

Co-Management in Philippine Fisheries: The Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (FARMC)

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A famous folk song in the Philippines, “Si Filemon”, reflects the impoverished livelihood of a poor fisherman named Filemon. The song conveys the plight of Filemon who goes to fish everyday using hook and line, who gets only small trash fish which he sells in a dilapidated market, and the sale from his catch is just enough to buy a glass of tuba (coconut wine) with nothing left for his family’s needs. The song may have some exaggerations but tries to impart the message on the need to help the fishers improve their economic status in order to get out from chronic poverty. The Philippines for its part, tries to address the needs of the country’s more than one million Filemons. Considering also that there are other millions of poor fishers like Filemon in the Southeast Asian region, they should be the target of any national safety net program on poverty alleviation. It is envisaged that this article could serve as a model for other countries in the region in their efforts to promote co-management in fisheries to help their own Filemons.

The Philippines is an archipelagic country consisting of more than 7100 islands lying north of the equator and on the western rim of the Pacific Ocean with a total land area of about 298,170 km². The country extends about 2000 km in a south-north direction from the northeast coast of Borneo to 150 km off Taiwan. Its total territorial water area including the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is about 2.2 million km² with about 266,000 km² of coastal waters. The country’s aquatic resources profile is summarized in **Box 1**. In 2007, the Philippines ranked 8th among the top fish producing countries in the world with a total production of 4.7 million mt, a significant increase from about 2.8 million mt in 1997. Tuna is the country’s top export commodity followed by shrimps and seaweeds.

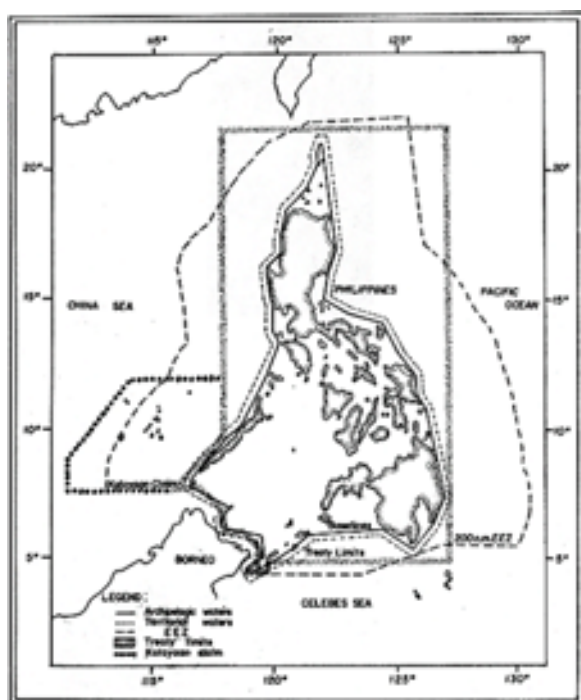
The small-scale fisheries in the country are also interchangeably known as artisanal, municipal, coastal or subsistence fisheries. More specifically, “subsistence fishing” refers to operations wherein fishing units catch marine products mainly for household consumption, while

“coastal fisheries” are defined as fisheries by fishing ground or area. Thus, fishing operations from the shoreline to 15 km is described as coastal fisheries. Municipal fisheries include capture operations using motorized and non-motorized boats that weigh 3 GT or less, as well as fishing and gathering less mobile aquatic animals without using boats. The persons involved are referred to as municipal fisherfolk who are directly or indirectly engaged in municipal fishing and other related fishing activities. The fisherfolk use bancas (a type of boat) with a capacity of 2-5 persons, usually without engine, and fishing gear such as hook and line, gillnet and others.

By area of operation, municipal fisheries can be classified into marine municipal fisheries in coastal waters and inland municipal fisheries in freshwater areas such as lakes, rivers, streams, dams, swamps, etc. In the Philippine context, boats that exceed 3 GT are considered commercial, and the sizes of commercial fishing boats are further categorized into: small-scale (3.1 to 20 GT), medium-scale (20.1 to

Box 1: Profile of the Philippines' aquatic resources

Marine Resources	Inland Resources
Total Territorial Waters (including EEZ): 2,200,000 km ²	Swamplands: 246,063 ha
Coastal: 266,000 km ²	Freshwater: 106,328 ha
Oceanic: 1,934,000 km ²	Brackishwater: 139,735 ha
Shelf area (depth: 200 m): 184,000 km ²	Other Inland Resources: 250,000 ha
Coral reef area: 27,000 km ²	Lakes: 200,000 ha
Length of coastline: 17,460 km	Rivers, reservoirs, etc.: 50,000 ha



Map of the Philippines showing the extent of its waters including its EEZ



Municipal fishing boats in the Philippines
(Photo by G.C. Diaz 2008)

Philippines representing about 85% of the country's total fishing force.

