

Coping Mechanisms of Filipino Households in Different Agro-Ecological Settings

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INTRODUCTION

The Filipino family is considered as the backbone of our society. The family or more generally, the household, is the unit of production, consumption, and reproduction, both on a daily and generational basis. It is within the sociocultural environment of the household that energy is expended and strategies are undertaken to attain individual and collective well-being and to improve one's quality of life. It is in the household where one's priorities are established and activities to pursue one's goals in life are carried out.

In his essay on rural development programs and the farm household as a unit of observation and action, Janelid¹ reiterates the interdependence between the household and the farm. In his view, "the interrelationships between the farm and the farm household are found in the main tasks of production, organization, distribution and consumption processes."

¹I. Janelid, "Rural Development Programmes and the Farm Household as a Unit of Observation and Action," in *The Household, Women and Agricultural Development*, ed. C. Presvelqu and S. Spijkers-Zwart (Wageningen, The Netherlands: Agricultural University, 1980), pp. 83-99

COPING MECHANISMS OF HOUSEHOLDS IN DIFFERENT AGRO-ECOLOGICAL SETTINGS

In Abad's² view, the following are characteristics of poverty in the Philippines as gleaned from case studies on poverty in the Visayas: (1) The poor are a heterogenous group; (2) The experience of poverty is varied; (3) The poor are assetless; (4) Poverty tends to be persistent; and (5) The poor are adaptable. The adaptability of the poor allows them "through a variety of survival strategies to cope with their everyday hardships, adjust to the cycle of lean and peak seasons, expand their niche the best way they can, and philosophically resign themselves to their fates". It is such survival strategies or what may also be called coping mechanisms which will be discussed in this paper.

Household food security is the major aim of the various coping mechanisms employed by both rural and urban families. Carner³ has identified the following commonly utilized survival strategies among the rural poor: (1) diversification of employment activities; (2) dependence on the village support system (i.e., kinship ties and reciprocal arrangements); (3) "making do" with less; and (4) migration to other places as a last resort.

Income and livelihood sources would be the major criteria in categorizing urban poverty groups.⁴ On the other hand, the rural poor can be classified on the basis of the people's access to and/or control of resources.⁵ The rural poor's "resource base, how they manage it and the income they derive from it"⁶ serve as the major criteria in classifying rural poverty groups.

The discussion of coping mechanisms of households in different agro-ecological settings would first focus on the following poverty groups: (1) landless agricultural workers in rice, corn, tobacco and/or sugar-producing villages; (2) Upland Farm-

²R.G. Abad, "Introduction", in *Faces of Philippine Poverty: Four Cases from the Visayas*, ed. R.G. Abad, R.V. Cadelina and V.L. Gonzaga (Quezon City: Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC), 1986), pp. 83-89.

³G. Carner, "Survival, Interdependence and Competition Among the Philippine Rural Poor", in *People-Centered Development*, ed. D.C. Kortan and R. Klauss (Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1984), pp. 133-143.

⁴R. Callanata, *Poverty: The Philippine Scenario*, (Makati: Bookmark, Inc., 1988).

⁵Carner, op.cit.; College of Human Ecology (CHE) and Commission on Population (POPCOM), *Proceedings of the Workshop on the Filipino Family in a Dynamic Ecosystem* (College, Laguna: UPLB, 1984), January 23-26.: Callanata, op.cit.

⁶Carner, op.cit.

ers; and (3) sustenance fishermen. Then the discussion will focus on the coping mechanisms employed by households in a coconut-based farming system.

