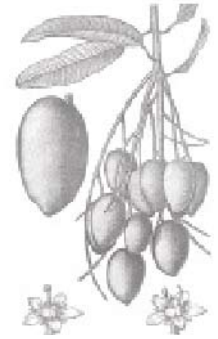




ERNESTO CADAWENG
Agroforestry Practitioner



“I haven’t seen a forest in a long, long time. A real forest is hard to find. What we always see are trees,” this from Ernie Cadaweng, a long-time forestry practitioner who has worked with upland development for most of his career, may sound surprising. Ernie’s experiences encompass social forestry, utilization, upland development, CBFM, and reforestation.

Ernie acknowledges that these programs did not work fully as we always looked only at government. “Did the private sector help?” asks Ernie. “I have been in development for a long time and it seems like we have not really helped people in the uplands. Maybe only a few have progressed.

“I am into development – reforestation, agroforestry. Upland development is my involvement. Agroforestry will work if it is subsidized for the first three to five years and you need to put in a lot of permanent crops. Upland development is more dependent on livelihood and upland communities will try to make money out of something that is readily available. They will not develop something that might be useful later, as they are concerned with the immediate, not the future. Most projects look at the short-term. Communities will necessarily respond while the project is ongoing, then they forget about it. So there’s no continuity. People in the uplands do not really tend to what they have planted. You plant corn now, then a big storm comes and it’s gone. They need to put in a lot of permanent crops and I’m looking at fruit trees. In watershed areas, I would suggest fruit trees – *pili*, durian, citrus, and they can still get food.”

Ernie is fully aware that government has all kinds of programs, adopt-a-mountain, adopt-a-park, and these are being re-hashed in different forms.

“CBFM has stagnated, I think. I don’t know if there is a successful CBFM project, because even those with foreign assistance had their funding stopped after three years. Maybe there are extensions for another three years, but then it ends. One of the problems really is resources. The other is responding to the question of having the capability to manage, and a one-week training cannot help. In Palawan, I was trying to assist a community in utilization of the remaining forests and one of the DENR guys objected immediately. I told them, ‘We do not have salvage management, we have forest management.’ We must look at the whole forest, don’t take out damaged trees or wood, look at what can be done to regenerate the forest. What can the community do? They will cut the trees and DENR will give them salvage permits? We cannot manage the forest with this kind of thinking. It was a similar experience in Region 2 when one time we were talking about forest utilization in communities and community people were following up with DENR guys, and the community commented that the Chinese were better to deal with, because they pay up.”

“Social forestry was in vogue in the 1970s, and 30 years after; what has happened? It was not socialized. They’ve only been socializing with upland people, not doing social forestry. We’re on the wrong foot always when working with people. We are not really helping them help themselves. We do projects based on how we see it. We don’t do projects on how they see it.

“Farming in the uplands is always subsistence. It’s not that they do not want to become richer, but they are also working in very small areas. People tend to go up the steep areas because that’s what is available. It’s the same conditions elsewhere.

“The assistance we provide these communities is not really going a long way for them. We give them technical assistance, but can they really sustain it? Their problem is what they can eat now, today, tomorrow. When we’re gone, they’ll look for something to eat. We leave after three, five years, and when we go back, it’s still the same. Maybe a few people who were listening might have caught up. It’s always been like that.”

What set Ernie on this track was that he first worked, after coming out of college in Negros, for a reforestation project. “This was around 1975 and the nursery men told me that there were more than 200,000 seedlings and we could not plant them all that year. I informed them there were many *kaingineros* – let’s talk to them and offer them *pakyaw* (contract). We asked them to work on this and gave them an area to reforest. We told them that we’ll pay them if the trees survive after a few months. That was the first time I really worked with upland people. From 1978 to 1983 I worked with the government.

“When the Integrated Social Forestry program came in around 1978 to 1979, I was with the Bureau of Forest Development. I was office-based and I remember thinking that government was in a good position to implement these kinds of activities. But the programs go on and off, depending on those in power. We were already talking about poverty alleviation then.”

