

# A Tale of Two Islands: An Evolution of Coastal Resources Management in the Philippines

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*“No country in history has yet developed through foreign investments, not anywhere, not in the past, not in the present. All the developed countries today have developed from native ingenuity and boldness, not from the kindness of strangers. Foreign investments do not blaze trails, they go only to places that have already been blazed, that show a track record for success. Foreign investments merely supplement, like vitamins, they do not sustain, like food.”*

*“... Development is the handiwork of people rather than of capital. It sees the people as the makers of development. It transforms them from mere labor, to be hired as needed, to entrepreneurs, to create as is their birthright. It makes entrepreneurship a collective rather than an individual initiative, one that benefits the community in general in wellbeing rather than the investor in particular in profit. It transforms people from targets, beneficiaries and objects of development to subjects, initiators and authors of development. Targets of development do not develop; authors of development do”.*

*“The real fundamentals are that countries do not develop from the benevolence or enlightened greed of others but from pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. The real fundamentals are that individual investors do not create development, a community does. The real fundamentals are that a country’s greatest wealth does not lie in its land, or capital, or natural resources, it lies in its people”*

*(de Quiros, Conrad. 2004 March 12. “Fundamentals”. There’s the Rub. Philippine Daily Inquirer)*

## **Introduction**

This paper is an attempt to trace the evolution of coastal resources management, and community-based coastal resources management (CBCRM) in particular, in the Philippines. It begins with reviewing written accounts of two marine reserves considered to be pioneering experiments in coastal resources management. The paper then proceeds to distinguish key features between integrated coastal management (ICM) and CBCRM as two distinct tracks/approaches to coastal resources management (CRM). The paper ends with key challenges that we face in pursuing CBCRM.

## ***“Kung Ano ang Puno, Siya ang Bunga”***

The Apo and Sumilon Islands marine reserves mark the Philippines’ initiation of a management approach that involved the participation of fishers and their local government in the process. However, specific histories of the management of these

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reserves provide a stark contrast in approach and perspective in resources management. Though both began with marine conservation and education programs at the community level, initiated by the Marine Laboratory of Silliman University in 1973 at Sumilon, and in 1976 at Apo, each followed distinct tracks that eventually defined different outcomes.

### *The Sumilon Island Experience*

In 1973, biologists and social scientists from Silliman University set up a community-level marine conservation program in the small towns of Oslob and Santander, Cebu. Initially the University staff spent substantial time talking to the communities about basic marine ecological concepts and about managing their marine resources. They also discussed the potential benefits of increased fish yields in areas adjacent to the reserve.

By April 1974, the Oslob Municipal Council passed an ordinance which established the Sumilon Reserve. The ordinance authorized "Silliman University to establish a marine park around Sumilon Island for marine biological studies and research" (White 1989). It also authorized the University "to regulate fishing and gathering of any marine products within Sumilon Island" (White 1989). To implement this, the university placed a caretaker on the island to ensure that no fishing occurred in the reserve and to monitor fish yields from adjacent areas.

In 1980 new mayors were elected in the towns of Oslob and Santander. Both mayors had links to large scale, commercial fishing operations. In February 1980 several serious fishing violations occurred in the reserve. The University appealed to the national government on several occasions, resulting in Sumilon Reserve being declared a nationally protected fish sanctuary under BFAR Fisheries Administrative Order 128 Series of 1980. As a result of this Order, BFAR assumed legal responsibility for the reserve, and Silliman University administered protection and management and carried out relevant research. This Order led to considerable resentment from many local government officials which translated in turn into resentment from the fishers as well because of the influence of the local government officials.

The Sumilon experience placed heavy reliance on external actors such as the local government, national government agencies and the academic community. Although the Sumilon Island experience generated many lessons and provided guidance for future projects, "... it ultimately failed due to a change of political leadership in the municipality. Hindsight shows that the fishermen ... were not sufficiently organized or strong to combat a misguided local politician. The fishing community although supportive of the management regime, never had a formal role in the day-to-day management of the coral reef and its resources for their own benefit" (White and Vogt 2000).

