Saying no to forced labour

In communities and families, women bear the brunt of the negative impacts of men's forced labour on fishing vessels

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A recent project revealed that the exploitation of men's labour on fishing vessels is central to certain fishing practices in Asia, including forced labour and trafficking in persons. The project, Safeguarding Against and Addressing Fishers' Exploitation at Sea (SAFE Seas) was carried out by PLAN International at sites in Indonesia and the Philippines to improve understanding of what constitutes forced labour and trafficking, and how to remedy labour abuses. Women and men in fishing families were engaged in the project to help increase their ability to recognise and report labour exploitation.

Typically, work related to overcoming labour exploitation at sea does not include women but, given the serious impact of such exploitation on families and communities, this project not only recognised but also drew upon the potential of women to speak up and act against forced labour. In General Santos City and Sarangani Province (Philippines), 20 per cent of women surveyed had husbands or sons who experienced work abuse; 15 per cent revealed that they had experienced such abuse but failed to report it for fear of job loss while 5 per cent of those surveyed were not aware of what constituted abuse. The 20 per cent who had experienced labour abuse mentioned financial penalties forced on them such as the withholding of their salary, being forced to work overtime to pay off debts, and having to personally bear the cost of medical treatment for work-related accidents and injuries.

When husbands and sons experienced labour abuse at sea, women themselves experienced a range of negative impacts, such as increased stress, having to take on extra work to make ends meet and shouldering debt burdens. Women typically manage the household finances and so they tended to take the lead in borrowing money for the family, often at exorbitant rates. Further negative impacts included children having to drop out of school and girls marrying young.

Gender norms determine the roles women perform in the family, society and industry, including unpaid or underpaid productive work. Despite these strictures, women may have considerable influence at the community and local government levels, advocating for local government to act on labour violations. When women are educated on labour rights, they are better prepared to fight for these rights. It is also often the case that men returning from sea are not interested in going to meetings to address these issues.

By examining women's roles in relation to local forced fishing labour, this study revealed that the families, through the women, also need better financial services, including affordable loans, social protection programmes and the development of livelihood opportunities and skills.

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When husbands and sons experienced labour abuse at sea, women themselves experienced a range of negative impacts, such as increased stress, having to take on extra work to make ends meet and shouldering debt burdens

For a better tomorrow

Case studies in Siquijor, The Philippines, demonstrate the benefits of women's participation in the management of marine protected areas

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Women in the Philippines are taking a stand against destructive and unsustainable fishing. On the small island of Siquijor, they have begun to play an important role in the management of a few community-based marine protected areas (MPAs). Aided by the technical support of their local government and the NGO Coastal Conservation and Education Foundation, some women have been empowered to manage marine sanctuaries to the benefit of the entire community.

MPAs are a key global tool of marine conservation, and stakeholder participation is a well-acknowledged critical component of their success. Although over 1,000 MPAs now exist in the Philippines, only 20 to 30 per cent of them are effectively managed. In their intent to create collaborative management of MPAs, NGOs and government agencies have historically focused on fishermen as the primary stakeholders.

Fishermen are sometimes already members of an established Fisherfolk Organization (FO), and when the process of creating an MPA begins, the FO is pulled in to jointly manage the MPA alongside the local government. Women who glean or collect shells and urchins have traditionally not been considered 'fishers' and, therefore, FOs are mostly or entirely male-dominated. As women have been systematically excluded from the opportunity to participate in MPA management, most management teams have few or no women involved. Instead, the FO and the local government put in the time and effort to manage the MPA but also receive the monetary benefits that come from divers' user fees.

Several case studies point to the positive role of women in MPA management; however, open-water MPAs are not covered by the literature. This article explores the role and effectiveness of women's participation in open-water MPA management in the Philippines.

There are two cases in Siquijor where the local women have taken the initiative to participate in MPAs. In one location, Maite, 28 women created their own registered association. Pushed and encouraged by a local retiree, the women were the main drivers of the MPA. They collaborated with their town council and FO (in which many of their husbands were members) to establish an MPA in their local waters in 2009. In the second location, Bino-ongan, 11 women who are not members of an association or the local FO volunteered their time to assist their town council in the establishment and maintenance of an MPA. In Bino-ongan, the women reported that the local fishermen and the FO were not even interested in establishing and managing the MPA. The women have successfully assisted the town council in performing baseline ecological surveys and delineating the boundaries of the MPA with homemade buoy lines of plastic bottles.

In Maite, the women involved in the MPA are mostly non-gleaners, and range in age from 23 to 73; they primarily manage their households and run a variety of small businesses. Though burdened by many hours of unpaid domestic responsibilities, the women participate in all aspects of MPA management. They take turns guarding the MPA day and night, reprimand violators, clean up the beach, maintain the guardhouse and buoy lines, collect crown-of-thorns sea stars, and monitor the condition of

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Maite MPA management team. Though burdened by many hours of unpaid domestic responsibilities, the women participate in all aspects of MPA management

the reef by snorkelling. In comparison with a study site run by only fishermen, the women in Maite seem to have maintained better records, run a tighter budget, and displayed greater enthusiasm in sharing information with community members.

Though non-fishers, the women in both study sites were found to have an acute awareness of the state of local fisheries. Women acknowledged that the poor state of fisheries and uncertainty over their children's ability to catch fish and earn a decent livelihood in future are some of the primary reasons for their participation in the MPA. Some declared it was their duty as citizens to protect their local coral reef from destructive fishing methods. In the words of a woman from Maite: "We are the *barangay* (pioneers) who started this sanctuary. We have to preserve our sanctuary, our resources, the corals and the fish because we have so much illegal fishing in our area. So we have to make a guardhouse and a schedule of duty to fight illegal fishing. We have to protect our sanctuary for the future of our children. Maybe someday we will have many fish."

In contrast, the few fishermen in MPA management in Maite stated that they participated because they hoped to gain extra income not only from increased fish stocks but also from government projects external to the MPA, like tree planting and seaweed farming.

Though small, the Maite MPA is a popular diving site among local tourist operators and has brought US$6,000 into the community from collections of divers' fees over the past three years. Only 15 per cent of the profit is divided among all 50 members of the management team, giving each member an average of US$6 per year. This cash benefit is too small in Maite to be considered a primary incentive. However, today, the increased catch size, which many community members attribute to the MPA, is seen as benefiting the whole community.

The local government staff reports other benefits of including women in coastal resource management, such as better understanding among community members and a significant decrease in conflict. In livelihood projects, women reportedly take greater initiative, delegate tasks, take care of details, and agree to put in the most labour, leading to improved project outcomes.

There are many reasons women should be included in the process of establishing and managing protected areas. Small MPAs often include the intertidal zone, so gleaners—mostly women—who collect shells and urchins at low tide are the primary resource users and, therefore, a critical stakeholder group. They not only have special knowledge of the intertidal zone that can be used for more effective management, but gleaning is also a primary local source of food—the fish caught by men is often sold but the marine invertebrates gathered by gleaners are often consumed at the dinner table.

Further, when an MPA is established, fishermen are often able to deal with the new restrictions it imposes by putting out their boats further from the coast; gleaners, however, have limited alternate fishing grounds. Clearly, gleaners and fisherwomen are the most marginalized by MPAs and should, therefore, be considered primary stakeholders. According to MPA researchers, including women in natural resource management "increases collaboration, solidarity and conflict resolution". Conflicts over natural resources are common in the Philippines, where artisanal fishers battle daily against commercial boats and depleted fish stocks. To improve marine conservation as well as to empower women and promote gender equality, women must be systematically included in the management of MPAs.

The poor state of fisheries and uncertainty over their children's ability to catch fish and earn a decent livelihood in future are some of the primary reasons for women's participation in the MPA management in the Philippines.

Climate Trouble

A meeting in the Philippines discussed the challenge of climate change and what women can do to deal with it

This article is by **Soledad Natalia M. Dalisay** (sol.dalisay@yahoo.com), Associate Professor of the Department of Anthropology, University of the Philippines, and co-ordinator of the Office of Anti-Sexual Harassment, UP Diliman

How has climate change affected the livelihoods of fishing communities? How have women coped with the challenge? Have government initiatives helped? What can be done to counter the adverse effects of climate change?