Ernie grew up in Baguio and in La Trinidad Valley. “In La Trinidad, I remember stealing strawberries when I was a kid. I value the time when I was a kid. We used to go to the forest and collect berries, blackberries, raspberries; we used to have a lot of those. Berries were everywhere, along the trails, sometimes under trees, very seasonal.”

“La Trinidad is just a valley with mountains all around and we could easily go to the forest. There were very few vehicles then. That was retained in me, going to the forest. I was a natural uplander. Now, even the mountains are full of homes.”

“I stayed there up to high school, then went to Los Baños, and after that never went back. I grew up in a farming area, and perhaps it just gave me the sense that I would like to see something growing. Just looking at people planting and then harvesting, I didn’t see them as poor. But this is different from what I see in the uplands now. I don’t see farming as economically sustaining.”

“I really didn’t want to go into farming. I wanted to be a veterinarian, but my sister was in Los Baños so I took some courses there. That’s when fate came in. I studied but didn’t graduate. After college, I worked with a logging company for a few months. I tried to go back to school, but never got interested.”

We asked Ernie where do we go from here and he laughs, “I think we’re going nowhere. DENR should prepare a program that fits what nature needs and what the people need. The reforestation program was good in a sense. It opened the minds of people about trees, planting trees. The problem is – who benefits? The contractor? DENR? Have we been successful with it? We spent almost half a billion dollars in a span of six to seven years. We need a lot more money than that for upland development. Mainly it’s the people in the forest that we need to help.”

“Instead of reforestation, I’ve insisted on assisted natural regeneration, or ANR. I am working now on a project in Bohol involving ANR. Many cogon areas and trees are being burned every year. We are trying to rehabilitate grasslands, and I see mostly exotic species. We are using existing natural regenerants – brought by the wind, brought by animals. We don’t do planting. We help nature in its rehabilitation of its former forest. After a year, the natural regenerants are taller than me already! The planted trees are starting to show green. We hope the project can promote ANR in other areas.”

What gives Ernie the heart to continue is the satisfaction of seeing people doing something in the uplands. “I’d rather be in the field and working with people, than sitting down and doing reports. One farmer



Coastal regeneration of mangroves is widespread in Bohol and communities know its value. Outmigration, too, has resulted in less cutting of mangroves for fuelwood and the limestone slopes in many areas are regenerating

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Bush regeneration at the Chocolate Hills

“I am still hopeful there will be a change of policy. Government should be more serious in its approach to forestry and local government should do its share. But there is also the problem of leadership. When a new leader comes in, the program is stalled.”

told me that he used the press board to press the weeds, and it only took him half a day, what would otherwise have taken him a week! That’s the satisfaction I get in teaching technology – what usually takes a week, takes half a day. Some farmers really adapt to knowledge.”

“Sometimes I do get frustrated. I was working with a local group’s chairman and he was supposed to call a meeting, but he didn’t. By the time they all arrived it was lunch time, and I had to ensure they had something to eat. That’s why upland development work needs to be subsidized, because upland people live hand-to-mouth. And sometimes in an area where there are indigenous communities, one among them will stand out and perhaps go to school. But they don’t return or they take advantage of the others.”

As to what can be done, Ernie advises that permanent crops be planted in these areas. “What I feel is that upland communities should be supported to do their own livelihood. I am still hopeful there will be a change of policy. Government should be more serious in its approach to forestry and local government should do its share. But there is also the problem of leadership. When a new leader comes in, the program is stalled.”

And for the younger people who want to take this path, Ernie advises against taking up forestry. “I would encourage them to take up environmental management, which is more holistic, not just trees and forests. And they will need to work with people, which is the most difficult part. They should go into some kind of apprenticeship . . . nobody gives apprenticeship nowadays for this kind of work.”

An upland development veteran, Ernie is aware that a number of battles were lost, but the war continues in securing the uplands through regeneration, not reforestation, and in uplifting the lives of the many who are poor through permanent agro-forestry crops, not short-term projects.



