



Bicol hopes against hope to attain MDGs

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Introduction

BICOL is the 4th poorest region in the country as of 2003. It may have graduated from being the 2nd in 2000, but it still has 2.3 million people living below the poverty threshold. Worse, this vulnerable segment of the population tragically felt the wrath of supertyphoons that hit Bicol before 2006 ended. Underdevelopment coupled with laxity in disaster management make poverty seem like an endless trail for the Bicolanos.

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Bicol region is now surely off-track in meeting the MDGs, particularly on poverty reduction. From 46 percent in 2000, the Regional Development Council (RDC) aims to reduce the poverty incidence of families to 26 percent after 10 years. The possibility is remote since as of 2007, a Bicolano family of five needs at least P207 a day to meet its food and other basic needs. A laborer earning a mandated daily wage between P168 and P220 will find it difficult to make ends meet, especially if available jobs are erratic. The labor participation rate decreased from 69.6 percent in 2004 to 65.6 percent in 2006, which means either there are no jobs available or jobs are mismatch.

But jobs provision alone does not define poverty alleviation. Jobs are means to cope and survive, but physical wellness, education, peace and security, and environmental conditions also dictate whether the state of being nonpoor will be sustained. The MDGs try to combine the factors necessary for quality life in the 21st millennium, and they must serve as a framework in governance. But to a poor Bicolano family, having something to eat today is a more primordial concern than restoring our forests and conserving our coasts today to ensure a sustainable future. For now, the hunger is responded to through the influx of aid after the disaster. It is both a relief to the typhoon victims and an opportunity for the public institutions to compensate for or cover the predisaster inadequacies.

Bicol economic growth

Two years ago, Bicol's gross regional domestic product (GRDP) posted the target 5-percent increase but it slowed down to 2.6 percent in 2006, a rate registered as third lowest in the country. Agriculture, fishery, electricity, gas and water are among the sources of this growth. But this was affected by the damage at Tiwi Geothermal Plant. Another contributory factor was personal consumption spending, which grew by 8.5 percent and 6.3 percent in 2004 and 2005, respectively. Personal expenditures constitute more than 70 percent of gross regional domestic expenditures (GRDE), whose share has been increasing from 2003 to 2005. Less than 30 percent comprise both capital formation and government expenditures. But an economy driven primarily by consumer spending, coupled with a decreasing ratio of investment to GRDE, prove to be unsustainable in the long run. Efforts, therefore, to promote and generate more investment in the region need to be aggressively pursued. Government should also implement priority infrastructure projects in order to stimulate construction-related spending and attract similar investments from the private sector.

Half of target labor became employed

Bicol's labor force participation rate has been decreasing from 69.9 percent in 2004 to 65.6 percent in 2006. This means that the number of persons who choose to work and /or look for work has not been increasing in proportion to the increase in the working-

Table 1 Annual Per Capita Poverty Thresholds, Poverty Incidence and Magnitude of Poor Population by Province, Region V: 2000 and 2003

Province	Annual Per Capita Poverty Threshold a/ (Pesos)		Poverty Incidence Among Population b/(percent)		Magnitude of Poor Population c/	
	2000 Revised	2003	2000 Revised	2003	2000 Revised	2003
Region V	11,375	12,379	52.6	48.5	2,540,660	2,332,719
Albay	12,144	12,915	48.4	42.7	553,629	464,510
Camarines Norte	11,505	12,727	57.3	55.5	301,147	269,604
Camarines Sur	11,054	11,873	47.2	47.1	765,373	750,674
Catanduanes	11,587	11,815	51.9	36.8	117,740	76,609
Masbate	11,019	12,504	70.2	63.4	482,818	470,670
Sorsogon	11,146	12,452	51.4	43.5	319,952	300,652

a/ The annual per capita income required of the amount to be spent to satisfy nutritional requirements (2,000 calories) and other basis needs.

b/ The proportion of poor individual to the total number of population.

c/ The number of poor population.

