

Protecting Our Environment

WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING ❖ HOW YOU CAN HELP

Healing Families And The Rain Forest

(NAPSA)—One of the many consequences resulting from a rapid growth in population is a corresponding decline in the condition of the environment. There are few places where this impact is more clearly evident than in the Philippines, where dramatic population growth—it is now the 14th most populous country in the world—is fueling the decline of the rain forests and mangroves.

On the small island of Guimaras, in the central region of the Philippines, through a process called “agro-forestry,” farmers are learning how to generate an income, while also restoring the forest through a program managed by Save the Children. They are earning a good living from the bounty of replanted forests, and learning about the impact on the environment and their livelihood from increased population. The program also provides information on the role of family planning in helping to preserve the environment and enhance their own standard of living.

The Azgar family farm sits on a hill looking out at the ocean near the village of Sebaste on Guimaras. Until 1992, the farm was surrounded by a barren and unfertile landscape, a victim of clear cuts and neglect. But in that year, Save The Children approached their community with information and assistance about “agro-forestry.”

As part of the program, the Azgars began to restore the land, embarking on a sustainable agriculture project that not only provides for their family, but has restored the environment as well. The rough terrain proved hospitable to native mahogany trees, and they planted over 1,400 trees on their land. The trees prevent soil erosion, protect the watershed, and provide compost that they sell to other local farmers to fertilize their own fruit trees and vegetables. In addition, the shade



Through a technique called “agro-forestry,” farmers in the Philippines are restoring the rain forest.

of these tall trees provides the perfect cover necessary to raise pineapple and forage crops for their goats. They are also raising mahogany seedlings and selling them to their neighbors.

In six years, the family will harvest and replant some of the trees, using the cash to meet their health care costs, support their children’s education and provide retirement income.

The Azgars have enabled a life for themselves and their six children unimaginable less than 10 years ago. They have increased the value of their assets from 5,000 pesos (U.S. \$100) to approximately 1,000,000 pesos through an integrated, environmentally sustainable farming system.

The Azgars are a success story. There are others, and there will be more. In the end, it is the environment in its entirety that wins, and with it, all of Earth’s inhabitants.

Visit www.familyplanet.org to learn more.