs. The project has to consider starting new marine-based enterprises, though without forgetting the negative experiences with some former ventures.

These failed marine-enterprises have also shown that the KKP's Sibuyan project, being chiefly involved in livelihood development, carries with it the inherent risks of running a business. These include non-payment of loans, the possibility of economic crises with low demands for certain products, as well as natural calamities like typhoons which damage crops and livestock, and the lack of basic infrastructure. When there are insufficient viable investments through credit and joint venture, the livelihood component may not be able to cover its expenses through income. That's the big challenge for the coming period. Reasonable payment rates with the credit schemes have to be secured, while the joint ventures have to be developed into profitable, cash-crop selling farms. If within a few years time, there will be a whole range of successfully operating locally owned enterprises, which work in a sustainable way, while at the same time there has come a final end to destructive methods of exploiting nature, something fundamental will have been changed on Sibuyan island. ▲

Acknowledgements

All texts written by Hans van de Veen and Gaston Dorren of Bureau M&O - *Environment & Development Productions*

Published by the DGIS-WWF Tropical Forest Portfolio based at WWF International.
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Cover pictures: Alberto Garcia and Jose Noel Dumaop
Layout and design: MMS Grafisch Werk, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Production: Bureau M&O, Amsterdam, The Netherlands