

MBN Implementation: Barangay Casoroy, San Julian, Eastern Samar

EDEN VALMONTE-SANTIAGO*

Through the application of the Minimum Basic Needs Approach, Barangay Casoroy, a rural community in the municipality of San Julian, Eastern Samar has palpably improved its condition from a poor barangay with limited access to basic needs and livelihood opportunities to a community characterized by better quality of life among its individual households. Dedicated field workers of various line agencies, the contagious enthusiasm of the municipal technical working group, the competent people's organizations, and supportive barangay leadership succeeded in converging their efforts and steering the community members to act and provide counterpart contribution to local projects addressing the residents' minimum basic needs. The collaborative efforts of the different sectors proved that, indeed, success can be attained even with the barest of resources.

Background

Ito na yata ang pinakaangkop na pamamaraang naisip ng gobyerno para sa amin. (This may be the most appropriate approach thought of by the government for us.) Such is how the leaders of Casoroy, a barangay in San Julian, Eastern Samar look at the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) approach. The experience of Casoroy in the implementation of the MBN approach appears to be a significant milestone in its history as a barangay. Today, the achievements of Casoroy have made it as the showcase of San Julian as far as rural transformation is concerned.

The inclusion of Casoroy as one of the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS) barangays proved to be a facilitating factor as it eventually opened the gates to a more comprehensive approach such as the MBN.

The study on the experience of Casoroy reveals an interplay of concerted efforts, where the contribution of one propels and inspires the others. The roles played by the municipal and barangay technical working groups, the people's organizations and the community residents themselves all tell one good story, the significance of which lies in the answered needs of its people. While the MBN approach has no bearing at all on the more affluent sectors of society, it really strikes at the very heart of the marginalized sector that makes up Casoroy. This case study hopes to inspire barangays in similar situations and encourage them to adopt the MBN approach and

*University Researcher II, Center for Local and Regional Governance, National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines.

eventually transform themselves as they prepare to face the challenges of the new administration.

San Julian was chosen based on the criteria set by the Department of the Interior and Local Government on I SERVE MBN (Innovative Service Response of Vibrant and Empowered Municipalities to Basic Needs). The selection of Casoroy as the case barangay, however, was decided upon by the SRA-MBN Municipal Technical Working Group (MTWG) of San Julian in consultation with the Barangay Captain. Data gathering was conducted on 16-20 February 1998. Municipal and barangay documents/reports served as the secondary sources of information while the primary data came from interviews with the members of the MTWG and key persons in the barangay. The interviews as well as the two sets of focus group discussions (FGD) conducted in the barangay involving the key implementors provided the insights to the case. Actual observation of projects also helped in gathering relevant information.

The Context

Selecting the Barangay

Casoroy is one of three pilot barangays in the municipality of San Julian covered by CIDSS. As a flagship program of the Ramos Administration under the Social Reform Agenda (SRA), CIDSS was implemented in Barangay Casoroy in March 1995. Selection of the target barangays was done in consultation with the municipal officials of San Julian using the following criteria:

- * poor with limited access to food, clothing, shelter, education and health services and facilities and livelihood opportunities;
- * high incidence of dysfunctional families;
- * low level of participation in community activities/projects; and
- * accessibility for monitoring.

Having the above criteria plus active and responsive barangay officials and community leaders, Casoroy qualified to be one of the CIDSS areas. The two other barangays were Putong and San Isidro. Situated nine kilometers north of the poblacion, the national highway from Borongan to nearby Samar and Tacloban provinces traverses Casoroy. In 1995, the barangay's population stood at 1,062. It is divided into 179 households and 202 families. There are more males (52 percent) than females (48 percent) in the barangay.

Barangay Casoroy has an interesting origin that dates back to the early Spanish times. However, it officially became a barangay only in 1968 through the efforts of

its own leaders. Considered a small-sized barangay of San Julian, Casoroy covers a total land area of 238.28 has. which occupy a measly 2.06 percent of the municipality's total area. Casoroy is largely made up of agricultural lands (97.5 percent) that provide the main source of livelihood to its people.

There is no existing barangay health station in the area. Instead there is a multi-purpose barangay hall fronting a basketball court and a mini-stage where most community activities are held. A glance into Casoroy's socioeconomic profile would reveal that indeed, poverty characterizes the barangay.

CIDSS uses the strategy of employing a community worker for each municipality who is tasked to undertake social preparation, the most critical phase of the project. In Barangay Casoroy, the CIDSS worker's initial activities focused on familiarization with the place and the people, resource inventory and identification of potential leaders. She prepared the community through the conduct of a barangay assembly, meetings, consultation dialogues and home visitations.

Part of the social preparation process that took place in the barangay was the organization of working committees, which became responsible for the formulation and implementation of development plans and projects. Casoroy may be considered to have responded well in this respect through the creation of the following committees:

- * Livelihood Committee;
- * Health and Sanitation Committee;
- * Education Committee;
- * Infrastructure Committee;
- * Supplemental Feeding Parents Committee; and
- * Day Care Parents Committee.