Source: National Statistical Coordination Board

Table 2. Region V Economic Indicator, As of July 31, 2007

Indicators	Latest	Previous		Source*
Gross Regional Domestic Product (<i>In Thousand Pesos, At Constant Prices</i>)	P35,358,229 (2006)	P34,453,986 (2005)	P32,810,702 (2004)	NSCB
GRDP Growth Rate (<i>In Percent, At Constant Prices</i>)	2.6% (2005-2006)	5.0% (2004-2005)	5.7% (2003-2004)	NSCB
GVA in Agri., Fishery & Forestry Growth Rate (<i>At Constant Prices</i>)	0.7% (2005-2006)	8.1% (2004-2005)	3.9% (2003-2004)	NSCB
GVA in Industry Growth Rate (<i>At Constant Prices</i>)	4.6% (2005-2006)	3.4% (2003-2004)	10.5% (2003-2004)	NSCB
GVA in Services Growth Rate (<i>At Constant Prices</i>)	3.1% (2005-2006)	3.5% (2003-2004)	4.7% (2003-2004)	NSCB
Per Capita GRDP (<i>In Pesos, At Constant Prices</i>)	P6,685 (2006)	P6,639 (2005)	P6,445 (2004)	NSCB

Source : Statwatch NSCB Region V

age population 15 years old and above. Representing about 43 percent of total population, the labor force provides for the food and other basic needs of more than half of Bicol's population. As targeted, 100,000 jobs must be generated yearly, but in 2005, only 55,000 workers were added to the workforce and it went down to 30,000 in 2006.

For every 100 employed persons, 41 are earning wages and salaries, 43 are self-employed, and 16 are unpaid family workers. As most of the population, the poor, and the labor force are in the rural areas, such areas must get priority in the delivery of basic social services, employment generation, and provision of support facilities.

Bicol population growing faster than projected

Bicol's total population is projected to grow 1.92 percent from 4,674,855 in 2000 and in 2004 the region's population reached 5,079,867; it is projected to grow to 5,711,798 in 2007. The projection is higher than the year 2000 population census growth rate of 1.68 percent, and is also higher than the Medium Term Regional Development Plan (MTRDP) target of 1.5 percent. Although estimates of crude birth rate and total fertility rates decreased, the region's population is still expected to double in 41 years.

Average household size of 5.24 is higher than the national average of 5.0. Population density of 265 persons/sq.km. is also higher than the national average of 255 persons/sq.km., making Bicol one of the more densely populated regions aside from the National

Capital Region. About 72 percent of the population is in the rural areas.

Around 46 percent of Bicolanos are within the dependent age bracket of 0-14 and above 65 years. This results in a ratio of 85 dependents for every 100 persons in the working age bracket of 15-64 years. This high dependency ratio implies a greater burden on the working-age population to satisfy the population's basic needs, thereby negating the capability for savings and investment. This also means that the bulk of public expenditures need to be focused on the delivery of basic social services.

Medium HDI

The Human Development Index (HDI) provides a comparison of province in terms of component indices on health, education, and income. According to the Draft Bicol Updated Development Plan 2007-2010, among the provinces in the Bicol Region, Camarines Sur ranked highest in HDI and it ranked 34th among the 77 provinces in the country. Albay, Catanduanes, Sorsogon and Camarines Norte have relatively the same HDIs, ranking 44th, 48th, 49th, and 50th, respectively. Masbate ranked near the bottom at 73rd place, only higher than Basilan, Tawi-tawi, Maguindanao, and Sulo.

Except for Masbate, Bicol provinces have medium HDIs. Masbate has a low education index due to a very low percentage of high school graduates, which contributed to the overall low HDI. All the six provinces have low income indices.

Table 3. Annual Per Capita Poverty Thresholds, Poverty Incidence and Magnitude of Poor Families, By Province, Region V: 2000 and 2003

Province	Annual Per Capita Poverty Threshold a/ (Pesos)		Poverty Incidence Among Families b/(Pesos)		Magnitude of Poor Families c/	
	2000 Revised	2003	2000 Revised	2003	2000 Revised	2003
Region V	11,375	12,379	45.3	40.6	407,176	383,625
Albay	12,144	12,915	40.3	34.4	83,398	76,200
Camarines Norte	11,505	12,727	52.7	46.1	50,670	44,874
Camarines Sur	11,054	11,873	40.8	40.1	120,762	121,936
Catanduanes	11,587	11,815	43.9	31.8	18,541	13,604
Masbate	11,019	12,504	61.3	55.9	83,660	81,804
Sorsogon	11,146	12,452	41.4	33.7	50,146	45,207

