

The MBN Approach: The Case of Barangay Sto. Niño in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro

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Naujan, a Galing Pook awardee, attributes its success in applying the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) approach in its poverty alleviation program to the participatory and vibrant leadership style of its mayor. One of the municipality's pilot barangays in adopting the MBN approach, Barangay Sto. Niño, has likewise become a showcase barangay and has been a favorite study tour site because of its successful implementation of MBN programs. Community participation and democratic management styles of the municipal mayor and barangay captain constitute the core foundations of the localities' accomplishments in addressing the issue of poverty at the municipal and barangay levels.

Background

Naujan was the first municipality in the province of Oriental Mindoro to receive a *Galing Pook Award*.¹ Its entry, the *Lingap-Tanaw Program*, was adjudged as one of the most innovative local development programs in 1997 primarily because it adopts the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) as an approach to poverty alleviation. Congruent with such approach, the program seeks to address the primary needs of the underprivileged through a concerted effort of the municipal government, the Mindoro Assistance for Human Advancement thru Linkages (MAHAL), Inc. and other nongovernment organizations (NGOs), people's organizations (POs), the barangays and Naujeños who are now working and/or residing outside Naujan. Priority projects and program beneficiaries are identified based on the results of MBN surveys conducted by community volunteers and validated through community assemblies.

Even before its proclamation as a *Galing Pook* awardee, Naujan had already emerged as a showcase municipality for the adoption of MBN approach. It has been a favorite destination of MBN *labbay-aral* (educational tour) groups composed of local officials and members of Technical Working Groups (TWGs) not only from various parts of Oriental Mindoro but from other provinces as well.

Serving as one of Naujan's pilot areas for the adoption of MBN approach is Barangay Sto. Niño. As of February 1998, the barangay had entertained at least twenty (20) *labbay-aral* groups.

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The evolution of Sto. Niño into a showcase barangay is primarily an offshoot of the initiative of Mayor Nelson B. Melgar to introduce the Social Reform Agenda (SRA) and MBN approach to the municipality. This started in May 1996 after Mayor Melgar had a turnabout from a negative to a positive attitude towards SRA-MBN as a result of his training under the 38th Local Administration and Development Program (LADP).²

What makes the experience of Naujan unique is that its local chief executive introduced SRA-MBN to the municipality without any financial support from the national government. The municipality is neither part of the so-called Club 20 (priority provinces for SRA) nor covered by the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF).

On the other hand, the experience of Sto. Niño is fascinating as the barangay has evolved into a showcase for the adoption of MBN approach after demonstrating its opposition to the leadership of Mayor Melgar. In the 1995 local polls, Mayor Melgar barely garnered votes from the Sto. Niño electorate. But, in spite of that, Sto. Niño was chosen as a pilot area primarily because of the willingness and commitment of the barangay officials to advocate the MBN approach.

Indeed, the experiences of Barangay Sto. Niño and of the municipality of Naujan can inspire many other local officials to enhance their leadership capabilities and thereby accelerate local development through the MBN approach. It is primarily for such reason that this case study was undertaken.

The bulk of data for this study was obtained during a fieldwork conducted in February 1998. Additional data were also gathered during the months of April and May of the same year. Semi-structured interviews and administration of questionnaires were the main techniques used in gathering primary data. These however were further substantiated through field observation of some MBN activities and processes, as well as ocular survey of program outputs and management tools.

The secondary data for this study were primarily obtained from the files of the municipal and barangay technical working groups. Additional data were also provided by Naujan's planning, budget and accounting offices.

The Context

Brief Profile of the Case Municipality³

Naujan derived its name from the word "nawu," a Malay term for "intelligent." Hence, Naujeños would like to believe that their municipality is inhabited by intelligent people. That Naujan lives up to its name had been proven partly by three Naujeños (including the mayor, the municipal planning and development coordinator [MPDC] and a planning officer) who graduated from the LADP with flying colors.

Located in the northern half of Oriental Mindoro, Naujan is adjacent to the city of Calapan, the capital of the province. The town's poblacion, however, is about 34 kilometers away from the provincial capital, but only about 18 kilometers away if one takes the short cut route via the coastal road.

The municipality is composed of eight (8) political districts. With 52,804.15 hectares of land spread over a total of 70 barangays and 187 sitios, Naujan is the biggest municipality of Oriental Mindoro in terms of land area. In terms of population, however, Naujan ranks only as second largest after Calapan.

In the 1995 census, the municipality had a population of 75,726 and a total of 15,163 households with an average size of about 4.8 members. Almost all (about 96.8 percent) of its inhabitants live in the rural areas even as the municipality has only three urban barangays (i.e. Poblacion 1, 2 and 3). As expected of a predominantly rural area, its overall population density in 1995 was very low at only about 1.43 persons per hectare. Nonetheless, its residential population density was much higher at about 57.8 for the rural communities and about 144.5 for the urban barangays.

Farming is still the predominant occupation in the municipality, with rice/palay as the major product, and citrus, coconut, corn, banana and coffee among the secondary crops.

Unemployment in the municipality was low at only about 8.4 percent in 1995. However, a high underemployment rate could be expected of a municipality like Naujan where seasonal farming is the primary source of livelihood.

Literacy rate in the municipality was high at about 95.0 percent in 1995. However, a total of 2,607 Naujeños who were ten years old or over could neither read nor write a simple message.

The educational facilities of Naujan include, among others, 67 primary/elementary schools located in 60 barangays and 7 secondary schools situated in six political districts. Thus, ten of the 70 barangays have no primary/elementary schools, while two of the eight political districts (i.e. districts 6 and 8) have no secondary schools. Likewise, majority of the barangays (58 out of 70) had no Day Care worker as of March 1997. However, at least four barangays have been operating community-based pre-schools which are attached to existing primary/elementary schools.

Malnutrition is a major problem in Naujan. Of the 16,675 children 0-6 years old in 1995, more than half (about 50.7 percent) were malnourished: 5,905 for the first degree; 2,245 for the second degree; and 309 for the third degree.

In 1995, the leading cause of deaths in Naujan was cardiovascular accident while the leading cause of illness was acute respiratory infection.

Public health services in the municipality are rendered primarily by two Rural Health Units (RHUs), RHU East which has two clinic beds and is manned by eleven medical and paramedical personnel; and RHU West which has only one clinic bed and is manned by thirteen medical and paramedical personnel. Assisting the RHU personnel are community volunteers composed of 567 Barangay Health Workers (BHWs), 60 trained hilots and 47 Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) as of 1997. Barangay health stations/clinics usually form part of barangay multi-purpose halls.

Provision of "social health services," however, is a concern not only of RHUs and barangay health stations but of other institutions as well. For instance, the Naujan Municipal Hospital, which is directly under the supervision and control of the Provincial Health Office, provides free medical services to indigents. The Lingap-Tanaw Program, through the Lingap-Tanaw Clinics and the Kalusugan sa Barangay program, also renders free health services. The Lingap-Tanaw Clinic is being operated by two NGOs, namely: the Naujan Women's Club and the Naujan Doctors.

There are five private health institutions in Naujan: three dental clinics; a maternity and medical clinic; and a specialists clinic. Occasionally, these clinics undertake free medical missions as part of their "social health programs."

From being a "sleepy town" with very limited sources of local revenue in the 1980s, Naujan managed to rise and shine under the leadership of Mayor Melgar. It was just a fifth class municipality when Mayor Melgar took over the reins of the municipal government in February 1988. Gaining from the administrative competence of its local chief executive who, as a former bank manager, has ample experience in mobilizing financial resources, Naujan was able to continuously upgrade its income classification. It became a fourth class municipality in 1991, third class in 1993, and without going through the second class status, skipped to first class in 1996. Its aggregate annual income from regular sources had skyrocketed from only about P2.67 million in 1988 to about P38.43 million in 1997 (Interviews with the Municipal Accountant and Municipal Budget Officer, February 1998).

