

A Common Vision for Sustainable Coastal Resource Management

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Introduction

Coastal resources and the habitats that nurture them provide the underlying foundation for human welfare and economic development in coastal communities in the Philippines. This inherent economic value leads to coastal resource utilization and exploitation. Fisheries are harvested with the most efficient methods to catch all that can be caught with the least effort. Development in coastal areas is promoted by the availability of coastal waters, which also serve as inexpensive discharge sites for “treating” industrial and urban wastes.

Coastal resource utilization leads to two paths (Figure 1), destruction: the state of being ruined, eradicated, or killed; or sustainability: the ability to maintain and keep in existence. The path of destruction or the path of sustainability are choices made by people. These choices arise daily resulting in decision points that lead down one path or another. In the case of Philippine upland forests, these resources

were, over time, exploited and for the most part eradicated. The same path of destruction is occurring in coastal areas. Overexploitation of fisheries and degradation of coastal habitats and coastal water quality is destroying the ability to sustain the value of coastal resources. People must decide on the path of sustainability to change the course of destruction.

Resource Utilization Pathway

Choosing the path of sustainability hinges on many factors. One crucial factor is leadership. The path to sustainability is highly dependent on the right knowledge and skills and strong capability of leaders supported by political will to pursue sustainable development goals. Leadership is needed to mobilize people with diverse interests, cultures, and priorities to change direction from the current path of coastal resource destruction to one of sustainable resource use. Only through strong leadership and a vision shared and actively promoted by coastal communities, local and national governments, and other coastal stakeholders, can the long term goals of sustainable coastal resource use weather fluctuating political and socio-economic storms.

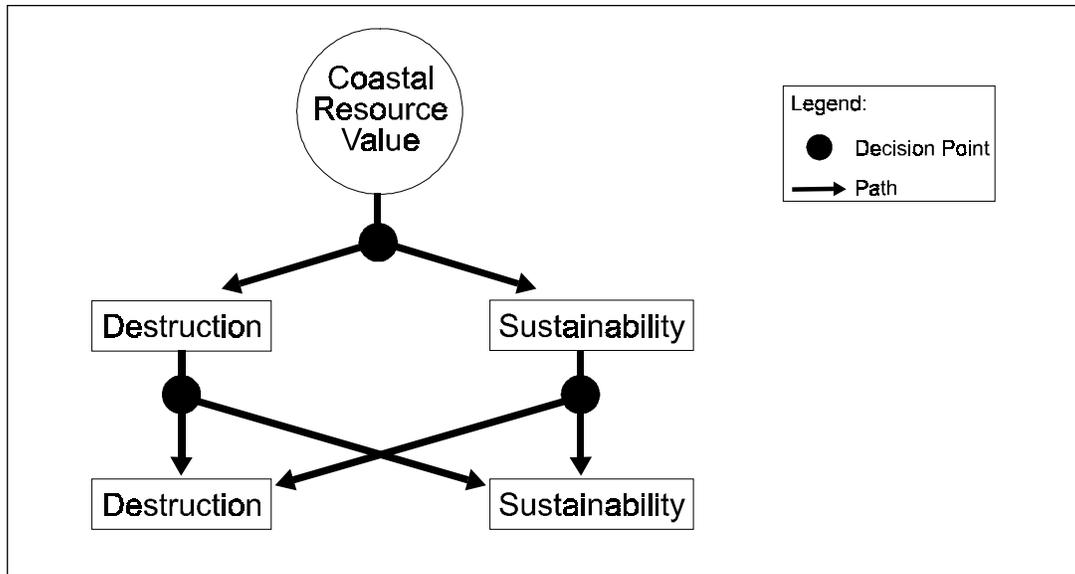


FIGURE 1. RESOURCE UTILIZATION PATHWAY.

Leadership has been described and defined in many ways; however, one essential ingredient is a vision that will enlist the support and commitment of others to effect change. A vision is an image of the

"If we do not change the direction in which we are headed, we will certainly end up where we are going."

-Anonymous

future that conveys an ideal or desired condition, a purpose that represents the common good. Developing and communicating this vision and enlisting support from a large audience is a crucial step toward sustainable coastal resource use. A vision statement serves as a compass enabling people to make day-to-day decisions that are consistent with that vision and to stay on the path of sustainability.