/ The annual per capita income required of the amount to be spent to satisfy nutritional requirements (2,000 calories) and other basis needs.

b/ The proportion of poor families to the total number of families.

c/ The number of poor families

Source: National Statistical Coordination Board

Malnutrition prevailing but not as bad as before

From being 1st in terms of malnutrition in 2001, the Bicol Region ranked 3rd in 2003 decreasing the percentage of malnourished 0-5 yrs old from 37.8 percent to 32.8, slightly better than Cagayan Valley and Mimaropa regions (FNRI and Department of Science and Health Data on Hunger). According to the 2007 NEDA V Draft MDG Report, as of “2006, malnutrition is highest in Camarines Sur (25.16 percent) among the provinces and Legaspi (12.20 percent) among the cities. It is lowest in Sorsogon (16.47 percent) and Naga City (4.22). Naga City

posted the highest percentage reduction at 24 percent from 2004-2006”. The same NEDA Report stated that based on the trends, in all the provinces and cities except Sorsogon “there is high probability of achieving the 2015 target of 16.8 percent”.

Decreasing access to safe water

Instead of getting any better, access to potable water slightly decreased from 82.7 percent in 2004 to 82 percent in 2006. The 2007 NEDA V report said the decreased trend was probably due to “changes in nonpotability of water as a result of contamination of water sources”. Similar conditions

Table 4. Region V Data on HH Access to Safe Water and HH with Sanitary Toilets, 2005

Province	Total No. of HH 2005	No. of HH with Access to Safe Water 2005		No. of HH with Sanitary Toilets 2005	
		# of Household	Percentage	# of Household	Percentage
Albay	181,510	171,436	94.4	129,969	71.1
Camarines Norte	94,606	70,461	74.5	66,733	70.5
Camarines Sur	268,377	173,062	64.5	172,717	64.4
Catanduanes	42,735	40,071	93.8	28,652	67
Masbate	136,385	81,380	59.7	52,188	38.3
Sorsogon	133,385	120,741	90.5	77,788	58.3
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Note : Excluded in the data the Cities in Respective Provinces 2005

Source : NSCB. 2005

caused the percentage of households with sanitary facilities to decrease from 67.85 percent in 2004 to 64 percent in 2006.

More children are going to school but do not complete schooling

The educational system has to cope with the high fertility rate in the region, which causes a rapid increase in the number of school-age children. This in turn boosts demand for more classrooms and teaching materials including books. In school year 2005-2006, basic education enrolment increased by 6.4 percent. The increased enrolment in public school is partially due to the transfer of students from private to public as a result of the increase in tuition fees. The condition meant more pressure on the part of the government to increase budget allocation to teachers, textbooks and expansion of school facilities.

The NEDA Report noted that basic education has expanded through the establishment of schools in school-less barangays. "In 2005 the number of barangays without elementary schools decreased from 173 to 38 barangays and the number of incomplete elementary schools decreased from 380 to 261 in 2006. It was also noted the improvement of the program called Government Assistance to Students and Teachers for Private Education (GASTPE) provided financial subsidy to students who could not be absorbed by the public schools".

Although access to education has been significantly addressed, achieving quality education leaves much to be desired. The NEDA Report revealed that "while most children have access to schools, only about 71 percent for elementary and 54 percent for secondary complete the education. For those who complete school, little learning takes place as evidenced by the low mean achievement of about 55 percent for elementary and 42 percent for secondary".

Preschool enrollment in 2005 showed an increase of 5.7 percentage points in the number of 3-5 years old enrolled in the formal preschool and in day care centers, surpassing the MTRDP target. However, this represents only 36.7 percent of the total preschool population. More grade 1 enrollees have previously attended either preschool or kindergarten class.

The number of day care centers increased from 3,895 in 2004 to 3,949 in 2005, but there are still 336 barangays (10 percent) without day care centers.



