

III. BARANGAY 10, AGUSAN DEL NORTE

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A Profile of Barangay 10

The municipality of Buenavista is one of the coastal towns in the province of Agusan del Norte. It is 16 kilometers east of the city of Butuan, and has an approximate coastline length of six kilometers. Marine and inland fishing are the primary sources of livelihood among coastal residents of Buenavista which includes the fishing villages: Sacol, Manapa, Abilan, and Barangays 8, 9, and 10 of the *poblacion*. Barangay 10 covers two *purok*, namely Calangaman and Tangka. Its shoreline stretches to almost two kilometers. It has a total land area of 7,200 sq. kilometers, part of which is seashore land. The *barangay*, which is along the way to the famous Tinago Beach, can easily be reached by walking or by tricycle.

In the 1972 survey, the total number of households was 219 with 5-6 members per household. Barangay 10 residents are young; 60 percent of them are 21 years old and below. Almost all of the residents are Catholics. The majority speak Cebuano because its inhabitants come from the different Cebuano-speaking provinces of Visayas and Mindanao. A sizeable number are also migrants from Leyte and Bohol.

Most of the houses are made of mixed materials, i.e., wooden/cemented walls with G.I. roofing or wooden walls with nipa roofings that are in poor state of repair. Almost all homes have a radio and wooden sala sets. Many homes also have one or two fishing boats placed upside down, under or beside the house, thus giving the impression that these have not been used for some time. It is apparent that many fishing households had seen better times.

Sunday is supposedly a day of rest, but for fishermen, it is another day to go out to sea and fish. Instead of sleeping after the Sunday fishing trip, the fishermen huddle in *sari-sari* stores to drink tuba or cheap wine, exchange pleasantries, or talk about their problems. Others relax by playing volleyball or by mending their nets on the shore. The wives are not to be outdone. They relax on Sundays, by keeping abreast with *barangay* events while mending their husband's net or making a new one.

Despite its proximity to the market place, the *barangay* has numerous *sari-sari* stores as the main source of income. Since the *barangay* is near beach resorts, the *sari-sari* stores make good business from excursionists.

Barangay 10 is a recipient of many government projects which have improved the living conditions in the area. The projects include

electricity, fish landing, and the dike; but the people are not happy about the construction of the dike and the fish port. They believe that these construction projects result in the slow erosion of one portion of the shore, causing destruction to homes.

The cheerful atmosphere in the area during Sundays conceals the inner fears of the *barangay* residents. The people fear that time will come when the whole *barangay* will be eaten up by the sea. In a conversation with a senior citizen of the *barangay*, it was learned that a big portion of the land had already been washed out so much so that many of the houses had to be moved back.

In recognition of the almost total dependence of Barangay 10 residents on fishing, the Ministry of Human Settlements had granted fishing loans to a big number of fishermen. With the release of the funds, the fishermen have reasons to look forward to a better tomorrow.

This discussion on the study's findings is divided into four sections: a profile of the fishermen, fishing activities, participation in organizations, and the fishermen's needs and aspirations. The profile covers the fishermen's demographic characteristics, levels of living, consumption and expenditure patterns, and the morbidity incidence in respondents' households. The section on fishing activities describes the fishermen's knowledge of their craft and their technology, production activities, and their sharing and marketing arrangements. The last two parts describe the participation of the fishermen in different village organizations, their attitudes towards different government projects and their needs and aspirations in life.

Profile of Fishermen

The mean age of the respondents is 36.6 years with a standard deviation of 11.22 years. The youngest respondent is 20 years old, while the oldest is 70. A close look at the data shows that the respondents are relatively young with 60.6 percent belonging to the 20-39 age group. The middle-aged, or those who belong to the 40-59 age group, comprise 30.3 percent while the remaining three percent are 60 years old and above. A great majority (89 percent) of the respondents are married.

The study also reveals that majority of the respondents are immigrants to the place. Only 26 percent of them were born in the *barangay* under study. Fourteen percent were born in the other *barangays* of Buenavista. Another 14 percent of the respondents were born in other places of the same region (to which the municipality of Buenavista belongs). A greater percentage (42.4 percent), however, was born in the Visayas, while only three percent are migrants from Luzon. The respondents' length of stay in the area ranges from one to 56 years. On the average, the respondents have lived in the area for 20.3 years.

Of the 99 respondents, 97.9 percent have received formal education. Seventy percent have reached the elementary level while 18.6 percent reached the high school level. Only 6.2 percent reached college.

Almost all (98.99 percent) of the respondents are Catholics while the rest are affiliated with the Iglesia ni Kristo.