After the establishment of said community structures, capability-building activities ensued to prepare the members for the mobilization process. Consequently, the working committees were mobilized in the formulation of the community profile and community development plan based on the output of the participative survey using the Family Data Survey Form. The survey facilitated the identification of 106 high-risk families as the priority target beneficiaries. From there, different projects were identified and implemented such as supplemental feeding, livelihood assistance, construction of a day care center and aid to individuals in crisis situation.

The Process of Introduction to MBN

The MBN approach reached San Julian through Executive Order No. 194 and Proclamation No. 548 directing the municipality to implement SRA using the approach. This meant having to prepare their local poverty alleviation plans based on MBN, and to institute the necessary interventions in order to meet these needs. The

municipality was also asked to come up with a listing of priority programs, projects and activities based on MBN results for incorporation and funding by the local 20 percent Development Fund and other available funding sources under the Annual Investment Plan. In response to the above issuances, the municipality created the SRA-MBN Municipal Technical Working Group (MTWG) that would be responsible for all MBN-related concerns.

The mayor technically has the overall supervision over the SRA-MBN implementation but the MTWG is the real workhorse whose members report to him all developments related to it. Before the formal implementation of the approach, the mayor already did his advocacy activities by giving advance information to the people during his barangay visits. He learned about the approach and the importance of people participation in its implementation through the seminars and training programs he attended in Manila and Tacloban.

The Vice-Mayor acts as chairperson of the MTWG. He gives the political inspiration expected from the local government unit (LGU). The following members support him:

- * Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator (MPDC);
- * Social Welfare Officer (SWO);
- * Municipal Health Officer (MHO);
- * Municipal Agricultural Officer (MAO);
- * District Supervisor from the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS);
- * Municipal Local Government Operations Officer (MLGOO); and
- * Barangay Local Government Operations Officer (BLGOO) (now assigned to the municipality of San Policarpio).

In March 1996, exactly a year after CIDSS was implemented in the municipality, the SRA-MBN Provincial Technical Working Group (PTWG) conducted a trainers' training for the newly created San Julian MBN Team. The training was specifically aimed to transfer the skill of operationalizing MBN at their level. Four key MTWG members attended: the MLGOO, SWO, MAO and the MHO. The MPDC was on maternity leave at the time, but later on became one of the two stronger pillars of the MBN approach in the municipality, the other one being the SWO.

In order to promote the approach to the municipality, the MTWG conducted orientation and consultation seminars at two levels. At the municipal level, they advocated the approach to the members of the *Sangguniang Bayan* (SB). Advocacy at the barangay level was through all the barangay officials and other members of the barangay development councils including the people's organizations. MBN orientation per barangay included the installation of the community-based information system. After the conduct of orientation and consultation workshops, the training of barangay MBN action teams followed. This commenced in April of the same year.

The activity aimed to enhance their knowledge in the conduct of the MBN survey using the standard minimum basic needs. Four representatives from each barangay were invited. They were usually the barangay health workers (BHWs), the barangay nutrition scholars (BNS), barangay officials including the *Sangguniang Kabataan* (SK) chairpersons and representatives from POs.

The MTWG gave inputs to the barangays whenever possible, i.e., during Barangay Development Council (BDC) meetings and assemblies to make the people aware of what MBN is all about. They encouraged the barangays by making SRA-MBN accomplishments one of the bases for evaluating the performance of barangay officials. As such, they were expected to allocate funds for the purpose, e.g. for databoards and other activities related to MBN. The appointment of the Vice-Mayor as chair of the MTWG helped MBN get the support it needed from the SB. This later on resulted in the enactment on 22 July of Resolution No. 96-56 series of 1996 adopting the Social Reform Agenda convergence policy through the MBN approach. Tapping the SB through the Vice-Mayor, to a large extent, facilitated the enactment of other legislative actions related to MBN, i.e. adoption of the municipal annual investment plans, municipal development plans, among others.

Community Volunteer Monitors (CVMs) recruited from every barangay did the actual survey. During the MBN baseline survey, there was no screening done on the selection of CVMs. Thus, problems of data inconsistencies cropped up due to low level of education of some CVMs. To correct the situation, the MPDC started enforcing stricter but informal procedures in selecting them. She required the barangay captains to submit the names of prospective CVMs. From there, they made a shortlist of persons whom they thought could best serve the interest of the community. CVMs are usually the barangay secretaries, BHWs, BNSs, day care workers, barangay councilors and members of people's organizations like the Barangay Water and Sanitation Association (BAWASA).

While the capability of CVMs was low at first, the MTWG members patiently coordinated with them and constantly monitored their activities, checking and re-checking the forms to eliminate inconsistencies in the data. Checking the survey forms proved to be a grueling experience. After undergoing scrutiny by the MPDC and SWO, it was found that data inconsistencies were also partly due to misinterpretation of MBN survey questionnaires. Hence, forms were given back to the interviewers up to four times to check and re-check the information. Unreliability of data occurred also in cases where the *kagawads* who attended the meetings/orientation hastily endorsed the conduct of survey to somebody else who did not know the job very well.

