



Faces & Places

Landcare in Lantapan

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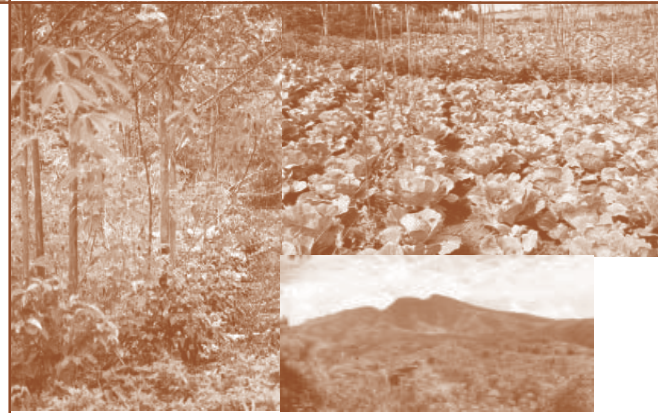
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Introduction

Back in 1996, Landcare became an arena for a new wave of volunteerism and cooperation among farmers in Claveria, Misamis Oriental, Philippines. By 1999, Landcare was scaled out to Lantapan and other neighboring municipalities in the Province of Bukidnon.

The Landcare Program in Lantapan started with an intensive information dissemination program on sustainable agriculture and environmental issues, technological options and institutional innovations.



The Landcare Team in Lantapan facilitated the information dissemination drive with slide shows, night or day. A generator was brought to communities with no electricity. The information drive was complemented with cross-visits to Claveria, to inspire and encourage farmers with the examples set in Claveria.

Farmers then began to organize themselves into Landcare groups at the sitio and barangay levels. They participated in agroforestry, soil and water conservation training and institutional capacity building, which led to adoption of conservation technologies. The sitio and barangay-based groups decided to organize themselves, and federate at the municipal level, now known as the Lantapan Landcare Association (LLCA).

Today, farmers have organized themselves into more than 60 Landcare groups. With Natural Vegetative Strips (NVS) as the foundation, farmers developed their fields into agroforestry farms, and established nurseries for fruit and timber trees. Some groups are also engaged in community-based activities such as creek and river clean up and rehabilitation, as well as, participated in various technical and institutional capacity building training.

Farmers and others, from various walks of life found new strength in working together to achieve common goals in the spirit of camaraderie and cooperation. Together with local governments, technical facilitators and other service providers, they improve their farming systems. This translates to improved agricultural productivity, increased income, improved vegetative cover – all towards a better quality of life, and the protection and conservation of the environment and natural resources.

Today, farmers are adopting a suite of soil and water conservation farming technologies including contour plowing, NVS, agroforestry, trash bonding, minimum tillage and many others. Tree growing is increasingly becoming an important component in the farm.

Secondary and elementary schools in Lantapan are also involved in the Landcare Program. Students and teachers are now both involved in school-based and community-led activities. This will be the way forward for a community-led practice in Landcare, with all sectors participating for both private and public interests.



Berting Ceballos – at the helm of
Agroforestry Tree Seed Association of
Lantapan (ATSAL)

To many who know him, Alberto Ceballos or “Berting” wakes up early morning to tend his nursery. He has been in the nursery business before he joined the tree domestication training conducted by ICRAF and SANREM in 1997.

Berting is just one of the many farmers who found an opportunity to improve the living condition of his family through the knowledge and skills he acquired from participating in various training. From then on, there was





no turning back for this humble farmer. He established his own agroforestry farm with a variety of fruit and timber trees in Balila.

Berting is now the active President of ATSAL, a partner organization of LLCA, which he also leads. ATSAL specializes in collecting, handling and marketing of quality agroforestry seeds, as well as propagating quality seedlings. Organized in 1998, the group accumulated a gross income of more than three million pesos in just four years, an unprecedented accomplishment for a small group like ATSAL.

Berting is constantly invited to seminars and workshops on germplasm management by different organizations, and conducts seminars himself. His experience on quality germplasm management for both exotic and indigenous species has earned him recognition as one of Mindanao's "top notch" in agroforestry.