In the end, Russ and Alcala (1999) concluded that through out the 24 years, "What is still lacking in this situation is genuine community-level involvement and support for the reserve..."

### *The Apo Island Experience*

Silliman University initiated another marine conservation and education program at Apo Island as early as 1976. In 1982, the municipality of Dauin and Silliman University forged an agreement to set up a sanctuary. The local community effectively protected the 0.45 km long section of the southeast side of Apo Island (10% of the coral reef area) even without legislation. Earnest work began in 1984 when the Marine Conservation and Development Program (MCDP) commenced.

The program was designed to directly involve the community in the whole process of implementation on the premise that resource management must be rooted in local communities. There were five general steps in the implementation process which were not necessarily chronological, but rather overlapping and ongoing. These include - integration into the community, education, core group building, formalizing organizations, and strengthening organizations (White 1989). By April 1985, the Apo Island community proposed a comprehensive marine reserve/sanctuary plan which was endorsed by the Dauin municipal council in August 1985. The municipal ordinance was officially approved only on November 3, 1986.

Throughout the years, the setting up of the Apo Island marine reserve "has had strong local support, and a good degree of community compliance with management regulations" (Russ and Alcala 1999). The relative success of the Apo Island marine reserve is credited to the fact that "... community support for the reserve concept was actively maintained, largely because the original ideas and concepts evolved from, and the implementation and maintenance was achieved by, the local community itself".

Moreover, "... core groups of residents emerged, that formed the basis of the Marine Management Committee (MMC)" (White 1989b). The residents themselves identified their needs and management problems and, with guidance from the educators, the concept of the reserve/sanctuary arose. The MMC was involved in the drafting of the municipal ordinance to establish the reserve/sanctuary, surveillance and collection of visitor's fees and donations and in the construction of the community education center (Russ and Alcala 1999).

Apo Island, White (1998) further attests "... has shown that it is possible to organize local communities to manage their marine resources, and that they will continue to do so if they derive benefits from this activity". Furthermore, the Apo Island experience demonstrates "... if coastal communities are to be effective in coastal resource protection and management, they must be recognized and empowered as the day-to-day managers of coastal resources..." (Alcala 1998)

However, the community based management model of Apo Island marine sanctuary was reversed with the passage of National Integrated protected Area System (NIPAS) law in 1992. With the subsequent declaration of the Island as a 'protected seascape', Apo Island was once again put under the control of a national government agency, the DENR through the Protected Area Management Board. This trend occurred in several other community-based marine protected areas like San Salvador Island, Masinloc, Zambales; Baliangao Wetland Park, Danao Bay, Baliangao, Misamis Occidental; and Saranggani Bay among others.

### ***In search of sustainable and effective coastal resource management approaches***

As the story of Apo Island continues to unfold, an interested observer cannot help but raise the following fundamental questions:

Is this what institutionalizing of resource management means?

Is this what sustaining community efforts involve?

What is happening now in Apo Island?

What lessons and insights can we gain from the contrasting experience of Apo and Sumilon?

The Sumilon and Apo Islands marine reserve experiences to our mind represent the basic approaches and perspectives that are to develop into ICM and CBCRM. Development strategies and interventions like ICM and CBCRM are born out of particular context and perspectives. They are the result of historical forces and circumstance – they are born out of the struggle of development actors in their efforts to achieve success and overcome failures.

Amidst the growing urgency of a deepening environmental and economic crises plaguing the country's coastal communities, those committed to the quest for sustainable and effective CRM approaches stands to benefit from critical self-reflection. Throughout the years, the Apo and Sumilon experiences have been repeated in countless other cases/sites. This is an opportune time for a self-critical reflection.

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### ***ICM's core features***

ICM began as an effort to overcome the limitations of sectoral planning which often results in narrow and contradicting goals and policies in resources management.

According to White and Lopez (1991), "ICM emphasizes the integration of management across both environmental and human realms to solve complex problems that span

sectoral concerns, ecosystems, institutions, and political boundaries. It comprises those activities that achieve sustainable use and management of economically and ecologically valuable resources in coastal areas that consider interaction among and within resource systems as well as interaction between humans and their environment”.