Being a first class municipality, Naujan is not covered by the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF). But Mayor Melgar, whose third term as a municipal chief executive ended on 30 June 1998, strongly believes that each municipality deserves to benefit from PAF since poverty is still a major problem even in a first class municipality like Naujan (Interview with Mayor Nelson B. Melgar, February 1998).

Brief Profile of the Case Barangay

Barangay Sto. Niño is otherwise known as "Maibon" – a Tagalog term connoting "a place teeming with birds." It is a rural barangay located in the sixth political district of Naujan. More specifically, it is about 23 kilometers west of the *poblacion*, but only about eight kilometers away from the junction of the national highway and the provincial road leading into Sto. Niño and other barangays of District VI.

A total of 15 public utility jeepneys (PUJs) are plying the route between the *poblacion* and Barangay Sto. Niño. However, each jeepney takes only a one-way trip per day, either to or from the *poblacion*, and usually extends its route up to the farthest point of the provincial road which is two barangays away from Sto. Niño. Four tricycles serve as alternative mode of public transport especially for short distance trips and/or for passengers who could not be accommodated by PUJs.

Sto. Niño is composed of seven sitios occupying an aggregate land area of about 872.89 hectares. With a total population of 1,255 as of the MBN Survey in June 1996, the barangay had a very low gross population density at only about 1.44 persons per hectare. But this is a miniature replica of the whole Naujan which also had a very low gross population density at only about 1.43 persons per hectare in 1995.

The MBN Survey in 1996 further revealed that Sto. Niño had a total of 238 families with an average family size of about 5.3 members. Most (about 87.4 percent) of the family heads had seasonal farming as their primary occupation, with rice/palay as their major crops, and corn, banana, citrus and vegetables among their secondary crops. To augment their income, some families also engage in fishing and livestock raising in-between planting and harvest seasons. A total of 18 family heads had non-agricultural occupation, six of whom were overseas contract workers (OCWs).

The results of the 1996 MBN Survey also show that Sto. Niño is characterized by high incidence of poverty. Almost three-fourths (about 73.9 percent) of the 238 families had an annual income ranging from less than ₱5,000 to ₱30,000, or a monthly income ranging from less than ₱417 to ₱2,500. The modal income category (N=96) was only ₱10,001 to ₱20,000 per year or about ₱833 to ₱1,667 per month. According to some members of the Municipal Technical Working Group (MTWG), the 1996 absolute poverty line for a family of 6 in Naujan was about ₱2,740 per month, or about ₱32,880 per year.

Owing primarily to meager income, almost all (about 90 percent) of the farmers in Sto. Niño finance their farming inputs by obtaining loans from either the middlemen, usurers or cooperative (Barangay Sto. Niño 1998a). Predominating the sources of loans are the middlemen who usually demand payment in kind upon harvest of agricultural products that are appraised much lower than the prevailing market price. The existing Sto. Niño Multipurpose Cooperative could financially assist only a limited number of farmers partly because of inadequate resources and lack of managerial expertise. Hence, the usurers comprise the second largest source of farming loans in the barangay.

Sto. Niño's amenities include, among others, a public elementary school with four classrooms, a multipurpose center, and a newly constructed barangay market (i.e. a *talipapa* made of concrete materials) without stalls, toilet and other basic facilities yet. The barangay has no electricity yet but negotiations are already going on between the barangay government and the Oriental Mindoro Rural Electrification Cooperative, Inc. (ORMECO). Moreover, Sto. Niño does not have a day care center.

The certified statements of income which form part of the 1996 and 1997 annual budgets of Sto. Niño reveal that, from only about P196.1 thousand in 1994, the annual income of the barangay government continuously increased to about P227 thousand in 1995 and about P246.7 thousand in 1996. This, however, was primarily due to the increase in Sto. Niño's Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) from about P187.6 thousand in 1994 to about P208.4 thousand in 1995 and about P227.2 thousand in 1996.

The IRA comprised about 94.4 percent of Sto. Niño's average annual income for the three-year (1994-1996) period. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to find that, from a high of about 95.7 percent in 1994, the share of IRA in Sto. Niño's annual income whittled down to about 92.1 percent in 1996. This is an offshoot of the discovery of a new source of revenue for the barangay – the sand and gravel tax – which contributed P10 thousand to Sto. Niño's annual income for 1996.

As of fieldwork time, the data on the actual income of Sto. Niño for 1997 were not yet available. But what is more important to note at this juncture is that, by the end of the third quarter of 1997, the barangay had already realized an income of P154.8 thousand from sand and gravel taxes (Field interviews, February 1998). Together with two other sources of local revenue (i.e. the real property tax and the community tax), the newly discovered income source would certainly boost the share of local taxes in the annual income of the barangay, and thereby reduce Sto. Niño's dependence on IRA.

Advocacy of MBN at the Municipal and Barangay Levels

The MBN approach was introduced to the municipality of Naujan sometime in May 1996. This was the mayor's most valuable "pasalubong" to his constituents – the best gift he could offer the Naujeños after his LADP training at U.P. Diliman.

He decided to initiate SRA-MBN in his hometown not because this was a flagship program of the Ramos administration but primarily because he was convinced that this is the best way to improve the plight of the poor. The presidential issuances that reached his office did not make the program attractive to him. He was able to appreciate the program only after hearing lectures and after the MBN study tour of his LADP class to a showcase barangay in Quezon City.

The Preliminaries. The main advocacy activities took the form of orientation seminars at the municipal and barangay levels. But such seminars were conducted only after undertaking some preliminaries which included the following:

- (a) assessment of the feasibility of adopting the MBN approach in the municipality;
- (b) consultation with an SRA-MBN advocate;

- (c) SRA-MBN orientation for prospective members of the Municipal Technical Working Group (MTWG);
- (d) creation of the MTWG;
- (e) formulation of criteria for choosing pilot barangays; and
- (f) actual selection of pilot barangays.

Immediately after the MBN study tour, Mayor Melgar made a long distance call to Naujan and instructed two of his staff to conduct a fieldwork in Barangay Paltoc primarily to assess the feasibility of adopting the MBN approach in Naujan.

The fieldwork was undertaken for two days (21-22 March 1996) by Ms. Raquelita M. Umali of the Municipal Planning and Development Office and Ms. Edna M. Llamoso of the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, both of whom are now members of the MTWG. Prior to such fieldwork, however, Ms. Umali attended the National Anti-Poverty Summit held on 19-20 March at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) where she had an overview of SRA-MBN for the first time.

From their fieldwork in Barangay Paltoc, Ms. Umali and Ms. Llamoso proceeded to the 38th LADP training venue in U.P. Diliman to discuss their findings with their mayor and the MPDC. "We can ably do it in Naujan, sir!" the tandem exclaimed as they discussed their field observations. And this reinforced Mayor Melgar's optimism as to the feasibility of adopting the MBN approach in his hometown.

Before finalizing his decision to initiate MBN, however, the mayor decided to consult Dr. Victoria A. Bautista, the U.P. professor who served as the 38th LADP's resource person on SRA-MBN. Elated by the mayor's intention, Dr. Bautista offered to assist Naujan in whatever way she could. For instance, she advised that the municipal and barangay officials could learn a lot more about the actual processes involved in the MBN approach by undertaking a *labbay-aral* not only to Barangay Paltoc but to other MBN showcase localities as well, such as those of Davao City and of the municipality of Kidapawan in the province of Cotabato. To put the *labbay-aral* into context, however, the mayor decided to postpone such activity until after the orientation of municipal and barangay officials on SRA-MBN.