Implementation of Relevant Instruments for the Promotion of Sustainable Fisheries

Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF)

The thematic issues in the CCRF have been used as the guiding principle during the development of the new Philippine Fisheries Code (Republic Act 8550) or the Fisheries Code of 1998. Consequently, the global CCRF and the Regional Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries have been used as framework in the formulation of programs such as the Philippine Comprehensive National Fisheries Industry Development Plan (CNFIDP). More specifically, the CCRF was also used as basis in the formulation of the National Plan of Action for sharks as well as for combating IUU fishing. The Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) provides training to the country's fisheries managers as well as to other stakeholders, and has conducted a series of seminars on the CCRF and the Regional Guidelines. In addition, the Philippine Council for Aquatic Marine Research and Development (PCAMRD) also offers a training program on sustainable fisheries management in the context of the CCRF.

150 GT), and large-scale (more than 150 GT). In 2007, the aquaculture sector posted the highest fish production of about 47% (2.2 million mt) while the commercial fisheries sector contributed 25% (1.2 million mt). The small-scale or municipal fisheries sector accounted for about 28% of the country's total fisheries production (1.3 million mt). There are about two million small-scale fishers (1,914,400) in the



Typical Philippine banca (Photo by BFAR)



A typical Filemon with his meager fish catch and his family, the main target of the Philippines' efforts in promoting sustainable fisheries management (Photo by AQD's Sid Tendencia)

Rights-based Fisheries and Co-management Using Group User Rights

The Philippines continued to promote the sustainable development of the country's tuna fisheries in consonance with the provisions stipulated in the Resolution and Plan of Action on Sustainable Fisheries and Food Security for the ASEAN Region. Considering that tuna is the number one export commodity of the Philippines, BFAR promulgated Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) No. 224 for the establishment of the Tuna Productivity Project (TPP) in Davao Gulf (southeastern Mindanao). FAO 224 gives exclusive fishing rights within the project area of 256 km² to the members of a cooperative in the Davao Gulf comprising small- and medium-scale commercial fishing boat operators in accordance with the TPP management regulations. In the Philippines, the TPP is now being referred to as a model in co-management and rights-based fisheries.

Development, Management and Conservation of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

Republic Act No. 8550 (RA 8550) also known as the Fisheries Code of 1998 is "An Act providing for the Development, Management and Conservation of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, integrating all Laws pertinent thereto, and for other purposes." Serving as guidelines, the Act has mandated the Department of Agriculture (DA) through BFAR to carry-out the major tasks of fisheries resource management in the whole country. The Fisheries Code of 1998 was developed with the global CCRF as the framework and guiding principle. Under this Act, the structure of BFAR was reconstituted from its staff status to line agency under the DA with its new prime mandate of promoting management, development, conservation, protection and utilization of

fisheries and aquatic resources of the country, except the municipal waters which were placed under the municipal or city government as stipulated in the Philippine Local Government Code of 1991 or RA 7160. As one of the policies in RA 8550, the fisheries and aquatic resources should be managed in a manner consistent with the concept of an integrated coastal area management in specific natural fisheries management areas, appropriately supported by research, technical services and guidance. In this regard, BFAR has issued various Fisheries Administrative Orders (FAOs) to address the issues on fisheries management.

Co-management in Fisheries

Under the framework of RA 8550, the Philippines had shifted to the system of co-management, where both governments and the communities/resource users share certain responsibilities in the decision-making and other functions of management. This was based on Sec. 68 of RA 8550 which provides that the development of fisheries and aquatic resources in municipal waters and bays shall be by the fisherfolk and their organizations residing within the geographical jurisdiction of the barangays, municipalities or cities together with the concerned local government units. Moreover, Sec. 69 of RA 8550 also provides for the establishment of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils (FARMCs) at the national level and in all municipalities/cities abutting municipal waters.

The councils are to be formed by fisherfolk organizations/cooperatives and NGOs in the locality and should be assisted by the local government units and other government entities. Consultation and orientation on the formation of



MFARMC members of Looc, Romblon prepares management plan for their Fish Sanctuary and mangrove resources

the councils is also required before they are organized. The FARMC is consulted by the Local Government Unit in matters concerning the formulation of fisheries policies, preparation of fisheries development plans and various concerns in the management of fisheries and aquatic resources. The FARMCs also assist in the enforcement of rules and regulations in fisheries and perform other functions as mandated by the Fisheries Code. Thus, the Philippines succeeded in having a legal framework where government can support and facilitate fisheries co-management and this is through the FARMCs.

The FARMC serves as a tool that enables the active participation of the stakeholders, particularly the small-scale fisherfolk in fisheries management by recognizing their competence and assigning them certain responsibilities of fisheries management at the local level. RA 8550 also provides the legal framework for the role of National Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils (NFARMC), Municipal/City (M/C) FARMC and Integrated (I) FARMC.

Specifically, Fisheries Administrative Order No. 196 was issued to provide the guidelines in creating and implementing the FARMCs. Initial experiences in the establishment of the FARMCs have demonstrated considerable success, but there is a need to sustain the initiatives by providing adequate support to empower the communities, build effective linkages and institutions, and provide adequate financial and technical resources to implement the FARMC program. Strengthening the fisherfolk organizations and the FARMCs to enable them to competently perform their mandates in co-management is a necessary element for success.