JESUS ALPOR, DEBORAH and JOSE MANLAPAZ
Root Furniture Makers



We passed through the wood furniture establishments in Real, Quezon and interviewed Deborah Manlapaz, the owner of 'Root Furniture.' She related her success story of running the business. Within eight years, she was able to expand her business and started exporting her products. She was also able to evenly distribute her land area to her children, who then put up their own shops, employing their own workers including carpenters, sanders, and laborers. It has become a joint business where they supply products to the big malls in Manila, such as SM Malls and Tiendesitas. But Deborah says that these days, while the wood furniture business still helps the family, it is not really a booming industry. Competition is stiff as there are many similar establishments sprouting like mushrooms along the mountain roadside to Manila. They are happy that they can still break even and more importantly, Deborah's business can help neighboring families.

We also spoke with some workers who were on their lunch break. Others were not able to work because it was raining heavily and they do their work outside the shop. We learned that they get the driftwood or tree stumps used to make the furniture from the rivers in the nearby hills and mountains. They pay Php250.00 as stipend for each person who gets the wood (*narra*, *acacia*, *yakal*, mahogany). The purchase price will depend on the size of the wood. The laborers will then manually lift and carry the driftwood to the shop. Often, this will take several days as they do not have vehicles that can pull the wood.

Legally operating without a license

They say these days the driftwood in Real is scarce. They go as far as Polilio Island and the nearby islands to get the wood, using motorized boats to bring the wood over to Real. Although they are often scrutinized at checkpoints, they continue the operations. They cannot have bulk deliveries because these will be held up by the regimented checkpoints. What they usually do is have small and intermittent transport deliveries, both for the driftwood and the finished products. Bulk deliveries are subjected to extensive scrutiny and interrogation and the finished products can be impounded in the DENR office in Los Baños, Laguna (another province), where they have to pay a fee and produce the necessary documents to claim the products.

At the shop, the carpenters and sanders earn from PhP250.00 to PhP350.00, depending on their expertise. Most of the workers are beginners still learning carpentry work or in the process of acquiring furniture-making skills. Those already having skills are working in Manila or in other cities.

As the land in the area is not suitable for farming, the main sources of people's livelihoods are carpentry work and furniture-making, apart from fishing. Their daily wages are insufficient for their family needs, so they also plant some crops to augment their food needs.

There is one cooperative in the area, the Ugat-Tuod Multi-Purpose Cooperative, an eight-year old organization. *Ugat* means root and *tuod* refers to the dead wood or driftwood that the cooperative uses as wood material for the furniture they make. The cooperative has 67 shops as members and each shop has four to five workers – carpenters and sanders. Each worker has a family that depends on the earnings of the cooperative.

Jesus “Bebot” Alpor spoke with us about how their group started. “Somebody saw driftwood in the river and thought of what artistic, good design can be made out of the wood, realizing that the wood can be made useful and not just left to rot. That’s how it started. The driftwood was made into furniture and displayed along the roadside. There are

different shapes and some are good as chairs and benches. One was bought, then another one was made and this was bought again, until the whole thing grew. We were few before, but now there are so many of us, copying each other. Bert Pasia was the one who started here. We first started with a center table and we had no training whatsoever. We really didn’t have carpenters here; we just learned and got trained.”

They get their wood from the surrounding mountains. Other sources are the towns of Polilio, Burdeos, Patnanungan, Jomalig, and Panukulan. They only use driftwood and for a single piece, one can either add or cut off some parts to create a furniture piece. “When selecting and buying the wood, one must know how to proportion for the wood design intended. One must be creative,” Bebot says.

For capital, they save up to get the sufficient amount needed. Bebot uses his earnings for his children’s schooling, much like everybody else. He has three children, two in high school and a three-year old. He sent the eldest to school and expects the youngest to be helped by the eldest.

“We think the wood sources will still last for another 10 years, and so will the business. There are still many trees, *kamagong* and *narra*. This will still last for a long time if the cooperative members are the only ones who will get the driftwood, and the supply is not be opened to outsiders.” He shows us a piece of wood and tells us that “this is a good wood and will not crack. It is seasoned and old. If this is new, the wood will crack. We use Johnson’s Wax in putting on the finish. We sandpaper the wood first, 24, 100, 180, 400 times. Once we reach 400, we just wax.”