A group of 35 women met earlier this year in the Philippines to discuss these important questions. The occasion was the National Workshop on Women in Fisheries and Climate Change, held from 9 to 11 March 2010 in Villa Alzhun Resort in Tagbilaran City, Bohol. It was a diverse group that met, representing the academic community, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as the local administration. Grassroots women leaders, mainly fishers, representing people's movements from the three major islands of the country—Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao—also took part. The group included six participants from Thailand.

During the workshop, experiences were shared and presentations were made by invited resource persons. The presentations made it clear that climate change might trigger sea-level rise, tropical cyclones and typhoons, floods, droughts, storm surges, changes in rainfall patterns and rising temperatures. The last point was already a lived reality for most participants. Fishermen were cutting their fishing trips short on account of soaring temperatures. For women, this meant diminished catches and, therefore, the compulsion to look for other sources of income. This, in turn, led to the neglect of children as well as strained family relations. Heat exposure reactions, leading to hypertension, coughs and asthma attacks, were becoming common. Increased violence, both in the family and the community, were reported.

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Participants of the workshop shared experiences and proposed strategies to deal with climate change

The presentations highlighted the gender-differentiated impact of disasters. It was pointed out that, according to statistics, more women than men drown in floods. Women, being responsible for the home, play a key role in disaster recovery but are rarely consulted when disaster risk reduction strategies are planned. Such strategies would be greatly enhanced if they took into account women's coping abilities as well as risk perception skills.

A few case studies were also presented. The case study of Cavite, for instance, revealed that flooding was occurring in areas that had never known flooding earlier, and increasingly, extreme weather events were being recorded. Two areas in Cavite—Naic and Ternate—were experiencing sea-level rise as well as coral bleaching. The usual weather calendar that fishers relied on could no longer be used because the weather had become so unpredictable. Cavite was experiencing non-seasonal rainfall. In Sorsogon, frequent typhoons, prolonged heavy rainfall, flooding and sea-level rise were being reported.

These phenomena translated into multiple problems: periods of food insecurity; increased levels of tension in the household and community; loss of property due to strong typhoons; and reduced income because of dwindling fish catches and economic and social displacement. As a result, people were being pushed further into the margins of poverty. Disease outbreaks were commonly reported, increasing the burden for women, the traditional caregivers within families.

Another case study focused on the region of Zambales, where a very strong typhoon in 2009, and the floods that followed, destroyed most of the structures built along the seashore. Houses, roads and agricultural fields were inundated. Salt water had filled the wells that supplied the community with drinking water. This meant that women had to walk long distances to fetch potable water.

Such sharing of experiences was useful for communities to craft collective strategies for climate resilience. The Thai participants at the meeting realized that the Filipino experience had been very similar to their own and that common lessons could be learnt. Strategies for mitigating climate change impacts included community-based resource management initiatives such as mangrove conservation and reforestation, creating artificial coral reefs, livelihood enhancement opportunities for women, and educational interventions. A multi-sector approach involving local organizations in partnership with academic institutions and the media was considered to be ideal.

PROFILE

Conchita S. Masin

Mother Conching, as she is popularly known, received a national award in 2007 for her exemplary service to the women's movement

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"*Coastal women, use your talents and wit to continue our cause! Women nowadays have heightened awareness about their plight. We are not stupid. Women are not only the light of their own households; they are the guiding light of their communities as well.*" - *Conchita S. Masin*

In 1997, when Conchita S. Masin and others from her family and community were evicted from their homes, they decided not to take it lying down. A group of Catholic nuns supported the displaced fisher people, giving them shelter and, most importantly, urging them to fight back and challenge their eviction. The incident marked a turning point in their lives. Conchita took the lead, organizing women along the coasts, gradually coming to the front ranks of the women's movement in the Philippines. Her deep involvement in the women's movement was formally recognized in 2007 when was given a national award for exemplary service. Yet another award, in the form of an honorific title, was given by the people and those who knew Conchita well. Mother Conching, they called her.

One of Mother Conching's most significant achievements to date has been the establishment of a Women Managed Area (WMA) within the fishing grounds in her community in Governor Generoso, Davao Oriental. Prior to the establishment of the WMA, women in her fishing community had always played supporting, background roles. They had never been involved in decision-making activities. Fishing tenure arrangements had always been framed by men, for men. The provision of priority use rights for the women in the community within a designated area for fishing was, therefore, a big step forward. This was a space of their own where they could engage freely in using and managing marine resources. The rehabilitation, reforestation and protection of the WMA were in women's hands. Mother Conching also became very active in fighting for the full implementation of the Fisheries Code. In the process, however, she acquired numerous enemies among commercial fishers.

The road Mother Conching has chosen to journey on has not been an easy one. As a member of the women fishers' association in her community, the *Agraryong Reporma Samahang kababaihan ng Pangisdaan*, she and the rest of the association members had to lobby for their rights. A big obstacle came in the form of conflicts with local government officials. But Mother Conching was vocal in her efforts. So much so that she came to the point of receiving death threats for her obstinacy and perseverance. Ignoring these, she continues to fight undeterred, for women's rights. She draws support and inspiration from people in the community. Mother Conching says she is happiest when she serves fellow women in her community. She attributes part of her success to the unwavering support she receives from her husband, whom she considers to be a "gift from God". It was not all smooth sailing, however, and their relationship went through rough times when she began her involvement in the women's movement. Eventually, things started to get better and today her husband is her most important ally.

Currently, the WMA that Mother Conching and the women in her community have laboured to build has become a model for coastal communities across the world. It conveys a simple yet powerful message. "Yes," it proclaims, "Women can!"

Milestones

Magna Carta of Women adopted in Philippines

On 14 August 2009, the President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, signed into law Republic Act 9710—the Magna Carta of Women. The Act is a comprehensive women's human rights law that seeks to eliminate discrimination against women by recognizing, protecting, fulfilling and promoting the rights of Filipino women, especially those in the marginalized sectors.

The Act is based on a substantive notion of gender equality and aims at real empowerment of women. It guarantees all rights of women enshrined in the Philippines Constitution and those rights recognized under international instruments signed and ratified by the Philippines, which are in consonance with Philippine laws. The Act spells out every woman's right to, *inter alia*: protection from all forms of violence, including those committed by the State; protection and security in times of disaster, calamities and other crisis situations; participation and representation; equal treatment before the law; and comprehensive health services and health information and education.

It also guarantees the civil, political and economic rights of women in the marginalized sectors, in particular their right to: food security and resources for food production, including equal rights in the titling of land; localized, accessible, secure and affordable housing; employment, livelihood, credit, capital and technology; skills training, and scholarships; representation and participation in policy-making or decision-making bodies in the regional, national, and international levels; access to information regarding policies on women; social protection; and recognition and preservation of cultural identity and integrity, provided that these cultural systems and practices are not discriminatory to women.

The Act defines marginalized sectors as those who belong to the basic, disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, who are mostly living in poverty and have little or no access to land and other resources, basic social and economic services such as healthcare, education, water and sanitation, employment and livelihood opportunities, housing security and the justice system. It recognizes that women fisherfolk—women engaged in fishing in municipal waters, coastal and marine areas, women workers in commercial fishing and aquaculture, vendors and processors of fish and coastal products, and subsistence producers such as shell-gatherers, managers and producers of mangrove resources—are among such marginalized groups.

The Act stresses that the State shall promote equal access to the use and management of fisheries and aquatic resources, and all the rights and benefits accruing to stakeholders in the fishing industry. It shall also ensure that equal status is given to women and men, and to women's organizations, in the issuance of stewardship or lease agreements and other fishery rights that may be granted for the use and management of coastal and aquatic resources. Further, that the State shall endeavour to provide opportunities for empowering women fishers to be involved in the control and management, not only of the catch and production of aquamarine resources, but also to engage in entrepreneurial activities that will add value to production and marketing ventures.

Most importantly, the Magna Carta asks the State to ensure women's participation in policy-making or decision-making bodies in the regional, national and international levels, including the participation of grassroots women leaders in bodies such as the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC).

The complete text of the Magna Carta of Women can be accessed at: http://www.ncrfw.gov.ph/index.php/magna-carta-of-women.