Berting now boasts to have sent his children to college from his earnings in selling seeds and seedlings.



Tulugan – once a “sleepy” sitio of Victory, now awakened by Landcare

It was June 1999 when Tulugan in Victory formally organized its own Landcare group. Through the leadership and guidance of Arsenio Tahuran, many of the farmers were able to address soil erosion problems in their sloping farmlands. Farmers mostly grow high value crops such as cauliflower, lettuce, carrots, cabbage and broccoli.

The group’s communal nursery has produced thousands of seedlings, and members have out-planted more than





15 000 fruit and timber trees, and other perennial crops like coffee. Today, 29 households in the sitio have adopted NVS and integrated trees into their farming system.

Tulugan resides in an area with conflicting land classification – buffer zone and Alienable and Disposable (A&D) land. However, this did not stop farmers from employing soil and water conservation technologies. This in fact, tightened their claims of the land and their landscape position mirrors a perfect harmony of people and trees, and the environment.

Viewed from afar, Tulugan's landscape boasts a mosaic of contoured farms with NVS and trees. "We regard the land as our source of life. Our future rests upon our present efforts", said Manong Arsenio.



Police officer turned agroforester

Roger Veloso once patrolled the streets of Lantapan to safeguard and protect its constituents. After leaving the police force, he continued his usual patrolling. This time, however, he patrols his productive agroforestry farm in Poblacion, tending his fruit and timber trees, perennial crops and farm animals. From a meager start of a few trees, his family now derives most of its income from his agroforestry farm.





Roger's farm now boasts of a variety of fruit trees such as durian, guapple, pomelo, coffee, rambutan and lanzones among others. His yearning for more knowledge and skills led him to ATSAL. Easily he enlisted as member, and actively involved in both ATSAL and Landcare activities.

Aside from selling his farm produce, he also collected various seeds of agroforestry tree species, which he made good money from selling. When planting stocks are plenty, he generously shares these to other farmers and friends visiting in his farm.

Recently however, Roger joined his Creator, but left a legacy for his children. Today, his memory continues to inspire other farmers, especially to his friends in ATSAL and Landcare.



“Walking the talk” – Datu Mansalalang’s integrated agroforestry system

Very seldom can we find a government employee practicing what he preaches. Henry Binahon or “Datu Mansalalang” of the Talaandig Tribe is exceptional. He is a former employee of the Integrated Protected Areas Management Systems (IPAS), the agency in-charged of the Mt. Kitanglad Range Natural Park in Bukidnon. In his private time, he works with his family to develop a once degraded three-hectare property in Bul-ogan, Sungco. He successfully developed the land into a very productive and stable agroforestry farm in just two years. There is





no doubt that Henry inspires many who have visited and learned from his farm.

Henry combines modern technologies with indigenous knowledge systems, and demonstrates that a small farm can be self-contained with food always in the home, and products available in the market for more income. Some of these technologies include NVS, minimum tillage, composting, organic farming and agroforestry among others. He also maintains a sizable nursery of fruit and timber trees, which he makes good money from selling seedlings.

Henry envisions of developing his farm into a Learning Center, where farmers within and outside Lantapan can come to learn about sustainable agriculture and natural resources management. He now stands proud with his mini-training center, constructed with timber harvested from his small tree farm.

Helping Henry in his farm is wife Perla who specializes in vegetable and flower gardening. The family now derives most of their income from the farm.



Tatay Toy – growing old... gracefully

Sixty-nine year old Alfonso Sagayan or “Tatay Toy” to many, is one of the most active agroforesters in Lantapan. His small farm in Sungco is one of the sites of an on going species evaluation trials, to test the growth performance of several agroforestry tree species across different elevation gradients in the municipality.

Most farmers of Tatay Toy’s age could have opted to retire from farming, sit back and watch their grandchildren grow. But this energetic farmer is





seemingly tireless. Presently, he is ATSA's Vice-President. His farm is frequently visited by farmers, agroforestry researchers, scientists, and those wanting to learn more about tree species that can be integrated in the farm.