Cebuano, the major language in the municipality, is reported as the mother tongue of 95 percent of the respondents. The remaining 5 percent claimed Ilongo, Tagalog and Binutuanon (a dialect of the natives of Butuan) as their mother tongue.

Socio-Economic Profile

The houses in Barangay 10 are generally constructed out of strong and light materials. Of the 99 fishermen respondents, 25.3 percent have houses built of light materials, that is, wooden walls and nipa roofings. Of this group, 19.2 percent are in a poor state of repair. Only three percent of the respondents have dwelling units with galvanized iron roofings and cemented walls, most of which are in a poor state of repair. The remaining 71.7 percent of the houses are built from mixed materials. These houses are temporary in nature and are built along the shore.

Only nine percent of the respondents own the houses and the lot they occupy. Forty percent own the houses but not the lots on which their houses stand. They do not pay lot rentals, however, because their houses are built on shoreland. Another 40 percent own their houses but pay for the lot rental. Two percent rent both the house and the lot they occupy. The remaining include those who rent the house but not the lot (8 percent), those who do not pay any rent (3 percent), and those who have other arrangements aside from those already mentioned (2 percent).

The single detached house is the dominant dwelling unit in Barangay 10. This comprises 85 percent of the houses occupied by the 99 respondents. The remaining 15 percent are *barong-barong* (12 percent), duplex (1 percent), commercial buildings, and others (2 percent).

The houses occupied by the respondents have rooms ranging from one to three. Almost one-half (48 percent) of the respondents live in a single-room dwelling units. All household chores and activities are done in this limited space by household members. Forty-four percent of the respondents occupy two-room dwelling units, while a small 8 percent are occupants of houses with three rooms.

Electricity provides lighting to 55 percent of the dwelling units in the sample. The remaining 45 percent still use kerosene. Wood appears to be the main cooking fuel used by the respondents in Barangay 10. Not one of them uses an electric stove or LPG for cooking.

The major source of water supply for most respondents (96 percent) is the artesian well constructed through the barangay development program. The remaining four percent have their own pump wells.

Almost two-thirds (72 percent) of the fishermen have toilet facilities such as the open pit, the antipolo type, or the water-sealed type of toilet. The

two percent who do not have any private means of disposing their waste make use of the wide seashore, especially in the evenings.

The radio is the most common household appliance in the *barangay*. Sixty-one percent of the respondents have radios and claim to listen to it everyday.

Some (37 percent) own inexpensive dining sets made of ordinary wooden materials. A good number (48 percent) of them also own sala sets made of light wooden materials. Televisions and refrigerators are rarely found in the fishermen's homes; only two percent of the respondents own these expensive appliances.

Livestock raising can be very helpful in times of financial crisis, but this activity is a rarity in Barangay 10. Only 35 percent of the sample have chickens, the average number being 1.1 per household. Similarly, only 25 percent raise pigs.

Three-fourths of the respondents own fishing boats, majority (55 percent) of which are motorized. Almost all (92 percent), however, own the fishing gear they use. The most commonly owned gear is the multiple hook (73.5 percent). The other types of gear used are big nets (20.4 percent) and small nets (5.10 percent).

Rice and fish are the staple food of the fishermen. Around 92 percent indicated that they eat rice and 89 percent said they have fish each meal. Fifteen percent prefer corn grits, however, as their staple food. Dried fish is a supplementary food in the fishermen's diet. In the absence of fresh fish, dried fish takes its place. Meat and eggs are rare items in their menu. Only 16 percent can afford meat, and only three percent can buy eggs.

The total amount spent by each household is broken down daily, weekly, monthly, and annually. The total daily expenses on food per household member is P2.35. With an average of six members per household, the family will need at least P14.10 daily in order to survive. This would imply that the family spends P5,146.50 annually for food alone. If this amount is computed against the family's income, there exists a shortage of P1,753.85. This suggests that the difference between the actual income and the actual expenses on food is taken from other sources like the middlemen, the loan sharks, or their *suki* (regular customer).

Fishermen and members of their households suffered varied ailments a year before the survey. The most common ailments, were flu with fever (98 percent), and colds (95 percent).

During the year prior to the interview, 184 members of the respondents' households got sick. Of these, 96 percent needed medical treatment, but because of financial problems and the distance to the hospital from the area, only 30 percent were actually brought to a physician. The remaining seventy percent resorted to self-help treatment by *herbolarios* in the *barangay* and in nearby *barangays*.