From this definition we note that ICM is fundamentally about planning. It is about integration and coordination on multiple levels of national and local government working together with community groups in an iterative assessment, planning and implementation process for the management of resources. White et al (1991) provides an apt summary in the following: “ICM includes many activities – often complex ones – which are carefully arranged in plans”.

It is interesting how these definitions do not affirm the fundamental lesson from the Apo Island experience – that of recognizing and empowering coastal communities as the day-to-day managers of coastal resources (Alcala 1998).

Can we say then, that ICM is not about empowering community people to appreciate their resources (human and ecological) and to address the problems they confront? That ICM is not about enhancing their capacities/capabilities that they may learn in the process?

Christie (1997), an ICM advocate, may have provided the answer to these questions, when he said, “The limitations of co-management and ICM may lie in the primacy placed on the role of government, rather than local communities”.

A central theme of community based management is that people will be more likely to comply with management regulations when they are well informed on the objectives of the management, are part of the process of deciding that management is necessary and on what forms it takes, and also participate in the implementation and maintenance of that management.

Johannes (1978), for example, has argued for many years that traditional marine tenure, a system with a strong community component, has been critical in the maintenance of coral reef resources in many Pacific Island nations. If local peoples are not involved in the design and implementation of marine resource management, often the users of a resource feel that a remote, sometimes bureaucratic and even ‘ill-informed’ management agency (often of a national or state government) is unjustifiably imposing restrictions on their rights to the resource.

### ***The Evolution of CBCRM in the Philippines (mid-1970s to 1990s)***

The evolution of CBCRM practice in the Philippines during the last three decades was a response to the changing context and continuing challenges to resources management.

The past three decades of development in Asia have seen the growing role of central government in the management of local resources (Korten 1986). Where once the management of small irrigation systems, forest areas, grazing lands or coastal fisheries was primarily determined by local custom and control i.e., by the people using the resources, today we see a variety of national laws, policies and programs directly affecting communal resources.

However, the past three decades have also witnessed a growing awareness of the limits of development models that look to government bureaucracies for leadership in doing development work for the people. Government has often overestimated its own ability to manage these same resources.

One result of this growing awareness has been a search for new and more participatory approaches to resource management. Out of this search has emerged a growing interest in the concept and practice of community-based coastal resources management. Community-based coastal resources management takes as its point of departure, not the bureaucracy and its centrally-mandated development projects and programs, but rather the community itself: its needs, its capabilities, and ultimately its own control over both its resources and its destiny. Community-based approach takes the people as partners in development (Ferrer and Nozawa 1977).

The forces that led to the development of CBCRM in the Philippines are deeply rooted in the social movement for economic justice, political freedom and cultural identity in the 1970s and in the firm belief that the people are the real partners in development. During this time, the Philippine socio-economic situation was rapidly deteriorating and the social crisis was again reaching a turning point.

The CBCRM framework and initial practice emerged from the early experiments of NGOs and academic and research institutions that initiated coastal resources management programs either singly or in cooperation with each other. In this early stage, the notion of "community-based" was inspired by ideals of equity, greater community control and democratization of access to natural resources.

### ***Key challenges that nurtured the growth of CBCRM***

#### **The Challenge of Integrating Social Justice with Resources Management**

Environmental activism began to take root in the Philippines from two main streams. One stream represented the more conservationist or "nature-loving" type of organizations (e.g., Haribon, which was originally founded as a bird-watching club), which expanded their concerns as international campaigns and agreements called attention to widespread ecological degradation. The other stream was represented by community-based groups and networks that were initially more concerned with human

rights issues like the displacement of tribes and poor settlers threatened by the environmentally destructive projects of the Marcos regime such as the Chico River Dam.

The initial and perhaps the foremost challenge to CBCRM was how to integrate social justice with resource management goals, as well as how to enhance local participation in resource management that leads to genuine community empowerment.

This was addressed through the development of the communities' critical awareness and understanding of the social and biophysical situation surrounding them through participatory methods in community studies, resource assessments and environmental education. Common understanding of problems and possible solutions helped build a collective spirit and foster commitment to do something about their situation.