Landless Agricultural Workers in Rice, Corn, Tobacco and Sugar-Producing Areas

The Philippines' farm population can be divided into two: "(1) those with currently recognized rights to a piece of land; and (2) those with no such rights".⁷ Subsistence production is only possible for the proportion of the farm populace belonging to the former category. "Landless agricultural workers belong to a marginal class in an agricultural, feudal society."⁸ Ledesma defines a landless agricultural worker as one who: (1) lives in the countryside and is dependent mostly on rural forms of employment, particularly farm work; (2) neither owns any land nor has tenancy rights to such; (3) hires out his labor, together with the labor of his family, to others as his principal source of income.⁹

The following coping mechanisms have been employed by landless agricultural workers in rice, corn, tobacco and sugar producing areas¹⁰:

- (1) Participation in different kinds of work groups (i.e. prendes/gama/sagod arrangements wherein landless workers weed the fields for free in exchange for harvesting rights or shares of the harvest; pakyaw/kabesilyahan wherein flat rates are given for the performance of various farm operations; work-exchange groups for hire).
- (2) Cooperation (whether intra- or inter-family) as a form of "shared poverty" (i.e. pooling together of labor and other resources to maximize income).
- (3) Engaging in diversified income and livelihood sources (i.e. carpentry, gardening, livestock raising, vending,

⁷G. Bautista, W.M. Thisenhuser, and D.J. King, "Farm, Households in Rice and Sugar Lands: Margen's Village Economy in Transition", in *Second View from the Paddy*, ed. A. Ledesma, P.Q. Makil and V.A. Miralao (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, 1983), pp. 73-92.

⁸M.C.J. Veneracion, "Coping with Crisis: Landless Agricultural Workers in Central Luzon" *Philippine Sociological Review (PSR)*, 33:1-2, (January-June 1985), pp. 27-34.

⁹a.J. Ledesma, "Landless Workers and Rice Farmers: Peasant Subclasses Under Agrarian Reform in Two Philippine Villages". (Ph.D.dissertation, Madison: University of Wisconsin).

¹⁰Carner, op.cit.; Bautista, op.cit.; CHE and POPCOM, *Structural Analysis*, PSR, 33:1-2, (January-June, 1985), pp. 18-26; Veneracion, p.cit.; Callanta, op.cit.

hiring oneself out as construction worker or domestic helper both here and abroad). These activities may also be viewed as means by which the landless leaves the category of agricultural worker.

- (4) Borrowing money or selling/mortgaging whatever little asset (if any) the worker has with relatives, neighbors and friends as usual sources of credit.
- (5) Borrowing money to repay previous loans which leaves the landless worker in a state of perpetual debt.
- (6) Migrating to other places or geographical mobility in search of job opportunities.
- (7) Collective decision-making by the household or clan members usually resulting in cautiousness in the adoption of innovations or risk-sharing.
- (8) Prayer or resignation to one's fate.

Upland Farmers

Upland farm households have been described as "tough, hardworking, resilient and ingenious".¹¹ Given the environmental constraints uplanders have to live with, upland households indeed have to be tough and resourceful in order to survive. Compared to coastal and/or lowland households, upland households are characterized by smaller family size and lesser sex role differentiation¹² and these characteristics may also be viewed as adaptive responses to environmental constraints. The two aforementioned characteristics of upland households may perhaps be attributed to the fact that sustaining a large family in the uplands would be extremely difficult and that all household members have to contribute towards the maintenance of the household.

The coping mechanisms utilized by upland households have been documented in various studies.¹³ Those studies have shown

¹¹P. Tangonan "Survival Strategies of Upland Farm Household in Labny, Mayantoc, Tarlac" (Ph.D. dissertation, UPLB, 1985).

¹²CHE and POPCOM, op.cit.

¹³Carner, op.cit.; CHE and POPCOM, op.cit.; J.M. Belsky, "Stratification Among Migrant Hillside Farmers and Some Implications for Agroforestry Programs: A Case Study in Leyte, Philippines", (M.S. thesis, New York: Cornell University, 1984), pp. 59-133.; R.V. Cadelina, "Social Networks: An Ecological Analysis of Social Transactions Within Content of Crisis", *PSR*, 33:1-2 (January-June, 1985), pp. 60-72.; R.V. Cadelina, "Poverty in the Uplands: Lowland Migrant Swiddeners in the Balinasayao Forest, Negros Oriental", in *Faces of Philippines Poverty: Four Cases from the Visayas*, ed. R.G. Abad, R.V. Cadelina and V.L. Gonzaga (Quezon City: PSSC, 1986), pp. 163-186.; Tangonan, op.cit.; L.B. Cornista, F.A. Javier, and E.F. Escueta, *Land Tenure and Resource Use Among Upland Farmers*, (UPLB): Agrarian Reform Institute, 1986); Tolentino, op.cit.; Callanta, op.cit.

that households of both upland and coconut farmers generally employ a two-pronged survival strategy which involves the diversification of agricultural practices and the diversification of income sources. The diversification of agricultural practices would primarily be a response to food scarcity while the diversification of income sources would primarily be a response to the household's need for cash.

