



ICM Solutions

Toward Ecotourism Development in Basyaw Cove, Guimaras, Philippines: Planning and Management by a People's Organization in Cooperation with Development Partners

- With the assistance of, and in partnership with various government and donor agencies, local communities of Guimaras Province, Philippines, are successfully being engaged to overcome the challenges of environmental degradation, enabling them to propose, execute, and manage community-based programs of environmental protection and conservation.
- One particular people's organization is the *Katilingban sang Magagmay nga Mangingisda sa Dolores* (KAMAMADO). Comprised of marginal fisher folks, it has established a track record in successfully developing and implementing conservation projects with a variety of partners. This has led to additional opportunities.
- The KAMAMADO formulated the Basyaw Cove Development Plan, a key component of which details the development of an ecotourism park in the area. The plan is currently being rolled out and has garnered support from the local government, private sector, and international development agencies.



Context

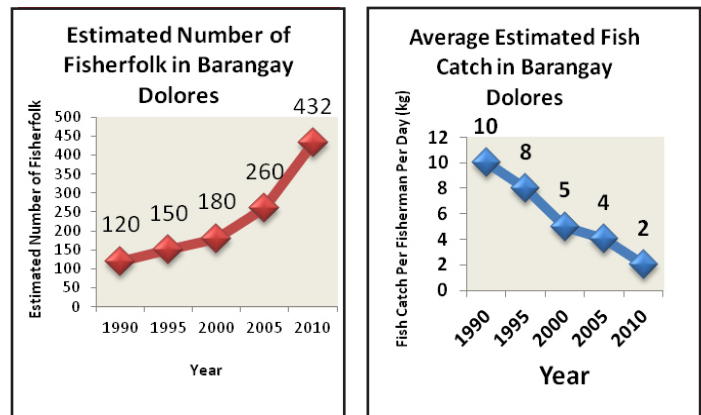
The island province of Guimaras is the youngest and smallest of the six component provinces of the Western Visayas region in the Philippines. Guimaras is composed of five coastal municipalities: Jordan (the provincial capital), Buenavista, Nueva Valencia, Sibunag, and San Lorenzo.

Known as the “mango country,” Guimaras Island has 8,000 ha of mango orchards managed by corporations and individual growers. The province is also endowed with fishing grounds rich in marine biodiversity, and boasts of white-sand beaches and diving spots. In fact, Guimaras Island has been proclaimed as the “island to watch” due to the huge potential of its pristine natural beauty.

Yet many people in its coastal communities are living at just about subsistence level.

Case in point is the fisherfolks living in the vicinity of Basyaw Cove in Barangay Dolores, Nueva Valencia. Residents have been complaining about the continued decline in the quantity of their catch from the seas, which is their primary source of livelihood (fig. 1). The decline in marine resources can be attributed to overfishing and illegal fishing as well as habitat destruction and degradation. Aside from a 2006 oil spill in Guimaras that destroyed a number of mangrove areas, mangroves were being illegally cut or harvested not only for fuel and

Figure 1. Socioeconomic condition of Dolores, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras.



BOX 1. BASYAW COVE BIODIVERSITY.

- The mangroves are mostly *Avicennia* and *Rhizophora* totaling 4-5 ha prevalent inside the Basyaw Cove. In the Baseline Biophysical Survey conducted, mangroves found comprised of 19 species of true mangroves belonging to four families and six genera.
- The highly endemic mangrove, and a highly favored bonsai gardening material, the *Pemphis acidula* needs protection from overharvesting.
- The mangroves in Basyaw Cove serve as nursery ground for all kinds of fish and shellfish. There are 13 species of fishes, 8 species of shells, 4 species of crabs, and various size and quantity of unidentified shrimp species.



- The inventory of plants and terrestrial faunal species identified more than 100 species of plants, 21 species of birds, 2 species of lizards, and 1 mammal species.



charcoal making, but also as attractive and highly favored bonsai gardening material that commands high market prices. Areas cleared of mangroves were subsequently converted into fishponds, which destroyed the area's ecological balance.

Basyaw Cove's mangroves serve as nursery ground for all kinds of fish and shellfish, which are a primary source of income for the 304 households in Barangay Dolores (**Box 1**). In addition to being home to a variety of wildlife, Basyaw Cove is also an excellent mariculture area, including mud-crab fattening and culturing of high-value fisheries. The natural barriers of small islets, joined by land bridges that are underwater during high tide, protect the cove from strong waves and storm surges.

