

# *Chapter 1*

## ***INTRODUCTION***



Malalag Bay is a 65 km<sup>2</sup> semi-oval embayment located on the southwestern coast of Davao Gulf with 58 km of coastline from Barangay Balutakay, Hagonoy to Colapsin Point in Sta. Maria (Figure 1.1). It is located within the grid coordinates between 6° 21' 57" to 6° 42' 50" north latitude and 125° 05' 29" to 125° 34' 48" east longitude within the province of Davao del Sur which lies at the southeastern portion of Mindanao.

Malalag Bay is under the jurisdiction of five municipalities: Hagonoy, Malalag, Padada, Sta. Maria, and Sulop, collectively called as the Malalag Bay Area (MBA). The MBA is bounded on the north by Digos and Matanao, on the east by Davao Gulf, on the south by Malita and Malungon, Sarangani Province, and on the west by Sultan Kudarat and North Cotabato.

Malalag Bay was once called Kasilaran Bay, named after a palm found abundant in the area. In the 1970s, when the municipality of Malalag was gaining popularity as a developing town within the bay area, Kasilaran Bay was then renamed. The bay was called Malalag Bay due to its proximity to Malalag and its wharf located in the innermost portion of the bay.

Most of the inhabitants of the MBA are of Visayan origin. They came from the islands of Bohol, Leyte, Negros, Panay, and Samar with the majority coming from Cebu. A few Muslims also inhabit the area primarily from the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and other Muslim-dominated provinces of mainland Mindanao.

Two aboriginal tribes, Kalagans and the Tagacaolos, inhabit the MBA. The Kalagans

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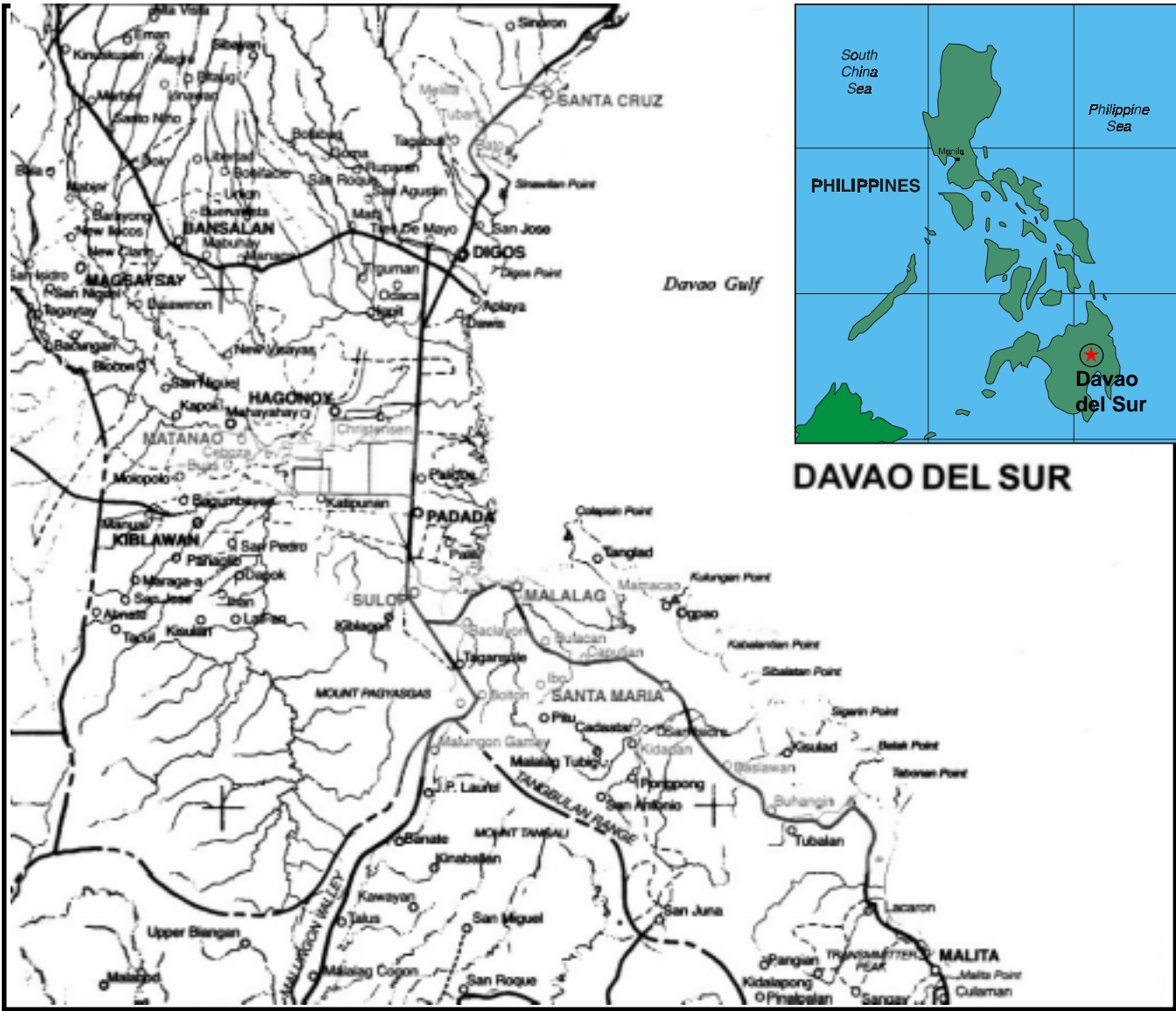


Figure 1.1. Malalag Bay with outlying municipalities.

reside in Barangay Aplaya of Hagonoy while the Tagacaolos are natives of Sta. Maria. However, few are located in the coastal area with the majority located in the upland communities of the municipalities of Malita, Don Marcelino, and Jose Abad Santos.