Diversified agricultural practices and other responses to food scarcity which were identified in the researches cited in the preceding paragraph included the following:

- (1) Niche shifting wherein the farm is extensively utilized during months of food abundance and during the months of food scarcity, swiddeners shift to wage labor.¹⁴
- (2) Mixed cropping wherein subsistence/food crops and commercial/cash crops are combined on the same piece of land. "Upland farmers adopt mixed farming as a reaction to their limited access to land resource and in response to market forces. Thus, they raise subsistence crops for food, cash crops for immediate income returns, and other perennial commercial crops for regular and long-term cash returns."¹⁵
- (3) Planting crops of different maturity periods to ensure that harvests are spread throughout the year.
- (4) Changing the way agricultural products are disposed or used (e.g. Instead of selling most of the agricultural products during periods of food scarcity, they are used for home consumption only).
- (5) Niche diversification¹⁶ which is dependent upon the availability of resources. It involves the simultaneous exploration of resources found in different environmental zones. An example of niche diversification would be for household members to go fishing in a nearby lake aside from gathering wild fruits/plants in the forest and/or raising crops or animals in their backyard.
- (6) Raising livestock or growing vegetables in the home garden.
- (7) Gathering of forest products to be used as alternative food resources.

¹⁴Cadelina, 1986, op.cit.

¹⁵Cornista, Javier and Escueta, op.cit.

¹⁶Belsky, Cadelina, op.cit.

- (8) Land sharing wherein upland household with no access to land are allowed to cultivate small portions of the land which their relatives are not currently using. This results in a shorter fallow period for the farm, and the uplanders who have no access to land do this even though they are aware of the deleterious effects of such a practice.
- (9) Practicing ecologically sound farming technique or employing conservation methods in order to protect the uplanders' resource base.
- (10) Reliance on institutional support systems, both internal support systems (i.e. kin, friends, etc.) and external support systems (i.e. nongovernmental organizations; credit facilities, etc.)¹⁷ or what Cadelina¹⁸ had described as "social networks".
- (11) Scarcity adjustment or making do with less (i.e. having meals only once or twice daily instead of the usual three meals a day; tolerating low levels of nutrition and poor health; eating root crops if rice is scarce, etc.)
- (12) Migration as the "ultimate strategy resorted to by upland farmers after exhausting all possible remedies in the village. Generally, migration helped the upland households survive. Working outside the village during lean months enabled the household to buy rice and other prime necessities for the family. On the other hand, staying in the village during hard times (rainy days) just after planting season would mean hunger to some upland families".¹⁹

Diversified income sources as responses to the upland households' need for cash included the following:

- (1) Borrowing money, with or without interest, from friends, relatives, and neighbors;
- (2) Engaging in wage labor either as agricultural laborers, domestic helpers, construction workers, etc.;
- (3) Gathering of forest products such as rattan, bamboo, orchids, firewood, etc.;

¹⁷Tangonan, *op.cit.*

¹⁸Cadelina, 1985, *op.cit.*

¹⁹P. Tangonan, *op.cit.*

- (4) Handicraft production;
- (5) Engaging in small-scale entrepreneurial activities such as operation of "sari-sari" stores and the buy-and-sell of different products.

