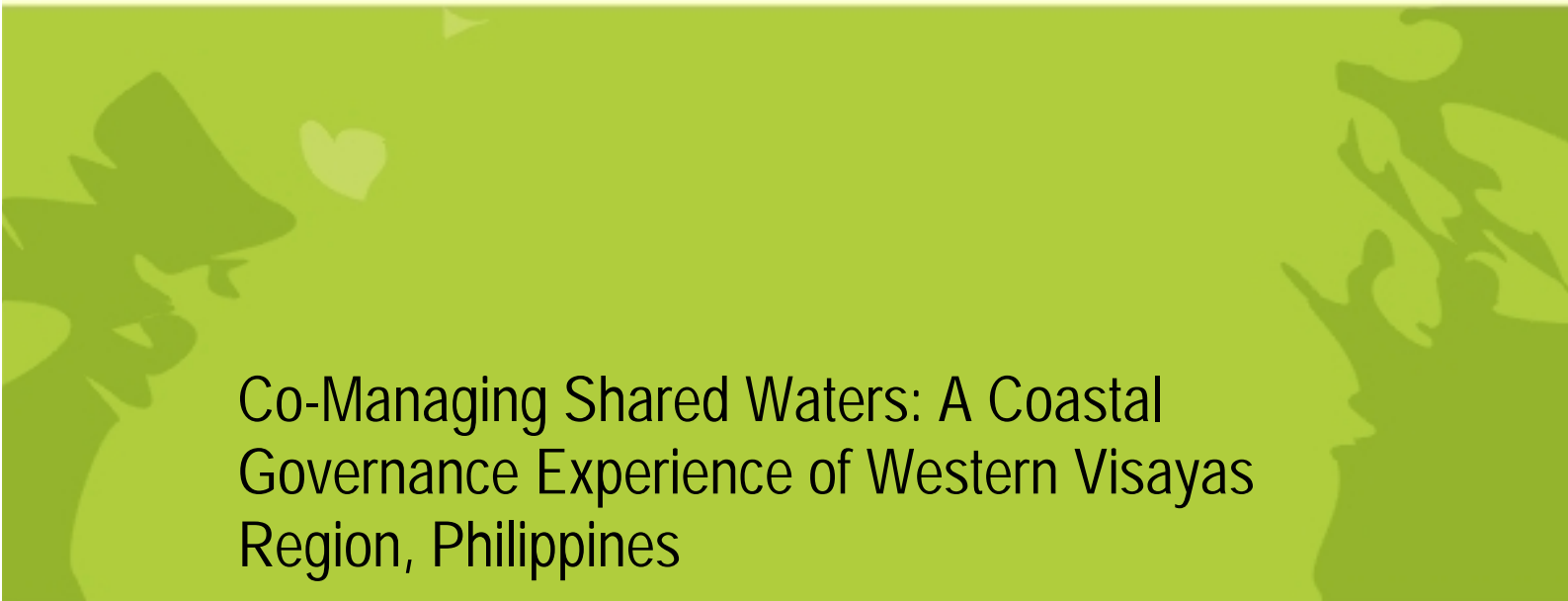


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Co-Managing Shared Waters: A Coastal Governance Experience of Western Visayas Region, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Coastal ecosystems in the Philippines are under stress from the combined effects of human overexploitation and habitat destruction. In recent years, the concept of an integrated approach to coastal resource management has been adopted to address this.

This new paradigm, generally described as co-management, makes use of the participation of the different sectors (e.g. government, community) in the management process.

The passage of the Local Government Code (RA 7160) of the Philippines provided for the optimal institutional setting of fisheries co-management in the country. The Code provides that local government units (LGUs) may group themselves and coordinate their efforts for purposes beneficial to them. Thus, Coastal Resource Management Councils (CRMCs) were created as a formal partnership arrangement among LGUs.

CRMCs are multi-sectoral in nature with inter-LGU partnerships and different resource-sharing schemes. This is based on the premise that complex problems in coastal areas do not respect jurisdictional boundaries and can only be addressed in a meaningful way through collaboration with the different sectors involved and empowerment of the community.

This paper will present the experiences of the different CRMCs in Western Visayas Region, Philippines and how the different LGUs surrounding a bay area have joined together to responsibly manage their common resource. Success stories or “best practice” strategy of the CRMCs will also be highlighted for possible replication in other coastal communities.