While anticipating for the harvest of trees after the experiment, Tatay Toy continues to sell his seeds and seedling stock of fast growing timber and fruit tree species. The regular flow of visitors in his area continues to provide extra income.

Tatay Toy's outlook in growing old is full of optimism. "Mingling with the oldies makes me feel weaker, so I usually talk and discuss things with the young ones to make me feel younger," Tatay Toy said.



The rain did it - Moises Abarquez' change of heart

Moises Abarquez chose not to apply the technologies applied by his peers, even those seemingly promising ones. From his experiences with previous projects, he feared that innovations involving soil conservation and tree growing would take away his cropland.

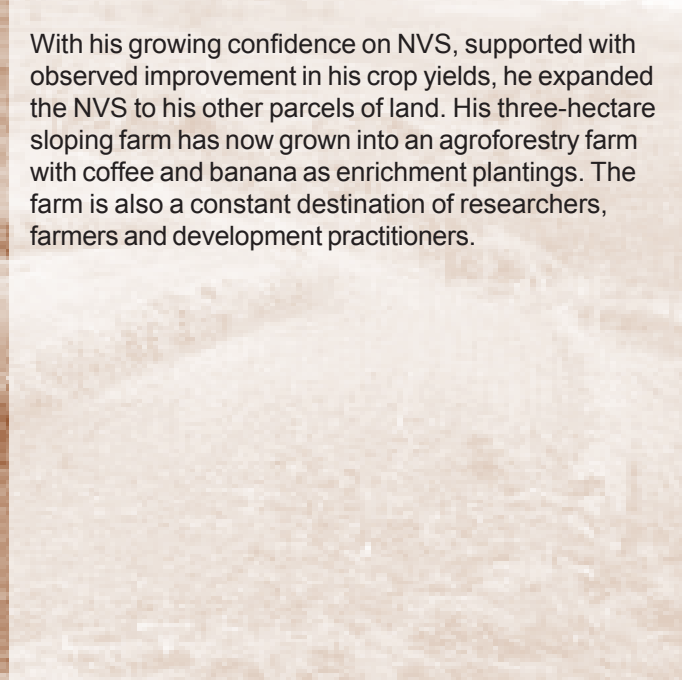
But Mother Nature had other plans for Moises. When Bads, an ICRAF researcher, persuaded Moises to visit his farm in Migdaha, Sungco, one rainy day, both saw the nutrient-rich topsoil being washed off from Moises'





sloping farm, to the road beside his property. Taking it as a cue, Bads explained the occurring erosion process. By that incident, Moises came back to his farm the next day more determined to establish the NVS.

With his growing confidence on NVS, supported with observed improvement in his crop yields, he expanded the NVS to his other parcels of land. His three-hectare sloping farm has now grown into an agroforestry farm with coffee and banana as enrichment plantings. The farm is also a constant destination of researchers, farmers and development practitioners.





Bernardino Dumo – “Best Farmer” shares his best

Bernadino Dumo was a model farmer awardee of Sungco in 1998. He organized fellow farmers into a Landcare group in Mapawa. Landcare enhanced his knowledge on soil and water conservation technologies, and motivated 59 other farmers to adopt the same. Bernardino is overflowing with strong conviction that his endeavors will ensure a bright future for his growing family. He constantly seeks knowledge and continues to share this with fellow farmers.



Mapawa is conducive to the production of high value crops. However, traditional “up and down” cultivation makes the soil prone to erosion. Mapawa is also part of the buffer zone of the Mt. Kitanglad Range Natural Park. Members of the Talaandig Tribe dominate the area.

The foremost issue confronting farmers in the buffer zone is insecure land tenure. But this did not deter them from planting more than 17 000 timber trees in the buffer zone. There are on-going dialogues with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to foster better understanding and in selecting options to improve natural resources management and tenure security. Farmers believe that their current land management will increase their negotiating power, over their claim for a more secured land tenure.