Seven prospective members of Naujan's MTWG were sent to Calapan to participate in a two-day (7-8 May 1996) SRA-MBN orientation seminar conducted by the Provincial Technical Working Group (PTWG) of Oriental Mindoro. As part of their reentry plans, the aforementioned participants from Naujan spearheaded the creation of the MTWG through an organizational meeting held the day after the orientation seminar. In such meeting, it was agreed upon that the MTWG would have a total of eleven members: the MPDC and two other staff of the Municipal Planning and Development Office (one of whom is Ms. Raquelita Umali); the Municipal Health

Officer and two Public Health Nurses (one each from RHU-East and RHU-West); the municipal department heads for agriculture and social welfare, respectively; the Municipal Agrarian Reform Officer of DAR; the director of *MAHAL, Inc.* (an NGO); and DILG's Municipal Local Government Operations Officer (MLGOO). However, Mayor Melgar later issued Municipal Executive Order No. 96-006 (dated 15 August 1996) not only to provide a legal basis for the creation of the MTWG but, more importantly, to designate the mayor as the chair and Ms. Raquelita Umali as the secretary, and to appoint three more members composed of two SB representatives and a Social Welfare Assistant in the person of Ms. Edna Llamoso.

The 9 May organizational meeting of the MTWG also resulted in the formulation of criteria for the selection of pilot barangays. More specifically, such criteria include the following:

- 1) representation of each political district;
- 2) strategic location;
- 3) receptiveness of barangay officials to emerging development approaches; and
- 4) performance of the barangay in previous and on-going development programs/projects (Field interviews, February 1998; Minutes of MTWG's organizational meeting on 9 May 1996).

Based on the above criteria, the MTWG initially identified only eight pilot barangays – one per political district. However, after some groundwork in the said pilot areas, the MTWG realized that the coastal and the lakeside barangays had not been represented. Thus, two additional pilot areas were chosen: a coastal barangay in District I and a lakeside barangay in District III. Following are the ten pilot barangays for the implementation of SRA-MBN in Naujan.

<i>Pilot Barangay</i>	<i>Political District</i>
1. Andres Ylagan	I
2. San Antonio (coastal barangay)	I
3. San Carlos	II
4. Sta. Isabel	III
5. Laguna (lakeside barangay)	III
6. Concepcion	IV
7. Gamao	V
8. Sto. Niño	VI
9. Masagana	VII
10. Inarawan	VIII

As a strategy for ensuring an effective implementation of SRA-MBN in the pilot areas, it was agreed upon that each pilot barangay shall have a facilitator coming from among the members of MTWG.

The SRA-MBN Orientation at the Municipal Level. The orientation seminar at the municipal level was held on 22 May 1996. This was attended by the SB members, municipal department heads (among whom were the treasurer, accountant, and budget officer) as well as other municipal employees, barangay captains of the pilot areas, and representatives of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS).

In preparation for the aforementioned orientation seminar, the MTWG formulated the corresponding training design and started sending invitations as early as the ninth of May.

Among the first to receive an invitation (on 9 May) were the presiding officer (vice mayor) and the members of *sangguniang bayan*. Such invitation prompted the SB members to obtain additional information on SRA-MBN from some members of the MTWG. And this eventually paved the way for the passage of an SB resolution adopting MBN as an approach to poverty alleviation in Naujan, and enjoining the Naujeños and all government agencies to support the implementation of SRA-MBN in the municipality. Unanimously passed by the SB members on 17 May 1996 and approved by the mayor three days later, such resolution must have inspired the resource persons and the participants to do their best at the SRA-MBN orientation seminar held on 22 May of the same year.

Mayor Melgar graced the aforementioned orientation seminar with opening remarks that gave him the opportunity to underscore the virtues of SRA-MBN and to relate how he arrived at his decision to initiate the program in Naujan. The MPDC served as the training coordinator and a resource person, while other members of the MTWG served as lecturers and/or facilitators.

After hearing lectures from the MTWG, some participants had the misconception that SRA-MBN is a grandiose program whose implementation entails a very complicated process. Thus, they expressed doubts as to the capability of Naujan to successfully implement such program. But Mayor Melgar was not irked even a bit for he, too, had the same skepticism prior to his LADP training. Like an understanding father, he encouraged the participants to have an open mind even as he patiently narrated how he experienced a turnaround from a negative to a positive attitude towards the program.

Despite the fact that the orientation seminar was conducted in the local dialect (Tagalog), a participant openly remarked, "I guess not even half of the participants in this seminar understood what you (the lecturers) were talking about." Requested to explain what he meant, the participant admitted having doubts on the MTWG's

capability to initiate SRA-MBN in the pilot barangays right after the seminar. But, instead of being disheartened, the members of the MTWG considered this a challenge even as they answered, "It remains to be seen, but there's no harm in trying."

The orientation seminar at the municipal level culminated in the preparation of action plans covering the SRA-MBN activities to be undertaken in the pilot barangays from 23 May to 15 June 1996. By coming up with workable action plans, the barangay captains showed their interest to initiate SRA-MBN in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

The SRA-MBN Orientation in Barangay Sto. Niño. Ebullient to share what he just learned, Brgy. Capt. Democrito Viray called a special meeting of barangay officials on 23 May – the day after the orientation seminar at the municipal level. He briefly explained the processes involved in the installation of an MBN community-based information system (CBIS), and how such CBIS can substantially improve the management of development programs for the barangay. On top of all, he underscored community participation and responsiveness to the primary needs of the people as among the essential elements of the MBN approach. *Ito ay talagang mula sa tao, para sa tao* (This is really from the people, for the people), he concisely explained to his colleagues. Finally, he discussed with them his action plan for the preliminary MBN activities in the barangay not only to identify the necessary revisions in the plan but also to solicit their commitment and support to the program.

There was no objection to any of the activities enumerated in the action plan. But, for some valid reasons, the timetable had to be revised. For instance, the orientation seminar which was originally planned to be held on 27 May was moved to an earlier date – 25 May.

Their first task, as identified in the action plan, was to inform their constituents of the forthcoming barangay assembly for SRA-MBN orientation. And such task had to commence immediately after their special meeting. Without much ado, they prepared the notice of assembly meeting and went house-to-house to notify their constituents accordingly. To expedite the process, they agreed to have a division of labor wherein the seven members of the *sangguniang barangay* would cover one sitio each. And such division of labor has been adopted in almost all aspects of barangay operations, with each sitio having a designated "sitio kagawad."

In accordance with the revised schedule, the SRA-MBN orientation in Barangay Sto. Niño was held on 25 May. Three persons served as resource speakers: Raquelita Umali, the MTWG member who had been assigned to serve as SRA-MBN facilitator for Sto. Niño; Lumen Malabanan, the MLGOO of DILG who is also a member of the MTWG; and, of course, Brgy. Capt. Democrito Viray. Other barangay officials performed dual roles, serving as participants and facilitators at the same time.

As expected of initial advocacy activities, the resource persons encountered difficulties in selling SRA-MBN to the Sto. Niño residents. Many of those who

attended the orientation believed that, like the previous government programs implemented in the barangay, the SRA-MBN is just another futile exercise which aims to improve the living conditions of the people but eventually results in nothing.

Hindi lang nakasarado ang mga isip nila – nakakandado pa! (Their minds are not just closed – but locked!) This was how Ms. Umali described the predominantly apathetic attitude of Sto. Niño residents during the SRA-MBN orientation. But the resource speakers did not quit. Over and over they explained the so-called *bibingka* (rice cake) model which illustrates the need for a concerted effort among the community, the government and many other sectors in achieving the goals of SRA-MBN. They stressed that, like the *bibingka* which cannot be cooked without the heat from live charcoal under and above the pan simultaneously, the goals of SRA-MBN cannot be achieved without an active community participation on the one hand, and assistance from various sectors at various levels of operations on the other.

The orientation seminar at the barangay level culminated in the recruitment of Community Volunteer Monitors (CVMs) as the resource persons posed this question: "Who among you would like to help in the installation of the CBIS for MBN?" In response to such query, more than a dozen people raised their hands, thereby boosting the morale of the barangay officials and inspiring them to proceed with the implementation of SRA-MBN despite the predominantly apathetic attitude of their constituents.