With the government agenda of creating 2.0 million jobs until 2010 as well as the need to make fisheries sustainable to support the livelihoods of the fisherfolk and contribute significantly to food security, program interventions to alleviate poverty among the small-scale fisherfolk have been implemented. These include fisheries resource management, establishment of mariculture zones/parks, and stock and resource enhancement anchored on the concept of community-based and integrated coastal resource management. In addition, assistance in technology demonstrations through capacity building has been initiated in order to promote livelihood improvement, and marketing and loan access. Development of fisheries infrastructure, distribution of post-harvest equipment and fishing gear paraphernalia, input assistance (fingerlings, seaweeds and others), establishment of seaweed nurseries, etc. have also been initiated.

National Policies and Governance

The Philippine Constitution

Article XIII Section 7 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution states that the government “shall protect the rights of subsistence fishermen, especially of local communities, to the preferential use of the communal marine and fishing resources, both inland and offshore. It shall provide support to such fishermen through appropriate technology and research... and other services.” This policy is therefore embodied in the Local Government Code of 1991 (RA 7160) and the 1998 Fisheries Code (RA 8550).

Local Government Code of 1991

Article 149 of RA 7160 grants “duly registered organizations and cooperatives of marginal fishermen preferential right to fishery privileges.” It also sets the municipal waters at 15 km from the shoreline. The enactment or promulgation of municipal or city ordinances and related resolutions affecting fishing and fisheries have already been transferred/vested to the Local Government Units pursuant to RA 7160. Some structural changes in terms of the devolution of functions related to the transfer of basic services and technology to the fishing communities have been made by virtue of RA 7160, by giving greater autonomy to local government units in the management of their aquatic resources. In this regard, a memorandum of agreement between DA and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) authorizes the devolution of fisheries regulatory functions within municipal waters, thus, the jurisdiction over the municipal waters has been transferred to the local government units concerned.

Issues and Concerns in Fisheries Management

The Philippine fisheries sector is faced with interlinked issues and problems, which include among others: the depleted fishery resources largely brought about by excessive fishing effort and open access regimes; degraded fishery habitats due to destructive fishing methods, conversion of fishery habitats into economic uses and negative impacts from land-based activities; intensified resource use competition and conflict, among fisher groups and other economic sectors; poverty among small-scale fisherfolk; post-harvest losses due to lack of infrastructure facilities (e.g., fish ports, market roads and dry/cold-storage facilities) and limited technological know-how; limited institutional capabilities from the local up to the national levels of governance; inadequate/inconsistent fisheries policies; and weak institutional partnership among government agencies, civil society organizations and private sector (BFAR, 2005).

Moreover, the implementation of fisheries co-management through the FARMCs is also faced with the problem of insufficient support for its implementation, i.e. inadequacy in the number of technical personnel and funds for full program implementation. At the local level, the recommendatory and advisory function of the FARMC somehow limits its capability to translate management initiatives from the community level into local regulations and programs if the initiatives are not supported by the Local Government Unit. This is a big challenge as well as an opportunity for the community for a more active engagement with the Local Government.

Future Directions

In order that the abovementioned concerns would be addressed, BFAR has launched programs that include provision of support services to increase fisheries production and alleviate the living conditions of the small-scale fisherfolk like Filemon. Specifically in 2008 and onwards, BFAR has committed to accelerate its efforts on aquaculture for rural development, expand seaweeds production to non-traditional areas, promote aquaculture and mariculture technologies, and implement Monitoring Control and Surveillance System and Coastal Resources Management Programs.

BFAR will also embark on new initiatives that will promote organic aquaculture, culture of high value species, deep sea mariculture parks for seaweeds, and culture of ornamental fishes. More post-harvest facilities would be established while assistance on HACCP compliance will be improved. BFAR will start capacitating the most vulnerable sector, the small-scale fisherfolk, to adapt to the changing situations caused by climate change by teaching them new skills and become more flexible. Fisheries cooperatives will be strengthened and linked with financial institutions and access markets for their products.

The 2005 Comprehensive National Fisheries Industry Development Plan of the Philippines (CNFIDP 2005) provides a comprehensive framework for promoting the optimal development and long-term sustainability of benefits derived from fisheries over the next 20 years (2006-2025), where priority projects for the small-scale fisheries sector have been identified. This includes the comprehensive education program for the FARMCs and fisherfolk organizations to enhance the capabilities of both the Local Government Units and the local communities in various facets of fisheries management. The priority projects under the CNFIDP include: (1) validation of priority use rights through municipal registration and licensing to minimize

resource use conflicts; (2) enhancement of locally managed marine areas and rehabilitation and regeneration of coastal and inland ecosystems to address the issues of habitat degradation; (3) sustainable fisheries livelihood to resolve livelihood-related concerns; (4) infrastructure and post-harvest facilities development for municipal fisheries to address the need for cold storage facilities and fish landing centers; (5) enhancement of fishery law enforcement to address concerns about weak law enforcement; and (6) rationalization of municipal fishing effort to address concerns regarding overfishing. Collectively, these priority projects are envisioned to result in the alleviation of poverty among the small-scale fisherfolk in the Philippines including the country's millions of Filemons and make the Philippine fishing industry more responsive to present and future challenges.

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