### **The Challenge of Women's Participation and Gender Relations**

A recurring concern in CBCRM is how it addresses the issue of gender inequality and women's empowerment. Pagaduan (2003) highlights the importance of understanding and accounting for women's social reproduction roles if we are to have a fuller and more inclusive notion of "community". Women's day-to-day work inside and outside the home forms an important link to sustaining community life and it is these concerns that are the essence of the "gender issue" in CBCRM.

To address the issue of women's empowerment in CBCRM, NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) carried out gender awareness building activities that heightened the community's understanding of women's issues and roles in resource management and community development. In most cases, women's committees or women-only organizations were formed, and these provided organizational mechanism for them to take on active roles in leadership and management of community programs/projects.

NGOs in some areas consciously encouraged the development of structures and processes that promoted women's participation in leadership and decision-making and in organizational and resource management activities. Such efforts resulted in the creation of a nurturing and caring attitude of CBO members towards their environment. RM projects directed towards enhancement and rehabilitation of fisheries and other resources were sustained.

There are already indications of increasing women's participation in the implementation of CBCRM activities. However, the objectives and design of many programs still make it difficult to surface/explore the differential interests and impact between women and men in the community.

### **The Challenge of Ecosystem/Fisheries Management**

From earlier attempts of organizing at the barangay level and initiating 'high-impact' projects like marine sanctuaries and reserves, current CBCRM practice is now moving towards increased ecosystem or area management. This involves intricately combining both stock/habitat/resource management and people management. Critical points in current CBCRM practice entail identifying a clearly defined **management unit** (where a group of resource users can identify themselves with) and forming, strengthening and institutionalizing a duly recognized **management body** with strong resource users participation. Among its most essential element is transforming the social relationships among people who exploit the resources/fisheries.

Effective community-based management of coastal resources (especially fisheries) need to be based on the resource users' adequate knowledge and understanding of fisheries production processes and dynamics. (How much fisheries is the management unit capable of producing/supporting? How much fish, mangrove, etc. can be harvested sustainably? Who shall be given the right [entitlement] to harvest how much of the production? What incentives/sanctions will be put in place to promote sustainable resources management?)

### **The Challenge of Scaling Up**

An important question posed to CBCRM is "... whether the current, community-based approaches can be successful in stemming the tide of resource degradation and increasing poverty in coastal areas" (White and Deguit 2000).

ICM's answer to this question is 'scaling up', mainly through vertical linkages. Vertical linkages are the interactions of organizations operating at different levels of decision making (Kearney 2004).

Vertical scaling up in the Philippines has resulted in CBCRM being mainstreamed by the government and donor agencies. Mainstreaming brought with it a change in approach and perspective, rather than people's organizations having real voices in decision making experts, professionals and government agencies have taken over management.

However, scaling up could also be undertaken through horizontal linkages. Horizontal linkages are the interactions between community organizations or among community organizations and sometimes with local government (Kearney 2004). Horizontal scaling up in the Philippines has taken place through federation and confederation building among people's organizations, NGOs and local government and has resulted in the formation of resource management bodies managing bigger coastal ecosystems.

The limitation of ICM's scaling up in the Philippines may lie in its focusing entirely on vertical scaling up.

## ***CBCRM's core features***

CBCRM has been characterized as a "people-centered, community-oriented and ecosystem-based management approach" (Ferrer and Nozawa 1997) towards the sustainable development of coastal communities and resources. It seeks to facilitate a participatory and empowering learning process involving marginalized groups of resource users and other members of the community.

Participation and empowerment are tightly linked concepts. Participation is empowering if it enables local people to do their own analysis, to take command, to gain in confidence and to make their own decisions (Chambers 1995).

Empowerment includes initiating/catalyzing processes by which people become aware of their own interests (and how those relate to the interests of others) which lead them to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make choices and decisions. This conception of empowerment encompasses the full range of human abilities and potentials and thus must involve undoing negative social constructions so that people realize their capacity and right to act and influence decisions. (Rowlands, 1997)

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## **CBCRM Goals**

Essentially, the main goal of CBCRM is the development of sustainable livelihoods of coastal communities where resource users, community members, local authorities and other stakeholders are active participants in the development process. While the starting point of CBCRM practice is resource management, it places fundamental importance on building community actions that incrementally lead to poverty reduction and greater human rights among the poor and marginalized. CBCRM thus is equity-driven and recognizes the need for radical changes to power structures and relations as well as transforming institutional arrangements that will allow the most vulnerable groups increased access to and control over community resources, opportunities, entitlements and benefits.

