Evaluation of Community-Based Coastal Resource Management (CBCRM) and Small Fishers’ Rights to Livelihood Project in Philippines

Executive Summary

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Background

There has been growing recognition of the rapid degradation of coastal resources in the Philippines and its dire economic implications. Numerous projects and interventions, mostly donor-funded, have been implemented to identify effective strategies to address resource use issues. Such strategies are slowly being integrated into a sustainable coastal resource management (CRM) system that is gaining wider application nationwide.

Key and integral to any development effort is community participation. In the Philippines, the involvement of the community has especially proven to be an imperative in CRM. The evolution of CRM in the Philippines into a multi-sectoral effort has greatly improved implementation and success rates, but community-based approaches remain a key ingredient in many CRM endeavors.

The Community-based Coastal Resource Management (CBCRM) and Small Fishers’ Rights to Livelihood Project (“CBCRM Project” or “Project”) is generally aimed at protecting the gains achieved in CBCRM and sustaining the work for the promotion of the rights of women and men small fishers to their livelihoods. It is co-financed by Oxfam Great Britain (OGB) and Oxfam NOVIB (NOVIB) under the May 2004 - April 2007 strategic plan of OGB’s Philippine Country Programme. This strategic plan has adopted the sustainable livelihoods (SL) framework, which links rights-based interventions and vulnerability reduction to improve incomes of beneficiaries from their livelihoods.

The Project aims to strengthen community-based management capacity through the direct engagement of NGO/PO groups in the implementation of various strategic activities and advocacy work. In addition, it is anchored on the SL approach introduced as a new concept in OGB’s 2004-2007 strategic plan.

The general objective is poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods for poor coastal fishing communities in the Philippines. Specifically, the Project aims to:

- **Objective 1.** Support coastal resource management in 150 fishing communities;
- **Objective 2.** Strengthen sustainable livelihoods by establishing income-generating activities and enterprises and promoting marketing linkages;
- **Objective 3.** Promote municipal fishing in 150 coastal communities;
- **Objective 4.** Promote greater accountability of the state and pro-poor policies;
- **Objective 5.** Promote gender equity.

Project Partners include seven (7) NGO Partners (CBCRM-RC, NFR, TDC, ELAC, SIKAT, Developers Foundation, LAFCCOD), a federation of fishers’
organizations (KM), a Batangas-based municipal federation of POs (SAMMACA), and a local fisherfolk organization (DBREMO).

Developers Foundation, SAMMACA, LAFCCOD, DBREMO, ELAC, and SIKAT work at the local level in the provinces of Aklan, Batangas, Lanao del Sur, Misamis Occidental, Palawan and Zambales, respectively. At the national level, the responsible Partners are TDC, NFR, and KM. The NGO Partners were directly responsible for Project implementation in their respective areas.

As well as funding, OGB-Philippines provided technical assistance and oversight to ensure that the Partner activities were in line with the Project’s objectives, and the grant was properly utilized.

The basic approach was community-based management, which by its nature and objectives allowed the Partners a high degree of flexibility in developing and applying strategies and approaches, according to the perceived needs of the communities they serve.

2. About this Project Evaluation

This evaluation covers the Project implementation period from May 2004 to December 2006, including the original two-year term of the CBCRM Project (1 May 2004 – 30 April 2006) and part of the extension phase until 31 December 2006. It aims to provide an objective validation/affirmation of Project outcomes as reported by the Project and its Partners, a qualitative assessment of Project accomplishments against intended outcomes, and insights and lessons that will enhance and reinforce OGB’s country strategic plan.

3. Key Findings

The flexibility and diversity with which the CBCRM and Small Fishers’ Rights to Livelihood Project was conceived and implemented posed myriad challenges and opportunities for its Partner NGOs and POs. The disadvantages and shortcomings of such an approach (lack of over-all cohesiveness, differing frameworks and paradigms, weakly enforced performance standards) though, were outweighed by the following achievements of the Project and its Partners:

- Project Partners have remained in the forefront of CBCRM and achieved a fair amount of progress in the implementation of strategic approaches in CRM in their respective areas, characterized by the following:
  - More focused approach to improving local governance in the area of legislation in support of coastal habitat protection and enhancing ecosystem health in nearshore waters, two primary elements of long-term coastal resource management;
  - Since the members of coastal communities are not all full-time fishers, some land-based and agriculture activities were also undertaken - heralding the beginnings of an integrated resource
management approach which require that threats posed by the destructive activities in the uplands and lowlands be addressed as well.