The prices of the finished products differ, but do not vary by much. These are agreed upon with the buyers. Their average monthly sales do not go lower than PhP10,000 or PhP15,000. Sometimes they get PhP50,000, but there are also times when they do not get any sales at all.

The buyers come from Manila, Cavite, Batangas and they see the displayed furniture as they pass by on the road. “They like it because it’s natural. We also receive orders for custom-made furniture. There are also those who buy fresh cut wood, but we rarely get a supply now because this is now banned.” There are also finished products in Infanta, the neighboring town, but these are made out of fresh cut wood.

Bebot says that “there are also the loggers who get the wood by bulk and their prices may depend on the effort, or per board foot. The loggers at first came from here, then this spread to Infanta, General Nakar. There are no alternatives here. This is the source of livelihood. The soil is not good. It needs fertilizer, especially if vegetable crops are to be planted.

“There are some IPs, the Agtas, in the area but they are not part of the cooperative. Some bring the driftwood to us and we buy it. If they see a cut tree, they slice the tree. They are our source of wood sometimes.”

We shared with Bebot that there are those who say that logging is one of the causes of the 2004 disaster in their area. He responds, “It depends on the type of soil. Within the Laguna area, there are no more trees, but why is there no landslide? Here, we have lots of trees, but there were many landslides. It was due to the force and volume of water, the volume of rain that fell. There were landslides in areas where there was no cutting. It really depends on the soil type. Even if these are areas where there is no cutting, if the rains are heavy, it will give way. And there was also an earthquake.”

Bebot is from Real and his mother was also born in Real. “Before I got into this furniture making, I used to get fresh cut wood in the mountain, because there are those who order fresh cut. In this business, we don’t have investors, only the business people where we get our wages. I will not get driftwood if I don’t have a budget. Sometimes, we give cash advances to those who will gather the driftwood.”

To purchase his equipment, Bebot says he got the funds by selling one of his two carabaos (buffalo). He had bought the carabaos when he sold his piglets. He was able to buy a sander, a grinder, a planer and a hand drill.





Their cooperative is registered with the Cooperative Development Authority, the Department of Trade and Industry, and with the Mayor's Office. They pay their taxes and have a barangay permit. But in transporting their finished products, this is where they have the difficulties.

“When you have finished products for transport, a receipt is issued. If there is a buyer, we issue a delivery receipt or official receipt. Once these are complete, there are other permits needed because we still cannot easily transport the products. The DENR wants us to get a permit from the CENRO in town to transport our products out of Real. So we just follow the rules, even if this is tedious, so that the product will not be held at the checkpoint, even if our papers are complete with the local government.

“Once we get our permit, we need *padulas* or grease money (also referred to locally as SOP). The grease money is not so much sometimes. Their reasoning is that sometimes they have visitors, and they need the money to feed their visitors and they have only a very small allowance. It's not much if it's only for the permit. The legal way is to compute the amount based on the board feet. It's PhP300 per permit. When they do verification of the product as to whether it matches what is in the permit, the fee is higher. To save time, we deal under the table. Our costs can reach PhP1,200 per permit. Also, there's PhP150 for the mayor's permit.”

One of them explained to us the sequence of the SOP. The first is for the CENRO, and this is given under the table, with no receipt. Then there are the various checkpoints, all SOP even if there are legal permits. This means that from Real to Manila, this involves the police, DENR, the military (AFP or Armed Forces of the Philippines) checkpoints, or if going by Laguna or Tanay, there are the DENR monitoring checkpoints. So total costs can reach PhP2,000 per permit.

“Even if we have a permit, they will tell us we have a fake permit and there is an anomaly. Somebody will start weighing, so that he can also ask for some money,” they complain. “We are really made to suffer. Don't they know that every time the products get held up, there are many families who are held up as well, as they depend on this for food?”



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“If what is being bought is only one or two sets for personal use, they allow these to be transported. If the products go beyond this volume, then they don’t allow it unless there is a permit. That is why when we deliver, we do it in bulk and we hide the products. We hire a closed van and when we reach the checkpoint, we negotiate. Many will be hungry if the products do not pass through the checkpoint. Often, we are allowed pass through. Even if hidden, we still ask for their permission.