The bountiful coastal resources of Kasilaran Bay persuaded the Muslims, Cebuanos, and other Visayans to settle along the area between 1920 and 1940. Old settlers felt the coastal and marine resources of the bay could support any human utilization and exploitation.

In the 1950s, dynamite fishing caused much destruction to the coral reefs, but people

did not notice its effects on the ecosystems nor on their livelihood. They, however, pursued different fishing methods to maintain or even increase their volume of catch unaware of the depletion of the fish stocks.

Devastation of the forest cover was also brought about by logging activities from the 1940s until the 1960s when timber was hauled to Malalag Bay and transported by ships outside the municipality. Succeeding destruction was hastened by the continuing influx of migrants to the logged areas, triggered primarily by a lack of economic opportunities in the lowlands. Slash-and-burn farming still persists and has caused much destruction, not only to the forest cover but also to the biodiversity of the place. Denudation continues to pose a grave threat to the community with the lands exposed and vulnerable to soil erosion and degradation. MBA now experiences long dry spells that result in the drying of water sources in general.

Davao Gulf and the MBA in particular share the following environmental problems and concerns as the rest of Mindanao:

- Forest destruction - Forest denudation has accelerated the loss of top soil, increased the severity and frequency of floods, increased siltation to downstream farms, settlements, and various coastal habitats, and decreased the supply of water for domestic and agricultural use. The rapid increase in the population of farmers aggravates issues of land tenure, sustainability of traditional sloping agricultural practices, and access to basic services.
- Water pollution - Pollution of the rivers and seas is mainly being caused by unregulated disposal of industrial, agricultural, and household wastes as well as oil spills. Pollution caused by fertilizers, chemicals, and pesticides from banana plantations and other agricultural development; effluents from sugar milling plants and other industrial establishments; oil spills dumped by docking vessels and motorized fishing boats that produce oil wastes during cleaning and changing oil; waste discharges such as uneaten fish feeds, fecal and excretory wastes from mariculture activities; and the solid waste pollution brought about by the negligence of households in the proper disposal of trash and the cellophane from the banana plantations resulted in the gradual depletion of the marine ecosystem. The narrow shelf makes the mangrove, seagrass, and coral reef communities vulnerable to these land- and sea-based sources of pollution.
- Persistent illegal and destructive fishing activities - The use of dynamite, poisonous plant extracts, and obnoxious commercial substances during fishing; the illegal entry of commercial fishing boats within the bay; the use of fine mesh nets including *baling* and *lampornas* resulted in the depletion of fishery resources.

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***Forest denudation continues to pose a grave threat to the community with the lands exposed and vulnerable to soil erosion and degradation.***

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It is further compounded by the increasing population of fishermen along the coastline and the open-access nature of the fishery especially for the small pelagic fishery.

Beset with various environmental problems, the MBA was selected as one of the six learning areas of the Coastal Resource Management Project (CRMP). The MBA serves as one of the models for CRMP which spearheads coastal resource management (CRM) through community leadership and initiatives.

This coastal environmental profile provides baseline information on the coastal habitats, resources, and socioeconomic condition of the MBA to the local government units (LGUs), nongovernment organizations (NGOs), people's organizations (POs), and the coastal communities and will serve as a guide in the development and formulation of CRM plans in the MBA.

The specific objectives of this profile are to:

- Determine the status of the shallow nearshore habitats, resources, and socioeconomic condition of the inhabitants for monitoring purposes;
- Identify issues and constraints besetting the MBA to be used in assessing the progress of the CRM;
- Synthesize mapped information which will constitute a visual database for spatial analysis;
- Summarize and assess information and ecosystem and resources, social and economic conditions, and legal and institutional regimes for management; and
- Provide a source of information for communities, government, planners, researchers, and others in the planning and education process.

This coastal environmental profile covers the MBA from the boundary of Hagonoy to the boundary of Sta. Maria. It is a compilation of existing baseline information available from the five municipalities, Provincial Planning Development Office (PPDO) of Davao del Sur, Mindanao State University (MSU), Silliman University (SU), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and from actual biophysical and socioeconomic surveys of the coastal zone.

Information for this profile was collected from primary sources including a participatory coastal resource assessment (PCRA), short-term site surveys, interviews with local resource users, LGUs, and community discussions. Secondary sources such as reports, maps, government files, and photographs were also utilized.