- More focused implementation of specific CBCRM interventions in the project sites such as mangrove reforestation and enforcement of RA 8550. In some municipalities such as Altavas in Aklan, Candelaria in Zambales, Puerto Princesa in Palawan, Calatagan in Batangas, these continue to receive support from the municipal LGUs in the form of legislation and supplemental funds and logistics.

- A broad base of popular support for CRM through its POs and PO federations, chalking up some significant on-site successes such as the dismantling of fish cages at Subic Bay and the blocking of the expansion of a prominent businessman’s resort that would have affected the Calatagan POs’ seaweed farms and very recently, the stopping by the MFARMC of Calatagan of excavation activities of a resort company along the seashore of Sta. Ana. SAMMACA and the Sta. Ana-based PO has been waging a campaign against the resort’s development’s activities, which have encroached into the fishing community’s living and fishing areas.

- The establishment and improved management of MPAs, making it an attractive entry-point CRM activity of Project Partners, generating enthusiastic response and participation from various sectors (LGU, fisherfolk, women, youth, and students). There are sufficient indications that the MPAs will contribute to specific goals of CRM if maintained effectively.

- Increased participation of women and increasing number of women in leadership positions and critical roles (livelihood and financial management, information management, training and organizing, resource accessing, advocacy) and increased knowledge, awareness, and internalization of the women participants on the ecosystems, environmental laws, and best CRM practices.

- **Hard-won and critical milestones in national advocacy were achieved.** Another outcome of NGO and PO collaboration was the formulation of the municipal capture fisheries development plan, which highlights the issue of mariculture expansion as a major factor affecting the municipal fisheries sector. The national coalition of NGOs, however, is hampered by financial and human resource constraints and challenged with the difficulty of securing consistent full-time involvement of members.

On the international front, two Partner NGOs, KM and TDC, participated in a meeting with partners in SeaFish for Justice to formulate specific calls for country negotiators in WTO-HK and actively campaigned against the inclusion of fish in NAMA.

- **Advocacies and campaigns by Project Partners and POs generated immediate positive action and support at the municipal and barangay levels.** The proximity of the Partners and
POs to municipal and barangay decision-makers allowed them to dialogue with and engage local officials more closely, as many of the issues being advocated at the local level were framed within existing laws and so entailed only ensuring the implementation of the laws.

- SL (Sustainable Livelihood) was recognized and established as a priority strategy to reduce poverty in coastal communities but the results are at best mixed. The SL outcomes – primarily income security - targeted by the SL partners, particularly SIKAT and ELAC, still need to be reached. The SL projects encountered problems and difficulties, largely due to the inexperience of the Partner NGO and PO in enterprise development and management. Towards the end of the Project, however, at least one enterprise shows signs of a turnaround but will need to be guided and supervised more closely.

- The number of women PO members and leaders has increased largely because of the programme’s proactive policy to treat gender as a cross-cutting theme, and partly as a result of the LDPW. The notable impacts of gender mainstreaming activities were reported, namely, change in views of women who participated in the LDPW, and awareness raised by the EVAW project among the men and women in the communities and LGU. As a result of Project interventions, local officials, even those who viewed the law on women as “anti-men”, included the issue of VAW in their agenda for the community, and local health and social welfare officials agreed to launch an information campaign on the issues.

- The learning opportunities and specific capability-building activities provided by the Project have developed more knowledgeable, confident, and assertive CRM and fishers’ champions among POs in all of the project sites. There is evidence, though, and concern, that another elite group is being engendered, i.e. the handful of federation leaders who have been in the forefront of the Project for years and benefit from the exposure and learning experiences provided by the Project and Partner NGOs. This has been acknowledged by some NGO management and staff and steps are carefully being taken to correct the situation.

4. Key Recommendations

As succinctly expressed in the evaluation report of PHL 300, “there are no quick remedies to resolving poverty and resource management issues and ultimately it requires effective coordination of local, national and international efforts to achieve these goals.” Key to effective coordination is the determination of starting points where the multiple CRM stakeholders can converge and create synergy from their own strengths and efforts. The current Project
has mapped out the following starting points beyond OGB and Novib:

- Advocacy of project-supported NGOs for national fisheries policy reforms, particularly those that concern policy on reforming open access fisheries and improving the institutional environment for CRM, presents opportunities to mainstream lessons learned in the CBCRM Project into the current revision of RA 8550 or the Fisheries Code of the Philippines. **Project Partners should pursue dialogues with BFAR**, especially now that the bureau is undergoing a "rationalization" process that will change its structure and operational configuration. Such dialogue can help advance policies that highlight sustainable allocation of coastal resources to protect ecosystem goods and services, sustaining coastal livelihoods, addressing overfishing and managing fishing capacity, allocating and limiting the most appropriate use of coastal waters for mariculture, and enabling equitable distribution of benefits. In their practical applications in municipal waters, such policies should support, among others, fisher licensing such as that being initiated in the Panguil Bay project area, mariculture zoning, protection of maturing fish stocks through closed seasons and areas, exclusion of destructive fishing gears and commercial fishing operations from municipal waters, and strengthening of community stewardship instruments for mangrove forest management and MPAs.