“DENR has a tree planting project and we are obliged to take part in this activity. We planted gmelina, mangium, mahogany in the areas located by DENR. We started planting seven years ago, and there are some tall trees already, but only 10% survived, as there was no maintenance. Now, they want us to plant jatropha, but this has not started yet as there is no MOA.”

It is not difficult to see where this situation has gone wrong, but for Bebot Alpor and his fellow cooperative members and their families, and for the forests in Quezon province, the way forward is not easy.



ELISEA GOZUN
Former DENR Secretary

As an activist during the Marcos era, Elisea “Bebet” Gozun niched her career path in working for social development. With her background in social work and management, she joined the government from 1986 to 1989 during the term of President Corazon Aquino, assisting the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of Natural Resources (which was transformed into the Department of Environment and Natural Resources or DENR in 1986). She then worked as a consultant for various government and multilateral projects on housing, urban environment and development concerns, and natural resource management. Bebet was appointed as DENR Secretary in December 2002, until she resigned in August 2004. Since then, she has gone back to consultancy work, focusing on assistance to local governments in relation to urban environmental concerns.

During her DENR term, her efforts were in the review and rationalization of existing environmental laws and policies, especially on solid waste, clean air, and the environmental impact system. On forests and coastal areas, the achievements were in the issuance of policies that sought to reiterate CBFM as the sustainable national forest management strategy and coastal resource management planning. A controversy she faced in the early part of her DENR stint was the distinction she made on where the Department of Agriculture and the DENR administrative jurisdictions were in relation to fishing in coastal waters. It was also during her term that the National Mining Policy was issued that also was an effort to put the social and environmental concerns upfront in relation to the Mining Act that much affects the sustainability of forestlands.



“When I joined DENR in 1986, I began to understand what the environment work was all about, and this brought about my new activism. The good thing going for us is that as a general rule, the environmental awareness is much higher today. In the mid-1980s, the environmental workers were voices in the wilderness. Many have joined the choir since then, even if they do not know much. And this is where it is sad for me, as we seem to be unable to capture and mobilize meaningfully this awareness. Much deepening of thought is needed to understand the benefits and the impact. There is a major disconnect in government, in NGOs, and in the private sector.”

A major forest plantation investment scheme in Agusan del Sur in Mindanao was also a focus during her term as DENR Secretary. From February 2003 until her departure from DENR, Bebet worked to clarify the forest plantation agreements with Shannalyne, Incorporated, covering around 170,000 hectares of forestlands. This was a legacy from previous DENR administrations and Bebet reviewed both the technical and financial capacity of the company, the erroneous allocation boundaries, the overlaps with other tenurial and land use agreements, the non-integration with land and river management plans, and the peace and order situation in the area. By the time Bebet left, DENR gave an ultimatum for the company and for the Philippine government to either rescind or re-establish the investment agreement clearly protecting the primary forest. Her predecessors were not able to pursue this. Such levels of poor management continue to haunt business interests, ancestral rights and ecological services, making it hard to make real progress.

Bebet’s current work draws her into many meetings and discussions with local government leaders, mayors and governors. Her work is especially focused on ensuring the implementation of the Clean Air Act, of which one of the provisions is the shift from the commonly-used two-stroke engines in the millions of tricycles all over the country.



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“We talk with tricycle drivers, and they are aware that they are contributing to the air pollution due to the emissions from their motorbikes. But until they understand this in relation to the health of their kids, the incentive to shift is not there. And once they understand the health impact, and they are willing to shift to cleaner technology, the next question is where do they get the capital to shift? And this is where the government, the private sector, and the NGOs have to step in to address the gaps and the needs. We are still far from achieving this technology shift and a conscious effort needs to be driven and with much assistance from local and national governments.”

Bebet shares that “in the reality of the Philippines, things will happen locally through the League of Mayors. There’s a culture of sharing amongst mayors and they are competitive, but we need to assist them in knowledge management and putting in place the mechanisms necessary. And whether these are the coastal or forestry areas, the situation is not working nationally. At the local level, at best it is spotty. In forestry, CBFM’s enabling mechanisms are not there to make it work, like the agrarian reform. In the management plans, the wherewithal is not there to actually ensure the implementation of these plans.”