PROFILE

Gemma Gades

Gemma Gades is an active member and President of Ladies in United Movement Onward to Development (LUMOT), the Philippines

This information has been compiled from the following sources: www.lmmanetwork.org and www.icsf.net/SU/Mon/EN/88

Gemma Gades is an active leader of a local fisherfolk group protecting Hinatuan Bay. Located in the province of Surigao del Sur on the eastern side of Mindanao Island in southern Philippines, Hinatuan Bay is made up of small island ecosystems abundant with marine life. Women from Mahaba Island are part of a community group called "Ladies in United Movement Onward to Development" (LUMOT), formed to address the threats facing coastal resources – their primary source of income. The threats include fishing using compressors and fine mesh nets; the use of destructive devices and poisons; the clearing of mangrove forests for fishpond construction; siltation of seagrass beds due to limestone quarrying; and algal overgrowth due to domestic wastes. Members of LUMOT have been trained to deepen their understanding of the coastal environment and to boost their ability to contribute to the management of coastal resources.

Ka Gemma, an active member of LUMOT, became president of the organization in 1999. Later that year, the group NAMAHIN or the Alliance of Fisherfolk Organizations in Hinatuan was formed to address bay issues at the municipal level and to link different stakeholder groups. In 2000, Ka Gemma was elected President of NAMAHIN. NAMAHIN leaders are currently working with a national coalition of voluntary groups and fisherfolk federations called NGOs for Fisheries Reform (NFR) for effective policy responses on the issue of fisherfolk resettlement in Hinatuan.

Reefs in Hinatuan Bay are slowly making a comeback after years of abuse. Eight fish sanctuaries exist within the bay and are patrolled by community members. Hinatuan Bay, where efforts are on to empower women to protect their seas, is one of the few sites in the Philippines with women fish wardens. Ka Gemma patrols the sanctuaries together with the wardens. Their efforts are bearing fruit; the big fishes have returned and the coral reefs are recovering. Dynamite fishing has been stopped for nearly two years thanks to active enforcement by fisherfolk organizations, fish wardens and the maritime police.

Since its formation, LUMOT has undertaken gender mainstreaming in its activities; husbands help women establish their fish sanctuary and build the guardhouse, as well as participate in mangrove reforestation and patrolling and enforcement of the sanctuaries.

Not everyone is happy about the sanctuaries. Some fishermen argue that sanctuaries should be opened up to local fishers now that the fish is back. In October 2003, tension between supporters and opponents grew when discontented fishers from Cambatong began a petition campaign. Ka Gemma and supportive local fisherfolk continue to advocate that the sanctuaries be maintained. With the help of the non-government organization, Center for Empowerment and Resource Development (CERD), campaigns to inform the displaced fishers about the benefits of maintaining the sanctuary are being carried out to this day.

'Engendering' the fisheries industry development plan

The need to integrate gender as an analytical and planning perspective in the National Fisheries Industry Development Plan in the Philippines is being forcefully articulated by women fishers and advocates

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In the Philippines, the adoption of the term "fisherfolk" to mean both women and men who are fishers is important policy recognition of the gendered nature of the fishing industry. When the Fisheries Code was passed in 1998, following 10 years of lobbying by fisherfolk, gender was slowly being recognized as an integral element of development. At the time, the crux of the struggle was the priority use rights of small-scale fishers over the coastal waters. The specific issues and concerns of women were only to unfold in the new millennium, as NGOs took up research, consultations, training and the organizing of women fishers.

Roles in fishing communities and households are substantially shaped by gendered notions of work. "Fishing," which constitutes the actual capture of fish and is usually done further offshore, is considered to be work (since it earns income) and is regarded as a male occupation. Women are engaged in various preparatory and post-capture (marketing and processing) activities, as well as capture, both offshore (fishing with their male family members) and nearshore such as gleaning and harvesting. Despite the importance of these activities in the whole fishing cycle, these activities remain unpaid economically and unvalued socially.

The invisibility of women's roles is further aggravated by their displacement from nearshore fisheries, as mangrove areas are felled to give way to aquaculture farms throughout the country, and as tourism and industrial development encroach on women's traditional fishing grounds. Even as women participate in community-based coastal resources management, the fisheries development agenda still largely ignores the marginalization that women face, particularly women fishers without economic and political resources to participate in policy-making.

The Fisheries Code mandates the formulation of the "Comprehensive National Fisheries Industry Development Plan" (CNFIDP), which serves as the operational framework for "optimal development and long-term sustainability of benefits derived by the nation from its fisheries". However, only after a decade since the passage of the Code did consultations, initiated by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), towards formulating the CNFIDP begin. The elements of the Plan include the Philippine fisheries profile, status and issues; fisheries sector development framework; medium-term priority programmes and projects; and institutional implementation schemes. Each section deals with the specific issues of the fisheries sub-sectors, namely, municipal, commercial, aquaculture fisheries, and post-harvest.

However, in neither the process nor the formulation of the Plan, did gender as an analytical and planning perspective receive attention. The Plan was strongly biased towards industry, focusing heavily on enhancing production, while critical social elements, such as fishing communities' access to basic services or social protection were not included in the operational part of the Plan. The Plan was also silent on issues such as women's access to reproductive health services or protection against violence and abuse, common in coastal communities. Even though the Plan document

had almost been finalized, women fishers and advocates began strongly pushing for the integration of gender concerns within it. Finally, they submitted to the BFAR, the text for inclusion in the Plan document for each of the chapters, including medium-term priority programmes and projects.

To begin with, the need for recognition of women fishers' role in the local and national fishing economy was included among the nine key issues of the sector. These are: (1) depleted fishery resources; (2) degraded fishery habitats; (3) intensified resource use competition and conflict; (4) unrealized full potential of aquaculture and commercial fisheries; (5) uncompetitive products; (6) post-harvest losses; (7) limited institutional capabilities; (8) inadequate/inconsistent fisheries policies; (9) weak institutional partnerships*; and (10) lack of recognition of women's roles and contribution in fisheries development*.

In developing their proposed inclusions to the Plan, women fishers and advocates asked several questions. What gender issues are addressed in the CNFIDP? Are the roles and problems of women in the fisheries considered and integrated in the analysis of the context, problems and issues? How does the CNFIDP consider women as stakeholders in the development of the fisheries industry? What are the specific programmes that address issues and concerns of women in fisheries?

Given that the advocates believe that the empowerment of women is fundamental to gender equality, the elements submitted to the BFAR largely addressed women fishers' concerns. These included access to resources; women's effective participation in decisionmaking and planning; institutional reform; a favourable policy environment for the full integration of women in fisheries governance from local to national levels; and overall contribution to substantive changes in the quality of life of fishing households. Also proposed were awareness-raising for men and women in the different fisheries management structures and capacity building for developing and implementing gender-responsive programmes and projects. While gender equality is a long term goal, the actions to be taken at present should be based on gender equity; this means addressing impediments that women fishers face in participating and influencing institutional and social reforms.

The advocates saw to it that the Plan recognized the differential roles and status of men and women as fishers; the importance of the institutional and policy environment; and that the "gender content" was both logical and comprehensive from analysis to operational mechanisms. Thus, the proposals also included national policies and international treaties signed by the Philippine government that relate to gender equality and gender mainstreaming, which is expected to help shape the policy discourse and practical interventions relating to fisheries governance.

The text for inclusion was well received by BFAR and is considered in the final document. However, the ownership of the new elements and the implementation of the Plan itself remain a challenge.

Going ahead, an analysis of the issues in the commercial, aquaculture and post-harvest sectors still needs to be done, since women in these sectors were not reached by the women-led consultations on the CNFIDP. Essentially, a more comprehensive gender analysis in the sector is required even as women fishers and advocates continue to create and seize opportunities to engage policy makers, fisherfolk leaders, and others, including the private sector, on gender equality as an integral part of sustainable fisheries development.

"A more comprehensive gender analysis in the fisheries sector is required even as women fishers and advocates continue to create and seize opportunities to make gender equality an integral part of sustainable fisheries development."

Women as fishers: Issues and struggles

This article outlines the threats facing artisanal fisherwomen in the Philippines and their struggles to foreground gender issues

By **Maria Divina Munoz** (gonzalesiza@yahoo.com), member of Women in the Fisherfolk Movement, Philippines

In the Philippines, the fisheries sector comprises four sub-sectors: municipal (capture) fisheries, commercial (capture) fisheries, aquaculture and fish processing. The majority of women and men for whom fisheries is a source of livelihood are found in the municipal fisheries sub-sector.

