

Sociodemographic profile of the upland farmers in the MPSAP pilot barangays

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ABSTRACT

Factual information and in-depth knowledge about the subject are important in formulating development programs and in providing solutions to problems that may be encountered in the course of development. Two hundred sixteen upland farmers were interviewed from the barangays of Patag, Guadalupe, Pangasugan and Marcos. Majority of the upland farmers are married who are at their prime adulthood. Their educational attainment and that of their spouses is below Grade V. The average number of children per household is four and the household size is about five persons. Most are migrants to the area from the interior barangays of Baybay due to insurgency problem in their respective places of origin, and to seek employment. They farm at the ViSCA forest reservation specifically, in the areas of Anibong, Bagacay, Calbiga-a, Dolores, Guilamingan and Hubasan. The five major problems of upland farmers are insufficient income, irregular job, tenurial insecurity on land cultivated and lack of decent house. To cope with their problems, upland farmers diversify their livelihood in order to generate income for the basic needs of the family. The major aspiration of the upland farmers is to find a regular job to enable them to send their children to school, eat nutritious food, start a business, stay healthy in decent house, wear good clothes and own land and a work animal.

Keywords: Profile, socio-demographic characteristics, MPSAP, upland farmers, coping mechanisms

INTRODUCTION

Fundamental to any rural development program is profiling of the people you intend to work with. The profile supplies factual information and in-depth knowledge about the subject to program planners and implementors. This basic knowledge is important in formulating develop-

ment programs and in providing solutions to problems that may be encountered in the course of development. Specifically, this study was undertaken to describe selected socio-demographic characteristics of the upland farmers; to identify their problems, aspirations and needs; and to ascertain the location of the farms they are tilling.

METHODOLOGY

The respondents of this study were 216 heads of upland farm families from barangays Patag, Guadalupe, Pangasugan and Marcos of Baybay, Leyte.

Data was collected through personal interviews using an interview schedule in Cebuano. Data were analyzed using descriptive methods which included frequencies, percentages, means and ranks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics

Tables 1 and 2 show that the majority (88.42 percent) of the upland farmers were married and were at their prime adulthood (46 to 60 years old). They and their spouses had less than five years of formal schooling. The average number of children per household was four and the household size was about five persons (Table 3). This study looked into the age of the eldest and youngest children because this factor partly determines the participation of the wives and children in farming and other livelihood activities. The mean age of the eldest children was 20 years old while the youngest was 8 months old (Table 4).

Table 1. Sex and civil status of the respondents (n=216).

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Male	201	93.1
Female	15	6.9
Civil Status		
Single	4	1.85
Married	191	88.42
Separated	2	0.93
Widow/widower	19	8.79

Table 2. Age and educational attainment of the household heads and their spouses (n=216).

Characteristic	Percent	
	Heads	Spouses
Age		
30 years & below	8.80	14.81
31 to 45 years old	26.85	27.31
46 to 60 years old	45.37	35.65
61 years old & above	18.98	8.80
Mean	49.67	40.44
Range	23-83	18-76
Educational attainment		
0 (no formal schooling)	9.26	5.56
1 to 6 (primary)	70.37	69.91
7 to 11 (secondary)	19.44	10.19
12 years & above (college)	9.3	4.22
Mean	4.69	4.22

Table 3. Number of children per family and household size (n=216).

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Number of children per family		
none	21	9.72
1-3	69	31.94
4-6	82	37.96
7-9	34	15.74
10 & above	10	4.64
Mean	4.24	
Household size		
2 (couple only)	20	9.25
3 to 6	91	42.13
7 to 10	79	36.57
11 and above	26	12.04
Mean	5.34	

Table 4. Age distribution of oldest and youngest children (n=216).

Characteristic	Percent	
	Eldest	Youngest
3 or less	1.85	31.08
4-6	5.56	
7-15	21.30	
16-20	10.18	13.99
21-30	32.87	7.87
31 and above	18.52	2.59
Mean	19.78	7.91
Range	9 mos.-60	1 mo.-36

Some indicators of levels of living

About one-half (49.07 percent) own their residential lots. Almost all of them (99.07 percent) own their residential houses. Two-thirds (64.35 percent) have temporary houses made of bamboo, nipa and soft lumber.

The common household appliances owned are radio (39.82 percent) and wall clock (15.74 percent).

Sixty-nine percent are squatters in the ViSCA forest reservation. Most (76.39 percent) of them cultivate only one plot. Eighty-five percent have an area of one hectare or less. Multiple cropping of root crops (pakudo, gabi, ubi, camote and cassava), banana, coconut and fruit trees is being practised.