Sustenance or Artisanal Fishermen

"Unlike most agriculture and forestry lands which involve specific property rights, the sea is considered to be a common property or an open-access resource. Essentially anyone is eligible to become a fisherman and exploit the resource as he can. Access to a fishery resource may be open, but success in exploiting it depends on, to a large extent, the availability of capital to invest in efficient gear. Open access is not the same as equal access."²⁰

"Sustenance or artisanal fishermen are small-scale, traditional fishermen who fish both inland waters and marine coastal waters within three miles of the coastline."²¹ "Artisanal fishermen use gears which either do not require boats or which require boats of not more than 3 tons."²²

As one proceeds from the uplands to the lowlands to the coastal areas, family size, and division of labor increases. Inter-family cooperation in the coastal areas decreases with increased population/household because there is a greater competition for available resources with constant productivity.²³

Different studies of sustenance fishermen have identified the following coping mechanisms which have been utilized by fishermen's households:²⁴

- (1) Due to the very low income of sustenance fisherman, most households have to augment their income by engaging in agricultural and service jobs and this usually involved out-migration. "Often sustenance fishing

²⁰C. Bailey, "Managing an Open-Access Resource: The Case of Coastal Fisheries", in *People-Centered Development*, ed. D.C. Kortan and R. Klaus (Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1984), pp. 97-103.

²¹Carner, op.cit.

²²Callanta, op.cit.

²³CHE and POPCOM, op. cit.

²⁴Bailey, op.cit.; Carner, op.cit.; CHE and POPCOM, op.cit.; V.B. Ardales and F.P. David, "Poverty Among Small-Scale Fishermen in Iloilo", *PSR*, 33:1-2, (January-June, 1985), pp. 35-39.; V.B. Ardales and F.P. David, "The Poverty Condition of Artisanal Fishermen in Iloilo Province" in *Faces of Philippine Poverty: Four Cases from the Visayas*, ed R.G. Abad, R.V. Cadelins and V.L. Gonzaga (Quezon City: PSSC, 1986), pp. 3-66; Callanta, op.cit.

is taken up as an occupation of last resort by landless families unable to find other forms of employment.²⁵

- (2) Other secondary sources of income were: livestock raising, vegetable gardening, small-scale business (i.e. sari-sari store; fish vending).
- (3) Borrowing money, with or without interest, for household and/or production needs from relatives, friends, and neighbors.
- (4) Borrowing money to pay off previous debts hence, the sustenance fishermen's households are often caught in the trap of the debt cycle.
- (5) Selling or pawning household property or valuables, if any.
- (6) Buying goods on credit from the local sari-sari store.
- (7) Scarcity adjustment or making do with less (i.e. limiting the number of meals and amount of food intake; substituting root crops for rice; attending celebrations or vigils to save on meals and to eat good food).²⁶

The Filipino Family in a Coconut-Based Farming System

The data to be cited in this section of the paper were taken from various studies conducted by different researchers: Castillo, 1979; Cornista, 1983; De Vries, 1976; Gomez, 1976; Guerrero, 1966; Porio, *et al.* 1975; Samonte, 1976; Sevilla, 1982; Tolentino, 1986²⁷ and from the household survey of the Philippine Coconut Authority - United Coconut Planter's Bank

²⁵Carner, *op.cit.*

²⁶Ardales and David, 1985, *op.cit.*

²⁷G.T. Castillo, *Beyond Manila: Philippine Rural Problems in Perspective* (Ottawa, Canada: International Development Research Centre, 1979); L.B. Cornista, "Coconut Farming System: A Sociological Perspective", paper presented at the Symposium on Coconut-Based Farming Systems", Visayas State College of Agriculture, 1-3 June, 1983; P. de Vries, "Some Observations on Landless Labor in a Village in Talavera, Nueva Ecija", July, 1976; E. D. Gomes and V. P. Samonte, *Communication Factors of Crop and Livestock Technology in Bulacan and Batangas* (College, Laguna: University of the Philippines at Los Baños, 1976); S. H. Guerrero "Decision-Making Among Farm Families in a Philippine Barrio" (M.S. thesis, UPLB, 1966); E. Porio, F. Lynch, and M. Hollnsteiner, *The Filipino Family, Community and Nation: The Same Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow?* (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, April 1975); V. P. Samonte, A. Peres and R.M. Macasaet, *Socio-Communication Factors and Agricultural Innovativeness of Coconut Farmers* (College, Laguna: UPLB, April 1976); J.C. Sevilla, *Research on the Filipino Family: Review and Prospects* (Pasig: Development Academy of the Philippines, 1982); L.L. Tolentino, "Social Change in an Upland Community in Quezon, Philippines" (M.S. thesis, Universiti Pertanian, Malaysia, 1987).