While recognizing that historically, DENR is a regulatory agency, Bebet is aware that the agency has to transform, “and it will take a generation for us to change the focus from regulations and move towards to what DENR is supposed to achieve. It is not developmental at the moment.”

During a meeting on a Convention of Cities in Manila, she was able to speak with the Mayor of Bogota, Colombia, who was surprised that the Philippine president spoke with pride that the Philippines is exporting welders, because they are much needed in other countries. Bebet worries that with this outmigration, the national government does not appear to have a plan for when this export of skilled people tapers off eventually, as the huge social costs are

not getting factored in the equation. With the commitment that’s leaving the country, what profile of the Filipino is left?

Bebet also shared a story of the fragmented management in fisheries, for example. In San Roque in Central Luzon where a huge dam was put up, tilapia (an introduced fish species that dominates the local markets) was bred. The tilapia’s prolific population soon finished off almost all the native fish that were originally thriving in the rivers. “Decision-makers don’t realize our riches and we need to protect what we have already. We only seem to learn after mistakes are done and we continue to put people in jobs where they are clueless.”

Bebet still can recall memories of childhood that include an appreciation of the environment and nature. “I grew up in Manila, but originally came from Cebu City. I’m now settled here in Marikina City, but I like open spaces, climbing trees. Even if I was growing up in a largely urban setting, we used to swim in Angat when I was in high school, and that was where I saw a forest and it was beautiful. We also used to swim in Manila Bay regularly and I remember dipping our boiled bananas in the saltwater so that they’re tastier. Until one time, we saw something floating, and that was the last time I swam there.”

“At this point, I fault two things: the education system and the church. These are two major institutions where the opportunities are there to make values really mean something and where the understanding can come in. Right now, these values don’t go into the heart. We seem to be just mouthing these values. The most strategic intervention is through the school, but look at the curriculum now. The Church is not there to open us to the spiritual values and relations and does not bring us deeper to the levels of human justice in the present politicization of environmental concerns. The environment needs to be understood in its connection with everything in our lives.”

She acknowledges as well that efforts to help indigenous peoples are not undertaken with a concerted effort and therefore the cultural heritage is not well appreciated. With over 100 languages and 80 dialects, indigenous communities in the country are not valued for the cultural wealth and knowledge they can contribute to broader society.

Bebet was involved in managing agricultural businesses when she was not in government, mostly family-owned. She is aware that huge plantation development activities in Mindanao are changing the landscapes, the employment. “As long as plantations are in production areas, these should be workable along with ensuring that people benefit and the operations are sustainable. There is much degraded land and the policies must be geared towards value-added production to support the economy in these areas. But the more fundamental issue is that there must be no conversion of food production areas for jatropa or other plantation species. There should be no encroachment in forestlands. Agriculture must be limited to agricultural lands and the management should be environmental as well. There are systems of plantations that do not rely on monocrops. We need models for that.

“I am sad to say this, but there is no logical agency to be involved in environmental concerns except for the DENR, who has the key role. But how do we get the DENR to re-tool itself and to provide that role to push and not be a push-over. It is going to be hard, because people at the top don’t even see it. The DENR must recognize what the priorities are and put the resources behind these.

“My two children are grown-up and they have their own jobs. I’m hoping that they get involved in what I’m doing. For now, they support what I’m doing, but are not directly involved in environmental work. But I’m doing this work for my kids. I love my two kids and I love my country.

“As I said, things are improving, awareness is high, more people are getting involved, environmental discussions are getting mainstreamed. The Gawad Kalinga shelter program is focused on providing housing,



but they are also going beyond and integrating environmental enhancement.

“What gives me hope is working with LGUs and getting them convinced. We are building up from local experiences, whether these are local community strategies or driven by the LGUs themselves. The quiet sustainability their experiences provide, the adaptations and the upgrading, these are critical. We need to look less at policy and veer away from the massive flagship programs. When people start asking for help, that is the point where significant change can occur.”