Municipal fisheries refer to coastal fishing activities by means of traditional and simple fishing tools, primarily for subsistence. As such, it is similar to artisanal fisheries but would also include aquaculture workers and small-scale aquaculture producers.

Women in Philippine's coastal communities participate not only in fishing but also in pre-fishing and post-fishing activities and should, therefore, be recognized as artisanal fishers. For example, most women help their fishermen husbands prepare or repair fishing gear. After the fish is caught, women are usually the ones who sell it in the local markets, drying or smoking what is left unsold. Women also take up small-scale seaweed farming and oyster farming. While the majority of women are not active fishers, in parts of Cebu and other Visayan islands, women do go out to sea with their husbands to help with fishing.

Today, the fisheries sector in the Philippines is facing a worsening crisis related to issues of ownership and control of coastal resources. The primary issue is the open-access regime under which big players—investors in the commercial fisheries and aquaculture sub-sectors—taking advantage of the weak enforcement of fishery laws and the lack of aquaculture regulations, have come to own or control coastal resources.

Commercial fishing operators have overfished most nearshore fishing grounds while aquaculture operators have gained control of shore and foreshore areas, destroying large tracts of mangrove forests to make way for fishpond development. In the process, they have displaced artisanal fishers, many of them women, from their traditional gleaning and fishing grounds.

Another issue is the threat of increasing liberalization of fisheries trade worldwide. Tariffs have been reduced to minimum levels to increase market access for fishery products, without regard to effective fisheries and aquaculture management. In fact, reduced shrimp tariffs in markets in Japan and other developed countries have provided an incentive for the Arroyo government and local investors to promote the farming of the exotic Pacific white shrimp. But this is being done without a parallel effort to establish effective aquaculture regulations and standards to mitigate the related social and environmental costs.

Perhaps the biggest threat to coastal fisheries and to fisherfolk communities is the alarming privatization of foreshore areas, areas supposedly inalienable under the Philippine Constitution. Investors are now engaged in massive conversion and reclamation of foreshore areas, building permanent structures, not only wharfs and jetties but also hotels, shopping malls and factories, where mangroves formerly stood. Bulacan's "Aqua City" and the Masinloc Coastal Economic Zone are just two examples.

Fisherwomen in general face multiple burdens. Besides looking after domestic chores and children's wellbeing, they supplement their husband's fish catch and add to the family's daily food by gleaning for fish in mangrove areas. The conversion of mangrove areas to aquaculture has meant less food on the family table. A woman fisher, thus, experiences more acutely the impact of economic dislocation and resource degradation caused by commercial aquaculture.

Some fisherwomen have been absorbed as labourers in aquaculture. Typically, in this case, a woman would help her husband, the fishpond caretaker. While the husband would receive a small share of the profit at the end of a

production cycle spanning several months, the woman's labour would remain unpaid. In a few coastal areas, there are small-scale fish farms providing subsistence for fishing families. In such cases, the woman and her husband work as co-producers and the meagre profits are regarded as family income to be managed by the woman.

However, as mentioned, the biggest threat in recent years has been the convergence of commercial and industrial investments in coastal areas, uprooting and dislocating fishing communities. This new form of "development aggression"—as it is now known—adds to the burden of fisherwomen who must help their families cope with the impact of dislocation.

In 2002, the Kilusang Mangingisda (Fisherfolk Movement) was formed to address the worsening crisis in fisheries. A coalition of 14 national and sub-national fisherfolk organizations, Kilusang Mangingisda (KM) seeks greater equity in property arrangements, participatory and accountable governance and the responsible use of fishery resources. Although KM is mainly engaged in advocacy campaigns, it also carries out research on fisheries.

From the start, women have been active participants in KM and its member federations. An initial question was whether a separate women's group was necessary to address gender-specific issues. The women finally decided to remain in KM, but banded together to form a committee called Kababaihan sa Kilusang Mangingisda (Women in the Fisherfolk Movement).

Kababaihan sa Kilusang Mangingisda (KKM) was formed around the same time that the Banilad Declaration came out in September 2003. This declaration outlined KM's views on the Philippine fisheries situation and the threats facing artisanal fisheries.

One of KM's major campaigns was a 1,000 km-long caravan campaign to highlight the fishing community's opposition to the government's aquaculture programme—Aquaculture for Rural Development (ARD)—and other forms of development aggression in coastal areas. The caravan passed through fisheries and aquaculture producing provinces in Luzon Island, from north to south, stopping in every major coastal community to educate local artisanal fishers about the adverse impacts of commercial and industrial investments in coastal areas. A woman from KKM was present at every meeting to discuss the gender-specific impacts of development aggression.

This campaign was followed by direct action, in which women from KKM also participated, involving the dismantling of fish cages constructed illegally outside designated zones.

The fisherfolk coalition also campaigned actively on the issues of trade and subsidy. At the national level, KM launched a countrywide conference of artisanal fishers in May 2005 to discuss the impacts of fisheries trade liberalization in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and that of fisheries subsidies on the sustainability of artisanal fisheries. The conference provided a forum for Philippine's artisanal fishers to develop a position supporting 'sustainable fisheries and trade'. KKM provided the gender-specific dimensions to this position.

At the regional level, KM engaged with other artisanal fisher organizations in the Southeast Asia Fish for Justice (SEAFish) network, a regional advocacy network of fisherfolk organizations from countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. At a conference in Jakarta in September 2005, SEAFish members formulated a common position on fisheries trade and subsidies, which was subsequently called the Jakarta Declaration.

The Jakarta Declaration called for the differential treatment of artisanal fisheries with respect to tariff elimination. It argued that public investments (or subsidies) are necessary for the sustainable development of artisanal fisheries. However, it called for the elimination of most subsidies in developed fishing nations on the grounds that these create trade distortions and lead to overcapacity and overfishing.

The SEAFish position set forth in the Jakarta Declaration was taken forward by member organizations in their respective countries. During the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in December 2005, SEAFish members made a presentation before WTO officials. They also conducted a fluvial parade in Hong Kong to dramatize the plight of artisanal fisheries under the WTO regime.

International activities go hand in hand with local ones. Lobbying with governments is necessary at both the local and national level for accessing funds allocated for gender and development programmes, for social services, for the resettlement of displaced fisherfolk and for fish processing and marketing activities.

KKM has succeeded in bringing gender issues to the fore within the KM coalition. At the village level, it conducts awareness-raising among women on fisheries. It also tries to expand the ranks of organized women. Fisherwomen are made aware that they are capable not only of domestic chores, but also of work in the economic and social spheres.

The assertion of rights of the individual woman begins at the village level. Women's organizations have, therefore, been formed in villages and these provide much-needed support to individual fisherwomen.

"A woman fisher experiences more acutely the impact of economic dislocation and resource degradation."

Asia/ Philippines

Women in Fisheries, Policy

Palihan, A Policy Journal on Gender Issues and Women in the Philippines Fisheries Sector, Volume I, 2006, published by NGOs for Fisheries Reform in partnership with Foundation for the Philippine Environment

This review of the first article in this volume is by Neena Koshy, Programme Associate, ICSF

Palihan, the journal of NGOs for Fisheries Reform (NFR) in the Philippines, aims to provide relevant policy research, in aid of legislation, that can assist local and national policy institutions in developing a more responsive Fisheries Code in the country. Volume 1, 2006 of the journal focuses on "Gender Issues and Women in the Fisheries Sector in the Philippines".

There are six papers in this volume. The first, titled "Looking for Women in Fisheries Policies and Programmes: A Review of Literature on Women in the Fisheries Sector in the Philippines", by Amelia Marie Dasig-Salazar and Shiela Marie Dasig, is reviewed here. This paper is a contribution towards the mandatory review of the Philippines Fisheries Code of 1998 (Republic Act (RA) 8550). The Fisheries Code is the national legislation that provides for the development, management and conservation of fisheries and aquatic resources. Considered a landmark piece of legislation for fisherfolk, it has not, however, provided enough space for women to raise their particular issues and assert their claims to the benefits that the law has to offer.