Leadership Initiatives

Role of Barangay Captain in SAPIME

Much of the successful implementation of the SRA-MBN in Sto. Niño can be attributed to the commitment and support of the barangay captain. In each of the various phases of the management cycle (i.e. situation analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation — or SAPIME for short), the barangay captain played a crucial role.

At the outset, he solicited the all-out support of the *sangguniang barangay* and all other barangay officials as he explained to them the merits of the program. This subsequently resulted in the active participation of his colleagues throughout the MBN management cycle.

Aware that the program could not be successfully implemented without financial support from the barangay, the captain initiated the allotment of necessary funds even to the extent of realigning the barangay budget. He did not mind going to the municipal hall several times to ensure prompt disbursement of badly needed funds. In cases where he could not personally undertake follow-up activities, he sent somebody else to do the job.

To ensure accuracy in the conduct of MBN surveys, the CVMs were given an intensive training by the MTWG and the Barangay Technical Working Group (BTWG). The barangay captain ensured that all of the CVMs would attend such training by notifying and repeatedly reminding them of the training venue and schedule. He also mobilized the members of the *sangguniang barangay* in the preparation of survey forms (MBN Form 01). Funded by the barangay out of its budget for maintenance and other operating expenses, these forms were prepared on the day and at the place of CVM training so that the barangay officials could listen to the lectures while ensuring that the survey forms would be ready by the time the training ends. This was also a way of making the CVMs feel that the captain and the members of the *sanggunian* care for them.

In the actual conduct of the survey, the barangay captain and the members of the *sanggunian* served as field supervisors in their own right. They accompanied the CVMs to their respective areas of assignment, and helped them in explaining the purpose of the survey to the respondents, especially to those who refused to be interviewed.

Indeed, the CVMs encountered a lot of difficulties during the first survey. As instructed, they humbly introduced themselves to their respondents and assured them that the results of the survey will be used in identifying projects that would respond to their basic needs. In spite of this, many of the respondents reacted negatively saying, *Surbey na naman? Surbey nang surbey, wala namang idinudulot na kabutihan* (Survey again? None of those surveys has brought us any good.). In the second survey, however, the Sto. Niño residents had become very cooperative and even observed: *"Iba pala talaga ang SRA-MBN. Sa mga nakaraang survey hindi natin nalalaman kung ano na ang nangyari sa datos. Pero dito, napag-uusapan ang resulta at tayo pa ang nag-iisip ng solusyon sa mga problema. Noon, barangay officials lang ang nagpapalano. Pero ngayon, kasama na ang mga tao."* (SRA-MBN is really one of a kind. With other surveys we do not know what has happened to the data. But here, results are being discussed and we are the ones who find solutions to problems. It used to be that only the barangay officials do the planning but now, the people are involved.)

As chair of the Barangay Development Council (BDC), the captain had a crucial role in ensuring that the situation analyses and development plans of Sto. Niño would be based on the results of the MBN survey. His enthusiasm to play such role prompted him to personally prepare the narrative report on the MBN situation in his locality with the help of the BTWG and the MTWG. Prior to this, he supervised the consolidation of MBN data by the members of the *sanggunian*, BTWG, CVMs and *Sangguniang Kabataan* (SK). The tabulation forms (MBN Form 02) were provided by the municipal government.

The barangay captain also showed his support to the program by convening community assembly meetings whenever necessary. By doing so he promoted

community participation in the different phases of the management cycle. Thanks to the assistance of other barangay officials in announcing these meetings, the barangay captain noted a very impressive attendance rate at about 75 percent for barangay assemblies and about 90 to 100 percent for the sitio level. Such meetings enabled the Sto. Niño residents to take part in validating MBN data, in identifying the causes of unmet MBNs, in prioritizing projects that would respond to their needs, and in ratifying barangay development plans. And these paved the way for the active participation of the community in the implementation and monitoring of SRA-MBN projects.

The community served as a source of funds for the implementation of projects. In the installation of sanitary toilet facilities, for instance, DOH provided the plastic toilet bowls while the municipal government gave the beneficiaries a bag of cement each; but labor, sand and gravel and any other construction materials were the beneficiaries' counterpart. Houses that badly needed repair were rehabilitated through the so-called *bayanihan* where some community members rendered free labor while others provided the meals and snacks. Likewise, the beneficiaries shouldered 30 percent of the cost of inputs as their counterpart in livelihood projects.

Apart from the situation analysis, a spot map, a databoard and flipcharts were prepared to serve as tools for planning, implementation and monitoring. The barangay captain authorized the release of funds that served as the barangay's counterpart for the preparation of these tools.

In soliciting counterpart funds from the barangay, the MTWG posed this challenge: *Ihanda n'yo ang lote, amin ang pabahay*. (You prepare the lot, we will take care of the housing.) Accordingly, the barangay financed the preparation of "the lot" which is actually a barangay map drawn on a large board by a skilled worker, while the municipal government provided the "housing facilities" which actually refer to the house-shaped family datacards. The actual posting of datacards on the spot map was done by the family heads themselves during a barangay assembly meeting called by the barangay captain.

Under the guidance of the barangay captain and the MTWG, a group composed of the BTWG, members of the *sangguniang barangay*, CVMs and SK representatives prepared the flipcharts summarizing the results of the first MBN survey. This group also participated in the preparation of the databoard, but only after the necessary painting job was done by a contractual worker paid by the municipal government. All of the materials used in the preparation of the databoard and flipcharts were provided by the barangay.

The second MBN survey was supposed to be conducted in June 1997 – a year after the first survey. However, as the barangay officials started campaigning for reelection in the May 1997 polls, the MTWG and the BTWG realized that June is not an appropriate time for the conduct of MBN surveys as there would be a need to advocate SRA-MBN to the new set of officials in case the incumbents are not reelected.

Fortunately, Bgy. Capt. Viray and all, except one, of the sangguniang barangay members were reelected. But even so, in anticipation of possible problems that may be brought about by subsequent local elections either at the barangay or municipal level, the conduct of MBN surveys has been reset to January of each year. Thus, the second MBN survey was conducted in the later part of January 1998.

Monitoring of SRA-MBN in Naujan is a function not only of the MTWG and the BTWGs but also of the barangay officials and the community.

The MTWG and BTWGs regularly meet at the municipal hall every Monday to discuss, among others, the status of, and problems encountered in, the implementation of the program. Occasionally, the municipal accountant and the Local Finance Committee are invited to share their expertise in solving finance-related problems.

In-between such meetings, the BTWG, the captain and other barangay officials of Sto. Niño monitor the implementation of SRA-MBN projects through the so-called *management by walking around*. They visit the project site, conduct an ocular inspection of the quantity and quality of project outputs, and go house-to-house to obtain feedback from project beneficiaries.

Delays and other problems encountered in project implementation are also communicated by the *purok* leaders and sitio residents to their *sitio kagawad* who, in turn, convey such problems to the barangay captain and other authorities concerned. Along with other barangay concerns, these problems are discussed during community assemblies and BDC meetings.

Sto. Niño intends to evaluate the impact of its SRA-MBN projects based on the results of MBN surveys conducted every January of each year. Due to interruptions caused by the May 1998 polls, however, the results of the second MBN survey (conducted in January 1998) were not yet available as of this writing. Nevertheless, the researcher was able to obtain the validated data on one of the sitios (i.e., Sitio Akasya).

Interface with POs

At the start of the program, there were only two POs in the barangay — the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) and the Sto. Niño Multipurpose Cooperative, Inc. Thus, it was not surprising that the topmost MBN problem identified in the first survey was the non-involvement of families in any PO or community development activity.

The cause-analysis revealed that the no. 1 MBN problem of Sto. Niño was an offshoot of the lack of knowledge among community members on how they could participate in community development activities. To address this problem, the

barangay captain summoned several community assembly meetings in each sitio for the purpose of discussing how the community could participate in barangay projects. One of the strategies identified then was to organize the community members into neighborhood associations with a set of officers called *purok* leaders. Household heads who were never involved in community development activities were accorded preference in the selection of *purok* leaders by the residents themselves.