(PCA-UCPB) Countryside Economic Development Program (CEDP) which was conducted in November 1986. Aside from the aforementioned sources of data, another major source of data was the author's masteral thesis which was on coping mechanisms employed by households in a coconut-based farming system. Both the PCA-UCPB household survey and the authors' field work were conducted in Barangay Malabanan, Balete, Batangas. Some of the statements which will be cited in this section regarding the family in coconut-based system also holds true for families in other agro-ecological settings in rural Philippines.

Regarding household structure, the average household (hh) size is usually seven persons. Most households are residentially nuclear but tend to be functionally extended. This means that even if the household is a separate residential unit, it still maintains ties and has reciprocal obligations towards the members of its extended family. Most of the residents in the barangay are related to each other either by consanguinity, affinity or ritual kinships. Due to the dependency ratio in young nuclear families, extended households (hhs) may have higher socioeconomic status (SES) than nuclear households.

Family decisions are reached independently by husband or wife in some instances and jointly in others. In home management-related matters, the wife is usually the major decision-maker but in actual farm operations, it is the husband. Decision on consumption loans are usually reached by the wife while those on production loans are usually jointly arrived at by husband and wife.

There is inequality in the intrahousehold food distribution processes with males and adults usually more adequately fed than females and younger people. Lower socioeconomic status (SES) households have a more well-balanced and varied diet compared to higher SES households because of the greater use of vegetables in their meals. The hh food security of coconut farmers with no rice intercrops is more at risk than that of rice-growing farmers because of the farmer's need to purchase rice. It is during the rainy season that the hh's food security experiences the greatest risk/threats, making the hh garden an important food reservoir. However, land scarcity brought about by population pressure endangers the existence of this reservoir.

Extrahousehold assistance is extended to both relatives and nonrelative alike and this assistance is extended reciprocally to and from the household. Patterns of assistance take on many forms (in cash or in kind), but it may be expected that

because of economic difficulties, less sharing of resources may occur in the future.

Division of labor is a necessity for the hh's everyday functioning. It is not age and gender alone which determine task allocation in the household. The ability and availability of the hh members are also important determinants. Therefore, the sexual division of labor in Filipino families is not as rigid as is often assumed.

The household survey of PCA-UCPB CEDP showed the following trends: Since coconut farming in Malabanan is generally a small holding enterprise, the income from coconut is often insufficient for the household's basic needs. Food is the major expenditure of most hhs and a majority of them spend more than they earn (which is also true for many hhs in different agro-ecological settings). Hence, friends and neighbors are important sources of credit.

Coconut farmers are often only part-time farmers because they engage in other occupations. Coconut farming families which practice intercropping and/or have off-farm jobs are financially better off than families dependent on coconut farming alone.

The actors in a coconut farming system constitute a heterogeneous group rather than a homogeneous one as is often assumed. A majority of the coconut farmers are tenants; the others are landowners, owner-operators or hired agricultural laborers. Tenancy rights are usually inherited and social mobility (both vertical and horizontal) does exist. But access to land on an intergenerational basis seems to be declining because of increasing population pressure. This pressure has also led to increasing parcellization of large landholdings.

Landowners get a proportion or all of the coconut harvest. Traditionally, what is grown under the coconut trees and the proceeds from such accrue to the tenant. But with the increasing profitability of intercropping, some landowners are: (a) restricting or exerting control over what intercrops or livestock are raised under the coconuts; and/or (b) demanding a share of the intercrops grown. It is also interesting to note that hired labor is seldom used either in coconut and/or intercrop production in the barangay where this study was conducted. But when there is hired labor, preference may be given to kin rather than nonkin.