Coastal Resource Leadership Challenge

The Coastal Resource Management Project (CRMP) identified the need for an approach

that combines leadership practices with technical skills on coastal resource management (CRM). This approach seeks current and future leaders and promotes informed decision making on sustainable coastal resource use to effect large-scale positive changes in human behavior in managing coastal resources. The Coastal Resource Leadership Challenge (CRLC) was developed to assist coastal communities identify leadership opportunities in CRM.

CRMP hosted three CRLCs in September through October 1996 in Regions 4, 7, and 11. The participants represented 29 coastal municipalities in 6 provinces including Palawan, Negros Oriental, Bohol, Cebu, Davao del Sur, and Sarangani. Over 300 participants representing local government units, community members, assisting organizations including, non-government organizations and academe, and national government agencies attended the CRLCs.

The CRLC process (Figure 2) was developed as a collaborative

effort between two USAID-funded projects, CRMP and Governance and Local Democracy. The process integrates a leadership philosophy, based on the five practices of effective leaders described by Kouzes and Posner (1995), and a technology designed to maximize participation, the Technology of Participation (TOP), developed by the Institute for Cultural Affairs (1994). Kouzes and Posner (1995) promote the concept that leadership can be learned and practised. The five practices described by Kouzes and Posner (1995) are: *challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, model the way, enable others to act, and encourage the heart.*

"One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time."

-Andre Gide

As a first step, participants, grouped by CRMP learning area, challenge the process by openly sharing their experiences and views on the current realities about coastal resources and uses in their

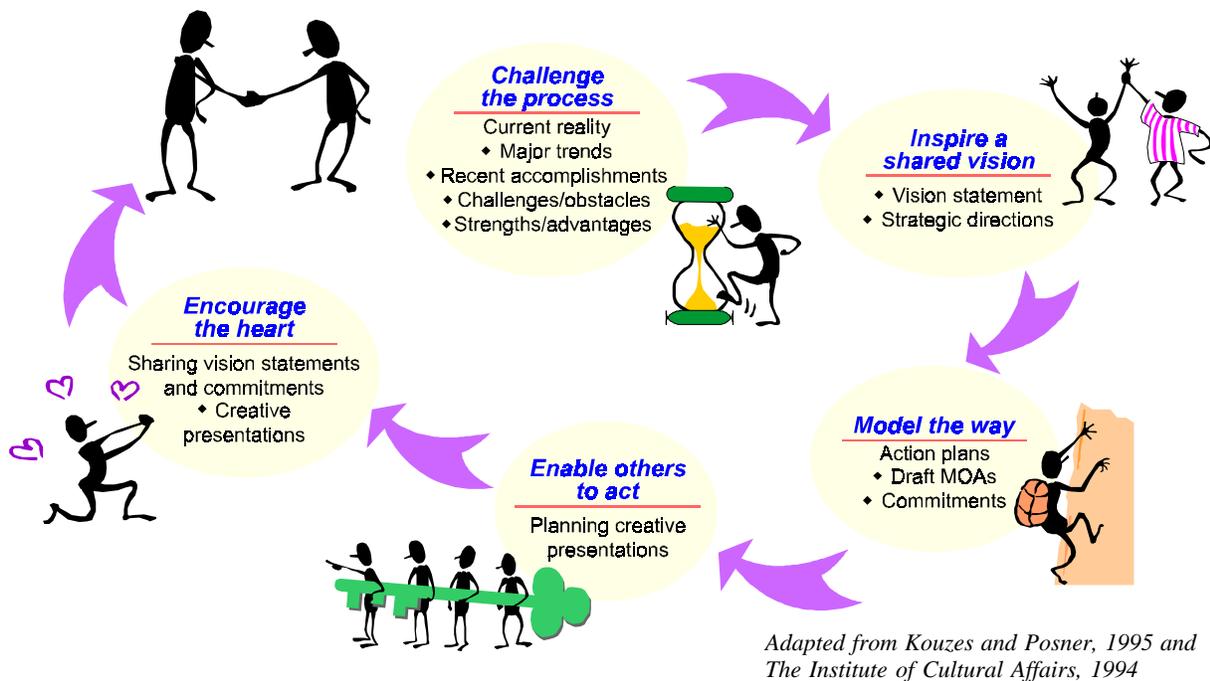


FIGURE 2. COASTAL RESOURCE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE PROCESS FLOW.

areas. These realities are grouped into four categories: major trends, recent accomplishments, challenges and obstacles, and strengths and advantages. Participants summarize their thoughts into phrases which are posted and through a participatory process, grouped into common themes. Headings for each grouping are developed to summarize the key aspects of each group into categories.