Difficulty also occurred in understanding the MBN questions at first because of negatively stated indicators and because the forms were written in Cebuano. Members of the municipal and barangay TWG thought it would be better understood if the forms were written in Tagalog or English. The presence of negative indicators resulted in misinterpretation of data and further differing opinions on what should

be adopted. What they did was to ask the help of the province for another reorientation and clarification particularly of the negative indicators.

Before the drafting of the final survey results, the information gathered from the survey was collated and subsequently presented to the community during barangay assemblies for validation. The process was able to effectively correct the inconsistencies or inaccuracies in the data with the help of the people themselves. Since the people worked in the farm during the day, barangay assemblies were held at night. During data validation, only about 30 percent of the household members were present, while the majority were in their houses listening to the loudspeaker. But once their names were read, they came out to see if the data concerning them were correct. If incorrect, they aired their complaints at once, which was also encouraged by the MTWG. Masterlists for every indicator were prepared in order to easily pinpoint the affected families or individuals. From the masterlists, the MTWG members read the names of families whose needs were unmet. Before the completion of the process, numerous corrections were made since the community members would not be contented once data inaccuracy occurred.

The validated MBN profile then served as the basis of the community for prioritizing problems. Barangay captains took charge of prioritizing the problems from the first to the last (33rd) indicator. In order not to overload them, priority problems to be given attention were limited to six.

The MTWG members then guide the barangays in the formulation of their annual investment plans. They see to it that the barangay plans reflect the results of the situation analysis.

In terms of installing the community-based information system, San Julian takes pride in its databoards throughout the municipality. One can observe that the community, together with the M/BTWG really gave their best shot in building such boards. Databoards show the six most pressing problems identified through the survey, which are color-coded for easy reference. At first, the MPDC and SWO did the color-coding, but now, doing it has become so familiar to the people, that even the children understand it. The common data presented on the boards are the number of households and the names of family heads while the problems vary per barangay. At least six major problems are reflected which they prioritized during community assemblies. These are problems they would want to focus on and solve within a certain period. The three most common are low income, absence of sanitary toilet and lack of potable water supply.

The people of San Julian owe the MPDC and SWO for making the implementation of the MBN approach work. After laying down the groundwork, the two took pains to see to it that the results of the MBN survey found their way not only to the development plans and databoards of the barangays but to the individual households as well, where the minimum basic needs of each are met. In the process, they found it was no easy task, even compromising their family obligations at times.

One strategy being employed by the MPDC in coordination with the MLGOO and other members of the MTWG is to hold the honoraria of barangay officials who are not able to submit the MBN results by a given date. This strategy has effectively mobilized them to submit the reports on time, which also forms part of their accomplishments as local officials.

Barangay Casoroy shares the experiences of San Julian in the process of MBN implementation. One advantage it has over the other barangays is that of being a CIDSS area. As such, it has undergone an intensive social preparation process with the help of the CIDSS worker. It has a one year-edge of immersion to a similar development approach over the others since CIDSS was introduced a year before. What is more significant though in Barangay Casoroy is the active participation of its leaders from the barangay officials down to members of people's organizations. These people possess open minds when it comes to development interventions. They welcomed the idea of the MBN approach as something that would liberate them from their present situation. Moreover, the barangay welcomed the MBN approach since it targets all families in the area unlike CIDSS, which prioritizes only 106 high-risk families. There are also 33 MBN indicators compared to CIDSS with only 26.

The Casoroy MBN Action Team otherwise known as the Barangay TWG is composed of all barangay officials, the principal and teacher in-charge as DECS representative, the agricultural technologist and the midwife assigned in the barangay, and basic sector representatives. The four reliable community volunteer monitors on the other hand, are the two councilwomen, the barangay secretary and the BHW.

The MBN baseline survey done in Casoroy served as the take-off point of the BDC planning session on 12 November 1996 the output of which was incorporated in the 1997 Barangay Annual Investment Plan (see Appendix). An examination of the barangay AIP from 1994 to 1998 reveals a noticeable shift in the prioritization of barangay projects. Note that AIP projects in 1994 and 1995 were mainly infrastructure in nature, whereas, more projects geared to social services were/are funded from 1996 up to 1998.

Aside from the MBN baseline survey done in 1996, Casoroy has completed a total of two cycles of data gathering. The second cycle, however, is still for data validation.

Funding

CIDSS activities are funded from the allocation of the line agencies (e.g. DSWD) in the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF) I while PAF II that is directly given to the municipality is used for MBN activities of non-CIDSS areas. Thus, Casoroy which received PAF I was no longer included in PAF II for equalization purposes.

For 1998, the proposed SRA-MBN activities in San Julian are listed under "Other Activities" in the 20 percent Development Fund. Activities include updating and printing of barangay development plans, and a small amount will be used as honoraria of CVMs.

Leadership Initiatives

Role in SAPIME

The success of the MBN approach in Barangay Casoroy can be attributed to the interplay of many factors in all the different aspects of the management cycle, from situation analysis to planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (SAPIME). Foremost of these are the active participation of its leaders and the perseverance displayed by the key members of the MTWG and the CIDSS worker.

There is no doubt that CIDSS facilitated the community transformation process that took place in the barangay, which was later enhanced by the MBN approach. While the municipal and barangay officials might have done their jobs before, CIDSS and subsequently the SRA-MBN, have definitely ushered the community into the more recent and responsive style of local governance: that of allowing the people to manage their own affairs.