Organizing the beneficiaries of livelihood programs into POs was another strategy adopted not only to enhance community participation but also to strengthen the capability of the community to manage its own affairs and eventually become self-reliant. As a step towards this end, the beneficiaries were trained by the agricultural technician on the technical aspects of agriculture-related projects (e.g. swine dispersal and *tilapia* production), and by DSWD on entrepreneurship and effective management of seed capital (Tria 1998: 2-3). The barangay captain expressed his concern through his inspirational speech and by being with the beneficiaries throughout their training.

The expertise of MAHAL, Inc. – an NGO represented in the MTWG – was also sought by the barangay captain particularly in community organizing. As of this writing, however, the POs were not yet fully established. This had been attributed primarily to the rapid turnover of community organizers assigned to Sto. Niño. After some groundwork in the barangay, the community organizer would resign from MAHAL, Inc. for unspecified reason.

But the “half-baked” neighborhood associations, although still undecided on how they would call their respective organizations, have shown their support to the SRA-MBN program. The interviews with a dozen *purok* leaders reveal that these leaders had assumed various functions in the implementation of the program. One of such functions had something to do with advocacy — “... *pagpapaliwanag sa mga kasamahan sa sitio tungkol sa kabutihan ng SRA-MBN at paghikayat sa mga taga-barangay, katulong ng konsehal (referring to the sitio kagawad), na suportahan ang programa....*” (... explaining to the sitio folk the merits of SRA-MBN and convincing the barangay people, with the help of the councilor [referring to the sitio representative], to support the program....)

Purok leaders had also become active partners of the CVMs in gathering MBN data from the field. This, coupled with the cooperation of respondents in answering survey forms, contributed much to the reduction of the time needed to complete the survey—from a total of 14 days in the first survey to only four days in the second.

Many other functions were performed by the *purok* leaders. Among these were their active participation in the data validation phase, ratification of barangay plans, project implementation (e.g. installation of toilet facilities and other activities concerning environmental sanitation), and monitoring the status of project implementation. They also helped the *sitio kagawad* in announcing community assembly meetings.

When asked how the barangay captain facilitated the performance of their tasks, the *purok* leaders cited the following:

...pagbibigay ng malaking importansya sa papel ng mga sitio leaders sa pamamagitan ng patuloy na pakikipag-unawaan...; bumibisita sa sitio at ginagabayan kami sa mga gawain...; may pagtuturo siyang ginagawa sa bahagi ng pamumuno...; nagpapatawag ng meeting sa lahat ng sitio upang maging malinaw ang tungkuling gagampanan...; natulong sa pagpapaliwanag sa mga taong barangay...; inaasikaso ang pagkain ng mga gumagawa sa proyekto...; minomonitor ang aming mga gawain...; follow-up through the BDC...; patuloy at agad-agad na nakikipag-ugnayan sa ibat-ibang ahensya at sa mga kinauukulan upang mabigyan ng sapat na suporta ang programa... (... giving great importance to the role of sitio leaders by continuously holding dialogues...; visiting the sitio and guiding us in our tasks...; he gives teaching on leadership...; calls meetings in all sitios to clarify responsibilities...; helps in making clarifications for the barangay folk...; takes care of food for those who work on the project...; monitors our work...; follows-up through the BDC...; continuing and prompt linkage with various agencies and authorities in order to provide the program adequate support...)

Together with the PTA and the Sto. Niño Multipurpose Cooperative, the neighborhood associations are represented in the BDC. Composed mostly of Barangay Health Workers (BHWs), the CVMs are also represented in the planning body.

Profile of the Local Chief Executives

The Municipal Mayor

Emergence and Preparation. Born in March 1941, Mayor Nelson B. Melgar was about to celebrate his 47th birthday when he took over the reins of the municipal government in February 1988. Reelected twice as local chief executive of his hometown, he has served such position for a total of ten years, with his third term ending on 30 June 1998. Much as his constituents would like him to continue serving as their mayor, he could no longer run for reelection in the May 1998 polls as the *Local Government Code of 1991* bars each elective local official from serving more than three consecutive terms in the same position (Sec. 43 of R.A. 7160).

Becoming a mayor of his hometown was a dream that was influenced primarily by one of his predecessors – his father who is a former mayor of Naujan. At first he was just challenged by the fact that his father, although elected four times as a mayor, never made it more than two consecutive terms. And so he wanted to prove that here is a Melgar who can make it to the maximum allowable by law. Later on he found himself eager to serve his townmates with a clear vision of Naujan rising from its then slumberous situation.

With a Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemical Engineering, his formal education could not be considered a direct factor in the development of his competence

in local governance. Nonetheless, his college diploma, coupled with his intelligence, diligence and charisma, enabled him to ascend from the ranks while working in the private sector. He had been a bank manager for several years prior to his involvement in local politics.

Being the youngest son of a former mayor, he already had some exposure to local politics long before the start of his career in the local government. This, combined with his experience as a bank manager, greatly influenced his style of management.

His first term as a mayor was primarily characterized by the so-called "politics of patronage." He focused on infrastructures and other projects which he thought would eventually generate votes for his reelection. At the same time, however, he initiated some fiscal measures which paved the way for the upgrading of Naujan's income classification from only fifth class in 1988 to first class in 1996. He conceptualized development projects in consultation with the people, but the final decision was still his. People empowerment remained hazy in his management vocabulary until his exposure to the MBN approach.

Unfortunately, he learned about the MBN approach only in his third term of office. Until mid-March 1996, he had very limited knowledge about such approach. His only sources of information then were the presidential issuances on SRA-MBN. Having no exposure to the actual processes involved, he reacted to such presidential issuances with apathy and skepticism. He could not imagine how such grandiose program could be implemented successfully by local government units (LGUs) without massive support from the national government. Thus, he predicted that the SRA-MBN will eventually wither on the vine.

But a significant change in his attitude occurred during his seven-week training in the 38th Local Administration and Development Program (LADP). Conducted from 11 March to 26 April 1996 by the Local Government Center of U.P. College of Public Administration in collaboration with the Local Government Academy of DILG, the 38th LADP included, among others, a lecture-discussion on SRA-MBN and a study tour to a Metro Manila barangay where an MBN information system was already installed. The lecture-discussion significantly enhanced the mayor's understanding of the various strategies involved in the MBN approach. But it was primarily the study tour which made him realize that the MBN approach is indeed workable even in an urban setting where community mobilization is a herculean task. And this served as a challenge for him to initiate the implementation of SRA-MBN in his municipality.

Qualities of Leadership Manifested. In the acknowledgement portion of Naujan's comprehensive development plan for 1997-2007, the planning team appreciated, among others, the support and the leadership qualities of the mayor. Thus, the team wrote:

. . . Mayor Nelson B. Melgar, the epitome of an action-oriented leader whose dream for Naujan and its people is a wellspring of hope, ideas and courage

as he left no stone unturned in providing assistance to the planning team while assuring them of freedom in setting planning directions
(Acknowledgements in *Comprehensive Development Plan, Municipality of Naujan, Province of Oriental Mindoro: 1997-2007*).

Certainly, many other leadership qualities can be ascribed to Mayor Melgar. When asked to zero in on those that facilitated the implementation of SRA-MBN, the MTWG cited:

his convincing power—being gifted with eloquence, which is a critical factor in advocating the program; his managerial competence, openness to change and adherence to transformational leadership; his sincerity, dedication and commitment to serve his constituents in order to improve their living conditions; his all-out support to the program as exemplified by the ₱1 million budget for SRA-MBN; his keen desire to continuously upgrade the capabilities of his staff and the barangay captains through “lakbay-aral” and various training programs; his trust and confidence in the MTWG and his participatory style of management (Field interviews, February 1998).