A little over one-half (53 percent) are sickly or malnourished or both. About two-fifths (39.35 percent) wear old but clean clothes while one-third (33.33 percent) of them sometimes wear dirty clothes.

Table 5. Some indicators of levels of living (n=216).

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Ownership of residential lots		
Personally owned	106	49.07
Owned by parents/relatives	45	20.83
Owned by landlord	21	9.72
Rented	44	20.38
Ownership of house		
Owned	214	99.07
Rented	2	0.93
Kind of house		
Temporary	139	64.35
Semi-permanent	63	29.17
Permanent	14	6.48
Household appliances owned*		
None	86	39.82
Refrigerator	7	3.24
Karaoke	5	2.32
TV/Beta	23	10.65
Cassette	27	12.50
Radio	86	39.82
Wall clock	34	15.74
Sala set	3	1.39
Sewing machine	2	0.93
Electric fan	6	2.78
Residency in the village		
Below 10 years	35	16.3
10-15 years	20	9.3
16-20 years	14	6.7
21 years and above	147	66.7
Mean	26.05	
Farming experience		
Below 10 years	88	40.7
10-15 years	23	8.3
16-20 years	11	5.2
21 years and above	94	45.8
Mean	72.93	

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Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Farm size (ha)		
Below 0.5	89	41.20
0.5-1.0	95	44.00
1.1-1.5	9	4.20
1.6-2.0	13	6.00
2.1 and above	10	4.60
Mean	74	
Number of plots cultivated		
One	165	76.39
Two	467	21.76
Three	4	1.85
Tenurial Status		
Owner-cultivator-tenant	67	31.02
Squatter in the ViSCA Forest Reservation	149	68.98
Health status		
No response	8	3.70
Healthy (no complained illness)	65	30.09
Sometimes get sick	90	41.67
Malnourished (thin & sickly)	50	23.15
Sickly (always get sick)	3	1.39
Clothing status		
No response	9	4.17
Regularly wears decent and nice clothes	28	12.97
Regularly wears old but clean clothes	85	39.35
Sometimes wear dirty clothes	72	33.33
Always wear dirty clothes	22	10.18

*Multiple responses.

Problems, coping mechanisms, aspirations in life and assistance needed

The problems of the upland farmers are:

1. Insufficient income.
2. Irregular job.
3. Tenurial insecurity on land cultivated.
4. Lack of decent house.
5. Sickly family members.
6. Lack of money for the education of children.
7. Lack of capital to start a business.
8. Fuelwood gathering is prohibited in ViSCA reservation.
9. Fear of displacement from their farms.
10. Low farm productivity.
11. High price nutritious food.
12. Gambling by children.
13. Fear that houses built along the river will be washed out.
14. Fear of the NPAs.
15. Big family size.

To cope with the above problems especially the livelihood problem, the upland farmers diversify their livelihood in order to generate income for their basic needs. However, efforts to diversify do not increase income due to irregularity of work and lack of capital to start a new livelihood.

The major aspiration of the upland farmers is to find a regular job. Finding a regular job to them would enable them to send their children to school, eat nutritious food, start a business, stay healthy in decent houses, and wear good clothing. They also aspired to own a work animal and land to have stability in farming.

The forms of assistance they need are:

1. Job opportunities.
2. Financial support through soft loans for the purchase of farm inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, insecticides and animal stocks and for initial capital for livelihood projects.
3. Security of tenure.

4. Free medicines.
5. Technical assistance especially on livelihood.
6. Scholarship grants for the children.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The upland farmers at the MPSAP area would stick to their upland farming because most of them, their spouses and children are in the active work age group, migrants and have unemployed children. Considering the low educational attainment of the children, the number of upland farmers might increase. Their major problem is economic in nature. The lack of sufficient income to meet the basic family needs has resulted in illness, lack of capital for livelihood projects, low farm productivity, and gambling by children. The number of upland farmers in the ViSCA forest reservation is high and concentrated in six areas, namely: Anibong, Bagacay, Calbiga-a, Dolores, Guilamingan and Hubasan.

The upland farmers in the MPSAP sites remain a threat to the fragile Mt. Pangasugan which primarily provides water to the farms and households in many villages and the town of Baybay. To preserve and rehabilitate Mt. Pangasugan especially from intrusion of farmers, the following are recommended:

1. Information dissemination of the college policies on the protection and conservation of its forest reserve.
2. Identification of squatters and individualized negotiation to resolve the squatter problem.
3. Establishment of livelihood projects in the lowlands.
4. Educational opportunities for the children to pursue college or other vocational education.
5. Creation of barangay monitoring system to document in-migration and imposition of strict guidelines for non-enchroachment of ViSCA reserve by the migrants.

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