The review is in three parts: (i) policies and literature pertaining to women in general; (ii) policies and plans related to fisheries and how gender is incorporated in them; and (iii) local development plans and gender plans in the service municipalities of the Community Empowerment and Resource Development (CERD) Inc., in the island municipality of Almagro and Tinambacan District in Western Samar.

The paper concludes with recommendations on how policies and programmes can better take into account the interests of women in the fisheries sector.

The paper notes that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979, and the Beijing Declaration can be used as a basis for crafting laws that address gender-specific concerns. The Philippines, as early as 1975, responded to international calls to uphold women's rights through the establishment of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW). The Philippine Constitution, which integrated the principles of gender equality, was enacted in 1987. The Constitution states: "The State recognizes the role of women in nation-building, and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of men and women".

Soon after, the Republic Act 7192 (RA 7192), known as the Women in Development and Nation-building Act of 1992, was enacted. This landmark legislation strengthened women's position as full and equal partners of men in development and nation-building. RA 7192, among other things, gives the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), with the assistance of NCRFW, the mandate to ensure that the different government departments and agencies formulate and implement development programmes for women, and ensure their participation in the entire programme development process.

Executive Order 273 approved and adopted the Philippine Plan for Gender-responsive Development (PPGD) for 1995-2025. This is the government's perspective framework for pursuing full equality and development, and the primary reference for integrating gender dimensions in the long-term development plan. It is also notable that the Gender and Development (GAD) Budget Policy requires agencies or local government units (LGUs) to set aside a minimum of five per cent of their annual appropriation to be used for priority programmes, projects and activities designed to address gender issues and women's concerns, in accordance with RA 7192.

Given the strong legal basis, nationally and internationally, the paper explores whether, in reality, issues and concerns of women have been addressed in different policies and programmes in the fisheries sector. The papers notes that the two most important

national laws for fisheries, the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) (RA 8435) and the Philippine Fisheries Code (RA 8550), which became effective in 1998, lacked a clear gender perspective. For example, only a few of the Administrative Orders issued under the above laws included provisions on women in their formulation. AFMA, in particular, lacks a gender perspective, and women are mentioned only in passing, even though the Act is said to be the cornerstone of the government policy for poverty alleviation in the agriculture and fisheries sector. The role women perform in the whole production process is not recognized. There is no consideration of the importance of their participation in policy formulation, or even the need to consult them in matters that directly affect them, such as credit policies, marketing and training programmes.

As compared to AFMA, the Fisheries Code, the paper notes, has a more appropriate gender perspective, in that there are efforts to provide for more participation of women in the fisheries, particularly in the Fisheries and Resource Management Councils (FARMCs). However, several provisions still need to be revised to ensure gender fairness, such as to provide for women's representation in higher bodies, for example, at the national level NFARMC.

The paper concludes with some recommendations to ensure gender fairness in the fisheries sector, particularly in policy formulation. There is need to advocate for changes in fisheries law and for frameworks for making development plans gender-sensitive.

Copies of the journal can be ordered through the NFR website, www.nfrphil.org

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Asia/Philippines

"It's the same"

These excerpts are from a recent study "Food Insecurity and Gender Inequality in Property Rights: The Case of Market Access for Philippine Seaweeds" by Hazel Arandez-Tanchuling and Marina Fe B. Durano

The report was originally published in *Lundayan*, Vol.13, No.1, 2006, published by the Tambuyog Development Centre (*http://www.tambuyog.org/news_details.asp?news_id=390*)

Fish is a Filipino's primary source of animal protein, and the Philippines reports an annual per capita consumption of 36 kg. This paper seeks to understand the linkages between food security and trade liberalization.

The 2003 Census of Agriculture and Fisheries of the Philippines' National Statistics Office estimates the fisherfolk population at 1.8 mn, and fishing communities are found to be among the poorest in the country. Since the 1990s, however, several fishing communities have shifted from subsistence fishing and fishing for local consumption towards seaweed production. This growing trend has been encouraged by the aggressive promotion of seaweed farming by the Philippines' Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to exploit its export revenue potential. This trend is similar to the shift from subsistence crops to cash crops in agriculture. In the fisheries sector, seaweeds are considered cash commodities.

The paper takes a deeper look at this production shift, which forms part of the larger export-led development strategy of the Philippines. The first section introduces the seaweed industry in the Philippines and shows how active the Philippine government has been in promoting the shift from municipal fishing to seaweed production. The second section discusses poverty in fishing communities, which forces fishing households to explore the options offered by the government. The shift towards seaweed production is part of the government's poverty alleviation programme and is consistent with export-oriented development. The third section, covering the Calatagan case study, analyzes the impact of the shift from fishing to seaweed production and identifies some dilemmas. Trade liberalization, in combination with aggressive government promotion, is expected to increase the incentives to shift away from municipal fishing. The lessons that can be drawn from the early stages of the shift in production can be useful for future policymaking.

Some edited excerpts from the study follow:

Impact of the Introduction of Seaweed Farming to Coastal Communities (The Calatagan Case Study)

In this section, a case study of a shift from fishing to seaweed production is presented. Researchers visited a town located south of Metro Manila, where the government has been actively promoting seaweed production in coastal communities. Small seaweed cultivators, local government officials, a trader and officials of the local fisherfolk organization—the *Samahan ng Maliliit ng Mangingisda ng Calatagan* (SAMMACA or Organization of Small Fishers of Calatagan) were interviewed.

Common Resource Use Conflicts

Since coastal areas are common resources, competition in usage arises periodically. Seaweed farmers compete with fisherfolk, prawn hatcheries, and even shipping and boat transport companies for use of the coastline. The management of these conflicts becomes crucial not only for the success of seaweed production as part of a growth strategy but also for other productive activities involving the use of common resources in coastal areas. A rational zoning system that allocates the use of common resources becomes an important governance strategy for the local government units (LGUs).

One of the first instances of conflict along the shoreline is between the seaweed producers and the fisherfolk. Fishers find it difficult to manoeuvre their boats in the areas where there is a high concentration of seaweed. This was a major problem faced by the fisherfolk in Barangay Uno during the boom in seaweed cultivation in the area. Seaweed rafts and other infrastructure block the passage from the shoreline to the sea. The use of nets is limited because the fish habitats are inside the seaweed farms and using nets will destroy the seaweeds. Repeated water thumping with the *timbog*, a fishing implement

used to round up fish into the net, affects the seaweeds. Seaweed farms are safe places for fish, allowing stocks to regenerate. With seaweed farming becoming the priority, fishers have to wait for the seaweed harvest season to catch fish, and they thus become subject to the seasonal cycle of seaweed farming. There have been instances when irate fishers would set adrift seaweed rafts as a form of revenge against some seaweed farmers. Mang Junior of SAMMACA is urging the LGU to limit the space available for seaweed farming so that fishers are not marginalized. Indeed, the low cost of the permit (PHP220 or US$4.4) for 20,000 sq m for seaweed farming is an indicator that the LGU does not want to regulate seaweed farming in its area.

The growth of seaweeds is sensitive to water quality, and pollution is a specific problem in Calatagan. Periodically, the residues from a prawn hatchery in Gulod have affected not only seaweed harvests but also all marine life in the area. Recently, seaweed farmers and fishers from Barangay Uno and Barangay Dos formed a coalition to raise their concerns to their LGUs about the pollution caused by the large prawn farms in their *barangay*s.

Seaweed cultivators in Barangay Dos face eviction problems with the Foreshore Lease Agreements awarded by the LGU to tourist resorts. In addition, Barangay Dos is expanding the pier to accommodate roll-on, roll-off (RoRo) boats going to and from the island of Mindoro. Once the port becomes operational, seaweed cultivators in the area will have to find alternative cultivation sites. The pollution from increased boat traffic will be harmful to seaweed growth. Oil slicks from ships passing the South China Sea, which faces Calatagan, have occasionally caused problems in the seaweed farms.

Although, at this point, use-conflict of fisheries is still manageable, there is no guarantee that this will continue to be the case once seaweed areas increase after aggressive government promotion.