From a “reluctant” farmer to Landcare visionary

Basilio Decano of Kibulay, Cawayan was a challenge for his peers in Landcare, as well as the Landcare facilitators in Lantapan. Invited seven times to attend Landcare meetings, he constantly refused and sent his wife instead. Even monetary offers of previous reforestation activities of the Muleta-Manupali Watershed Development Program did not move him.

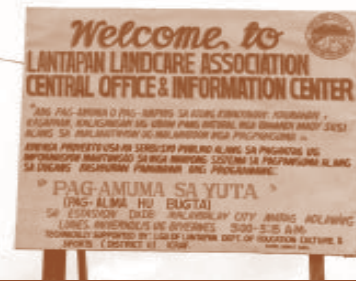
A cross-visit to Claveria, Misamis Oriental softened his perspective about Landcare. Seeing the activities of





Landcare groups in Claveria, he immediately convinced two of his friends to set up a small nursery. This newfound inspiration and dedication to Landcare, however, initially annoyed his wife who even told him, “better take your pillow and blanket and sleep in your nursery!” But when they started producing trees and selling some of their produce, his wife became one of his staunchest supporters. Even other residents of Kibulay who were cynical at the start, joined him after seeing the potential benefit that Landcare could bring to their community.

Starting with only three members, Basilio’s group grew to include the entire households in the community. His sloping farm is now a model agroforestry farm with over 7 000 trees planted along the contour and in the boundary of his property, which extends to a riparian area of a small creek. With these developments in his farm, he amuses the visitors by saying, “if God will get me now (hopefully not yet!) I would oblige gracefully, since I already have a legacy for my children.” He hopes that his family and successors will continue what he has started.



Lantapan Landcare Association's (LLCA) Central Office and Information Center - once a dream, now a reality

Rolled into one: perspiration, dedication and cooperation, the LLCA Central Office and Information Center now stands after more than a year in the making. Landcare members thought it best to conveniently meet at the most accessible area, especially for farmers who have to travel a long way for a meeting. They dreamed of an office, and became determined enough to make it happen.





From then on, there was no stopping the Landcare members from realizing their vision. Meetings were held to make plans. They identified donor members and sources of outside assistance. Bamboo, lumber and other constructions materials were to be shared. A school property was identified as a suitable area and immediately, the members approached the Department of Education's District Superintendent to request a portion of the school property in Baclayon to be the site of LLCA Office, and the rest is history.

December 6, 2001 witnessed the inauguration of the LLCA's proud structure with a big signboard. For farmers, the structure is a symbol of integrity and dependence in one's capacity to make a great dream a big reality. The Office with a demonstration farm now serves as the business center of the group, where everybody are most welcome to visit, and learn about Landcare.



Starting them young - Landcare in School

School... ZZZZZ!!!

Teachers and school administrators have always tried to make life in school not only conducive to learning but also, where learning could be fun. Some teachers creatively take students out into the woods, rivers, creeks and farms to bring the lessons close to real situations. You name it, and they've done it. The outrageous escapades plus the serious stuff inside the classroom equals fun learning, makes school more exciting and effective.



Landcare shares this opinion: Landcare is not only for farmers, just as learning is not confine to the classroom corners. Needless to say, schools are viable entry points for learning, promoting, sharing and implementing on-ground environmental and sustainable agroforestry practices. With some brainstorming, collaboration and coordination with the heads of schools, Landcare was piloted in two private high schools in Lantapan by early 2000: the Xavier de Kibangay and the San Herminigildo Agro-Industrial School.

Students in the two schools are mostly children of poor farmers in the area. Hence, they can readily apply what they learned in Landcare when they help their parents in their farms, and when they eventually become farmers in the future.



Response from both the students and the teachers were positive. They now learn better from hands-on practical activities, as well as from theoretical topics. Contour and nursery establishments, tree planting, farm planning and river/creek clean up drives were some of the initial out-of-the-schoolroom escapades that both students and teachers fondly engaged.

The success of Landcare in the two school inspired the public schools in Lantapan to integrate Landcare in their programs. Initial activities begin with nursery establishment and contouring their own schoolyard. Students learned to become more productive, proactive and responsible members in the community.