Fishing Activities

Ninety percent of the respondents interviewed reported that fishing is their primary occupation. They have engaged in fishing from one to 45 years, with 16 years as the mean. Seventy-six percent said they acquired their fishing skills through experience. As children of fishermen, they learned how to fish from their parents and enhanced this knowledge through experience. Some fishermen, about 14 percent of them, obtained new knowledge by attending seminars conducted by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. However, none reported having been able to make use of the skills they had learned in these seminars. One reason is that they could not afford to buy the necessary equipment to try out new fishing methods.

Almost all of the respondents (95 percent) are engaged in offshore fishing, spending between three to seven days in the sea and an average of eight hours per fishing trip. A majority of them (75.8 percent) own the boats they use; 55 percent of the boats used are motorpowered. The others rent (17.2 percent) or work as crew members (7.1 percent). Three-fourths of the fishermen use multiple hooks, while the rest use big or small nets.

Sharing Arrangement

Sharing arrangements are either in kind or in cash. They affect only 24 percent of the respondents, particularly boat renters and hired crew members. Of this 24 percent, only six percent receive their share in cash, and the rest receive theirs in kind. Their sharing practices — classified as 20-80, 50-50 or 75-25 — are based on several conditions: who spends for fuel, who owns the fishing gear used, who shoulders the expenses on food, etc.

Production

Fishermen consider the months of March, April, May, June, and part of July as peak fishing months. At this time, the fishermen stay out at sea longer because the weather is good and the sea is calm. This does not necessarily imply that their catch will be abundant, however. The catch is more likely to depend on the kind of boat used by the fishermen, the gear he uses and whether he is engaged in off-shore or deep-sea fishing. In contrast, the lean period is of a longer duration. When the sea is rough, fishermen seldom go out to fish. To insist on fishing is to incur great risk. It is not even certain that they can bring home something for the family consumption.

As expected, the productivity of the fishermen during the lean months is very minimal, and their income may not be enough to make both ends meet. At these times, the fishermen, as household heads, resort to borrowing money, even at high rates of interest, so the family can survive. Borrowing money from

middlemen, or any other source, can partly explain why fishermen, especially those who have no other sources of income aside from fishing remain poor. During the lean months, the fishermen sometimes return home empty-handed and may have already spent some amount for gasoline and food. If they are fortunate, they may catch enough to earn the equivalent of P152.00 a month.

If based on the theory of supply and demand, it can be assumed that there is no great difference in the income of fishermen during peak and lean months. Other factors however, such as the kind of fish caught during the lean months also influence the marketability of fish. Thus, even if the supply of fish during the lean months is less and the demand for fish is great, we cannot assume that the fishermen's earnings during the lean months will be more. The fishermen's catch may be classified into two categories, namely: a) biggest catch for one fishing trip in a year with the corresponding cash value, and b) the smallest volume of catch for one fishing trip with the corresponding cash equivalent.

Values

The results show that "salvation" is perceived as the most important value; 97 percent of the fishermen rate it as "very important." This is followed by "self-respect" (96 percent), social recognition (91 percent), family security (89 percent), sense of accomplishment (82 percent), and comfortable life (68 percent).

More than one-half (71.1 percent) of the respondents expressed a great desire to have their children finish college. Considering that the average educational level of the respondents is only Grade 5, it is not surprising that they have high hopes for their children. Education has always been regarded as the key to the improvement of one's lot. It means better opportunities, better jobs, and better salaries. So when parents desire to have their children finish college, they hope that one day they will be able to enjoy a better life. This hope is captured in a fisherman's statement: "*Maayo na lang kung makahuman ang among mga anak aron naay among kasaligan sa among katigulangan.*" (It is good if our children could finish a college degree so that there is someone we can lean on during our old age.)"

Marketing

Eighty-two percent of the respondents report that their catch is both for sale as well as for consumption. Selling is done by the fishermen themselves, their wives, or their children. Almost one-half (48 percent) of the respondents said that they sell their catch themselves. The other half of the respondents said that the selling is done by the wife or the children. Some of the fishermen (20.2 percent) said that even while they are still at sea, they are able to sell their catch because some buyers go out to meet them. About 13 percent sell their catch at

the fish landing. A larger percentage (34.4 percent), sell their catch at the town market, while 26.3 percent sell their catch outside of town, most probably in Butuan or in Nasipit where the demand is greater and the price is higher. Forty percent of the respondents sell their catch to the middlemen, 37 percent to final sellers, and only 18 percent to final consumers.

On the average, the biggest sale reported by the fishermen recorded P702.00, and the smallest, only P45.00. The largest volume of fish sold, on the average, was 73 kilos, while the smallest was 5 kilos.

Participation in Organization

The majority of the fishermen (59.7 percent) who were interviewed are not members of any organization, although half of them expressed interest in joining religious organizations. They do not join any organizations because their time can be used for more productive activities. Moreover, membership in any organization is a drain on their pockets since every now and then, members are asked to give financial contribution. Worse, they do not receive the corresponding benefits from these organizations.