Indeed, as a result of his LADP training, the mayor’s management style has been transformed from a leader-oriented to a participatory and community-oriented one. He has refrained from supporting projects that are not identified by the communities concerned in accordance with the MBN approach. He holds regular dialogues with his constituents, and regularly obtains feedback from barangay officials. He even holds breakfast meetings with representatives of various sectors to discuss with them his plans and programs, and to solicit their participation and support.

In one occasion he had a heart-to-heart talk with Sto. Niño’s Brgy. Capt. Viray to ascertain how the head of a pilot but oppositionist barangay honestly feel about his (the mayor’s) leadership style. “For me,” the barangay captain said, “the best thing you have done as a mayor was teaching us to become self-reliant.”

Shunning dole-out mentality, the mayor explained, “I don’t give a man a fish; I want to teach him how to fish. But I do not want him to be dependent nor totally independent—*gusto ko may* (what I want is) interdependence.” To promote mutual help between the barangays and the municipal government, he shelled out counterpart funds for some barangay projects—but only if such projects were identified in support of SRA-MBN.

Qualities They Expected Him to Manifest. Having manifested the leadership qualities discussed above, what more could be asked of Mayor Melgar? Indeed, the MTWG believed that their mayor already possessed all the essential characteristics expected of a leader. Nonetheless, they would like him to continue one thing that has been stopped—the so-called *Araw sa Barangay*.

The *Araw sa Barangay* is an occasion wherein the officials and residents of the barangay concerned have the privilege of having an audience with the mayor for the presentation of their MBN situation, plans and programs. This occasion is called as

such because the mayor has to devote one whole day for the barangay. Each barangay has a definite schedule for such day with the mayor. The barangay officials considered this a special day so they really looked forward to and prepared for it. Unfortunately, the mayor was not always available for such occasion. In one barangay, for instance, the officials and residents waited the whole day but the mayor did not arrive because he had to attend to a very urgent problem. Eventually, the *Araw sa Barangay* was stopped partly because the mayor encountered difficulty in synchronizing his schedule with those of the barangays. Some people may view this as indicative of a need to improve time management. But the other side of the coin is the mayor's trust and confidence in the MTWG which, he hopes, would continue having audience with the barangays for the sustainability of SRA-MBN despite changes of municipal leadership.

The Barangay Captain

Emergence and Preparation. Bgy. Capt. Democrito R. Viray is now 57 years old. But he was only 48 when he entered local politics about nine years ago. His first position in the local government was that of a *barangay kagawad* (councilor). His popularity among the Sto. Niño residents made him the topnotch member of the *sangguniang barangay*. Thus, when the former barangay captain prematurely vacated his post for unspecified reasons in 1992, the then Kagawad Democrito Viray automatically took over as Sto. Niño's local chief executive. He ran as a candidate for *punong barangay* (barangay captain) in the 1994 barangay polls and won by a landslide. Again he ran for the same position in 1997 and was reelected. Thus he has served as a *punong barangay* for a total of six years.

The overwhelming support of his family and the people of Sto. Niño as a whole served as his inspiration to aspire for more years in the position of a barangay captain. He wanted to upgrade the living conditions of his constituents through the implementation of government programs. And this is one of the main reasons why he readily embraced SRA-MBN.

He is the eldest son in a family of four children whose father served as a barrio captain in the 1950s. Partly because of financial difficulties, he was able to finish only first year high school. He had to send one of his brothers to college through farming and buy-and-sell of agricultural products. Such brother is now a member of the U.S. Coastguard and has taken over his *kuya's* (eldest brother's) duty to support the schooling of other family members. But the barangay captain still engages in farming and buy-and-sell of agricultural products in order to feed his children and his wife.

His family used to own vast tracts of land. Due to a calamity that struck Naujan in 1952, about 90 hectares of their lands were eaten up by a river. But the barangay captain was happy to note that such river is now a substantial source of barangay revenue in the form of sand and gravel taxes which already amounted to P154,800

as of the third quarter of 1997. Such revenue source was recently discovered as a result of the captain's initiative to look into the possibility of generating income from the said river.

Certainly, the exemplary performance of the barangay captain in managing the SRA-MBN program cannot be attributed to his work experience and formal education. It was primarily his interest to learn from various capability-building programs that honed his managerial expertise. He joined the MTWG and nine other barangay captains during the *laktay-aral* to various MBN showcase areas. He attended the BDC convention that led to the reactivation and strengthening of Sto. Niño's planning body. He actively participated in the training on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach to situation analysis and planning. He played a dual role as a resource person and participant during a seminar on SRA-MBN and Primary Health Care. He attended a six-week basic course in management and leadership. And, on top of all, he was more than willing to undergo on-the-job training under the guidance of the MTWG.

Qualities of Leadership Manifested. What leadership qualities does the barangay captain demonstrate in managing the program? Sincerity, diligence and dedication to his job were among the qualities mentioned by eleven respondents. "... *Masipag si Kapitan,*" (The Captain is industrious) they said, "*Nagbibigay ng sapat na oras para sa programa. Talagang inilaan ang sarili sa tungkulin....*" (He gives us enough time for the program. Really committed himself to the office...)

The same number of respondents appreciated the captain's thoughtfulness. "*Maasikaso*" (thoughtful and caring) was the common adjective they used. They also cited his patience and perseverance in guiding them throughout the performance of their tasks. One of the *purok* leaders further recalled that, in some instances, the barangay captain showed his concern with the people working on the projects by shouldering their meals out of his own pocket. His sincerity in implementing livelihood programs was also interpreted by the BTWG as an expression of concern with the plight of the poor.

Despite his patience and perseverance, he is still perceived as a strong leader. He is capable of commanding respect and obedience not only from other barangay officials but even from the BTWG and the CVMs — "*Mahusay siyang magdala ng tungkulin at mahusay magpasunod.*" (He knows how to take up responsibility and knows how to make people follow him.) This is exemplified by his effectiveness in soliciting the support and cooperation of the whole sanggunian.

One reason why he is respected by everyone is that "he leads by example." He expressed his all-out support to the program not only in words but also in deeds. He actively participated not only in the advocacy but also in the actual implementation of the program. And he has a word of honor. As observed by a *purok* leader, "*Ang sinasabi niya ay kaya niyang panindigan.*" (He stands on his word.)

His willingness to learn and to share what he has learned contributed much to his competence in managing the program. As earlier mentioned, he joined the *lakbay-aral* to various MBN showcase areas and attended a number of seminars. Upon his return to the barangay, he shared what he learned by conducting on-the-job training of sanggunian members, BTWG, CVMs and purok leaders with the help of the MTWG. He himself underwent on-the-job training on the various aspects of the program under the guidance of the MTWG and BTWG.

Eloquence is another characteristic that can be ascribed to Bgy. Capt. Viray. He has been a favorite resource person at various seminars conducted by the U.P. College of Public Administration not only for barangay captains but even for mayors and other types of local officials from different parts of the country. As such, he has extended his MBN advocacy activities beyond his territorial jurisdiction.

Despite his relatively low educational attainment, the barangay captain demonstrated competence in negotiating for program support. He was able to promote convergence by establishing linkages and continuous communication with various agencies and authorities at higher levels of operation. He dared approach the congressman to solicit support for the construction of a day care center in Sto. Niño, and he succeeded in convincing the latter to make a pledge. He took time out to negotiate with the municipal treasurer on the share of the barangay in sand and gravel tax, and such tax has now become a substantial source of revenue for the barangay. His negotiating expertise has also triggered ORMECO to accord Sto. Niño the topmost priority in the provision of electricity, and has paved the way for donations amounting to P100,000 from a big landowner and P50,000 from two other persons for the installation of electrical posts.