Based on an assessment of the current reality the group develops a vision statement that embodies an ideal goal and common purpose. Action plans are developed from the vision statement with tangible and attainable goals and objectives for a 1- to 5-year planning horizon. The vision statement and action plans become the road maps for informed decision-making.

Action plans have been operationalized through Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) between CRMP and the municipality and province that commit tangible tools to implement

the action plans through funding and providing other resources for CRM activities. Opportunities for communication and information exchange is facilitated throughout the CRLC process to foster collaboration and team work. Creative group presentations provide opportunities for groups of participants to practice working together as a team and to communicate a shared vision with participants from other coastal areas.

As a result of the CRLC process, major themes in the current reality of coastal resource management emerged from the responses of the participants. These responses were categorized into key areas and ranked according to frequency of responses (see Table on page 14).

Characterizing Major Trends

Increasing development and investment that would lead to

unsustainable coastal resource use was identified by the participants as a major trend. Rapid industrialization in coastal communities is occurring without proper consideration of the environment and coastal resource management. The impact of the growing human population on limited marine resources exerting extreme pressure on coastal resources was also identified as a major trend. Urbanization resulting from population growth and migration to urban areas will increase pollution and stress on coastal habitats. The rapid rate of marine resource depletion and degradation in the Philippines was recognized as an ongoing trend resulting from worsening poverty and pollution resulting from rapid agro-industrialization. Key positive trends identified included the increasing community awareness and support for CRM and devolution of responsibility for municipal waters to the LGU.

Documenting Recent Accomplishments

Key areas documented by the participants as recent accomplishments included: increased institutional capacity, better multisectoral coordination, more effective coastal law enforcement, development of better planning and monitoring information, improved CRM laws and policies, and implementation of certain CRM interventions.

Identifying Challenges And Obstacles

Jurisdictional issues between local government units (LGU) and national government agencies present obstacles in implementing CRM. These obstacles are rooted in confusion over the level of devolvement of responsibilities for CRM to LGUs and the need to enact local legislation to resolve these jurisdictional issues.

The overall lack of funds, resources, logistical support, and equipment for coastal resource management was identified as a major obstacle to CRM implementation at the municipal level.

A recurring obstacle identified by the participants is the lack of political will or leadership for sustainable CRM. Conflict of interest, lack of political support, and political opposition represent the key elements contributing to the lack of political will.

Recognizing Strengths And Advantages

Participants recognized strengths and advantages that could be used to achieve the pursuit of sustainable value of coastal resources. The current high degree of community organization and participation was viewed as an important aspect in forwarding CRM goals. Empowering the day-to-day resource users in coastal resource management was viewed as an essential ingredient to sustainability and grass root support.

Heightened interest from foreign donors in coastal resource issues helps provide needed technical assistance to increase the capacity of LGUs to implement coastal resource management.

Participants recognized the value of strong political leadership in affecting change in current

coastal resource use. In some areas, individual political leadership has been a key driving force toward sustainable CRM, testimony to the fact that one individual can make a difference.

The value of the remaining marine resources was recognized as an advantage that cannot be lost. A general optimism prevailed in that it is not too late to act.

Sharing A Common Vision

Based on the current realities, participants developed a practical vision for each learning area. Vision statements were shared by the participants (see text box) grouped by learning area. A pervasive theme in all the vision statements highlights the importance of active community participation and empowerment and of balance and harmony of that community with its coastal resources.

Committing to Action

As a final step in the CRLC process, commitments were made toward achieving the vision based on the vision statement and action plans developed by the participants. Committing real effort, resources,

CURRENT REALITY OF COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: MAJOR THEMES			
Challenges/Obstacles	Rank	Strengths/Advantages	Rank
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional capacity of LGUs to implement CRM • Legal and jurisdictional issues over coastal resource management • Political issues and conflicts 	1 2 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical assistance from foreign donors • Community organization/participation • Institutional support • Political leadership 	1 1 2 2
Number of responses = 116		Number of responses = 77	
Recent Accomplishments	Rank	Major Trends	Rank
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRM laws and policies • CRM interventions • Institutional capacity/support • Coastal law enforcement • Planning and monitoring data collection and compilation • Multi-sectoral coordination 	1 2 3 4 4 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development/industrialization • Marine resource depletion/degradation • Population growth 	1 2 2
Number of responses = 86		Number of responses = 89	

A Common Vision for Sustainable Coastal Resource Management

“Towards a unified directed effort for total coastal community empowerment for a sustainable coastal resource management” - *Bohol Learning Area*