Production Shifts and Cultural Rigidities

Policywise, there are no impediments towards women participating in seaweed cultivation. User rights are given to both men and women as long as they reside in Calatagan. Yet no woman has applied for a seaweed production permit. This is very

interesting in itself. Studies on the impact of trade liberalization on women in agriculture indicate that women are unable to benefit from shifts towards cash cropping because they do not have rights to own land, as in several African countries. This cannot be the case for Calatagan. No prior private ownership by an individual of the coastal area, whether male or female, was established. With the implementation of the permit system, which gave the holder private usufruct rights for designated coastal areas, it was the men who claimed the rights since none of the women applied for a permit. Thus, the result is that women are not in a position to benefit from seaweed production, except through their relationships with their husbands who have the usufruct rights.

Women do not consider themselves engaged in productive activities when undertaking tasks required of seaweed production. Rather, women consider their labour in the trade as extensions of their household work. They only provide supplemental labour. Since women's work is seen as tied to household work, it is not surprising that women have not applied for a seaweed production permit. These women think that permits for seaweed production are in a realm outside of their socially designated authority.

All the women interviewed in Barangay Dos do not see seaweed cultivation as an added burden, although they admit that seaweed cultivation takes time away from household duties and child rearing. The women

are involved in practically all areas of seaweed production, particularly when their farm is close to the shore. They are involved in the preparation of materials, planting, especially during low tide, and harvesting. In one day, they can prepare up to 25 kg of seedlings for planting, which can fill up half a raft. One respondent, Aling Tinding, said that she usually sets aside all her Saturdays to attend to her seaweed farm, alongside her family.

The women do not see any difference in work hours with the change from fishing to seaweed cultivation. They all said, *"Pareho lang"* ("It's the same."). Thus, in terms of work hours, the women do not see any improvement. They were also involved in the capture and marketing of the harvests. The same tasks remain today as the women continue to gather seashells and other marine products along the shoreline for household consumption and sales.

All the women are grateful to the seaweed industry. They say that if not for the seaweeds, they would not have been able to build concrete houses, send their children to school and eat meat. The increase in their family income has provided more room for managing the household budget, but only during the harvest season.

The management of the household budget is, however, limited to those areas dealing with household consumption. Decisions over seaweed production remain with the men. How much of household income is to be allocated for seaweed production is decided by the men. Mang Nilo, for instance, secures an amount sufficient to buy gin, and leaves the rest of the earnings to his wife. More importantly, he also decides how much money should be set aside for the seaweed farm.

This division of labour indicates that women are tasked with socially reproductive activities, such as food security for the household. Although incomes may have risen, the rise is not sufficient to ease the women's burden of providing for the family. Women act as default providers of food when the lean season arrives. Although the well-being of the women has improved because of higher incomes, their work responsibilities remain the same. Women continue to have to perform the roles expected of, and imposed on, them by society.

Concluding Remarks

Perhaps the most important lesson from the case study is how the shift from fishing in a common resource area, such as the coastal area, towards seaweed farming allowed men to gain property rights, while the women did not. Before the shift, both shared the property rights of the common areas with the rest of the community. The permit system imposed by the local government unit was meant to manage conflicts over the use of common community resources. Instead, the unintended consequence was to increase gender inequality in property rights.

The shift towards seaweed farming has not been complete in the coastal communities in Calatagan. The main barrier to entry is the size of capital needed to start the business. In order to pursue this activity, many seaweed producing households enter into sharecropping or contract-growing arrangements that leave them tied to their financiers in a cycle of debt. Seaweed cultivation is also very labour-intensive because the seaweed is sensitive to its environment, whether it is pollution from competing activities, an increase in seawater temperature during summer months, or the monsoon season. It is probably more time-intensive than fishing, requiring the construction of temporary shelters over the farm areas in order to undertake 24-hour surveillance, especially when there are weather changes.

Although the rise in incomes has been recognized by seaweed farming households, its variability needs to be highlighted. The seasonality in income forces these households to borrow money during lean months. The quality of food also follows this seasonality, with fresh meat and luxury food items available just after the harvest, while processed and canned foods become the main food source during the latter part of the gestation period as well as the monsoon season. As those responsible for food security, women ensure that food is available through careful budgeting, gathering of marine products from the shore, and cultivation of fruits and vegetables in their backyards. Occasionally, the men will catch fish from the seaweed farm. Overall, food security is not consistently assured, despite the higher incomes; at the same time, the work burden of women has not been relieved.

Increased market access for seaweed products raises the incentives for export producers to urge

BFAR and the LGU partners to support the increase in supply of seaweeds. It can be expected that export promotion programmes will coincide with increased seaweed seedling distribution and seaweed production technical assistance, and support to convince fishing households and communities to change their production activities. The distribution of gains is disproportionate, as the experience of Calatagan shows. The production shift does not guarantee food security and has increased gender inequality in property rights.

[This project was jointly implemented by the International Gender and Trade Network-Asia, and Tambuyog, a non-governmental organization in the Philippines doing community-based coastal resource management, research and advocacy of coastal/ fishery issues and community property rights.]

For further information contact: info@tambuyog.org

News/Philippines

Devastating oil spill

The oil spill from the ship of the Sunshine Maritime Development Corporation (SMDC), which sank on 11 August, south of Guimaras, as it was transporting more than 2 mn litres of bunker oil for the Petron Corporation, is devastating the livelihood of thousands of fisherfolk

This write-up is from the website of Kilusang Mangingisda, a coalition of five national fisherfolk federations in the Philippines (*http://www.fisherfolkmovement.org/*)

The oil spill that recently occurred off the coast of Guimaras will destroy and affect the livelihoods of some 8,000 fisherfolk living in the coastal fishing communities of Nueva Valencia, Jordan and Buenavista and several islands off the coast of Guimaras Island, according to Kilusang Mangingisda chair, Ruperto Aleroza.

"It is with sadness and rage that we heard the news that an oil spill occurred in the Visayan region last week. No amount of dole-outs and financial contributions will make up for the devastation that the oil spill has wrought, and its effects will be felt in the loss of livelihoods and the displacement of thousands of fisherfolk living in the coastal communities," he said.

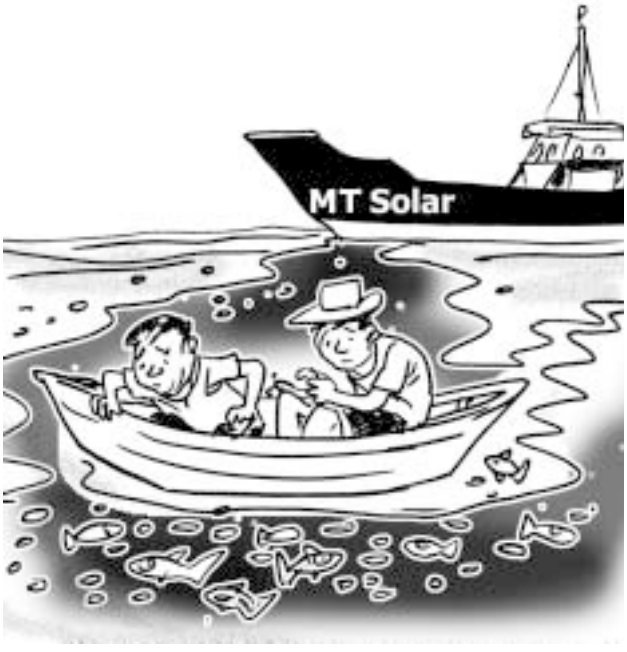
The oil spill has also affected the other coastal towns of Villadolid, Bago City, Pontevedra and Hinigaran in Negros province, and will further threaten the coastal towns of Oton, Tigbauan, Guimbal, Leganes, Zarraga and Dumangas in Panay. Likewise, the spill could also affect the northern coastal towns of Enrique, Manapla and Victorias in Negros, and Barotac Nuevo and Banate in Panay because of the proximity of the spill to some of the richest mangrove areas in the Visayas.

The oil spill, the second to hit the country in a year, could cause massive pollution in violation of Republic Act No. 9275 or the Clean Water Act. The oil tanker chartered by Petron, *M/T Solar I*, was carrying 2.4 mn litres of oil when it sank off the coast of Guimaras.

Apart from the severe ecological damage, the spill could threaten the economy of Guimaras, which was once one of the poorest provinces in the Visayas. "Fishing is the major source of livelihood for the people of Guimaras, which was recently taken out of the list of the poorest provinces by the National Statistical Co-ordination Board (NSCB) because of the resurgence of its local economy and tourism. Now the province would go back to being a backwater region once again because of the damage wrought by the spill," lamented Aleroza.