On top of all, the barangay captain has been commended for adopting a participatory style of leadership. He convenes community assemblies to consult the people and to solicit their active participation in the implementation of SRA-MBN projects. He mobilized the whole *sangguniang barangay* to participate in every aspect of the MBN management cycle. He meets with them two to three times a week so that any difficulty encountered in the performance of their tasks is promptly addressed. He frequently visits the different sitios to provide guidance and moral support to *purok* leaders, especially to those who have problems, regardless of whether such problems are personal or job-related.

Owing to his exemplary performance in implementing barangay projects through the MBN approach, Democrito R. Viray was proclaimed by an inter-agency body as the **Most Outstanding Barangay Captain of Naujan in 1997**.

Qualities They Expected Him to Manifest. What more could be asked of an outstanding barangay captain?

As the saying goes, "No one is perfect." Two purok leaders noted that there were instances where he failed to notify their sitio officials about a scheduled

community assembly meeting – “*Kung minsan ay nagkukulang sa abisa.*” (Sometimes he fails to notify.) But, at least, this shortcoming was not intentional. This could be attributed partly to the enormity of his tasks and his difficulty in expediting the accomplishment of several activities simultaneously through delegation of functions.

His desire to actively participate and to make himself visible in every SRA-MBN activity is among the reasons why he is not too keen to delegating a considerable portion of his functions. And this sometimes lead to postponement of some activities until such time that the captain is available. A case in point was the validation of data for the second survey whose completion was still pending as of the writing of this report.

Of course, the captain could not please everyone. While one purok leader wants him to be more patient in mobilizing neighborhood officials who encounter problems in their tasks, another one wants the captain to be more strict saying: “*Tagtagin na sa katungkulan ang purok leader kung hindi ito marunong mahiisa.*” (Shake the purok leader off his office if he does not know how to cooperate.)

All, except five, of the 25 respondents at the barangay level believed that the barangay captain already possessed the essential characteristics of a good leader. Nonetheless, they want him to continuously upgrade his managerial competence and to keep abreast of emerging management strategies by actively participating in various seminars and *labbay-aral*. Difficulties encountered in establishing POs in the barangay also imply the need for the barangay captain to harness his competence in organizing and strengthening people’s organizations.

Value of MBN to the Community

From being generally apathetic at the start of the program, the Sto. Niño residents have now become supportive of the MBN approach. The change in their attitude towards the program stems from the fact that the MBN approach has made them participate in every aspect of the management cycle, unlike before where only the local officials had the “right” to plan and manage their community affairs. Indeed, the MBN approach has made them feel that they own the projects that are being implemented in their community, unlike before where government programs were imposed on them even if these did not respond to their basic needs and problems.

The officials, on the other hand, valued the installation of a CBIS, even if this entailed a lot of their time, effort and resources, as this provides an objective basis for prioritizing barangay projects in the most responsive and democratic way. Apart from serving as an input to SAPIME, the CBIS was also used by the barangay officials as a tool for soliciting support from various sources, and for encouraging their constituents to take initiative in improving their lot. And they take pride in the fact that Sto. Niño has become a showcase for the implementation of SRA-MBN.

The baseline survey in June 1996 paved the way for the identification of Sto. Niño's top ten MBN problems, with "incidence" or number of families/persons affected as the primary basis for ranking (see Table 1). Topping the list was the non-involvement of families in any PO or development activity. As an initial step towards the solution of this problem, community assembly meetings were held in every sitio for the purpose of organizing neighborhood associations and to discuss how the community can be involved in barangay projects. As earlier mentioned, however, the neighborhood associations are still "half-baked" partly because of interruptions in the services rendered by community organizers. In spite of this, the officers of such associations (i.e. the *purok* leaders) have started mobilizing the community members in the implementation of projects that the community itself identified.

Table 1. Top 10 MBN Problems of Sto. Niño in 1996

Rank	MBN Indicator No.	MBN Problem	No. ^a	% ^b
1	29	None of the family members was involved in any PO or community development activity	138	61
2	24	Family income was below subsistence threshold level	110	54
3	25	Children aged 3-6 not attending day care/preschool	97	94
4	17	House would not last for at least 5 years	82	34
5	14	Family had no access to sanitary toilets	71	30
6	11	Couples not practicing family planning in the last 6 months	70	54
7	27	Children 13-16 years old not attending high school	27	24
8	3	Pregnant and lactating mothers not provided with iron and iodine supplements	24	28
9	7	Pregnant women not given at least 2 doses of tetanus toxoid	21	27
10	23	Family members 18 years old and above (exclusive of family heads) were unemployed	21	21

Notes: ^aNumber of families/persons unable to meet the MBN standard.

^bPercent of eligible families/persons.

Source: CBIS for MBN of Sto. Niño, 1996.

Ranking second among the MBN problems of Sto. Niño was the absolute poverty of 110 out of 238 families in the barangay. The identification of this problem led to the implementation of livelihood programs that would augment family income. This

also paved the way for the construction of a barangay market which would enable the community members to sell their products without travelling to the *poblacion* (town proper), and the conduct of training in entrepreneurship as well as provision of seed capital by DSWD in collaboration with the municipal government and the barangay. To ensure effective management of their projects, the beneficiaries have been encouraged to form POs. Unfortunately, however, such POs had not been established as of this writing.

A total of 97 children aged three to six were not attending day care or preschool during the period covered by the baseline survey. This was then the third MBN problem of Sto. Niño, the main cause of which was the absence of a day care center. This thereby prompted the barangay captain to solicit infrastructure support from the congressman and to mobilize the day care worker and the CVMs for the preparation of instructional materials.

Poverty had also caused a total of 82 Sto. Niño families to live in houses that could not stand the weather for at least five years. But the MBN approach prompted the community to solve this problem through the so-called *bayanihan* for the rehabilitation of dwelling units.

Sanitation was also among the top five problems in the barangay at the start of the program. A total of 71 families had no access to sanitary toilet facilities, but some of them were ashamed to tell the truth. The shy ones told the CVMs that they had a "flush toilet" instead of admitting that they only had a "splash toilet." Plastic toilet bowls from DOH were then immediately distributed for free to the families which were bold enough to tell the truth. This later led to the revelation that there were actually more families needing toilet bowls compared to what the survey indicated as the previously shy families had gained courage to complain why they were not in the list of beneficiaries. And this has served as a lesson for the community residents to be honest during MBN surveys.

Corresponding measures were also taken to address the problems ranking 6th to 10th. Information campaigns for family planning were intensified by the RHM and BHWs; out-of-school youth were convinced by the SK to continue their studies; "active" or house-to-house approach was adopted in improving the provision of iron and iodine supplements to pregnant and lactating mothers; campaigns for the immunization of pregnant women from tetanus were also intensified; and unemployed family members aged 18 and above were encouraged to participate in various livelihood programs.

Pending the final results of the second survey, changes in the MBN situation of Barangay Sto. Niño as a whole cannot be ascertained at this writing. Nonetheless, the preliminary results of data validation in Sitio Akasya indicate that the MBN approach has brought about some improvements in the MBN status of sitio residents (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Comparative MBN Data of Sitio Akasya:
First and Second Surveys**

Indicator No.	MBN Problem	1 st Survey (June 1996)		2 nd Survey (January 1998)		% Change
		%	Rank	%	Rank	
25	Children aged 3-6 not attending day care/preschool	84.6	1	41.7	4	(42.9)
29	Family not involved in any PO or development activity	65.5	2	63.9	2	(1.6)
24	Family income was below subsistence level	61.1	3	75.6	1	14.5
11	Couples not practicing family planning in the last 6 months	54.5	4	56.0	3	1.5
14	Family had no access to sanitary toilet	41.7	5	12.2	14	(29.5)
1	Newborns with birthweight below 2.5 kilograms	28.6	6	40.0	5	11.4
3	Pregnant/lactating mothers not given iron and iodine supplement	25.0	7.5	1.4	12.5	(23.6)
4	Infants not breastfed for at least four months	25.0	7.5	1.4	12.5	(23.6)
17	House would not last for at least five years	19.4	9	3.2	9	(16.2)
13	Family had no access to potable water	13.9	10	22.5	8	8.6

The program has substantially improved the situation of Sitio Akasya residents in five MBN indicators. From a high of about 84.6 percent at the start of the program, the percentage of children not attending day care/preschool has gone down to only about 41.7 percent. The proportion of families with no access to sanitary toilets has also decreased from about 41.7 percent during the first survey to only about 12.2 percent during the second survey. Two other MBN problems (i.e. on pregnant/lactating mothers not given iron and iodine supplements, and on infants not breastfed for at least four months) had a percentage reduction of about 23.6 each, from about 25.0 percent at the start of the program to almost nil at only about 1.4 percent during the second survey. The proportion of families living in houses that could not stand the weather for at least five years had also decreased from about 19.4 percent at the initial phase of the program to only about 3.2 percent as of the second survey.