“To attain a quality future with an ecologically conscious and active community towards prosperity in harmony with environment” - *Cebu Learning Area*

“A sustained, restored and productive marine resources of Malalag Bay capable of uplifting the socio-economic condition of coastal communities through people’s participation” - *Davao del Sur Learning Area*

“An agro-aqua province with a strong determination to preserve the natural beauty of the ecosystem through community involvement and enforcement of logging and fishery laws as well as the rehabilitation of denuded areas to conserve, protect, and develop the environment geared towards a happy, healthy, clean, and progressive Negros Oriental” - *Negros Oriental Learning Area*

“Towards sustainable coastal management and utilization of resources with the involvement of empowered stakeholders” - *Palawan Learning Area*

“Sarangani Bay towards effective and participatory coastal resources management for the preservation of well-balanced ecology through sustainable and efficient resource utilization by the year 2002” - *Sarangani Learning Area*

Output from CRLC Workshops involving 300 participants from 29 municipalities and 6 provinces

and funding toward coastal resource management is required to realize a return on that investment. Small investments can reap large gains in terms of improved fish catch, physical protection from improved coastal habitats, and other values of coastal resources. As a starting point, the participants identified activities that would enhance community participation and empowerment. Suggested activities which may need resource allocation on the part of the LGUs and the *barangays* (villages) could include: coastal profile preparation and the participatory coastal resource assessment (see article on page 23). These efforts signify a commitment to action toward the common vision of sustainable coastal resource management.

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Symbiosis Between Fish and Fishers

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You don't harvest your garden with a bulldozer. Destructive forms of fishing must be eliminated.... Replace predation with symbiosis, mining with husbandry.... Stephen Olsen describes what happened to fisheries in New England, USA—an account that is very relevant to fisheries in the Philippines.

Many of us who work in fisheries also plant gardens. Any gardener knows that success lies in a symbiotic (not a predatory) relationship between a gardener and his garden. A symbiotic relationship has many feedback loops. The gardener harvests the flowers and the vegetables, but only when they are ready to harvest, and the harvest comes only after a long sequence of weeding, thinning, watering and keeping pests at bay.

There are many demands and many rewards for both the gardener and the garden. If there is no feedback and the gardener only takes—or mines—his bit of land, we all know what the result will be. After a season or two, a luxuriant and beautiful garden becomes patches of bare earth interspersed with clumps of weeds.

We see a marine equivalent in New England's

fishing grounds, which are among the most productive on the planet. Here, the desirable species, the cod family and the flounder family, have never been scarcer. Once-abundant species such as the mighty and delicious halibut disappeared long ago. It is the weed species, the skates, dogfish and sand eels, that today are wonderfully abundant.

As a result, many fishers are bankrupt and a way of life once central to New England's culture and economy is as endangered as the fish stocks that supported them for generations.



This sad progression of overfishing and collapse is being repeated around the world. Yet, New England's fisheries are once again in crisis. But this is only another downward tread on a staircase that began many hundreds of years ago, when European fishers discovered and began to mine the extraordinary bounty of fish off New England's shores and northwards to the Grand Banks. Each step in this sustained decline has been marked by more intensive mining of (or predation on) a diverse and beautiful form of wildlife with an extraordinary ability to regenerate itself.

Each increment in the mining has usually been triggered by a more efficient technology. It began with the single hook and line and progressed through multiple hooks on ever longer "long lines" and set nets, and beginning in the 1930s, ever more efficient trawls and electronic fish-finding equipment. Now the most productive sea floor is being scraped over several times a year by heavy gear that sweeps up everything in its path.

I have been a bit player in this massive failure. I began going out on commercial boats before I was in high school. By the time I reached my mid-20s, I had fished in the Mediterranean, the North Sea and off Rhode Island. I loved the people, the work, the spells of boredom in a wide ocean, that particular camaraderie and interdependence that exists only on a fishing boat. Sometimes, I am humbled by my incompetence and

my seasickness. In some countries, I shoveled "trash fish" overboard by the ton; in others, the "trash" was what we ate.

Twenty years ago, new England fisheries were in another crisis. Foreign fleets had vacuumed up our stocks. After a long struggle, the United States declared a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone and we all believed that the time had finally come to do it right and to see our fishing fleets prosper. As the 200-mile limit approached, a colleague and I prepared a report that documented the evolution of Rhode Island's fisheries and suggested how this state could respond to the promise of a well-managed, rich and self-renewing resource.

