

Conceptual Framework of Organizing Communities for Effective Mangrove Management

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Our country today is facing the critical issue of sustainable fishery. Many factors have contributed to the grim situation. What makes the scenario worst is the destruction of the habitat, i.e., coral reefs, seagrass and mangroves.

The loss of mangrove forests to human development projects is a direct threat to fisheries-derived food resources and the health of the environment. Mangrove forests support natural fish production in nearshore waters, provide an important nursery habitat for fish, prawns and crabs which are vital food and income sources for coastal communities, and trap sediment from the upland which would suffocate the coral reefs and seagrass beds. Loss of mangroves is a serious concern to people living along the coastline dependent on mangroves for food and economic livelihood. Coastal erosion has made coastal communities vulnerable to losing properties and lives.

The role of organized communities in mangrove management therefore cannot be discounted. Organized groups or People's Organization (POs) provide the formal structure within communities on which decisions and project implementation and sustainability depends upon.

An organizing framework which is being developed by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) revolves around the Community-Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) will be put to test for the duration of the Community-Based Mangrove Rehabilitation Project in the Philippines. The framework is expected to provide guidance to groups which would embark on similar



projects. Likewise the framework is hoped to influence policy makers, NGOs and agencies of the government.

Supported by the ZSL, the 4-year project covers the 4 provinces in Western Visayas, i.e., Iloilo, Aklan, Capiz and Guimaras. ZSL will work closely with the DENR in securing CBFMA for the project sites. The CBFMA is a tenurial instrument which gives communities the right to manage a certain area of mangrove for a period of 25 years.