Unfortunately, the problem of absolute poverty of families in Sitio Akasya seems to have worsened, with a percentage increase of about 14.5 percent. This may imply

that the income generated from the livelihood projects was not enough to offset the skyrocketing increase in the prices of basic commodities, and/or the family income sources, especially those related to farming, have been drastically affected by the El Niño phenomenon. Likewise, the percentage of newborns with birthweight below 2.5 kilograms has increased by about 11.4 percent while the proportion of families without access to potable water has risen by about 8.6 percent. These were not among the top ten MBN problems at the barangay level in 1996. Nonetheless, nutrition programs and installation of facilities for potable water supply, together with many other MBN projects, have already been included in the Five-Year (1998-2002) Development Plan of the barangay. This plan can therefore serve as a tool for sustaining the program even if changes would occur in municipal leadership after the May 1998 polls.

Lessons Learned

Other local chief executives can learn a great deal from the experiences of Mayor Melgar and Bgy. Capt. Viray in enhancing their leadership competence through the MBN approach. Indeed, the following are some of the lessons that can be drawn from the implementation of SRA-MBN:

1. Success in the implementation of the program entails the leader's commitment to improve the living conditions of his constituents.

Naujan does not form part of the *Club 20* and, hence, is not a beneficiary of the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF). But the mayor's commitment to upgrade the quality of life of Naujeños drove him to ensure success in the implementation of SRA-MBN even in the absence of financial support from PAF. Likewise, the barangay captain of Sto. Niño decided to set aside politics for the sake of improving the living conditions of his people. He readily showed his commitment and support to the program even if he comes from an oppositionist barangay.

2. Training and orientation can motivate a leader to support the MBN approach.

Presidential issuances were necessary to introduce the program to the local officials and to provide the legal bases as well as guidelines for the implementation of the program nationwide. But these issuances may not effectively convince the leaders to initiate the program in their respective territorial jurisdiction, especially in non-priority areas where program implementation largely relies on local funds.

Indeed, the presidential issuances did not make the program attractive to Mayor Melgar. His initiative to introduce SRA-MBN in his hometown was primarily influenced by his seven-week training in the 38th LADP. Likewise, the enthusiasm of Bgy. Capt. Viray to advocate the program in his locality was primarily an offshoot of his participation in the orientation seminar.

3. Study tours or *lakbay-ara* can enhance the commitment and competence of a leader in the implementation of the program.

The MBN study tour of the 38th LADP class served as an eye-opener that cleared the mayor's doubts on the merits of SRA-MBN. His exposure to the actual processes involved in the MBN approach prompted him to take a hundred-eighty-degree turn, from a negative to a positive attitude towards the program. This also contributed much to his competence in providing guidance to the MTWG.

In the case of the barangay captain, his *lakbay-ara* to a number of showcase areas gave him the opportunity to learn various ways of providing leadership support to the program, particularly at the barangay level. His exposure to positive changes that the MBN approach had ushered into the showcase areas also motivated him to sustain his commitment and support to SRA-MBN despite the difficulties he encountered in selling the program to his constituents.

4. The MBN approach can change the attitude of a traditional politician towards community participation.

People empowerment remained vague in the management vocabulary of both the mayor and the barangay captain until their exposure to the MBN approach. They used to monopolize the conceptualization of development programs primarily to focus on projects that would generate votes for their reelection and those that would please their political allies. But now they have shunned "politics of patronage" to give priority to needs of the poor, and to ensure sustainability of development projects by involving the people in every aspect of project management cycle.

5. A leader's sincerity to involve the community in SAPIME can transform indifference into a supportive attitude among the people.

Through his patience and perseverance to promote community participation in SAPIME, the barangay captain has succeeded in convincing his previously apathetic constituents to wholeheartedly support the program. He has made his people feel that the program can do nothing without their support, and this is one aspect of the MBN approach that the people valued most.

6. Lack of expertise in CO can drastically affect a leader's capability to ensure self-reliance among program beneficiaries.

Owing to his limited knowledge in community organizing, the barangay captain relied solely on the expertise of MAHAL, Inc. in establishing POs. Consequently, the inability of the said NGO to sustain the commitment of its community organizers has delayed the process of transforming community-oriented activities into community-managed ventures.

Conclusion

This study has proven that SRA-MBN can be implemented successfully even in an area that is not covered by the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF). Certainly, financial support is a crucial factor of success in the implementation of the program. But absence of PAF support would not pose serious problems if the leaders have the commitment to serve the interest of the poor; for such commitment will eventually lead to generation of program funds from various sources other than PAF. For instance, program implementation in Barangay Sto. Niño has been supported, among others, by municipal and barangay funds, by the livelihood project funds of MAHAL, Inc., by funds coming from national agencies (e.g. DOH and DSWD), and more importantly, by free labor and other forms of support from the community.

However, commitment to serve the people does not automatically lead to adoption of MBN as an approach to poverty alleviation, especially if the leader lacks comprehensive knowledge on the MBN management strategies. This underscores the need to continuously conduct SRA-MBN orientation and training programs as well as study tours or *lakbay-aral* for local chief executives.

This study has further shown that, due to their sad experiences with past government programs, the people tend to show apathy at the initial stage of SRA-MBN. Indeed, it was not easy to sell the program to the people. Hence, the leaders and technical working groups of Naujan and of Barangay Sto. Niño deserve commendation for their patience and perseverance in advocating the program.

Through the MBN approach, the leaders of Sto. Niño, with the help of the BTWG and MTWG, were able to restore the trust and confidence of the people in government programs. Due to lack of expertise in community organizing, however, they encountered difficulties in establishing and strengthening POs that could serve as venues for ensuring sustainability of the program beyond the incumbent leaders' term of office. Although sustainability of the program has been ensured by integrating SRA-MBN in the five-year development plans of the municipality and of the barangay, POs can make a great difference especially in harnessing community participation in the program. Hence, it is imperative that leaders undergo intensive training in community organizing.

On the whole, this study has proven that the MBN approach can bring about improvements not only in the living conditions of the people but even in the management style and managerial competence of a leader. This therefore poses a challenge for all local chief executives to initiate and/or sustain the adoption of MBN as an approach to local development.

Endnotes

¹*Galing Pook* Award is conferred on a number of local government units that have implemented innovative and replicable development programs and approaches. The *Awards* program is being administered jointly by the Local Government Academy (LGA) of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Center for Development Management of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) to promote excellence in local governance.

²Local Administration and Development Program is a seven-week course designed for local chief executives and other local officials. The course encompasses the following modules: (1) Challenges of Decentralized Development, (2) Dynamics of Intergovernmental Relations, (3) Local Government Systems and Procedures, (4) Local Resource Management, (5) Development Planning, (6) Action Research, and (7) Innovations in Local Government. Instituted in 1968, the Center for Local and Regional Governance (formerly Local Government Center) has administered its 40th LADP course in December 1998. LGA of DILG gives technical and financial assistance to the program.

³This section draws extensively from volumes I and II of Naujan's Comprehensive Development Plan for the period 1997-2007.

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