Solutions

KAMAMADO formulated the Basyaw Cove Development Plan highlighting the Basyaw Cove as an ecotourism park. The development of Basyaw Cove was planned and initiated based on available capacities and resources. The following steps were taken by the group to achieve support for their Plan from government and non-government stakeholders.

Align activities with the opportunities set by national and provincial agenda

According to the Philippines' National Ecotourism Strategy and Action Plan (NESAP) 2013-2022, the potential market size for ecotourism in the Philippines is in the range of 1,251,293 to 14,176,500 ecotourists. It said the potential maximum earnings from ecotourism could reach PhP 157 billion by 2016.

Basyaw Cove has rich coral and seagrass beds that can serve as potential eco-tour destination because of its diversity and aesthetic beauty (**Box 1**). Other eco-tour sites in the area include the 18th century Guisi Lighthouse (considered a heritage site), white beach fronts and caves.

Examining the potential of tourism in the area, the data on the number of tourists visiting Guimaras has shown an increasing trend from 2000 to 2010 (fig. 2). Likewise, tourist arrival data in 2011 (taken from the data of the beach resorts) showed people's growing interest in exploring the area, with peaks in the months of April-May and November, during school vacation (fig. 3). Thus, KAMAMADO recognized the opportunity and developed their plan as an integral part of government policy and objectives for ecotourism development.

BOX 2. THE KAMAMADO EXPERIENCE.

Registered in 1999, the Katilingban sang Magagmay nga Mangingisda sa Dolores (KAMAMADO), translated as "organization of small fishers in Dolores", aimed to create a strong and viable organization for the conservation, protection, and rehabilitation of coastal resources that would improve the socioeconomic conditions of small-scale fishers in the area.

Specifically, it aspires to: (1) protect, conserve, and rehabilitate the coastal and fishery resources, and promote public awareness toward this end; (2) maintain the ecological balance of the coastal fishing areas; and (3) increase fish production by at least 100% from the present level.



Plan to succeed in stages

As a first step in the planning process, KAMAMADO developed the Coastal Fishery Resources Recovery Program (CFRRP) in order to detail the problems and issues related to fisheries. The document contained a work plan and financial strategy with activities and budget allocation. The document was approved by the local municipality, and established the capacity of KAMAMADO in the eyes of the local government.

To complement the CFRRP, KAMAMADO then formulated the Basyaw Cove Development Plan in 2007 highlighting the Basyaw Cove as an ecotourism park. In the plan, the development of Basyaw Cove was divided into four phases:

- Phase 1 – Acquisition of authority for KAMAMADO to reforest the Basyaw Cove
- Phase 2 – Reforestation of Basyaw Cove
- Phase 3 – Installation/Introduction of tourism facilities and services
- Phase 4 – Introduction of livelihood projects

The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as “the responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education. It is about uniting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel.”

A resolution was passed that same year by Dolores Barangay LGU endorsing to the Governor, Province of Guimaras through the Tourism Officer, the proposed Basyaw Cove Reforestation and Development Plan, for inclusion in the Provincial Tourism Development Plan. The resolution was then referred to the Municipality of Nueva Valencia, and was included in their Coastal Resource Management Plan (CRMP). Finally, the plan was adopted by the Sangguniang Bayan of the municipality. Further, Basyaw Cove was designated as an ecotourism site which was further strengthened by the passage of Ordinance No. 02, Series of 2014 declaring Barangay Dolores Marine and Fish Haven wherein Basyaw Cove is located.

Create the opportunities for capacity development with partners

The Philippines’ ecotourism development strategy and action plan (NESAP) is premised “on the concerted efforts of concerned stakeholders including government, private sector, civil society, and the host communities.”

Consistent with this condition is the healthy and strong linkages and cooperation among the Guimaras provincial government, Nueva Valencia municipal government, donor agencies, NGOs, and most especially, the host community as represented by the KAMAMADO.

Figure 2. Number of tourists to Guimaras (2000-2010).