The community volunteer monitors of Casoroy, i.e. two councilwomen, the barangay secretary and the BHW, diligently conduct the MBN survey. While it appears to be a tedious job that takes patience and commitment, the constant and close supervision of the MTWG serves as encouragement for them to go on. During the course of the survey, the CVMs accumulated a lot of stories enumerating their experiences. They noted the negative attitude of the people as the number one problem, although this had been lessened after several exposures to the survey and after the people have learned that they themselves could directly benefit from it.

The barangay captain of Casoroy made his presence felt even at the start of implementing the approach. The captain, then a kagawad, already set his mind on involving himself in the process. While he may not be directly involved in the conduct of the survey, he serves as the guiding light of the BTWG and the CVMs in the pursuit of MBN-related activities. He acts as the direct link between the MTWG and the barangay implementors not only as far as the MBN approach is concerned but in all matters relating to the barangay.

On the part of the community, while there may be a display of some negative attitude at first, answering the questionnaires dutifully is already an indication of their involvement. In time, they have learned to cooperate and give accurate information, lest they risk deprivation of benefits due them. No matter how the MTWG diligently train the CVMs, if the people will not cooperate in answering the

questionnaire, nothing will happen. Moreover, people participation is really appreciated in the installation of CBIS, because without their involvement and cooperation, it will not be realized.

The outcome of the MBN survey clearly pinpointed the high-risk families who, before, were not the focus of most interventions. It also provided a concrete basis for making Casoroy's annual development/investment plans. With the assistance of the MTWG, the barangay officials and other members of the Barangay Development Council see to it that addressing the unmet MBNs is their topmost priority.

When it comes to project implementation, the community shoulders at least 70 percent of labor while skilled workers are hired to do the other 30 percent. For example, in building day care centers, the skilled workers are paid, while other members of the community give free labor which is "pintakasi" in their local dialect. When there are "pintakasis," the community provides the snacks. There are some community members, however, who do not readily cooperate and need constant prodding to act and be mobilized.

The BTWG monitors the implementation of projects usually after they have given the materials and have set the date of completion. They check every now and then on the progress of the project. Since Casoroy is a CIDSS area, the barangay officials and people's organizations are not the only ones monitoring the projects but also the regional and provincial offices of the DSWD and other line agencies concerned. While the people are not directly involved in the management of MBN activities, they also have this attitude of overseeing how the project will turn out.

Interface With POs

There are several people's organizations in Casoroy which are active in community activities resulting from the MBN approach. Although they are not so much involved in data collection, their presence is mostly felt during the planning and implementation phases. These POs which are also members of the BDC, exist in harmony with barangay officials. Their relationship is one of cooperation and understanding. Since Casoroy is a relatively small community, its barangay officials and leaders are also officers/members of not only one but several committees or associations. Thus, there exists a give and take relationship, not to mention the personal attachments with one another.

A community structure created in response to the number one MBN of the community, that is, access to potable water supply, is the Barangay Water and Sanitation Association (BAWASA). Two of its active members ("caretakers" as they call themselves) have undergone a training program on the maintenance of potable water system in the area. BAWASA is also actively involved in the annual barangay development and investment planning.

A church-inspired organization, the Sta. Iglesia Association also possesses a good working relationship with the barangay officials. As member of the BDC, the Sta. Iglesia president regularly attends its meetings. Its members actively participate in barangay-initiated activities while the barangay leaders on the other hand, support their religious projects. During the recent fiesta celebration, all the funds they gathered from a fund raising activity (i.e. beauty contest) were donated to the barangay and used in putting up water stations. The association also draws its funds from MACARESO, an organization of persons from Casoroy who are now living or working abroad. The extra collections of Sta. Iglesia also go to other barangay projects.

The BFARMC, an organization of farmers and fisherfolk in Casoroy also participates actively in MBN-related concerns. As member of the BDC, the organization focuses on how to increase the income level of almost 80 percent of the populace. Its president noted though, that there is lack of knowledge among the barangay officials on how to make farming and fishery laws suited and applicable to the farmers and fisherfolk based on the identified MBNs. At present, they do not have the irrigation to sustain the needs of rice production and other productive crops like corn, coconut, and abaca, which they could develop. The presence of irrigation and farm-to-market roads could serve as encouragement for the association members to shine and hone their efforts. While their lands have the potentials, they think that construction of more irrigation and access roads will enable them to escape poverty.

The Profile of a Leader

Casoroy appears to be lucky to have Mr. Felimon Camplon as their Barangay Captain. At 42, he won by a landslide in the 1997 barangay elections. Education-wise, he only reached first year high school but he is enriched with life's experiences being a family man with several children, a farmer, an animal raiser and a variety store owner. Though he has been in office for only less than a year, he is armed with his experience as a kagawad (councilor) with the highest number of votes in the 1994 elections. His performance as a barangay official and his genuine commitment to the MBN approach were the primary factors considered by the MTWG in recommending Casoroy as the municipality's showcase barangay.

