Climate Change Adaptation in Batangas, Philippines through ICM

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Developing countries are said to be, "about twice as vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change as are developed countries, and small island developing countries are about three times as vulnerable" according to the UNDP in 1999. Thus, for the Philippines, climate change measures must be given priority because of their urgent necessity.

Since 1994 to present, the Provincial Government of Batangas in partnership with the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), World Wide Fund for Nature- Philippines (WWF) and the Conservation International-Philippines (CI-P) through the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) Program have worked towards the full implementation of the Batangas Strategic Environmental Management Plan. It is a comprehensive and integrated set of strategies and action plans aimed to continually improve the lives of its constituents through environmental protection and effective management, development and judicious utilization of the province's natural resources.

As an agro-industrial province, the three major bays (Batangas Bay, Balayan and Adjacent Bays and Tayabas and Adjacent Bays) are facing countless environmental problems and issues that are complicated but are very much interrelated. The issues were categorized into five major areas of concern: waste generation and disposal activities, fishery resources, biodiversity and habitat, underground water, and sustainability through institutionalization and community participation. The bays have been subjected to various impacts resulting from human activities, including improper solid waste disposal, pollution, overfishing, improper mining and quarrying operation, foreshore development, and various activities in the watershed areas. It is also anticipated that the consequence of climate change will be felt in the province.

Changing oceanic conditions including increasing temperatures, currents, and sea level rise will ultimately affect all the coastal related resources and sectors particularly the tourism industry. Habitat conditions may change and threatened species in the area will be at great risk of local extinction if impacts from climate change are further aggravated by human activities.

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The sensible response to climate change is to adopt actions aimed at mitigation, adaptation, restoration and research. The province management interventions initiated to improve the sustainability and improve coastal resilience to the impacts of climate change are: 1) declaration and establishment of marine protected area (coral reef/mangrove); 2) water quality monitoring (surface and underground water); 3) advocacy for the prohibition of the use of plastic bags on dry goods and regulation of its utilization on wet goods and prohibition of the use of Styrofoam; and 4) enforcement of fishery and environmental laws.

A myriad of solutions can be brought together for collaborative action of various stakeholders under one committed management. Many related researches can also help plus a sustainable financing mechanism.

Coastal areas are among the most productive areas in the marine habitat. They support other marine life and the lives of humans as well.