The situation necessitates expanding the coverage of the Early Childhood Care Development (ECCD), improving its program implementation and involving human resource service providers. Likewise, there is need to sustain implementation in the region of the preschool service contracting scheme where private schools, as service providers, are paid by the national government.

The NEDA V Report noted the following challenges that face early education: a) improving the quality of day care centers through the Day Care Center (DCC) accreditation system including adequate provision of learning materials and b) improving the quality of day care workers through continuous capability and standardizing the salaries of day care workers.

Goal 3. Gender Equality

The Gender and Development (GAD) framework rests on the basic principle that Development is for All; that both women and men equally contribute to and benefit from development.

Results of the 2003 Functional Literacy Education and mass media Survey (FLEMMS), as indicated in the 2007 Draft Report of Neda V on the Achievement of MDGs in the Bicol Region, show "Bicolanas 10 years

Table 5. Gender Parity Index Based on Cohort Survival in Primary Education

Indicator: Gender parity Index based on cohort survival in primary education					
Province/City	Baseline (1994)	Current (2005)	Target (2015)	Ratio of Required Rate to Average Rate of Progress	Probability of Attaining the Target
Albay	1.12	1.11	1	12.1	Low
Camarines Norte	1.11	1.03	1	0.41	High
Camarines Sur	1.1	1.14	1	3.85	Low
Catanduanes	1.05	1.07	1	3.85	Low
Masbate	1.23	1.24	1	26.4	Low
Sorsogon	1.07	1.17	1	1.87	Medium
City					
Iriga	1	1	1	0	High
Legaspi	1.09	1.16	1	2.51	Low
Naga	1.11	1.07	1	1.93	Medium
Region 5	1.11	1.15	1	4.13	Low

old and over having higher rates than the Bicolanos in both simple (96.3 percent vs 93.8 percent) and functional (83.8 percent vs. 76.6 percent) literacy”.

The Gender Parity Index at 0.98 for CY-2004-2005 revealed there is no disparity in the participation rates of boys and girls in the region. However, boys lagged behind girls in terms of Cohort Survival Rate in elementary as indicated by the Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 1.15.

The increasing number of dropouts could indicate that tightening economic conditions of the already poor families are forcing children to stop schooling. The frequent occurrence of typhoons could also account for rising dropout rates, given the adverse impact of typhoons on family income and the condition of school infrastructure. Schools are usually transformed into evacuation centers and facilities of these schools are insufficient to meet the demands of evacuees. Furthermore, the transformation of schools into evacuation centers disrupts the education of students.

The NEDA V Draft MDG Report said “Regional data for 1996 showed that majority of the employed females (72.7 percent) worked in areas of professionals, technical, managerial, services and clerical work. Majority worked in wholesale and retail trade sector (68 percent)”.

It also stated: “From 1996 to 2003, more than 82.6 percent of women aged 15 years old and over were in the

labor force, compared to 52.1 percent of men in 2003. The participation of women continued to increase from 53.5 percent to 82.6 percent in 2003”.

Over the years there has been an increase in the Bicolano women’s participation in development. Their contribution to the economy has been recognized. They have also been benefiting from various interventions to improve their health, access to education and access to better opportunities. But there are still issues to solve pertaining to violence on women and children, and issues on GAD implementation in the region.

In Bicol Region the PNP recorded more than 200 rape case each year from 2004 to 2006: in 2004 there were 276 cases; 271 in year 2005; and 214 cases in 2006. The DSWD served 166 children in need of special protection in 2006, including victims of rape/maltreatment, and neglected children. In the same year, the agency served 24 cases of women in especially difficult circumstance, such as those physically abused, maltreated and battered.

It is imperative that local officials of various LGUs give priority to mainstreaming the GAD-related activities and reflect this in their respective development plans. Proactive programs like awareness raising on GAD, women and children’s rights should be seriously implemented and the corresponding mechanism set up; or, more crises intervention centers should be established.



Child mortality is declining, but maternal deaths are increasing

Deaths among young children have continued to decline. Under-five mortality rate (UFMR) dropped from 47.68 deaths per 1000 livebirths in 1990 to 23.1 deaths in 2003. Camarines Norte had the highest UFMR. Infant Mortality Rates (IMR) have also been reduced from 25.19 deaths in 1990

to 13.06 in 2003, and to just 9.3 percent in 2005 based on data from the Field Health Information System. The improvements are attributed to the implementation of programs such as Vitamin A supplementation, breastfeeding practices and improvement of case management at home and in health facilities.