His experience as a barangay kagawad coupled with his positive attitude toward the MBN approach is his best asset that guides him in performing his duties as a barangay captain. While in office for only less than a year, he is not a neophyte though when it comes to MBN implementation since he was the most responsive and supportive kagawad even from the start.

The captain closely coordinates both with the community volunteer monitors and with the MTWG to ensure that only accurate information will be generated by the survey. He also has the initiative to do everything he can like going after the municipal officials to be able to facilitate the releases of funds to the barangay.

Mr. Camplon focuses his efforts on meeting the basic needs of the people, which were identified through the MBN survey. As a kagawad, he already focused his efforts on MBN. At the time, he saw the weaknesses of the barangay and had a vision of what it must possess.

When he was still a kagawad, he already showed a genuine concern to meet the unmet needs of the community. One of the things he will best be remembered for is when he initiated making at least 26 toilet bowls and distributed them to the different households without this amenity. He solicited the materials he used; the cement came from the LGU while the sand came from the DSWD.

While the captain is a good leader, he is also backed up by a council whose members share his ideals. Hence, they are able to work towards one direction. Whatever success Casoroy has achieved, the barangay leaders readily acknowledge the support extended to them by the MTWG members and the CIDSS worker who showed no hesitation in working 24 hours a day if needed.

Qualities of Leadership Manifested

The barangay kagawads and members of people's organizations view the barangay captain as someone very supportive and able to help his constituents in many respects. They could not help but compare him with the former barangay captain who did not run again because of old age and frequent bouts with illness. They see his relatively young age as an asset that makes him active and quick in following up delayed projects.

The barangay leaders see him as thoughtful, concerned and selfless. In fact, they said he shares the knowledge and experiences with his kagawads by personally inviting them to go with him when there are seminars or training programs usually held in Tacloban. He gives personalized service not only to the people but to his colleagues as well. When there are meetings, he does not rely on somebody else to inform the kagawads, but goes to their houses to personally invite them. His personalized service makes him aware of all the programs/projects and activities going on not only within the barangay but in other parts of the municipality. He hears suggestions from his kagawads on how they can improve the situation. Together, they identify the strengths and weaknesses of the barangay and act from there.

The council members credit him with giving his best to the MBN activities and for displaying his readiness to do everything to make the people benefit from the approach through the efficient delivery of basic services. In fact, some of them mention that there were instances when the captain shelled out his own money whenever there was lack of funds or delay in their release. He has donated weighing scales to the barangay for the use of the children-beneficiaries of the feeding program.

Another leadership quality possessed by Mr. Camplon is his honesty concerning his limitations. His ability not to pretend to know everything always works to the barangay's advantage. He is not ashamed to seek the opinion of the mayor and the MTWG. He does not decide on his own but always consults the municipal officials as well as the barangay leaders. What matters here is his openness to learn for the sake of his barangay.

The positive attitude he has shown towards MBN has easily convinced his constituents to get involved in it. The success of the MBN approach in the area can be partly attributed to the barangay captain who is really persistent in pursuing it. He sees and believes in its importance where the real problems of the community are identified, unlike before when planning and budgeting were automatically focused on infrastructure and not on human/social needs.

Leadership Qualities Expected of the Barangay Captain

In spite of the good leadership qualities possessed by the barangay captain, still, there are those which his colleagues and constituents would like to see in him. They point to his lack of experience since he is just on his first year as a barangay captain. They cite his need for additional training on leadership and on local governance that would equip him with enough knowledge on the Local Government Code and other laws on barangay administration.

They see him as too kind and patient and not wanting to quarrel with anyone, good qualities which sometimes become prone to abuse by some of his constituents. His kagawads expect him to be more strict in enforcing laws, particularly in the prohibition of "tong-its" (a kind of card game) which is prevalent in the area. They say the barangay captain must be tough in dealing with problems. The barangay captain says he is still feeling the waters, since he is newly elected.

One suggestion or reminder is for the captain not to neglect the development of Sitio Layug together with the barangay proper. Sitio Layug is physically detached from but forms part of Barangay Casoroy. It is one of the five puroks/sitios of the barangay. It is important to the people since this is where they get their livelihood (farming and fishing). Most of them only go back to Casoroy to sleep and rest.

Value of MBN to the Community

Dito nagsisimula ang pag-unlad ng isang barangay. Siguro, kung walang MBN dito sa amin, mga ilang pamilya pa lang (hanggang sa ngayon) ang may toilet. Ngayong may MBN na, 37 na lang ang natitira. Noong wala pang MBN, napakahirap ng tubig dito. Ang layo ng pinagkukunan, sa mga creeks lang at sa mga springs. Kaya noon, maraming nagkakasakit ng diarrhea. Nauuwi pa sa pagkamatay ng mga bata

dahil ang source ay hindi malinis. Kung tag-araw naman ay natutuyuan kaya napakahirap na pupunta pa kami sa kalapit na barangay para kumuha ng tubig. Ngayong may MBN na, may communal water system na kami (Marianita C. Duras, Barangay Secretary, 17 February 1998). (The development of a barangay starts here. Maybe if there is no MBN in our area, only a few families may have their own toilets. Now that there is MBN, only 37 families are left without this facility. When there was no MBN yet, water was very scarce. We used to get it from creeks and springs located very far. That was why many children got sick of diarrhea before. The unsanitary source of water even resulted in the death of many of our children. Said sources become dry during summer which make it hard for us to go to the adjacent barangay to fetch water. Now that MBN is here, we already have the communal water system.)

