

## Success Stories in Coastal Resource Management



Barton Bay

The Philippine coastal zone comprises some 11,000 square kilometers of land and 267,000 square kilometers of water. About 70 percent of the country's municipalities consider the coastal and marine ecosystems an important source of livelihood. These ecosystems include coral reefs, sea grass and algal beds, mangroves, a variety of productive fisheries, beach systems, estuaries, and lagoons. However, it is estimated that only five percent of the Philippine coral reefs are in excellent condition and mangroves have declined by as much as 57 percent in the last 23 years. Moreover, sea grass losses have been estimated at 30-50 percent over the last 50 years.

To help arrest this destruction, the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP), 2004-2010, explicitly laid out the thrust of expanding the coverage and strengthening the protection of coastal and marine ecosystems. In particular, the MTPDP stated that the government will pursue the following through the Environment and Natural Resources Sector:

- extensive implementation of mangrove replanting to cover 10,500 hectares and establishing 128 marine sanctuaries in cooperation with local government units (LGUs);
- creation of 14 coastal law enforcement alliance with nongovernment sectors and communities; and
- provision of technical assistance to 570 LGUs in coastal protection and management, especially in participatory planning, zoning, and standard setting.

There have been successful initiatives on coastal resource management that could be replicated in other parts of the

country to safeguard the threatened biodiversity of coastal and marine ecosystems and uphold sustainable development.

### *Port Barton*

In the 1980s, Port Barton in San Vicente, Palawan fell prey to destructive fishing and overexploitation that devastated many fishing grounds in the country. Its residents however proved that in working together, they would be able to save and protect their livelihood source, the sea.

1999 was a turning point for the barangay when local leaders with support from the rest of the community united to pass legislation that established the Port Barton Marine Park. One hundred twenty-three hectares were designated as a marine park and a zoning plan for the barangay's waters was formulated. A coastal resource management plan was also completed. Moreover, 20 percent of the barangay's development fund has been committed for the maintenance and protection of the marine park.

Stricter laws and law enforcement have deterred greatly illegal fishing methods. The protection of marine sanctuaries has been strengthened with the installation of two police outposts at strategic points near the marine park. This has also helped stop the encroachment of commercial fishers on its municipal waters.

Meanwhile, some residents have gone into seaweed farming as an alternative enterprise, putting up a pilot farm that involves about a dozen cooperators.

Even Port Barton's youth are involved in protecting their environment engaging in coastal clean-up and waste management activities. Indeed, the whole community's involvement has shown that concerted efforts have brought about the victories that they have now gained.



### *Suba, Olango Island*

Barangay Suba is a major gateway to the Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary (OIWS) in Cebu, an internationally recognized reserve for migratory birds. Exposed to over a decade of community-based resource management efforts by several groups, Suba's residents have long been involved in assessing and managing their own resources.

Their centerpiece project is an ecotourism venture known as the "Olango Birds and Seascape Tour."

In late May 2000, when two private foreshore land claimants began building three recreational huts on the beachfront at Suba, the community did not just passively stand by sensing the potential harm that this encroachment could bring. They protested, wrote petition letters to and met with regional and local government officials.

The residents were able to stop the huts' construction because of the absence of building permits and the owners were unable to present any form of official document proving the legal basis of their claim on the land.

It had been established that the disputed land was outside the OIWS and thus was not under national protected area laws. But by virtue of a local zoning ordinance, the area extending outward to 100 meters from the boundaries of the sanctuary had been declared a "buffer zone" and therefore technically a protected area. Unfortunately, the city still had to issue the implementing rules and regulations related to the zoning ordinance. The claimants however have decided not to continue their projects and wait for the guidelines to be issued. For the local community, this was an important victory.

What happened in Suba is an example of a community upholding sustainable shoreline development. The experience showed that the local community is the first and final defense in maintaining the ecological integrity of shorelines. Thus, residents must be armed with the basic understanding of pertinent laws and best resource management

practices. They must be vigilant and must have established lines to authorities in charge of environmental protection. Proper documentation is likewise vital in building a strong case.

### *Banate Bay*

Banate Bay in Iloilo province encompasses an area of 14,385 hectares. The 22 coastal barangays of Anilao, Banate and Barotac Nuevo depend on the bay for subsistence. Overexploitation, blast and illegal fishing methods, commercial fishing in its shallow waters and coral reefs and a host of other problems have contributed to the destruction of Banate Bay over the years.

Resolving to confront these problems, the local executives of the three municipalities created the Banate Bay Coastal Resource Management Council, Inc. (BBCRMCI) in 1996. This initiative has been cited by the Galing Pook Foundation, an independent organization that cites exemplary practices in local governance.

BBCRMCI's program to save Banate Bay had five components: (1) institutional development, (2) law enforcement, (3) mangrove/land use or resource generation, (4) livelihood assistance, and (5) establishment of a more reliable databank on the bay.

In 19 barangays, Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils were set up. Also, 10 Fishermen's Associations were organized. The LGUs contributed their own resources and manpower to support BBCRMCI.

The council established linkages with other institutions such as the Iloilo School of Fisheries and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

In the area of law enforcement, the council deputized 78 fish wardens to guard the bay 24 hours. The three municipalities also consolidated their fishery ordinances.

To regenerate the ecosystem, a mangrove nursery and shellfish culture facility were set up in Talokgangan and Belen in Banate. Moreover, a two-hectare space was designated as a mangrove reforestation project. School children likewise participated in clean-up activities on the shoreline.

BBCRMCI helped some 247 fishermen set up livelihood projects with a Php 1.5 million assistance from the Department of Agriculture. In addition, the council created a databank containing profiles of the 22 barangays surrounding Banate Bay. Continued research are carried out in collaboration with the academe and government agencies.

#### *Sources:*

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