Goal 5. Improve Maternal Health

Despite the improving children's health, maternal health seems to be worsening. Trends of MMR in the Bicol Region increased from 1.26 maternal deaths per 1,000 livebirths in 1990 to 1.54 in 2005. Catanduanes and Sorsogon have the highest rate at 2.28 and 2.29 deaths, respectively. The highest causes of deaths are hemorrhages related to pregnancy, and pre-eclampsia. Factors contributory to the health status of the mothers includes poor nutrition practices and poor access and delivery of maternal care services. The NEDA Bicol Report noted that the "achievement of the 2015 goals for this indicator is low".

Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases

According to the Department of Health (DOH), Bicol accounts for 25 cases or one percent of the 2,354 cumulative HIV/AIDS cases in the Philippines from January 1994 to September 2005. Their ages range

Table 6. Data Under Five Mortality Rate (UFMR)

Indicator: Under-five mortality rate					
Province/City	Baseline (1990)	Current (2003)	Target (2015)	Ratio of Required Rate to Average Rate of Progress	Probability of Attaining the Target
Albay	40.52	21.74	13.51	0.4	High
Camarines Norte	74.77	35.67	24.92	0.25	High
Camarines Sur	45.79	18.93	15.26	0.13	High
Catanduanes	55.5	35.14	18.5	0.75	High
Masbate	66.23	23.28	22.08	0.03	High
Sorsogon	44.15	23.61	14.72	0.4	High
City					
Iriga	35.7	17.19	11.9	0.26	High
Legaspi	44.19	24.69	14.73	0.47	High
Naga	31.32	19.05	7.11	4.86	Low
Region 5	47.68	23.1	15.89	0.27	High

Table 7. Data on Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)

Indicator: Infant mortality rate (IMR)					
Province/City	Baseline (1990)	Current (2002)	Target (2015)	Ratio of Required Rate to Average Rate of Progress	Probability of Attaining the Target
Albay	20.57	12.1	6.86	0.57	High
Camarines Norte	42.63	23.88	14.21	0.48	High
Camarines Sur	23.32	10.31	7.77	0.18	High
Catanduanes	27.75	17.86	9.25	0.8	High
Masbate	37.71	12.29	12.57	0.01	High
Sorsogon	22.46	12.85	7.49	0.52	High
City					
Iriga	20.11	9.59	6.7	0.25	High
Legaspi	26.1	15.71	8.7	0.62	High
Naga	10.88	10.01	3.63	52.43	Low
Region 5	25.19	13.06	8.4	0.35	High

Table 8. Maternal Mortality Rate

Indicator: Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)					
Province/City	Baseline (1990)	Current (2003)	Target (2015)	Ratio of Required Rate to Average Rate of Progress	Probability of Attaining the Target
Albay	1.02	1.330	0.26	3.2	Low
Camarines Norte	1.49	1.92	0.37	3.32	Low
Camarines Sur	1.34	1.12	0.34	3.29	Low
Catanduanes	0.91	2.28	0.23	1.38	High
Masbate	2.13	1.9	0.53	5.49	Low
Sorsogon	1.2	2.29	0.3	1.69	Medium
City					
Iriga	2.05	1.6	0.51	2.23	Low
Legaspi	1.03	1.25	0.26	4.16	Low
Naga	0.73	0.92	0.18	3.58	Low
Region 5	1.26	1.54	0.32	4.02	Low

from 4 to 59 years old and by province, they are broken down as follows—Camarines Sur, 10; Albay 8; Sorsogon 3; Camarines Norte 2; and one case each from Catanduanes and Masbate. Of these, seven have died.

In the 2003 National Demographic and Health Survey, about 45 percent of women and 67 percent of men knew that AIDS can be prevented by using condoms. Condom use rate decreased from 3.03 to 2.25 percent.

Malaria

According to the Draft MDGs Report of NEDA V “the region has posted an average of 44 malaria cases during the period 2001-2005 with significant reduction from 2001 to succeeding years. The report noted no recorded deaths due to malaria”.