CBCRM relies upon strong community-based organizations (CBOs) that are critically aware of their present conditions and possess the capacities, confidence and resources to actively participate in decision-making related to their well-being.

CBCRM requires a high degree of participation from communities, civil society, minorities, indigenous peoples, women and others. Such participation must be active, free and meaningful so that mere formal or ceremonial contacts with beneficiaries are insufficient. This requires opting for process-based methodologies and tools rather than externally conceived 'quick-fixes' and imported technical models. Once people and communities are empowered to develop themselves, it follows that they will do so in distinctively different ways which will be affected by a whole variety of cultural and ecological variables.

## **CBCRM Methods and Processes**

CBCRM makes use of a multi-disciplinary perspective and approach in order to effectively facilitate the communities' deeper appreciation and analyses of the intricate links between the biological and social processes involved in fisheries production and utilization, as well as deepen their understanding of how broader political and socio-economic structures and relations influence their lives (Ferrer et al 2003).

Alcala (1988), in his review of CBCRM projects in the Philippines, noted six common components: (1) social preparation and community organizing; (2) environmental education and capacity building; (3) resource management planning, including protective management; (4) support activities for livelihood and financial resources mobilization; (5) research and monitoring; and (6) networking activities.

**Community organizing (CO)** seeks to address the issues of political empowerment of coastal communities in order for them to gain active participation in governance processes from village to higher levels. CO enhances the ability of people to work together for common goals in groups and organizations. The CBOs established give form and substance to community spirit and unity of purpose.

Community organizing in CBCRM now includes the following thrusts:

- The strengthening and increasing autonomy of community-based organizations and/or local resource management structures towards increased community participation in resources management and other broader community development efforts
- The scaling up of levels of organizing towards federation building (at the municipal, provincial, regional and even national levels), formation of multi-stakeholder bodies and coalitions for broader and more effective coverage of resources/fisheries management, more coordinated advocacy campaigns, and stronger solidarity and sharing/lessons learning
- Formation of bay-wide resource management structures in some areas towards wider fisheries/ecosystem management (e.g., Danao Bay, Murcialagos Bay, etc.)

**Environmental education and capacity building** is envisioned to enhance the knowledge, skills and attitudes of community members towards leadership development and organizational planning and management. Integrated into all the components are consciousness raising and gender sensitivity strategies in order to enhance people's knowledge and ability to undertake projects and activities that address resource management, livelihoods and gender concerns.

**Resource management (RM)** seeks to develop community capacities in resource assessment, resource management planning, implementation and monitoring.

Institutionalization of community-based RM structures and their integration into important decision or policy making bodies were established by gaining recognition as legitimate organizations from local government units (LGUs), national government agencies and their communities. Membership in mandated organizations and special bodies involved in fishery development and policy formulation provided the NGOs and CBOs the opportunity to actively engage in governance and advocacy work. The adoption of CBCRM programs at the local and municipal levels convinced the LGUs to grant legal recognition of local RM projects and to adopt CRM planning and program for their municipal waters. With their active participation and advocacy for strict law enforcement, partner NGOs and CBOs continue to exert significant influence on LGUs to intensify their efforts for the protection of vital ecosystems and/or fishery habitats.

**Support activities for livelihood and financial resources mobilization** is geared towards sustainable livelihood development through effective coastal resources management and establishment of other economic activities that provide alternative/supplemental income and access to basic social services.

Another important aspect in the empowerment-based strategies is to enable the CBOs to have access to and control over community resources and livelihood opportunities. As a result, local organizations gained control over specific fishery resources/habitats through legal instrument granted by LGUs. In many different areas, local CBOs or resource management organizations (RMOs) now assume relative control of the management functions in Marine Protected Areas or mangrove reforestation projects within their barangays (village). In some instances, the community organizations were given the responsibility to manage other community projects related to basic social services and livelihood projects introduced by LGUs and national line agencies.