Many farmers, as well as their children are optimistic about their future. They consider education as a means for upward social mobility particularly in the light of their own low educational attainment. In general, most farmers desire a better

quality of life (i.e. economic stability, etc.) and they perceive equality with other farmers in terms of levels of living. But this perception of equality is changing as social stratification and social differentiation become more apparent due to worsening socioeconomic conditions.

Perhaps, one of the most important survival strategies used by coconut farmers, specially in the Southern Tagalog region, is intercropping. The increasing profitability of intercropping vis-a-vis coconut farming per se had been noted in different studies.²⁸ "The availability of land for cultivation of vegetables and fruit trees enables landless workers to augment their income. It would seem therefore that landless laborers who are merely dependent on coconut farm work are worst-off while those who have access to other productive resources like land have better chances of improving their socioeconomic status"²⁹.

The following coping strategies of landless coconut workers had been identified by Cornista and Escueta³⁰ in their study of the Southern Tagalog region:

- (1) Work arrangements
 - (a) Seminahan – scheduling of the hired workers to enable all of them to work even for a limited period of time.
 - (b) Saggian – laborers form a work group in which everyone equally shares in the remuneration regardless of sex and the difficulty of tasks performed
 - (c) Pakisamahan – allows the inclusion in a work group of nonmembers who are in dire need of work
- (2) Employment patterns
 - (a) Seeking other farm and nonfarm employment
 - (b) Out-migration to the poblacion or cities or overseas
- (3) Other coping mechanisms
 - (a) Development of patron-client relationship with their employer.

²⁸L.B. Cornista, "Social Dynamics of Coconut Farming in Two Southern Tagalog Villages", (Ph.D. dissertation, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1981).; L.B. Cornista and E.F. Escueta, *The Structure of the Coconut Farming Industry*, Occasional Papers No. 10 (College, Laguna: Agrarian Reform Institute, 1983); M.B. Carlos, "The Economics of Coconut-Based Integrated Farming Systems in Silang, Cavite", (B.S. thesis, UPLB.; Belsky, op.cit; Tolentino, op.cit.

²⁹Cornista and Escueta, 1983, op.cit

³⁰ibid.

- (b) Cultivation of other social ties to ensure regular employment and ready source of credit.

Just like the households of the landless agricultural workers in rice, corn, tobacco and/or sugar; upland farmers; sustenance fishermen; and coconut workers/farmers found in other parts of the country, the households in the coconut-based farming system of Malabanan utilized the following coping mechanisms/survival strategies:

1. Household structure
 - a) Establishment of extended households as a means of sharing limited resources; or
 - b) Establishment of residentially nuclear but functionally extended households
 - (1) Reliance on intra- and inter-household patterns of assistance (i.e. extension of credit to kin and friends, etc.)
2. Employment patterns
 - a) Increased out-migration in search of employment opportunities elsewhere
 - b) Employment of out-of-school youth to augment household income
 - c) Reliance on family labor rather than on hired labor for farm operations
 - d) Hiring oneself out as agricultural labor
3. Patterns of livelihood in a coconut-based farming system
 - a) Diversification of agricultural practices
 - (1) Combination of coconut-intercrop-livestock production
 - (2) Crop diversity (i.e. multiple cropping; intercropping)
 - (3) Increased cropping intensity
 - (4) Borrowing of land
 - (5) Land transfer/land use arrangements (*hublian; arienda; sangla*)
 - b) Diversification of income sources
 - (1) Augmentation of household income by exploiting three or more sources of income (i.e. combination of agricultural sources of income with nonagricultural sources)
 - (2) Sewing of garments at home on a subcontractual basis
 - (3) Engaging in small-scale entrepreneurial activities such as store keeping

4. Sociopsychological coping mechanisms
 - a) Satisfaction with present life or "making do" with whatever one had
 - b) Optimism for the future as manifested in the respondents' aspirations; perceptions of agrarian reform; and perceptions of what constituted the good life.