Key words: Fisheries co-management; coastal resource management councils (CRMCs)

INTRODUCTION

As a maritime nation, the Philippines' economy is highly dependent on the productivity of its coastal environment. The country has 7,100 islands and 18,000 kilometers of shoreline. More than 60% of its population lives in the coastal zone and almost all major cities are coastal. However, despite of its importance to Filipinos, coastal ecosystems in the Philippines are under stress. This can be attributed to the combined impacts of human overexploitation, physical disturbance, pollution, sedimentation and general neglect [1].

In recent years, the concept of an integrated approach to coastal resource management (CRM) has been adopted by development workers to address the problem. This new paradigm, generally described as co-management, makes use of the participation of national government agencies (NGAs), non-

government organizations (NGOs), and people's organizations (POs) in the management process [2, 3, 4].

The Philippines appears to provide an optimal institutional setting for fisheries co-management [5] with the passage of the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act 7160) decentralizing government functions to local government units (LGUs). Specifically, Section 33 of this Code provides that local government units (LGUs) may group themselves, consolidate and coordinate their efforts, services and resources for purposes commonly beneficial to them. In line with this, Section 76 of the Fisheries Code (Republic Act 8550) also promotes an "integrated management" concept among LGUs surrounding a common resource (e.g. bays, gulfs, lakes) by creating an Integrated Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Councils (IFARMCs).

These policies gave rise to the co-management approach in the country which is multi-sectoral in nature, and called for inter-LGU participation and resource sharing-schemes. This is based on the fact that environmental problems transcend jurisdictional boundaries. Thus, inter- LGU alliances that seek to address common problems faced by neighbouring coastal communities created the Coastal Resource Management Councils (CRMCs).

This paper will discuss the experiences of the five CRMCs in Western Visayas Region in the Philippines, the different institutional arrangement involved in managing a common resource, and the responsibility- and resource-sharing scheme of the member-LGUs.

COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COUNCILS (CRMCs)

Most commonly, recognition of a resource management problem triggers co-management. Governments have turned to co-management as a means of responding to a management crisis and sometimes to an opportunity [3]. In the case of CRMCs, conflicts on municipal water^a boundaries, difficulty in fisheries law enforcement, and inadequate resources for coastal resource management are the common factors that prompted the different municipalities bordering a common water resource to jointly manage it. Instead of making the resource as an area of conflict for these neighbouring LGUs, they have agreed to form a partnership. Thus a structure has been created that will specifically address the complex problems they share and will facilitate the management process. This formal structure is usually called a Coastal Resource Management Council or CRMCs. Mayors of each member-municipality signs a Memorandum of Agreement thereby agreeing to share the responsibility of managing and developing their common fishing grounds, and committing their resources for the operation of the CRMC. Generally, these CRMCs are registered with the Philippines' Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)^b thereby giving it a legal entity and institutionalizing it.

Profile of the CRMCs

As of 2004, there are five (5) actively operating CRMCs in Western Visayas, a region in Central Philippines (Figure 1), namely: Banate Bay Resource Management Council, Inc. (BBRMCI); Kabankalan, Ilog, Himamaylan – Integrated Coastal Area Management Council, Inc. (KAHIL-ICAMCI); Libertad, Pandan, Sebaste and Culasi Bay Wide Management Council (LIPASECU); Northern Negros Aquatic Resources Management Advisory Council (NNARMAC); and Pilar Bay Management Council (PBMC).