- To protect the gains made in CBCRM it is important to:
  
  o continue to initiate dynamic discussions, linking national advocacy goals and achievements to community advocacy and actions and vice-versa, using appropriate venues and representation,
  
  o strengthen integrative mechanisms between the POs, the broader mix of stakeholders, and the LGU. Lessons from CRM initiatives elsewhere indicate that, to achieve sustainability, a CRM program must, in its first two years, establish a strong institutional commitment to provide the springboard needed for sustained CRM governance, policy reforms and CRM ordinances, and recurrent funding support.
  
  o identify local policies that would directly support activities that concretize the foundation of CRM in the communities, and strengthen local CRM institutional capacity. The application of a standard set of indicators and best practices is suggested to strengthen institutional mechanisms and establish institutional accountability of the LGUs. Such policy tools may include, among others, legislations to ensure regular allocation of government resources and personnel for CRM implementation, legal organization and LGU sanctions for a multi-disciplinary municipal coastal law enforcement team and the imposition of
more effective, issue-driven “control” mechanisms against destructive fishing gears such as push nets and Danish seines. More importantly, the Project POs should intensify advocacy for the re-allocation and assignment of community stewardship agreements for mangrove forest reforestation and management.

- pursue various pivotal recommendations generated through the NFR study that all sum up to more equitable access and privileges for small-scale fishers.

- pursue the initiatives installed by the PBRME component, through serious and consistent application of the baseline information and indicators generated by the project

- build on the information, knowledge and communication accomplishments of the CBCRM-RC and NFR, i.e. localization and popularization of issues and lessons, etc.

- redirect and expand capability-building program to focus on the expressed training needs of Partner NGOs, PO leaders and members

- **Science-based approaches must be used to link Project initiatives directly to a fisheries management strategy that is focused on enhancing recruitment of fish stocks in ecosystems under CRM management.** Over the long term, this strategy will provide the foundation for the Project objective to “promote municipal fishing in coastal communities.”

- **While the Project’s long-term CBCRM philosophy must be built on the premise that any solution to CRM issues must involve the economic upliftment of local communities, it is equally important that the project’s livelihood assistance investment and initiatives are underpinned by CRM principles and infused into project planning at the onset.** Depending on the capability and resources of project implementing partners and the determination of recipient organizations, the goal of sustainable livelihood projects needs to be aligned with the dynamic paradigms of an increasingly competitive market. Project design and resources allocated would vary significantly if the goal of livelihood development is merely to provide supplemental income, which is unlikely to have tangible impacts on CRM-related resource uses over the short term. In contrast, enterprise development (for larger profit), can be used as the vehicle for reducing fishing effort.

- **The economic viability of enterprises at the micro-level must be ensured.** At the very least, proper management and adequate technical and infrastructure support are necessary for micro-enterprises to generate a net income surplus capable of both generating returns on investments and enlarging the enterprise at
some point. **Well-coordinated assistance should come from various supporting institutions as the required inputs do not fall -- and cannot be possibly handled -- within the realm of a single entity.**

- **Capital development and self-help programs combined with a package of technical training, institutional development, proactive marketing strategies and perhaps subsidies at start-up may work far better than any intervention working alone.** Looking into the complex dimensions of local economic development, and drawing from livelihood lessons that failed, the Project’s livelihood investments for coastal communities in the future should not be limited to the development of traditional small-scale "alternative livelihood" but should attempt to broaden proven livelihood projects into micro-enterprises that are capable of expanding profit margins and employment potentials into small-scale entrepreneurial economic projects. This is typified in the development of PO-based businesses with better technical systems that aim for more stable and bigger returns.

- **The current enthusiasm and initial efforts towards gender mainstreaming must be utilized to develop strategies that would cultivate even greater involvement of women in CRM activities, especially in sustainable livelihood and enterprise development and benchmark their participation in fisheries management.** If available, the Project NGOs should identify and reanalyze data sets that can be disaggregated by sex, particularly those that involve fish capture and gleaning, livelihood generation and post-harvest activities. Such data can provide more insight on gender differences in fisheries resource use and management activities.
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