One recommendation called for a Rhode Island Fisheries Council that would put the regulators, scientists and fishers on a single body with broad powers to regulate fishing and conserve the stocks within our three-mile limit. Soon thereafter, the Federal Fisheries Management and Conservation Act of 1976 set up regional councils to manage stocks offshore.

Both councils have failed in their fundamental mission, and today we must say that the high hopes of the mid-1970s have been dashed. Distrust between fishers, scientists and conservationists has never been greater. We missed a great opportunity, and are now paying a great price.

What went wrong? This is the time to rethink the relationship

between fishers and fish. We must get back to basic principles and the first step is to examine the goal. In the past, the goal was—in essence—to take as much as possible economically and biologically; a mining, and therefore predatory, approach.

We would proceed differently if the goal was to balance among (1) sustaining the quality of life of the fishers and (2) sustaining the qualities of the resources upon which they depend. The principle would be to replace predation with symbiosis, mining with husbandry. The challenge becomes making a stewardship ethic operational for the benefit of both the fishers and the fish. If we chose to follow such an approach, we would find that the guideposts to making this operational are fairly clear and well known.

We would recognize that approaching the goal can occur only through a series of strategic actions over many years. We will need clear, unambiguous objectives for each step back up the staircase that has led us down to the weedy garden that now confronts us offshore. We will have to learn because we will continue to make mistakes. Who is the "we"? It must be the scientists, the regulators and the fishers working together toward a common goal. We have learned time and again that stewardship—or any other attempt to modify human behavior—succeeds only when the people involved (or most of them) believe in the goal. We also know

that fishing effort must be in balance with a sustainable yield. You don't harvest your garden with a bulldozer.

Destructive forms of fishing must be eliminated. That may mean replacing most trawling with less damaging and wasteful technologies. Perhaps, most important is to worry about feedback loops between the fishers and the fish. The lobster trap fishery is the only fishery that is doing well off New England. Could the reason be the abundance of positive feedback? Everyday, hundreds of tons of lobster food—in the form of bait—are taken offshore. Undersized lobsters and lobsters with eggs are thrown back and most survive the trip to the surface. Lobster fishers believe in the regulations and enforce them by common consent. Quality of life

for most lobstering families is pretty good. Here the goal is in sight.

Currently, the most popular definition of “the fisheries problem” is quite different from the one suggested here, and so is the proposed solution. Most believe that the problem lies not in the goal but simply in the fact that fish are common property. The prescription is to “privatize,” and hand over ownership and responsibility for the fish to a smaller number of fishers who, driven by the desire to maximize their profits, will stop mining what they own and become stewards.

I am skeptical. I think the problem lies in the paucity of positive feedback between the fishers and the fish. Meaningful stewardship calls for close attention

to goals and a lot of hard work. But fishers—certainly the ones I know—are not afraid of work and care passionately about their way of life. It is hard to imagine this today, but perhaps, New England's fishers could become a model for how human society can learn to prosper in balance with nature rather than offering us parables for our failures as stewards.

The traditional fishers, independent-minded and unruly as they are, just might embrace such a goal.

[A rather straightforward comparison to the fishing situation in the Philippines can be made. Similar linkages and feedback loops must be formed before destructive fishing will stop! Editor]



NACFAR and the Fisheries Resource Management Councils



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In its inception in 1990, the National Coalition for Fisheries and Aquatic Reform (NACFAR) embarked on the formidable task of establishing the recognition of fisherfolk in our national psyche. We know much about the toiling farmers and laborers, but little about marginalized fisherfolk.

Coupled with this objective is the need to generate widespread awareness of their problems, and alternatives that organized

fisherfolk have worked on and which they would also want the public to support. With environmental consciousness permeating our bureaucracies and business establishments throughout the world, the battlecry to save our remaining natural resources especially marine and aquatic resources, had never reverberated more strongly. In this setting, fisherfolk found themselves confronted with a new challenge—

how to become effective stewards of the resources that they depend upon. Their answer to this challenge was the Fisheries Resource Management Councils (FRMC).

FRMC is the implementing framework for the fisherfolk-drafted Unity Bill which is their alternative to the existing fisheries law—the 21-year old Presidential Decree (PD) 704. PD 704 has become the bone of contention of

small fishers, believing that it serves only the business interests in the fishing industry and propels traditional fishing grounds to a state of degradation. This also caused continuing poverty among the majority of fisherfolk in the industry. A bleak scenario for an archipelagic country, blessed with a multitude of fish and other marine and freshwater flora and fauna.