The resources base of the households in the coconut-based farming system made possible the utilization of the different coping mechanisms cited above. The multiple livelihood strategies employed by most of the households were made possible by the resources found in the coconut-based farming system. If there are changes in the household's resource base, there will be concomitant changes in its survival strategies. The resources found in a coconut-based farming system contributed to both stability and change in the households contained therein.

CONCLUSION

Although this paper has not involved a very extensive review of all the available literature on coping mechanisms of households in different agro-ecological settings in rural Philippines, some patterns/trends can be gleaned from the studies cited in this paper. The following coping mechanisms or survival strategies are employed by households of landless agricultural workers in rice, corn, tobacco, and sugar-producing areas; upland farmers; sustenance or artisanal fishermen; and coconut workers/farmers:

1. Seeking other farm/fishing and nonfarm employment opportunities (i.e. wage labor; service jobs; etc.) which usually results in out-migration.
2. Scarcity adjustment or "making do" with less.
3. Borrowing money either to pay back old debts ("debt trap/cycle") and/or to service a new need.
4. Cooperation and/or reliance on institutional support systems (internal or external) or "social networks" (kin, friends, etc.). This has led to situations wherein "shared poverty" is manifested in terms of the existence of collective decision-making; land sharing; formation of extended households or residentially nuclear but functionally extended households and other forms of "shared poverty".

5. Due to the resource base available to both upland and coconut farmers, they are able to employ a two-pronged strategy of diversification of both agricultural practices and income sources, sustenance fishermen and landless agricultural workers are only able to diversify their income and livelihood sources but not their agricultural practices.
6. Both upland and coconut farmers and sustenance fishermen utilize family labor rather than hired labor in accomplishing farming/fishing tasks. The same pattern is also true for landless agricultural workers whose major resource is their own manpower.
7. The establishment of small-scale business enterprises such as "sari-sari" stores; buy-and-sell of various products, etc. are often resorted to by households in the uplands and in coconut farming areas.
8. Landless agricultural workers whether in rice, corn, tobacco, sugar or coconut-producing areas usually participate in different kinds of work groups or work arrangements.

The foregoing patterns of coping mechanisms utilized by households in different agro-ecological settings have some implications for policy formulation. Farmers should be encouraged to engage in multiple and intercropping practices rather than monoculture alone. As seen in the case of the coconut-based farming system in Batangas, farmers who engaged in coconut-intercrop-livestock farming had more substantial income as compared to farmers who depended on coconut production alone. Members of rural poor households could also be taught some entrepreneurial and managerial skills which they can use to augment their family income. Engaging in small-scale enterprises implies that credit from financial institutions should be readily accessible to the rural poor. Giving credit to the rural poor would prevent them from being caught in the debt trap.

The problem of increasing landlessness could perhaps have some relief if and when the government decides to enforce the provisions of the comprehensive agrarian reform law (CARL). The growing numbers of landless agricultural workers has not been given adequate attention and appropriate action. As long as this problem continues to be ignored, the rumblings of discontent among the rural poor would increase in intensity.

Environmental degradation adversely affects the resource base available to the rural poor. Unless ecological stability can be restored through the implementation of vigorous environ-

mental conservation and preservation measures, the continued survival of households not only in the rural areas but also in the urban areas is severely threatened.

In conclusion, it can be clearly seen that the rural poor are coping with problems rather than actively seeking changes in the present conditions. This attitude characterizes most poor, rural Filipino households. As gleaned from their ingenuity in employing their coping mechanisms, many rural poor are optimistic in their life outlook. But as their socioeconomic-political-demographic conditions worsen, their coping strategies may not be enough to survive. The time is now to apply what Fr. John Carroll, S.J. (in his analysis of what lies beyond the EDSA revolution) calls "*pressure from below coupled with a creative response from above*".³¹ The "pressure from below" has long been felt and is increasingly being manifested. What is missing is the crucial "creative response from above" and hopefully all of us will be able to render a creative response to the call of the times.

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³¹Fr. John J Carroll, S.J., "Looking Beyond EDSA", *Human Society*, Nos. 42 and 43, (May, 1985).

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