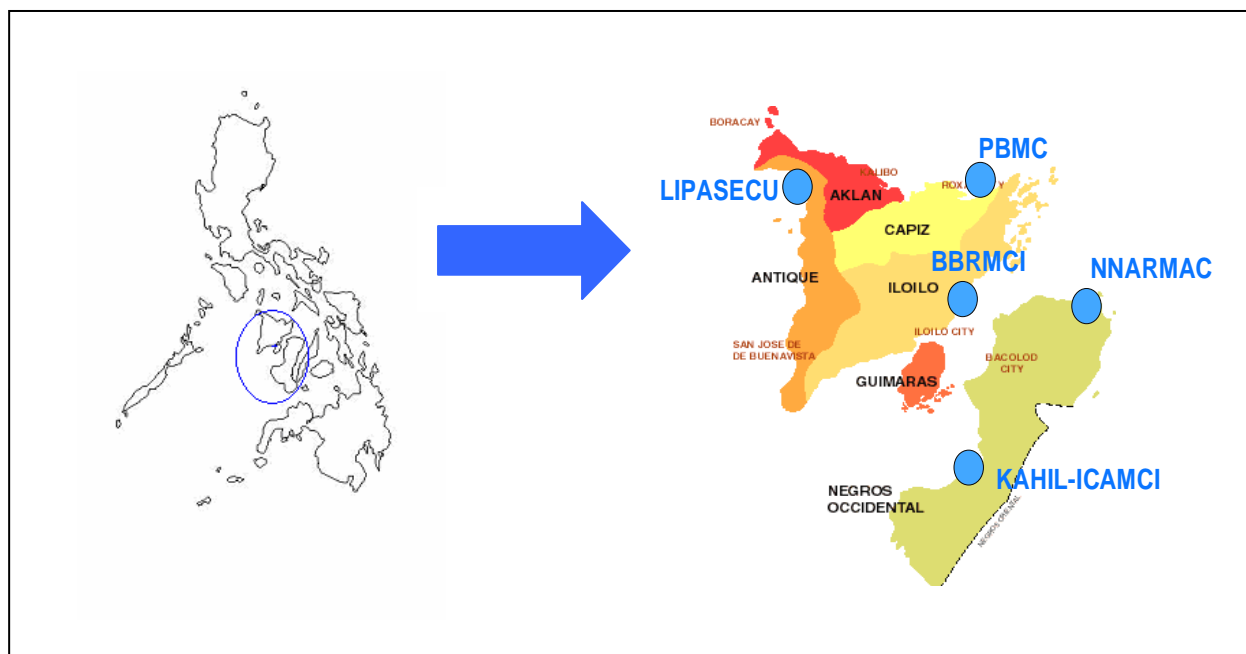


Table 1. Profile of the five CRMCs

CRMC	Common resource	Year organized/ Initiator	Number of member-LGUs	Estimated number of fisherfolk involved
BBRMCI	Banate Bay	1996/LGU	4	1,500
KAHIL-ICAMCI	Ilog Bay	1997/LGU	3	2,700
LIPASECU	Pandan Bay	1997/NGO	4	2,200
NNARMAC	Tanon Strait/ Visayan Sea	2000/LGU	9	17,000
PBMC	Pilar Bay	1997/LGU	4	3,000

Institutional arrangements

Complex issues in coastal resource management can be best addressed through partnership and collaboration with the different stakeholders involved with it. All of the five CRMCs has multi-sectoral composition and brings together the divergent efforts of the different stakeholders. Table 2 shows the different sectors involved in the management and operation of the five CRMCs. This involvement could either be representation in the Board of Trustees of the Council, act as an advisory body, or membership in the

Operational Units. Figure 2 shows the typical organizational structure of a CRMC system.

Table 2. Sectors involved in CRMCs

Sectors	CRMCs				
	BBRMCI	KAHIL-ICAMCI	LIPASECU	NNARMAC	PBMC
Local government units (LGUs)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Non-government organizations (NGOs)	✓		✓		✓
National government agencies (NGAs)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Research and academic institutions	✓		✓		
People's organizations (POs)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Private sectors	✓				