Data from the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) cites Iloilo City as having the highest municipal marine production at 67,885 tonnes annually, followed by Negros Occidental province, with 35,260 tonnes, and Guimaras, with 3,266 tonnes in 2005. Fisher leaders from Kilusang Mangingisda fear the daily fish catch in municipal fishing will suffer a drastic drop in figures as the region braces itself for the ill effects that the oil spill has wrought.

Kilusang Mangingisda would send a team to Guimaras to conduct a study on the gravity of the damage as well as to get video footage, and talk with local partner fisherfolk organizations in the area. The group is also studying the possibility of filing damages against



Petron for the economic and ecological destruction it has caused to the thousands of fisherfolk in Guimaras, once it concludes its fact-finding report.

"The rich biodiversity of the Visayan Strait was severely compromised by the laxity of laws by the national government and equally, by the wanton disregard of shipping regulations by huge corporations like Petron. The consequence is wholesale devastation of mangrove and marine resources. Surely the answer shouldn't be the thousands of fisherfolk commissioned by Petron to clean up the spill in coastal communities. For a fisherfolk community, there is nothing more difficult than to leave their traditional fishing ground," said Aleroza.

Added Aleroza: "Ultimately, the real losers in all of this will be the lowly fishermen struggling mightily to contain the spill. They work until sundown scooping up the gooey sludge that the vessel caused. They will go home with just enough money in hand to feed their families and survive the day but not for long. No one addresses the long-term economic damage to the thousands of fisherfolk and their families living in coastal communities in the Visayas."

Film / Philippines

Selling Songs of Leyte

An award-winning documentary tells the tales of the dried fish vendors in Leyte, Philippines, who sell their wares to the rhythm of the songs they sing

Tacloban City (15 October)—*Selling Songs of Leyte*, a 14-minute documentary on the dried fish vendors in Leyte who sell their wares to the rhythm of the songs they sing, won the Best Foreign Short Documentary in the recently held New York International Independent Film and Video Festival. The documentary was made by Eli Africa, 41, who lives in San Pablo, California and whose mother is from Alangalang, Leyte and whose father is from Nueva Ecija.

The festival, the largest of its kind in the world, is held several times a year in different cities of the United States, including New York, Miami and Los Angeles. It is covered by national and international media and popular among struggling but promising independent filmmakers.

Eli revealed that the idea for the video came by accident, when he heard about these vendors from Leyte who sold dried fish by singing to their customers. He was so intrigued that he asked his niece to investigate. With the information from his niece, he flew to Tacloban, visiting towns like Palo, Tanauan and Carigara during *tabo* or market day, filming and interviewing the singing vendors.

Eli said that he learned that the dried fish vendors of Leyte sang because it helped them keep track of how many fish they had sold. They also claimed their singing attracted customers.

Little is known about how and when the tradition started. Most of the townspeople in North Leyte are not even aware of the dried fish vendors who sing. Afrika believes it could be related to the rich musical heritage of the Leyte-Samar region.

With more vendors selling fish, and fewer of them singing, the dried fish vendors of Leyte who sang to sell their wares is a dying breed. Thanks to the love of country of a Filipino who was born and lives in California, this dying tradition will now continue to live and be known by future generations.

Encouraged by the positive response to his *Selling Songs of Leyte*, even from non-Filipinos, Eli wants to make more films that capture the Filipino experience

and culture. Already, he is toying with the idea of making a documentary on the "Tree of Life". What deters him from doing so is the lack of logistics support.

This piece is based on a Philippines Information Agency (PIA) press release.

Asia/ Philippines

Voices from the field

These are stories of three women, part of community-based coastal resources management groups in the Philippines, who met at a recent workshop organized with the objective of enhancing women's roles in these groups.

by Nalini Nayak, a member of ICSF

Betty looks so little and frail. She giggles like a little girl and one thinks she is just a student. But Betty is 31 years old, a mother of three and the only woman chairperson of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Council (FARMC) in her region. These FARMCs were created in 1998-90 after the passing of the Fisheries Code that was lobbied for by several fishworker organizations. The Code stipulates that 15 km of inshore waters should be reserved for the artisanal fishers, where no destructive fishing will take place. The FARMC is mandated to manage these 'municipal waters', as it is called. Betty explains:

> The FARMC is composed of 17 members, with the Mayor as the chairperson. There are other *ex-officio* members like the municipal development officer, the agricultural officer, etc. There are 11 representatives of the fisherfolk, one representative of the private sector and one professional. Of the 11 fisherfolk, four are women. I was elected as acting Chairperson in 1998 and the original term was for three years, which was later extended without elections. This was the decision of the Mayor, who supports the fisherfolk. It is actually the municipal development officer who opposes us. He once put me to shame at a monthly meeting when we were passing an ordinance. We had worked out all the details but he opposed us making some technical objections and treating me like an illiterate, and so I cried. But we got it through all the same and this ordinance became the model for other municipalities in the Tayabas Bay. The three provinces of Batangas, Quezon and Marindukue then created an integrated FARMC because of the common fishing grounds of the communities of this area.
>
> There are several committees in the FARMC looking after subjects like security, education, conservation, etc. I have to participate in all these committees, besides doing paper work and also going to the field. So it is almost a full-time job for which I am paid only 500 pesos a month (US$1=50 pesos). There are 10 of us on the Fisheries Law Enforcement Team. When we travel, we get per diems of 200 pesos. Our municipality is not so rich, but when there was an NGO in the area that supported our work, we got some more travel and training allowance.

All this work in committees and in the public field was new to me because I was brought up in a simple family, remaining aloof from people. My father was a fisherman and all of us eight children and mother went out to fish and to vend fish. Alongside, I studied and completed the first year at the Polytechnic at the University of the Philippines, for which I had secured a scholarship. But, as there was no money for the food expenses, my mother called me back as the family could not afford it. Reluctantly, I came home and became a worker at the day care centre and got married at the age of 21. I have three children now.

The initial experience in the committee and then participation in the Asian Social Institute training programme gave me more skills. Later, I also participated in a training programme organized by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to become a fish examiner, that is, to certify whether fish is legally or illegally caught. I was the only woman among 30 participants and only 20 of us passed the course.

My husband has been very supportive and lets me freely engage in this work. In fact, it is because he encouraged me that I entered this field. He is a longline fisherman and has a 3-m boat with a 30-hp engine. Nowadays, when we women take steps in the community, some men call us 'Gabriella' (the name of a feminist organization in the Philippines). But we want to do what is right and we all want to serve our community. I am not interested in politics. I only want justice for my community.

Glo comes from Tinambaac in the *barangay* of Bagacay. Together with some of her colleagues, like Rose, Glo has been very active in building up the women in fisheries organization in their area. She tells her story:

I am a mother of three children. In my earlier days, I went with my husband to collect crabs, which we sold to the middlewomen. When my children grew older, I worked in the local crèche and preschool. That was eight years ago. When my husband became a member of Bikis Lakas, the fisherman's organization, I attended their meetings and got to know about the problems of our fishery, the causes for depletion, and I became very active and vocal about the need to stop illegal fishing in order to safeguard our fishery.

The fishermen encouraged me to stand for election in the *barangay* (local government unit) so that I could lobby there and get official support to apprehend illegal fishers. So I started to canvas votes for myself and I told women that if they voted for me I would provide free childcare for their children. Many of the women already knew me as I also taught several of them how to recycle the plastic bags as part of the zero-waste programme in my area. I was elected in June 2000. I was the only women of the seven elected members on the *barangay* council and the only one representing fishers. I realized that none of the others knew anything about the fisheries and it was very difficult to convince them about the issues.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in a training programme organized by Betty and Vir of the Asian Social Institute, and I got a good idea about how to work in the community and also how to organize for our rights. So when I returned, I not only began to organize other women with Rosa and a few others who also attended the training, but I also learnt about the Fisheries Code and understood that this was a tool in my hand. So I took a copy of the Code to the *barangay* and asked the others to read it, and we understood that we could implement the Code by issuing Ordinances in the *barangay*, and this is what we did. We set down rules and also demarcated the area where trawling and dynamite could not be used. We also decided on the punishment—fines for different crimes. So this helped us to apprehend the illegal fishers.

