

Chapter 1

PROFILE, PLAN, ACTION!

(Introduction)



On the windswept coast of western Palawan lies the town of San Vicente, one of the six learning areas of the Coastal Resource Management Project (CRMP). As a result of the pioneering efforts of its local officials in environmental protection, San Vicente was selected as one of the models for CRMP, which embraces coastal resource leadership as its major theme.

Among the important marine resources of San Vicente are:

- 160 species of finfish
- 163 species of corals and thousands of species of other invertebrates
- 96 species of algae
- a diverse collection of seagrass
- 22 species of mangrove

Like most coastal towns across the country, however, San Vicente faces a host of issues and management concerns that need to be addressed. Most of the issues identified by residents fall under the following categories:

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- impact of land-based activities (siltation, pollution, land reclamation, beach erosion, landslides, floods)
- resource use (cutting of mangroves/conversion into fishponds, habitat destruction, illegal fishing, "strict" laws, organizational problems, lack of fishing gear, lack of buyers of fish catch, selling of agricultural land/beachfront)
- resource access (presence of outside fishers, overfishing, theft of fish and destruction of artificial reefs, illegal nipa claims, restricted access to fishing grounds)
- government and social services (lack of land ownership, lack of alternative livelihood during lean months, lack of schools, lack of health services, lack of clean water, no roads, damaged bridges)

Much of the input for this document came from the participatory coastal resource assessment (PCRA) done in early 1997 in San Vicente. The PCRA team spent nearly two months (February 14 to March 24) along the San Vicente coast, braving monsoon winds to conduct workshops and collect data in 27 fishing villages. In addition, we gathered information from previous profiles and survey/research reports written by government, academic, and private agencies about the coastal environment of the municipality. Then we analyzed, arranged and rearranged all data to create this profile.

This profile provides the baseline information necessary for planning an appropriate course of action in managing the municipality's coastal resources.

We hope this profile will prove useful to the coastal communities of San Vicente, as well as to national and provincial-level policy makers. It provides the baseline information necessary for planning an appropriate course of action in managing the municipality's coastal resources.

Using the PCRA process described in the next chapter, a multi-agency team composed of personnel from the Technical Assistance Office (TAO) of San Vicente Mayor Antonio Alvarez, CRMP, the environmental media group *Bandillo ng Palawan*, the consultancy firm Coastal, Ocean, Reef and Island Advisors Ltd. (CORIAL) of Hawaii, and Peace Corps-Philippines contributed to the collection of data. Sources of other data include barangay and municipal profiles prepared by the Mayor's staff, as well as surveys and

research reports done by the Silliman University Marine Laboratory (SUML) and International Marinelife Alliance-Philippines (IMA).

The resource persons and documentation team wish to thank the following people for their valuable contribution to this profile:

- Manong Coring of Catalat Island, Chona of Gawid, *Kagawad* Suplito of Binga, and other villagers who welcomed us into their homes and kitchens;
- Tay Daming and his boat assistants Bebot and Babymax (with apologies to the bakery) who went beyond the call of duty to cook for us and invite participants to the PCRA sessions;
- Teddy, Dongdong, Pons, Nonoy, and Blanding who taught us the other meaning of Community Organizer (in the field, the community organizer also serves as *caldero* [cooking pot] operator);
- Joe Buenaobra, Thor, Susan Gavino, and Resource Management Center staff for sharing with us their valuable resources;
- Sammy Magbanua for lending us his Acer computer and helping us meet our deadline; and
- members of the PCRA team who assisted the fishers of San Vicente in this activity.

Our deepest gratitude goes to the fishing communities of San Vicente who provided much of the information contained in this report. After spending most of the night fishing and most of the day selling and/or drying their catch, they graciously took time to join the research team in resource mapping and interview sessions. Their active participation gives us reason to believe that, indeed, the future of marine conservation lies in the collective efforts of fishing communities whose lives are intertwined with the Rhythm of the Sea.

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PCRA Team on Double Island, Poblacion, San Vicente, March 1997