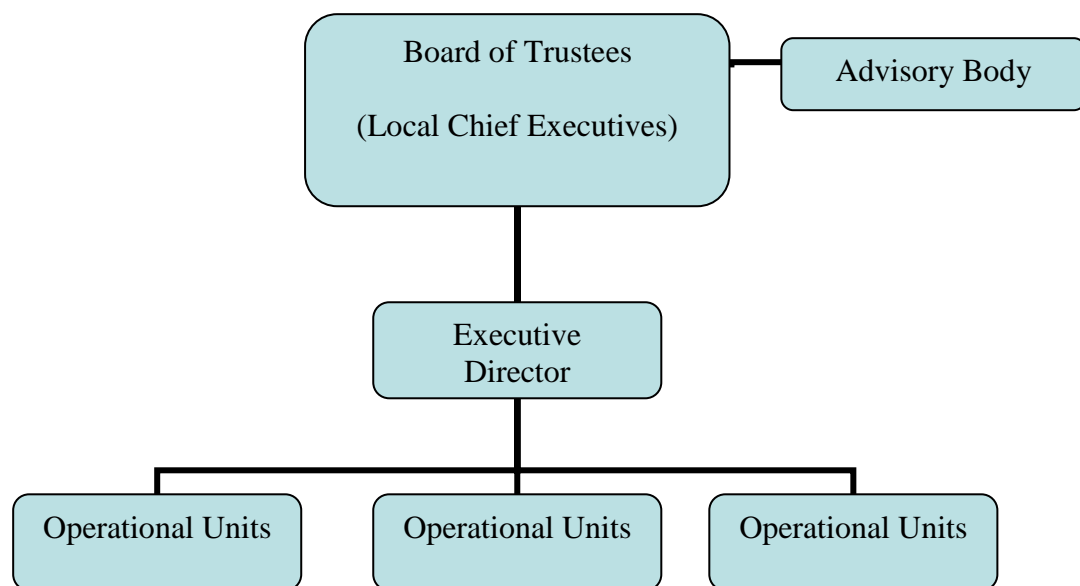


Figure 2. Typical organizational structure of a CRMC

The degree of participation and decision-making power of these sectors differs among CRMCs. LGUs play the most important role in a CRMC since they provide the mechanism for setting up of a partnership arrangement. The inability or unwillingness of LGUs to engage in cooperative, multi-jurisdictional management is a significant drawback to effective coastal resource development and management [6]. It is also the LGU who provides the overall

facilitation and coordination for planning, implementation, and approving of local regulations (e.g. enactment of a comprehensive fisheries management ordinance).

On the other hand, NGAs (e.g. Department of Agriculture, Department of Environment and Natural Resources) provide technical expertise to the CRMCs and support through issuance of needed policy reforms and agenda. NGOs help advocate for the community and foster participation. POs are community organizations that can serve as “pressure groups” to lobby for changes in or development of policy. In a CRMC, POs are most likely to be the resource users themselves who are at the same time the target beneficiaries of development efforts (e.g. livelihood project, capability-building training).

Table 2 shows that BBRMCI has the greatest number of sectors participating in its operation and projects. The roles of these sectors were formally defined in the Memorandum of Agreement on Sectoral Management Committee that they have signed with BBRMCI.

Partnership arrangements

Member-LGUs of the CRMCs agree on certain partnership arrangements deemed to be beneficial to their constituents. Most CRMCs have an organizational structure in place to define the roles and responsibilities of each sector. This is to minimize possibilities of “powerplay” or leadership issues in the future. As a strategy on power-sharing, Mayors of each member-LGUs take it in turn to head the CRMC as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

Member-LGUs also have a cost-sharing scheme for the operation of the CRMC. Each municipality is required to remit their annual contribution to the Trust Fund of the Council. This financial counterpart usually ranges from PHP 100,000 to PHP 200,000 (approximately US\$2,000 to US\$4,000).

Some CRMCs (e.g BBRMCI, LIPASECU) have their own offices. Aside from the financial contribution of their LGUs, they also assign some of its employees to work full time for the Council. These employees are on detailed status and their salary come from their respective LGUs.

Evaluating the CRMCs

According to Pomeroy and Williams [7], there are emerging conditions that appear to be central to the chances of developing and sustaining successful co-management arrangements. When more of these key conditions exist in a particular situation or system, there will be a greater chance of successful co-management. These key conditions are: clearly defined physical boundaries; resource users are identified; group cohesion; existing organizational experience; benefits exceed cost; participation by those affected; management rules enforced; legal rights to organize; cooperation and leadership at the community level; decentralization and delegation of authority; and coordination between government and community.

However, the conditions mentioned above generally focus on a type of co-management wherein only two sectors have a major role to play - the government and the community. In this type of partnership, it is primarily the government and the community of local fishers that share with the responsibility and authority in managing a fishery resource. To be able to give emphasis and evaluate a co-management institution that is multi-sectoral in nature, the author explored other indicative factors based on literature and documented researches [8, 9, 10, 11, 5], that may contribute to the success of the arrangement. These additional key conditions are: participation of other sectors; LGUs' commitment to the cooperative effort; integrated CRM plan; and existence of an organizational structure. Indicators were identified under each key condition to determine its level of presence in a particular CRMC system. Table 3 shows the rating of each key condition for each of the five CRMCs using the scale Low, Medium, and High.

Table 3. Rating of key conditions

Key Conditions (modified from Pomeroy and Williams, 1994)	BBRMCI	KAHIL- ICAMCI	LIPASECU	NNARMAC	PBMC
1. Clearly defined physical boundaries	***	**	***	**	**
2. Resource users are identified	**	***	**	**	**
3. Group cohesion	**	**	**	**	**
4. Existing organizational experience	***	**	***	**	**
5. Benefits exceeds cost	**	**	***	*	*
6. Participation by those affected	**	*	***	*	*
7. Management rules enforced	***	***	**	**	**
8. Legal rights to organize exist	***	***	***	**	***
9. Decentralization and delegation of authority	***	***	***	***	***
10. Coordination between government & community	**	**	**	**	**
11. Participation of other sectors	***	*	**	**	**
12. LGUs commitment to the cooperative effort	***	**	**	**	**
13. Integrated CRM plan	***	*	***	**	***
14. Existence of an organizational structure	***	***	**	**	**

Legend: * - Low
 ** - Medium
 *** - High

Generally, BBRMCI and LIPASECU rated highly in most of the key conditions. These two CRMCs already have an established track record in coastal

resource management and local governance, as evidenced by the various awards they have received from different organizations. Because of their organizational experience, they have less difficulty accessing grants from external donors and funding agencies.