I was very active in the patrols as we women could handle the apprehension better than the men

who would get into quarrels. We also received 40 per cent of the fines when we apprehended the illegal fishers. But since we women do not patrol at night, we felt these illegal fishers sometimes operated at night. So we got the media to highlight the problem and, as a result, this is now very reduced.

One of the big problems that I face is that the *barangay* captain (president) is always trying to put me down and does not encourage me. It is only because most of the other men support me and because he knows that I have the support of women in the community, that he has to control himself, and I can go ahead.

We are now around 120 women in our organization, meeting in groups of 30 once a week. We do a lot of awareness-raising, especially related to conservation of the environment, guarding of the sanctuary, regeneration of the mangroves, etc. We have also started some alternate livelihood programmes and we have helped women with loans to start small cottage industries, like adding value to the fish and other food products and starting a piggery. For this, we are supported by the NGO called CARD that helps us with savings and credit.

> Through this, we also have an accident and emergency insurance programme. In our own women's organization, we also have a fund to which all the members contribute five pesos a week. We are trying to get our organization accredited so that we can be recognized for assistance by government programmes.

Glo has three of her own children. She fulfilled her election promise of free childcare by continuing to work voluntarily in the crèche as she got an allowance as a council member. She also got the *barangay* to open another childcare centre in the community.

Wilima lives in Dalig, Cardona, on the banks of the Laguna Lake—a very steep bank that is densely populated too. On this bank, she and her 30-odd women friends have managed to put up a little tin-cum-bamboo shed, which is the centre of their women's group called Bulaklak. Wilima's story:

> I was always inspired by the older fishermen who fought for the conservation of the lake and the passing of the Fisheries Code. (Wilima referred to Koni who was a wise, committed and charismatic fisherman leader). When I participated in the seminars organized by CALARIS, our fishermen's federation, I also realized that I was a part of the problem, destroying the lake by contaminating it. So some of us women took the initiative to clean up the lake, but later when I participated in the women's trainings organized by the Family Centre, I got more ideas, skills and courage to go ahead.
>
> Our group of 30 women meets regularly. We continue to raise awareness about the contamination of the lake and we also have cleaning drives. As we save one peso a day, we now have a kitty of 2,290 pesos. In the initial stages, we ran a store with grains that was subsidized by the government. This was a good programme that all the women benefited from. But when the government changed, this supply was stopped. More recently, our fishermen leaders organized a training programme for us through BFAR, where we learned to do all kinds of fish processing. The products are very good. There is also a good market. But we produce some of the products only on order. We want to build up a regular market by networking with different women's groups.
>
> Earlier, our husbands did not want us to get to work collectively, but later they realized that their incomes are dwindling and we cannot make ends meet in the home. So, many of our men now do the housework, while we go out to the market. Our men go to fish at night or in the early mornings and since we now sell our fish directly in the market, we manage to bypass the middlemen.Coming together as a group has helped us fight our poverty. We know our efforts are small but we do not have great ambitions. Some of us now have small fish pens where we just let the *bangus* (milk fish) grow without feeding. Most of us vend fish and some of us also do the processing. We hope that we will be able to build a strong network of women so that together we can fight this process of marginalization.

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FROM ASIA/ Philippines

Fisherwomen as researchers

A research project proves to be a fascinating learning process

by Cornelie Quist, Research Adviser for the CB-CRM Programme of Pipuli, Philippines, and member of ICSF

After several years of preparatory awareness building and organizing work, fishing communities and the supporting NGO, Pipuli, decided that they were ready to take up the management of the 2279 hectares covering Danao Bay (Misamiz Occidental in Northern Mindanao). By that time, every *barangay* (village) around the bay had a local fisher organization, which, besides addressing local needs, together formed a Resource Management Council (RMC), which is the officially recognized representative body of the fisher community to undertake the resource management of the Danao Bay. Various resource management initiatives had been organized, such as the establishment of a fish sanctuary, a ban period for fishing, a ban on destructive fishing methods such as dynamite and poison, and mangrove rehabilitation.

Until then, women had been practically invisible in the resource management initiatives. Women had participated in these initiatives, but mostly as supporters and not as initiators. There were no women in the leadership of the organization and women's special interests as resource users were practically not recognized, leave alone addressed. The NGO, while working with the communities, had already observed this gender-imbalance and had begun organizing work among the women. They had started with leadership training for women and gender sensitivity training for the local leaders and their wives. Women were encouraged not only to give voluntary support, but also to speak out their specific problems and needs in the resource management initiatives. This resulted in women coming forward in their roles of shellfish gleaners, fish-trap operators and mangrove harvesters.

Now, at the threshold of taking up the management of the Danao Bay, the leaders of the fisher organizations and the supporting NGO realized that until now, the resource management initiatives had never been assessed with the community. Plans had been made and projects designed mostly based on assumptions or on the (technical) views of the NGO and also on the problems and needs of the most active members of the fisher organization. To be sure of a broadly-supported and effective management plan, they were in need of more insights about the resource users. They required more factual data about their socioeconomic background, their resource-use practices and dependency, and their perceptions about resource management. They also wanted to know what their experiences with the resource management initiatives and the fisher organization were so far.

In mid-1998, the leaders of the organization, some active fisherwomen, the supporting NGO , myself (research adviser) and a colleague (gender adviser), gathered to prepare the research, which we called the Resource Users Profile of the Danao Bay. We had decided to make it a community-based research, which is to be understood as involving the community in all stages of the research, from defining the research question, and collection of data, up to the final analysis. The approach is process-oriented and, therefore, needs time and intensive monitoring, but yields interesting insights and, moreover, it generally has an awareness-building and mobilizing effect on the community.

During the first session with this preparatory group, we organized a workshop where all could familiarize themselves through various exercises with what research is and how to define a research question. The formulation of the actual research question led to the first exciting discussion. It appeared that the leaders (men) had a rather limited definition of a resource user. In their eyes, resource users were first and foremost fish harvesters—who were mostly men—and that the data collection should focus on these. This implied that other resource users, such as shell gleaners, mangrove harvesters and those involved in pre- and post-harvest activities—all activities where women were to be found—would be left out from the research. The women participants were encouraged to give their views on who a resource user is and, after a lively discussion, the men indeed broadened their definition.

In order to collect solid baseline data, it was decided to choose the survey as research methodology. The formulation of the questionnaire showed again how important the involvement of the community leaders and women was. They pointed out issues, problems and views that would have been overlooked by the NGO, which had a different perspective. The women

were of great help in making the questionnaire gender-sensitive, meaning that the concerns of the women as resource users were addressed as well. The women also pointed out that the resources are not only valued commercially in the community, but also considered for their non-cash value, such as food for the family, and that they were also used as an exchange product. This preparatory phase of the research was already a fascinating learning process for all.

The next step was to select and train research volunteers in the community. It was decided that we would select only women research volunteers, because women were seen as more approachable and better listeners than men. After we made a profile of the research volunteer, the leaders of the organization and the NGO went to look around in the community. More than 29 curious and enthusiastic women of all ages came for our training session. Their motivation and commitment was great and this made them good learners. And we also learned a lot from them, because after they pre-tested the questionnaire , they gave us very valuable feedback that enabled us to make important improvements.

When the first batch of filled-in questionnaires came in, we found out that it was mostly men who had been interviewed, despite our instructions to interview in every household, both the husband and the wife. During our assessment meeting with the research volunteers, we were confronted with rather persistent gender biases, as they told us that women were just housewives and, therefore, did not need to be interviewed. They also said that many women did not want to be interviewed and had told them that it was sufficient to interview their husband only. We encouraged them to go back to the households and interview the women too.

When the preliminary processing of data showed that women were very much involved in resource use—it was even revealed that 21 per cent of the women respondents were actually engaged in fish capture—and that women's knowledge about the state of the resources and ideas about resource management were as good as that of men, the last barriers to interviewing women were finally taken away. So, again, we had an exciting step in the learning process.

As said earlier, community-based research also has an impact on the mobilization of the community. After we had presented the initial findings to the community, not only did more people join the organization, but the organization also adjusted its strategy based on the feedback from the community. And moreover, many of the women research volunteers became activists, advocating the concerns of the women as well.