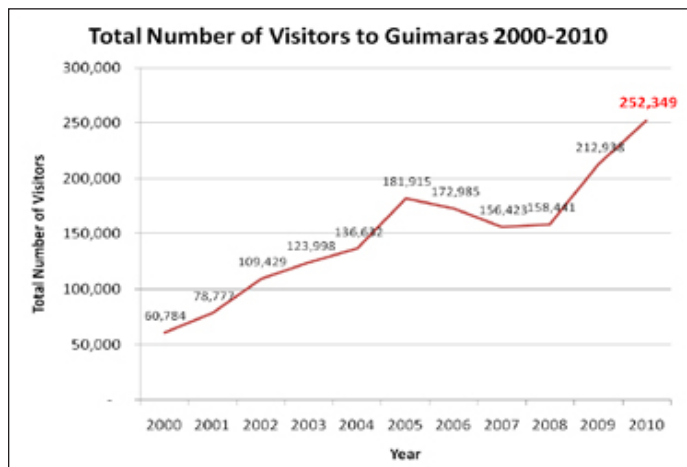
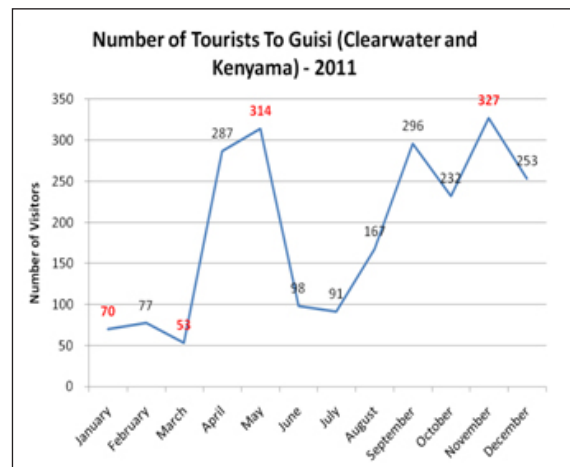


Figure 3. Visitors to Guisi Lighthouse (2011).



The NESAP 2013-2022 likewise highlighted the importance of developing and strengthening partnerships as one of its key strategies: “The communities and development partners are the key players in ecotourism development and this strategy aims to facilitate the engagement of partnerships among communities, entrepreneurs, government, and funding sources.”

The partnerships in Guimaras for ecotourism particularly the Community-based Rural Tourism (CBRT) is based on the programs and approaches identified by the Province of Guimaras which involve the people’s organizations (POs), NGOs, the Barangay Development Councils (BDCs), National Government Agencies with assistance of Municipal LGUs and the provincial government. Every partner has specific roles to play. For example, in Guisi Heritage Site CBRT in Barangay Dolores, KAMAMADO is in-charge of Tour Group Guides.



KAMAMADO outpost within the Basyaw Cove where members generally meet.

Results

I. Building partnerships in conservation

KAMAMADO was successful in actively seeking out relevant government agencies to assist and capacitate them. Its strong commitment as an organization and capability to successfully undertake programs made the organization the rational choice for partnerships with various agencies.

Over the years, the members and the organization as a whole amassed skills and strength from local experiences and several interagency partnerships. The following undertakings arranged according to order of chronology describes the evolution of the association as it becomes a conspicuous pro-environment figure in Nueva Valencia.

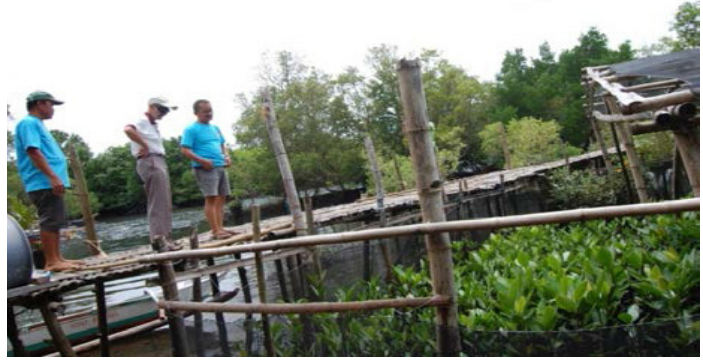
National Government. In 2009, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) issued a Community-based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) to KAMAMADO for 25 years, renewable for another 25 years. Recognizing the leadership of KAMAMADO for mangrove rehabilitation, DENR granted them a CBFM-CARP Livelihood Development Project in addition to the CBFM area. The Tabuaya Cove, about 1.5 km north of the Basyaw Cove, along with other reforestation areas, provided a venue for learning the proper reforestation techniques which resulted in higher survival rates in succeeding activities.

The Coastal Resource Management Framework (CRMF), and Annual Work Plan (June 2009–May 2010) was formulated under the guidance of the DENR-Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) Guimaras. The proposed activities for the management and utilization of Basyaw Cove within 25 years was incorporated in the CRMF. This document, together with the Annual Work Plan, is used by KAMAMADO as a guide in implementing the mangrove rehabilitation and utilization of the cove.