In the efforts to address poverty and the lack of livelihood opportunities in coastal communities, NGOs and CBOs employed livelihood-based strategies, enabling local organizations to establish livelihood projects. In the same manner, management skills were enhanced in order to make their projects viable. Ranging from individual, household and group managed projects, these were established to generate income (supplementary or additional) and to provide basic social services for the community. In most cases, these were fishery-related while others were land-based. Aside from the problem of management, the viability and profitability of livelihood projects were greatly influenced by prevailing market mechanisms that made it difficult for small business to compete.

**Networking and policy advocacy** included seeking different forms of institutional arrangements for CBOs to assume their role as resource managers of fishery habitats covered by their local conservation and rehabilitation projects. To further strengthen security of tenure or stewardship arrangement, NGOs and CBOs advocated for the adoption of CRM planning and management structures where the interests of small fishers are integrated. The CBOs were able to claim their right to have a say on matters

involving access to and control over their fishery resources, through their participation in local decision-making bodies and networking with LGUs and government line agencies.

Networking and policy advocacy are also being undertaken at the national level towards the adoption of enabling policy and institutional arrangements that could sustain CBCRM. By elevating micro-macro issues and policies into national debate and its impact on small fishers and their livelihood opportunities, NGOs and CBOs were successful in making policy-makers take cognizant of the small fishers' situation.

### **Mainstreaming gender**

CBCRM programs have long recognized that there is a gender dimension to coastal resources management and community development. There is now a diversity of strategies to mainstream gender in CBCRM. Gender mainstreaming efforts are translated into several activities such as:

- Increasing sensitivity to the differential conditions between men and women and the differential impacts of development on them;
- Conducting research on the prevailing gender gap;
- Increasing the participation of women in resource management;
- Organizing women in creative and innovate ways which promote their solidarity and exercise of political (organizational) independence;
- Enhancing/Facilitating access to basic services (health, water, education, etc.);
- Advocating for recognition of women's roles in fisheries
- Advocating the implementation of legislations granting women special treatment/affirmative action such as GAD budget, and promoting women's rights;
- Responding to violence against women (VAW) in the community

Some CBCRM programs already have clear objectives and indicators for enhancing women's participation and/or women's empowerment in the programs. It is worth noting that integrating gender in CBCRM has allowed advocates to address women's issues which were traditionally hands-off in CBCRM, such as VAW.

CBCRM as a gender-aware strategy has also linked issues related to access to basic services with that of empowerment. Through women organizing and various gender sensitizing activities, CBCRM has underscored the role of women in the fisheries industry and has fostered leaders from the ranks of women, who were formerly 'mere housewives'.

### ***Sustaining CBCRM thru learning organizations and communities***

What would sustain CBCRM into the future?

To our mind, one of the most critical elements that sustain and advance the “self-organizing” process of people and communities is the “learning process”. We argue that what initiates and sustains the CBCRM process is the learning that takes place every day in the life of individuals, organizations and communities and the relationships of learning that are established as a result of this process.

### **The Learning Process as a process of empowerment**

Learning is a fundamental ingredient of empowerment. Learning takes place everyday in life and fishers learn from their day-to-day activities. In the interaction between and among the community and the coastal environment learning occurs constantly and knowledge is continuously generated, validated and/or debunked. This continuous process of learning enables communities to accumulate wisdom about the natural and social processes in their environment and provides the knowledge base and guidepost to their everyday resource use and management practices.

The process of learning from each other and forging connections between and among people from various communities engaged in CBCRM has greatly heightened the spirit of community in a broader sense. As a result, the NGOs and CBOs are encouraged and challenged to put more efforts in carrying out regular reflections and summing up of experiences in order to gain more knowledge for future program implementation.

An important element in CBCRM is the development of knowledge borne out of CBCRM practice and integrating these lessons into future practices. To further enhance and strengthen NGOs and CBOs’ capabilities, individual and joint learning activities are continuously fostered to help CBCRM advocates share and synthesize their experiences, draw lessons, and creatively confront emerging challenges.

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