

Comprehensive Coastal Community Development Program: the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The Philippines depends largely on its fish production for the country's protein requirement. In 2001, the fish production of 3.2 million metric tons was contributed by aquaculture (38%), commercial fisheries and municipal fisheries (31%, respectively). The per capita consumption of fish is at 26.8 kg/capita/yr. Most fishing activities are done within the 15 kilometers of the coastal areas where 70% of the total population of 80 million lives.

Similar to some ASEAN countries, the Philippines is characterized by an open access of its marine waters that has resulted to depletion of resources and overexploitation of the fisheries. There is conflict among fishers and other stakeholders arising from the utilization of coastal waters. Further, there is a widespread environmental damage due to pollution and deforestation. There is a need, therefore, to address the various issues that confront the coastal resources in general, and the fisheries sector in particular. The Local Government Code and the Fisheries Code provide the framework to institute and implement resource management in coastal and offshore waters. The Local Government Code introduced new norms in local governance through decentralization of management to local government units (LGUs). On the other hand, the Fisheries Code underscored the roles and functions of LGUs in fisheries management. Some of the management strategies include the resource enhancement activities; information, education and communication campaign; fisheries licensing; limited access; income diversification; capability building; and income diversification.

At present, a number of resource management initiatives are being undertaken to protect and conserve the coastal resources. The Government is implementing the Fisheries Resource Management Project (FRMP) to address the critical issues of fisheries depletion and poverty among fishers. The Project is being undertaken collectively by the national government through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), local government units, people's organization and councils; and nongovernmental organizations. The private sector, the academe and research institutions are also involved as partners. The important feature of the Project is the integration of activities into the existing organizational and functional framework of BFAR. It also supports the active participation of local governments and local communities in coastal resource management. After all, the local governments and the people are the true vanguards of coastal resource management.

Keywords: fisheries management, decentralization, local government, open access, overexploitation, management initiatives

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I. Background

1. The Philippines is an archipelagic country composed of about 7,100 islands. The country's marine territorial area is about 220,000 km². The coastline is about 17,460 kilometers long. The coastal areas offer a vast and diversified marine life.
2. The Philippines is one of the top fish producing countries in the world. The country's total fish production of 3.2 million metric tons is contributed by the aquaculture sector (38%), municipal fisheries sector (31%), and the commercial fisheries sector (31%).
3. Fish is an important part of the Filipino diet. Seventy percent of the total population of 80 million live along the coast with a per capita consumption of fish is 26.8 kg/year. There are about 8,000 individuals employed by the fisheries sector

II. Issues of Fisheries and Coastal Resources Management

4. The Philippine fisheries is open access in nature. There is a little control on how fishers exploit waters especially at the coastal areas. This has resulted to issues that have confronted the sector.
5. Most of the traditional fishing grounds are overfished. There is a depletion of fisheries and other coastal resources that has resulted to low income of fishers. The open access has virtually given the various resource users to exploit the resources of other coastal areas other than their own. Further, coral reefs, mangrove and seagrass beds have been depleted due to overexploitation. The depletion of these coastal habitats resulted to low production.
6. The environmental damage is widespread throughout the country. There is an unabated pollution coming from domestic, industrial and agricultural sources. For the past years, massive fish kills have occurred due to pollution that has resulted to oxygen depletion.
7. Despite the laws that prohibit the use of illegal and destructive fishing methods, there is still the prevalence of these methods in most coastal areas. The most common of these methods are the use of explosives or dynamite, use of cyanide and the use of fine-meshed nets.
8. Most coastal areas are not limited to fishing activities only. There are a number of stakeholders in the coastal areas, hence, the resource-use conflicts. The conflicts often arise between and among fishers. However, tourism could be one of the major activities in urbanized coastal areas.
9. There has been a clamor for the need of reliable data and information of the status of coastal resources. These data can be used when planning for the management of the coastal area.
10. To address the poverty of fishers, there is the need to augment the earnings of the fishers. This could be done by providing viable livelihood activities. This will not only increase their income but will also diversify their livelihood and will reduce fishing activities.
11. There is the need for a strong and organized fishers' group to be able to implement strategies necessary in fisheries and coastal management.

III. Some Fisheries and Coastal Management Policies

1. Local Government Code

12. The Local Government Code introduced the new norms of local governance. The Code provided provisions for the decentralization of functions and responsibilities to the local government units (LGUs). It also put the municipal waters (0 to 15 km offshore) under the jurisdiction of the LGUs. Legislative powers are exercised through the local legislative councils. Ordinances that concern the local fisheries and environment are enacted by the local government councils.

2. Fisheries Code

13. The Fisheries Code provides for the development, management and conservation of fisheries and aquatic resources. It established coastal resource management as an approach to managing fisheries at the municipal level. The Code allows the issuance of permits to municipal fishers by the LGUs. The enforcement of fishery laws, rules and regulations is one of the most important function given to LGUs by the Code.

IV. Management Strategies

14. The Philippine coastal and fisheries resources management adheres to the framework of an integrated management. There are a number of management strategies adopted by various implementors.