Bantay Gubat, a local forest watchers group, was trained on mangrove laws to enhance coastal forest protection. The DENR trained 18 KAMAMADO members, 6 Dolores Barangay Officials, and 1 staff of the Office of the Municipal Agricultural Services.

In June 2012, the DENR PENRO Guimaras granted KAMAMADO a CBFM-CARP Livelihood Development Project which aims to expand mangrove rehabilitation in Basyaw Cove outside of the 6.4 ha CBFM area of KAMAMADO. Another component of the project was milkfish culture in floating cages as a means of generating income for the organization while implementing rehabilitation in Basyaw Cove. The project had a total fund of PhP 388,000 and was implemented for a year.

The mangrove cover has improved. KAMAMADO continues with mangrove planting and protecting with rotating personnel assigned to maintain and guard the mangrove plantation. There is an increase in marine organisms (fish, shellfish, crustaceans, etc.) which resulted in increase in fish catch and income of fisherfolks. Beach resorts continue to operate and new ones were established to accommodate guests and tourists visiting the area.



Mangrove Nursery near Basyaw.

Provincial Government. Pending the release of order of finality from Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) on the reversal of FLA (Fishpond Lease Agreement), a mangrove reforestation project was jointly undertaken with the support from the Provincial Government of Guimaras through the Guimaras Environment and Natural Resources Office (GENRO). Defying the risk that the CBFMA would not be granted, but relying on the good will and nobility of environmental restoration without breaking any laws, KAMAMADO planted 20,000 seedlings of *Rhizophora mucronata* in the cove. The activity boosted the morale of the members as it was one of the major conservation efforts in the cove since the petition for reversal of the FLA.

Through the Guimaras ICM Program, KAMAMADO became a recipient of Global Environment Facility (GEF) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Small Grants Programme (SGP) and implemented the Mangrove Rehabilitation and Development of Basyaw Cove beginning February 2012. The project's various components led to the following outputs: (1) capacity building for effective project and mangrove management; (2) development and conduct of information and education campaigns; (3) mangrove reforestation; (4) ecological solid waste management; (5) enforcement of environmental laws and policies development; and (6) livelihood projects.

Municipal Government. The Municipal Local Government Unit (MLGU) of Nueva Valencia and KAMAMADO co-manage all activities conducted in Basyaw Cove as part of the municipal water and is included in the Municipal Five-Year Coastal Resource Management Plan. Through the Office of Municipal Agricultural Services, MLGU funded in the amount of PhP 150,000 the milkfish cage culture establishment in Basyaw Cove as a livelihood project of KAMAMADO, assisted in the development and distribution of IEC materials such as comics, brochures, and leaflets; and pushed for the passage of policies to protect and conserve the Basyaw Cove that were submitted to the Municipal FARMC for endorsement to the Sangguniang Bayan for approval.

NGOs. In 2008, the Community-based Mangrove Rehabilitation Program (CMRP) was launched by the Zoological Society of London and identified the KAMAMADO as the qualified PO to implement the project in Basyaw Cove. It is a four-year project aimed at reforesting the 6.4 ha of mangroves in Basyaw Cove.

The CMRP strategies include active community participation, increasing capabilities of stakeholders, collaboration, and networking. The project has four phases to be implemented in four years. During phase I, preliminary activities such as stakeholders' orientation and PO formation were undertaken. In phase 2, KAMAMADO as identified PO was strengthened through leadership training. A survey of economic activities in the site was also done, as well as monitoring and maintenance of established mangrove nursery. In phase 3, they conducted regular meetings and advocacy activities. They were also prepared to undertake income generating activities; after formulating the Coastal Resource Management framework, the CBFMA was awarded. And in the last phase of the project, KAMAMADO exhibited functional organization and continue to conduct meetings and advocacy. They established financial and administrative systems strictly adhered to by the members.

This project has already been completed (2008-2012), but livelihood programs, which would augment income but are environment-friendly, need to be introduced to allow multiple activities to coexist in the area.

Though the current project activity of the KAMAMADO focuses more on protection and rehabilitation of Basyaw Cove, the Zoological Society of London as their partner NGO plays a significant role in fostering the capacity of the KAMAMADO as to technical skills and as an organization. This partnership ultimately could lead them to their long-term goal of turning Basyaw into an ecotourism park. They are able to establish linkage to other partners with Line Government Agencies (LGA), local government units (LGUs) and other groups (e.g., UPV and SEAFDEC) with similar undertakings in order to assist them.