As an organization, the FRMC is envisioned to be formed from the local (*barangay*) to the national levels. The members of the council will be fisherfolk representatives, government officials and non-government organizations (NGO). The fisherfolk will be given majority representation in the set-up. The formation of FRMCs does not preclude the formation of bigger groups such as community Resource Management Councils (RMC) wherein the bigger problems of the environment such as forest, aquatic and other ecosystems will be tackled. The FRMCs can join this wider expression of concern for the environment.

The FRMC is based on “user-manager principles.” This points out that the direct users or those who directly depend upon the natural resources should be given the chance to become managers of the resources—protecting, conserving and managing the resource base for their benefits and that of the larger community. The experience in Apo Island, Negros Oriental, as well as in other countries like Japan attest to the soundness of this principle.

The second principle is sustainable development which has been interpreted and used in many ways. For the fisherfolk, it not only means ensuring that the present and

future generations will continue to reap benefits from the environment, but also development that equates socio-economic and political equality in terms of the use of and benefits from the resources.

Democratization is another principle of the FRMC. In the present setting, the Philippine fishing industry benefits only a few



business interests at the local and national levels. The FRMC is seen as a means of leading the way to democratization of the industry starting from the bottom. Cooperativism and the employment of micro-finance instruments and supplementary livelihood would provide greater access to the local markets. Another important part of democratization is the institutionalization of the exclusive use of the 15-kilometer municipal waters by small-scale fishers.

Limited access is a principle that is based on the reality that our aquatic resources are finite. Management principles to guide us must be based on these limits. The FRMC will become a tool to propagate this principle and encourage cooperation among fishers and the community to help in limiting access and level of exploitation.

The business of conserving and managing the natural resources

should not be given to a few. Communities and fisherfolk especially, should be given the opportunity to spearhead this undertaking, paving the way for the empowerment of the sector.

Fruits of the Struggle

NACFAR’s ideal of an empowered fisherfolk sector leading resource management initiatives at the local levels, first gained recognition among NGOs and people’s organizations. NACFAR then ventured to model its FRMC concept in Bicol. In 1994, the government took notice of the concept and patterned from it the creation of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils (FARMC) through Executive Order No. 240, s. 1996. At the start of the 10th Congress, majority of the bills submitted to the committees bore the imprint of the FRMC concept.

These developments show that novel ideas, if advocated with much vigor and resolve, especially by the marginalized sectors of the society, can be popularized and may gain support from influential sectors. It is this vision that could lead us to true human and social development that we are striving for.

[It is worth noting the similarities and differences between the view of S. Olsen in Rhode Island and NACFAR in the Philippines relating to localized management. The lesson may relate to “positive feedback between fishers and fish” mentioned by Olsen. Editor]



May 1997 is the
National Coral
Reef Month

Community-based Coastal Resources Management, Bolinao, Philippines: An Evolving Partnership Among Academe, NGOs, and Local Communities

[This article first appeared in Coastal Management in Tropical Asia: A Newsletter for Practitioners in September 1995.]

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In 1995, three institutions renewed their collaborative efforts to pursue appropriate management of coastal resources in close partnership with the local fishing communities of Bolinao, Philippines. A joint project proposal of the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute, the College of Social Work and Community Development, and the Haribon Foundation was approved by the International Development Research Center (IDRC)-Canada in February 1995 to implement a community-based coastal resources management (CB-CRM) program. As part of a collaborative effort with the coastal community to develop pragmatic and effective management, the program designers hope to ensure sustainable use and protection of resources in the town's coastal zone.

With a grant of CAD\$450,000 from IDRC to execute the three-year project, a team consisting of community organizers, marine science and social science researchers was

formed. Community work that was initiated in 1993 under a previous IDRC-sponsored project was continued. The team currently works in four barangays including Arnedo and Balingasay on the mainland, and Binabalian and Dewey on the islands. Besides village-level community work, the team liaised with the municipal, provincial and regional government bodies to determine the best options for sustainable use of coastal resources, not only of Bolinao but also those of Lingayen Gulf.

The development research framework of the CB-CRM project team has one goal: to develop an integrated program of approaches, strategies and action plans with the local community which will enable them to evolve into a self-determining collective steward of their coastal resources. A major thesis is that a community must be at the forefront of the research process, so that the community can emerge as the lead partner in resource management. A local community, at the