Indeed, the leaders of Casoroy believe that meeting the minimum basic needs of the people at the grassroots is the most responsive approach of the Ramos Administration to local development. According to its leaders, the MBN approach is a big help to the barangay. They are witnesses to the fact that their barangay has slowly developed since its inception. It opened the eyes of the barangay leaders as well as of the municipal workers to see what the people really need and to focus on the problems that require immediate attention. Before the implementation of the MBN approach, projects in the barangay were not focused on the needs of the people. They implemented whatever project they could think of, the majority of which were devoted to infrastructure, like plazas, waiting sheds, basketball courts, those which are easily visible to the people.

Through the MBN, the community of Casoroy was able to identify and prioritize the most pressing problems like access to potable water supply and absence of sanitary toilet facilities among the household members (see Table 1). It has become their basis for organized action. Because of the process, national and local assistance flowed to the barangay. They were able to easily respond in providing the necessary interventions. For example, through the resolution passed by the BDC, the PPDO and DSWD gave additional materials for septic tanks (Interview with Ms. Conia Desoloc, 17 February 1998).

The result of the baseline survey was disheartening where the databoard showed majority of the households full of red marks that indicated unmet needs. The MPDC who knew these people personally particularly expressed this feeling. This gave her and other members of the MTWG the drive to continue with what little support the LGU could immediately give.

Table 1 shows the top priority MBNs for 1996 and 1997. Improvements in identified MBNs can be noted in comparing the two cycles. The identified problems were referred to the different municipal offices concerned, e.g. the malnourished children were attended to by the MSWDO; the names of families in need of health services were given to the Municipal Health Office (MHO). This resulted in a more

intensive delivery of health services where the health providers brought their services right to the doorstep of the people.

Table 1. Comparative MBN Data for 1996 and 1997

MBN Indicator Number	Indicator	2nd Semester 1996		2nd Semester 1997		Change in Percentage
		%	Rank	%	Rank	
13	Family with access to potable water	20.11	1	63.53	6	43.42
05	Deliveries attended by trained personnel	23.53	2	100.0	-	76.47
14	Family with sanitary toilet	48.60	3	79.55	12	30.95
02	No severely and moderately underweight children under 5 years old	53.03	4	71.08	11	18.05
17	Housing durable for at least five years	56.42	5	70.71	10	14.29
27	Children 13-16 years old in high school	61.29	6	66.13	8	4.84
25	Children 3-5 years old attending day care/pre-school	64.71	7	45.00	1	(19.71)
24	Family with income above subsistence threshold level	67.04	8	46.40	3	(20.64)
06	Infants immunized	67.86	9	45.45	2	(22.41)
11	Couples practicing family planning in the last 6 months	74.70	10	89.69	18	14.99
23	Other members of the family 15 years and above are employed	92.74	17	50.82	4	(41.92)
33	No child below 7 years old left unattended	100.0	-	58.0	5	(42.0)
28	Family members 10 years old and above able to read, write and do simple computation	88.83	16	63.54	7	(25.29)
04	Infants exclusively breast-fed for at least 4 months	93.10	18	70.00	9	(23.1)

Source: MBN Barangay Tabulation Forms, 1996 and 1997, Casoroy, San Julian, Eastern Samar.

Lack of access to potable water supply which surfaced as the number one problem in 1996 went down to number six in 1997, with a change in percentage point of 43.42 percent. In response to this problem, the Barangay Water and Sanitation Association (BAWASA) was created. Its main contribution was to help the BDC in implementing water and sanitation projects. It installed water pipes that enabled the people to obtain potable water from the spring development project. It benefited the whole barangay though not yet enough particularly during the dry season because of the El Niño phenomenon. But this should prove sufficient as the rainy season comes.

Likewise, the need for sanitary toilets registered a change in percentage point of 30.95 percent. Before it was identified as a minimum basic need, human wastes were seen everywhere, with bad effects on health especially those of the children. Unsanitary environment caused diarrhea, skin and worm infection and other common illnesses. In addition, it contributed to the degradation of the shoreline. This situation, however, was not seen as a problem until the MBN approach pointed it out to them. At the time of the interview, only 37 out of 181 households were without toilets. Since construction of sanitary toilets is included in the 1998 Barangay Development Plan, they believe that the barangay will attain 100 percent coverage in no time. As soon as it is achieved, the BDC will pass an ordinance prohibiting the residents from doing "it" just anywhere.

While positive changes were consistently noted for the top six MBNs, those that ranked 7th, 8th and 9th in the first cycle became the top three priority problems in 1997. Though it is understandable, the community should take note that these indicators, with the addition of some, registered negative change in percentage points. This could indicate that while they may be concentrating in solving the first six MBNs, less attention was given to other indicators causing them to slide down in terms of ranking. There are also other indicators which did not appear as among the top ten problems during the first cycle but figured in the second cycle. These are indicators 23, 33, 28 and 4 (see Table 1).