2. Successful activities after the adoption of the plan

Capacity Development. Various trainings were attended by the officers and members such as Orientation Training on Mangrove Laws and Policies, Mangrove Ecology Training, Project Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation (PIME) Training, Bantay Gubat Training, On-the-job training on Financial Systems Operation, Tour Guiding and Exposure Visit to Sagay, Negros Occidental, which capacitated the members in all project implementation and other undertakings.

Establishment and Maintenance of Mangrove Nursery and Replanting of Mangroves. The KAMAMADO mangrove nursery measures 8m x 12m and is made of light materials. It can hold as many as 5,000 *Rhizophora spp.* propagules at a given time. The propagules are grown to a minimum height of one meter before planting. The seedlings are utilized in mangrove planting and later in replacement planting activities.

Using the seedlings from the mangrove nursery, replanting was done periodically by KAMAMADO in plantation areas with mortality. This ensures success of the mangrove reforestation activity. The improving mangrove cover increased the services offered by ecotourism wherein boating, bird watching and site seeing are among the attractions.

Becoming part of a marine protected area. Seventeen hectares of Basyaw Cove mangrove area are now under the Barangay Dolores Marine and Fish Haven, a newly declared 56.51-ha marine protected area (MPA) in the Municipality of Nueva Valencia as per Municipal Ordinance No. 02, Series of 2014. The MPA was established with the assistance of the Zoological Society of London. A patrol boat will be turned over pending a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with MLGU stipulating the provision of Nueva Valencia Municipal Government for maintenance and operating cost and crew for patrolling within the municipal waters of Nueva Valencia, particularly in areas of Barangay Dolores Marine and Fish Haven.

Savings Mobilization Fund. KAMAMADO has developed the Community Savings Credit Association (ComSCA). Now in its 4th annual cycle, the system involves purchasing a share in the ComSCA, which is equivalent to PhP 50/share (about US\$ 1). A member can borrow thrice the amount of the total share purchased. The loan is payable in three months with ten percent interest. A five percent surcharge is imposed when the loan is not paid within three months. After a year, the shareholders decide where and how the allocated budget is used for development of structures in Basyaw Cove as an ecotourism site. This system has provided benefits as it made available extra funds in the education of children, for fishing activities and for other livelihood activities. POs from other areas in the Philippines, including Capiz, Bohol and Cebu have visited and observed the ComSCA best practice. Other fund sources include: the collection of Social Fund (PhP10/week/member); and the collection of penalties during scheduled meetings (PhP20 every absence, and PhP10 every tardiness).



Lessons Learned

The active participation of local communities is key. It is prudent to involve the participation of the host communities as they are considered a key, if not the most significant stakeholder, in the process. The challenges of environmental degradation and ecological imbalance are logically closest both to their hearts and gut, and they are best suited among the stakeholders to assume the lead role in implementing development projects at the grassroots level. Of primary consideration is sustainability, driven by strong motivation from sense of ownership of these projects.

Effective cooperation with government and development partners can be sustained. The case of Basyaw Cove and the active involvement of KAMAMADO is a clear testament to the vital elements of successful partnerships and institutional setups. It shows that a strong, active and organized coastal community with a clear environmental advocacy and commitment can secure the trust and optimize the support of local governments and partners, as well as help facilitate on-the-ground implementation of activities for improvements in social, economic, and environmental well-being of coastal communities.

Capacity building of Basyaw Cove and KAMAMADO members resulted in the success of ecotourism. Through the trainings and exposure visits, KAMAMADO officers and members increased their capacity in project management and enhanced the strong linkages with government agencies (local and national), funding institutions and NGOs. They became fully aware and responsive to environmental concerns specifically related to coastal resources management. Despite meagre funds, their “*bayanihan*” (collaborative) spirit resulted in continued construction of facilities in Basyaw Cove as an ecotourism site. Through their institutionalized law enforcement activities for environmental protection and savings mobilization system, they have somehow alleviated their socioeconomic condition whereby they were able to send their children to college.

With the capacity of KAMAMADO in sustaining their efforts in CRM and working towards ecotourism development, and continued collaboration with other stakeholders, the community’s vision of becoming a full pledged ecotourism site in the future will be attained.

As KAMAMADO continue to be partner in CRM and ecotourism activities with other stakeholders, their experience and best practices are serving as a model in the establishment and management of Tan-Luc MPA in Nueva Valencia and Balcon MPA in Jordan and La Paz Women’s Group.

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