Issues and Challenges

Because of the multi-sectoral composition of CRMC, it is always beset with issues and problems especially on the conflicting interests of the groups involved and the “power-play” issues among them. In this type of organization, more often than not, there is an individual or a sector who wants to have a “greater role” in the Council or the “greater benefits” that can be derived from it. This situation is usually aggravated by the complexity of the socio-political setting where the CRMC exists.

The most common problem encountered by the CRMCs is the conflicting provisions on penalties of fisheries violations. CRMCs have already unified the different fishery ordinances^c of their member municipalities; however, stipulations for penalties differ according to LGUs discretion. This may cause conflict because illegal fishers will have the tendency to commit violations in a municipality where penalties are much lower.

Constituents of KAHIL-ICAMCI and NNARMAC complain that priorities on development efforts of their Council are concentrated on the LGU of the incumbent Chairman. This uneven distribution of development projects may have a negative effect on the commitment of other member-LGUs who have not benefited from such projects.

Most of the CRMCs also complain of their weak organizational structure wherein authorities and accountabilities are not clear. This is caused by overlapping functions and undefined roles of operational units.

Best Practices

CRMCs have formulated and adopted their respective strategies in order to attain their goals. These evolving strategies are usually influenced by the type of coastal ecosystem they have and their respective socio-political arena. These successful strategies or “best practices” are documented for possible replication. Some of the “best practices” of the CRMCs included in the study are the following:

- The partnership agreement is formalized and institutionalized, and an organizational structure that clearly delineates the roles of each sector is in place.
- Local Chief Executives have strong political will and committed to implement the goals of the partnership, transcending even politics.
- Manpower resources (full-time staff) and infrastructure (office) are available to facilitate the implementation of CRMCs plans and programs. This strengthens its identity in the community as a coastal resource management body.

- Planning is done through a participatory process integrating all the concerns of the different groups and bringing together their divergent effort.
- CRMCs invest in information, education, and communication (IEC) program. IEC materials (e.g. comic books, leaflets, and radio plugs) play a vital role in reducing social conflicts and have shown effective results in increasing awareness of the fisherfolk and in promoting the objectives of the CRMC.
- Alternative livelihood projects in the coastal area to reduce potential pressure in the coastal resource are complemented with microfinance projects.
- CRMCs encourages participation and collaboration with other sectors (e.g. NGOs, POs) in addressing complex issues in the coastal area.

CONCLUSIONS

CRMCs are effective in coordinating the efforts of the LGUs in areas that do not follow jurisdictional boundaries (e.g. common fishing grounds). They serve as a venue to address the common concerns of the LGUs involved, and to resolve conflict associated with resource utilization. For the partnership to be sustainable, it should be formalized and institutionalized.

Efficacy of the CRMC can be enhanced through linkages with various partners and related sectors (e.g. NGAs, NGOs, POs) to be able to address complex issues. This will result to some degree of resource sharing and collaborative work.

Co-management is a political issue [7]. Thus, CRMCs should be able to transcend politics and must be shielded from short-term political pressures that could dilute its goals. It should have a management regime that is participatory. Potential benefits from its development initiatives should also be equally shared by the target beneficiaries (e.g fisherfolk).

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END NOTES

a. Municipal water is defined by the Philippine Fisheries Code (RA 8550) to include not only streams, lakes, inland bodies of water and tidal waters within the municipality which are not included within the protected areas as defined under Republic Act. No.7586 (The NIPAS Law), public forest, timber lands, forest reserves or fishery reserves, but also marine waters included between two (2) lines drawn perpendicular to the general coastline from points where the boundary lines of the municipality touch the sea at low tide and a third line parallel with the general coastline including offshore islands and fifteen (15) kilometers from such coastline. Where two (2) municipalities are situated on opposite shores that there is less than thirty (30) kilometers of marine waters between them, the third line shall be equally distant from opposite shores of the respective municipalities.

b. CRMCs are registered with the Philippine's Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as a non-stock, non-profit organization.

c. Fishery ordinances are local laws enacted and enforced at the municipal level to regulate and to prohibit certain acts associated with fishery resources.