Lessons Learned

As Casoroy embraced the MBN approach, some lessons could be drawn for other barangays to learn.

It ushered in a change in the attitude of the people particularly in restoring their trust and confidence in government. To them, the MBN approach has demonstrated the government's sincerity in uplifting their quality of life. There were criticisms at the beginning. People displayed negative attitude borne out of previous experiences with projects that were not seen to fruition, and because of long years of being an underserved community. They questioned the importance of the databoard which showed their houses marked with red dots. While it publicly embarrassed them, it also made them aware that here are the minimum basic needs in life they should

possess. They showed their negative sentiments by not involving themselves in consultations, dialogues or orientation meetings. After the provision of interventions, followed by the successful implementation of projects, they started becoming appreciative and gradually joined in community activities. They were later encouraged to strive and acquire what they need.

It facilitated the function of the municipality particularly that of the Municipal Planning and Development Office (MPDO), which does not have an adequate staff complement. The output of the MBN survey proved to be useful to the MPDO in gathering a consistent and updated municipal profile without hiring staff for the purpose. This way, the municipality was able to save in terms of manpower.

It evoked an excellent performance on the part of the barangay officials and community leaders. Since they became a CIDSS area, the community leaders underwent a social preparation process that proved beneficial in the sense that it exposed them to participating in community activities. Moreover, the series of capability-building activities equipped the barangay leaders with knowledge on project proposal making, barangay planning, budgeting and other aspects of barangay administration. It also improved their relationship with the people and with one another as well.

The achievements they derived out of the MBN approach gave the present set of barangay leaders the desire to sustain what they have started. It instilled in them the hope to attain progress and development. They were firm in saying that even if they are not mandated or financially supported by the municipality, they will continue to go on for the sake of their barangay. They also consider the phasing out of CIDSS this year as timely since they will be forced to depend purely on local funds. They believe this is the time for them to stand on their own. They want to show that they can do things for themselves even with less or minimal external assistance. They want their barangay to improve and develop through the efforts and initiatives they derive out of the MBN approach.

Lack of political support remains a factor to be considered despite the active participation of the barangay leaders and the perseverance of the MTWG. The leaders of Casoroy believe that there is lack of political support from the municipality. They mentioned that some municipal officials displayed negative attitude toward MBN activities. Some even commented that it has no use at all, which discourages them all the more. There is a general sentiment among the barangay leaders that MBN activities in the barangay do not receive enough support from them.

Hence, they suggest that municipal officials should be properly oriented toward the MBN approach for them to acquire the initiative and re-focus their vision. Moral support from these officials could give inspiration to the barangay people.

The mayor has handed to the MTWG all the responsibilities of running the approach including attendance at orientation and training programs. The mayor always says, "*Pag-MTWG ang humikilos, laging okey sa akin.*" (If it is the MTWG that acts, it is always okey with me.) Though the mayor may be lacking in actual participation when it comes to MBN, nobody can really say that he is neglectful of its implementation. He readily gives his support when it comes to provision of transportation, logistics, among others, and in giving inspirational talk or message during capability-building programs. But the barangay leaders and the MTWG as well, still think that the full support of the local leadership is important. If the MTWG decides on something and the local leaders do not agree, they cannot do anything.

The local leadership's lack of orientation towards the approach does not give the MTWG the total freedom to act. For example, a look into the municipality's Educational Development Fund (EDF) will reveal that provision of social services is not a priority. If the political leadership is oriented towards MBN, more could be allotted to social services.

The Vice-Mayor, for his part, fills the gap by providing all the support he could give. He always joins the MTWG members during barangay meetings and orientations at the municipal and provincial levels.

It should be emphasized that MBN was realized in the municipality because of the commitment coming from the MTWG. The barangay leaders fully acknowledge the wholehearted support extended to them by the members of the MTWG, in particular the MPDC, SWO, MLGOO and the Vice-Mayor. They are the ones who continually provided the strength and encouragement to the people.

Competent leadership at the barangay level facilitated the MBN implementation. There is no doubt that the leaders of Casoroy aptly complemented the efforts of the MTWG. Without their openness and willingness to give it a try, the MTWG could not easily push for the adoption of the MBN approach. While San Julian opted for a municipal-wide adoption of the MBN, it was Casoroy which excelled in the process mainly because of its active leaders.

Concentration on top problems proved detrimental to other MBNs. The barangay officials seem to have concentrated on solving the most pressing problems of Casoroy while unintentionally neglecting the others. This should make them look at MBNs not as individual indicators but as a total set to operationalize the so-called "quality of life."

Conclusion

Casoroy represents a typical barangay in a Philippine rural setting. What makes it different from the others is that its leaders as well as its people decided to

embrace the concept of SRA-MBN and they did embrace it well. The success of MBN implementation in the barangay found its way to the individual households where there is felt improvement in the quality of the people's lives. The MBN approach helped Casoroy concretize the development strategies which others just talked about. These are the commitment and determination from all sectors both at the municipal and barangay levels in coming up with more responsive annual development activities focused on meeting the minimum basic needs of the marginalized sector. The process also highlights the role of the local leaders in responding to the priority problems of the community. The unmet MBNs and later the positive returns motivated the barangay officials hand in hand with the leaders of people's organizations to continue even with the barest of resources. No matter how small the change that has taken place in Casoroy when viewed from the national scale, it can still serve as a lighted candle illuminating the journey of other communities towards empowerment.