15. The establishment of **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)** is one of the more popular strategies. In the country, MPAs may be a fish sanctuary, fishery refuge, marine park, marine reserve or mangrove reserve. These MPAs, however, are established to enhance and restore the population of the coastal habitats.

16. The open access nature of most coastal areas make is almost impossible to implement a **Fisheries Licensing System** at the municipal level. The system will enable the LGUs to implement limited access in their area of jurisdiction.

17. The **Information, Education and Communication (IEC)** strategy has been an effective tool in influencing individuals to take appropriate actions. This strategy cuts across all other strategies. However, the IEC should be sustained and must include all sectors.

18. One of the aggravating factors of the depletion of coastal and fisheries resources is the absence of other livelihood options. The provision of viable and feasible **Livelihood Options** will add income to fishers and their families. It may also lessen fishing activities and give the coastal waters respite from overfishing.

19. **Capability Building** aims to enable the stakeholders participate actively in the implementation of management activities. This strategy will ensure that individuals are provided the right and appropriate skills and knowledge on coastal and fisheries management. Oftentimes, capacity building is in the form of trainings, study tours, seminars and workshops.

V. The Fisheries Resource Management Project (FRMP)

20. In the Philippines, fisheries resource depletion is the fundamental cause of the declining income from fishing. The increasing fishing pressure on the fisheries had consequently led to overfishing and the vicious cycle of poverty and environmental degradation.

21. The FRMP is being implemented by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Department of Agriculture with financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). The Project represents the Government's effort to



shift the sector focus from excessive capture fisheries exploitation to fisheries resource protection, conservation and sustainable management. The Project is spread in 18 major bays and gulfs all over the country.

22. The FRMP aims to address the two critical issues of fisheries resource depletion and poverty among municipal fishers. It will focus on reversing the trend of fisheries resource depletion by controlling illegal fishing and overfishing. The Project will adopt a gradual approach that will (1) reduce the level of the user competition by restricting new entrants to municipal fisheries through fishing licensing; (2) reduce fisherfolk's reliance on fishing by promoting income diversification; and (3) facilitate the gradual exit from fishery of some fisherfolk through the promotion of mariculture and development of other enterprises.

23. The three Project components are **Fisheries Resource Management, Income Diversification and Capability Building**.

1. **The Fisheries Resource Management Component** includes the establishment of fisheries database. At present, the Fisheries Information Management Center (FIMC) has been established to provide accurate data and information to coastal managers. The database contains systems that would enable users to access and use fisheries and related data and information gathered by the Project. The LGUs have been provided with computers and manpower to maintain the systems.

The Component also includes habitat and resource enhancement projects. A number of fish sanctuaries have been established by the coastal communities and are monitored regularly. Data from these fish sanctuaries have shown an increase in the fish catch in the adjoining areas. Mangrove reforestation activities are also being conducted in deforested areas. Riverbank rehabilitation is also done in some areas.

The fisheries licensing system aims to regulate the exploitation of fisheries and coastal resources at the municipal waters. The licensing of system is a mandate of the local government units. One of the pre-requisites of the municipal licensing system is the inventory of fishing boats to be able to know the actual fishing effort. The outcome of the inventory can be used when implementing limited access as a strategy.

One of the bottlenecks in fisheries and coastal management is the enforcement of fishery laws. The enforcement is a devolved functions and the responsibility lies within the jurisdiction of the LGUs. Oftentimes, there is a perception that enforcement is weak. To remedy this situation, the *Bantay Dagat* or Coast Watch has been established in most municipalities. Responsible individuals are trained and deputized as fish wardens. These individuals, in partnership with representatives from the local police, nongovernmental; organizations, fisheries and aquatic resources management councils and national government are part of the composite team that is tasked to enforce the fishery laws in the coastal areas.

2. **The Income Diversification Component** provides micro-enterprise and mariculture projects for the fishers. However, fishers who belong to organizations are preferred. This will give a better assurance that the project will succeed and can be sustained. At present, recipients of livelihood assistance are engaged in marine-based and land-based activities. Some of the livelihood projects are seaweeds farming, milkfish and tilapia culture and post-harvest activities. Trainings and the preparation of business plan development are done before any livelihood project is started.

3. **Capacity Building Component** includes on-site coaching of the implementors at the community level. Trainings, workshops, seminars and study tours have been conducted to equip the implementors with appropriate knowledge and skills on fisheries and coastal management.

VI. Implementation Arrangement

24. The Department of Agriculture is the Executing Agency. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and Regional Offices are responsible for project implementation at the national and regional level. A Project Management Office is responsible for day-to-day Project implementation, coordination and liaison. A Project Implementing Unit established under each BFAR Regional Office is responsible for field level activities. At the municipal level, the Fisheries Municipal Unit takes charge of the technical support and extension services at the local level. The levels of implementation is national, regional and municipal. Most activities, however, are done at the local government level and at the coastal communities. All LGUs that agreed to implement the Project had provided counterpart funds. The national and regional agencies provide facilitation and coordination between and among implementors.

25. In the long-term, the Project hopes to ensure that the activities towards fisheries and coastal management are sustained at various levels of implementation. And this can be accomplished by institutionalizing fisheries and coastal management within the existing organizational structure and mandates of organizations tasked to implement resource management.