Of the 30 who are members of organizations, more than one-half (18) belong to religious organizations, while the rest belong to different socio-civic organizations. Nine out of 30 members are officers and their length of membership varies from 1-18 years, with three years as the average. Asked to rate their participation in the organizations, the members rated themselves as very active (31.2 percent), active (43.7 percent), and slightly active (18.8 percent). Their rating was based on the number of meetings that they have attended and the activities that they have participated in. Despite the problems that they have experienced, lack of funds and lack of cooperation for example, they report that they have received benefits from the organization, foremost of which are financial and social.

Considering the popularity of religious organizations and the importance of receiving financial aid, *Alay Kapwa sa Kalipay ug Kasakit* is one organization worth mentioning here. It is an exclusive organization, open only to the members of the Dona and the Banaria families, and it is not solely dependent on members' contribution as its source of funds. The primary aim of the organization is to give financial aid to the members at times of *kasakit* (sorrow, like death) and *kalipay* (joy, like weddings). The organization raises funds by asking the members a monthly contribution of P5.00. The amount is placed in *pundo* (common fund) and kept by the president of the organization. At the same time, they supplement their funds by selling firewood (done by the male members) and by making nets for the fishermen (done by the female members).

Awareness and Attitudes Towards Government Projects

Majority of the respondents (94.9 percent) are aware of several government projects which have been undertaken in their *barangay* at one time or another.

They were able to identify projects which fall under one of the six government projects identified in the survey. They were also able to rank these projects according to the benefits received.

The level of awareness of the respondents of the *Kilusang Kabuhayan at Kaunlaran* (KKK) is very high; it ranks first among the projects mentioned. This high degree of awareness stems from the fact that it is one of the most recent projects launched by the government. However, the actual benefits derived from the project is very low: only 5.7 percent of the respondents said that they have been benefited by KKK. It receives in fact, the lowest rating in terms of actual benefits granted. Since KKK is a new project, it has not yet reached many people and therefore few respondents have been benefited by it. The respondents also reported that of the six government projects mentioned, they have derived more benefits from the water system, electrification, and infrastructure projects. Their level of awareness of these projects is low however.

Attitude Towards Government Projects

Fifty percent of the fishermen agree with the statement that government projects serve only the interest of organized groups in business and labor but are not concerned about the needs of the people in general. In turn, forty-nine percent disagree with the statement that the government is undertaking so many things including those that the government has no right to do. The negative attitude of the fishermen towards government projects arises because they have not been recipients of benefits from the different government projects. It is worth noting that despite their disappointment, they still believe that the government is engaged in the right kind of activities.

Needs, Aspirations and Perceptions

Despite many problems, 42.8 percent of the fishermen said they are "happy" about life as a whole, while 33.7 percent said they are "just happy." Sixty-five percent also said that they are "happy" about their ability to satisfy their family's wants and needs. Nineteen percent, however, said that they are "neither happy nor unhappy."

With regard to their participation in organizations, 87.5 percent said that they are "happy" about it, while only 12.5 percent are not certain of their feelings. However, a majority (56.3 percent) are happy about the government projects which are undertaken in their community. When asked if the projects can improve the living conditions of their families, 73.9 percent of the respondents said "yes." They strongly believe that the government can greatly help improve their living conditions and the economic progress of their community. This belief is shared by 89.7 percent of the respondents. They believe that this could be done by the government if their fishing loans are approved. They shall

then be able to buy new fishing equipment and hopefully increase their catch. Eventually, they said, this will lead to the improvement of their lives.

The results also show that more than one-half (51.5 percent) of the fishermen assess their current status as below the middle positions (steps 2 and 3) of a 10-rung ladder, while only 25.3 percent assess their current status in the middle positions (steps 4 and 5). However, circumstances were different five years ago. More than one-half (51.5 percent) assessed themselves to be in the middle positions. This statement is supported by comments like "*Arang-arang ra ang among kahintang niadtong miaging mga tuig* (Our living conditions were a lot better in the past years)." As to where they would place themselves in the ladder 5 years from now, 26.3 percent said that they will still be in the lower positions, whereas 39.4 percent hope to rise to the middle positions.

Comparing the self-assessment of the fishermen five years ago and now, the results indicate that they perceive an improvement in their socio-economic status and anticipate a better life ahead of them, especially five years from now. This anticipation of improvement is expressed in statements like "*Pag-abot nimo sa ubos, wala na kay laing padulngan kung dili sa taas*, (When you reach the bottom, you have nowhere else to go but up)."