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Key Informants

LGU-San Julian, Eastern Samar

Florencio L. Nicart	Mayor
Eddie S. Limbauan	Municipal Secretary

Municipal Technical Working Group San Julian, Eastern Samar

Fidel D. Colico	Vice-Mayor/ MTWG Chairman
Engr. Fluerdelis C. Quinto	Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator
Ma. Teresita Calvadores	Social Welfare Officer III

Barangay Technical Working Group Casoroy, San Julian

Felimon O. Camplon	Brgy. Captain
Fernando Colico	Brgy. Kagawad
Ma. Conia P. Desoloc	Brgy. Kagawad
Basilio A. Madolid	Brgy. Kagawad
Geronimo Madolid	Brgy. Kagawad
Beatriz D. Villarta	Brgy. Kagawad, CVM, PTA Secretary, Day Care Organization Member
Marlon Jungaya	SK Chairman
Marianita C. Duras	Brgy. Secretary, Day Care Organization President, CVM, SKA President

Representatives from People's Organizations

Barangay Casoroy, San Julian, E. Samar

Estila O. Aclan	Member, Self-Employment Kaunlaran Association
Domingo Maghacut, Jr.	Vice-Chairperson – Food Subsidy Barangay Water and Sanitation Association (BAWASA) Caretaker Chairperson, BFARMC
Odilon L. Desoloc	Farmer and Fisherfolk Representative
Rosita Evardone	President, Sta. Iglesia Association

List of Priority Projects

1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Projects funded out of the 20% Development Fund*				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construction of two units artesian well 2. Construction of communal irrigation system (dams and canals) 3. Construction of riverside street 4. Extension of Casoroy-Layog feeder road 5. Extension of barangay streets 6. Renovation of barangay hall (walling and flooring) 7. Construction of waiting shed 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construction of barangay road transversal 2. Construction of dugwell 3. Maintenance of street lighting 4. Repair/concreting of barangay roads 5. Cleanliness and beautification (painting and cleaning) 6. Completion of barangay hall 7. Education program (honoraria of day care workers [DCWs]) 	<p>Social Sector – 0.48%</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completion of Caguisocan Spring Development (installation of pipes) 2. Education Program (honoraria of DCWs) 3. Health and sanitation 4. Supplemental feeding <p>Infrastructure – 0.43%</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construction of health center 2. Construction of drainage canals 3. Construction of concrete post for street lighting 4. Installation of footbridge at Sitio Layog 	<p>Social Reform Agenda</p> <p>A. Agricultural Development (farm inputs)</p> <p>B. Delivery of Integrated Social Services</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health and Nutrition (Supplemental Feeding) 2. Water and Sanitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of water-sealed toilets • Construction of 1 unit deepwell • Construction of health center • Concreting of ditches/canals 3. Social Welfare and Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honoraria of DCWs • Barangay Council for the Protection of Children <p>Human and Ecological Security</p> <p>A. Support to clean and green program</p>	<p>Social Reform Agenda</p> <p>A. Agricultural Development (farm inputs)</p> <p>B. Delivery of Integrated Social Services</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. WATSAN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of 1 unit deepwell • Concreting of ditches 2. Social welfare and development (honoraria of DCWs) 3. Literacy Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFE • Honoraria of resource person for OSY skills training 4. Construction of Health Center <p>HES – 20% of 20%</p> <p>A. Support Clean and Green Program (additional dumping site)</p> <p>B. Peace and Order Development</p>

			B. Peace and Order Development C. Population Program Infrastructure Development A. Construction of barangay road transversal	Infrastructure Development A. Street lighting B. Barangay road transversal C. Repair of barangay roads • Barangay road approaches
Projects without local funds**				
	1. Construction of deepwell/ spring development 2. Construction of barangay roads transversal 3. Repair/concreting of barangay roads 4. Construction of irrigation system	1. Construction of waiting shed 2. Improvement of barangay plaza 3. Concreting of Sabang Street	1. Irrigation system/farm to market road 2. Upgrading of barangay hall 3. Concrete fence of barangay plaza 4. Waiting shed 5. Repair/concreting of barangay roads 6. Concreting of barangay road approaches 7. River landing 8. Barangay public market	1. Irrigation system with access road 2. Construction of 1 unit deepwell 3. Upgrading of barangay hall 4. Construction of waiting shed 5. Concreting of barangay plaza 6. Construction of river landing 7. Improvement of pathway to school 8. Improvement of school bridge 9. Construction of reading center 10. Construction of public market 11. Procurement of sound system 12. Construction of barangay playground

Sources: Annual Investment Plan, Barangay Casoroy, 1995-1998.

*Other fund sources – Municipal government, different municipal offices, CDF

**Other fund sources – DPWH, Provincial Engineering Office, Provincial Government, NIA, CDF of Senators/Congressmen, foreign sources.