Through the intervention of the Malaria Control Program, Masbate and Sorsogon have been declared malaria-free by WHO, and Albay is in the process of being declared malaria –free.

Table 9. Deaths Due to Tuberculosis

Indicator: deaths due to TB per 100,000					
Province/City	Baseline (1994)	Current (2005)	Target (2015)	Ratio of Required Rate to Average Rate of Progress	Probability of Attaining the Target
Albay	42.86	29.14	0	0.77	High
Camarines Norte	28.24	29.03	0	13.36	Low
Camarines Sur	38.21	36.31	0	6.95	Low
Catanduanes	42.58	19.38	0	0.3	High
Masbate	29.32	26.67	0	3.66	Low
Sorsogon	36.07	27.79	0	1.22	High
City					
Iriga	32.56	30.47	0	5.3	Low
Legaspi	51.88	51.06	0	22.64	Low
Naga	64.87	18.3	0	0.36	High
Region 5	40.26	30.59	0	3.74	Low

Tuberculosis

Despite improvements in the health sector, problems still persist. Preventable communicable diseases like diarrhea, pneumonia and bronchitis still remain leading causes of illness. The prevalence of tuberculosis; and lifestyle diseases such as diseases of the heart and vascular system prevail as the leading causes of death.

Tuberculosis (TB) is one of the 10 leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the region. Although the number of deaths from TB declined from 37.85 percent deaths per 100,000 population in year 2000,

to 30.59 deaths per 100,000 population in 2005, the Neda Report noted that achieving the target by 2015 to halt the incidence of TB has a low probability.

Goal 7. Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Bicol's forest resources have been deteriorating due to deforestation caused by regular human activities like kaingin, illegal logging, quarrying, mining, forest product poaching, settlement and infrastructure development. Forest degradation is at the rate of 11,172 hectares per year. Just last August 2 a joint effort by PNP in Lucena and the Tanggol Kalikasan



**Table 10. Damage Report (Upland, Mangrove, and Agroforestry Plantations)
DENR Region V, Legaspi City**

Office	Estimated (Area (Ha.))	Total Cost
PENRO Sorsogon	293.00	5,909,000.00
Upland	112,000	
Private Plantation	146,000	
Mangrove Plantation	35,000	
PENRO Camarines Sur	5,461.50	30,151,000.00
Upland Plantation	3,514.50	
Agroforestry Plantation	1,947.00	
PENRO Albay	2,450.26	45,540,000.00
Upland Plantation	2,104.14	
Agroforestry Plantation	210.00	
Mangrove Plantation	136.14	
PENRO Catanduanes	3,256.00	7,767,000.00
	3,256.00	
GRAND TOTAL	11,460.78	88,367,000.00

(TK) environmental NGO intercepted a “Fish Dealer Truck” in Lucena carrying narra wood from Sorsogon, estimated to be 7.08 cubic meters (3,000 board feet).ii The degradation is compounded by seasonal typhoons and heavy rains, thereby resulting in disasters.

Endowed with a mixture of ecosystems, Bicol should have at least 60-percent forest cover to be able to protect such wealth from damaging effects of typhoons that pass through the region. The fact is only less than 7 percent of the total Bicol land area has actual forest cover; thus, other ecosystems like marginal lands, lowland agricultural and urban ecosystems, as well as freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems have also been vulnerable to natural calamities.

Despite the huge magnitude of assistance the region actually needs for environmental restoration, according to DENR Bicol Region the average budgetary allocation of department in Bicol for the past five years in terms of



plantation establishment is only P 8,644,000.00—an amount that can only plant 508 hectares for upland and mangrove areas and 19 hectares for agro forestry per year.

The condition was aggravated by the two typhoons during the last quarter of 2006, which brought flashfloods and mudslides that devastated DENR tree plantations. A DENR Region V Assessment said, “Over a 8,987 hectares of upland plantations were swept and lost by the combined strong winds and flash floods. Others were on agroforestry plantations (2,157 hectares), mangrove plantations (171 hectares), plantations within the national highway, and private tree plantations (146 hectares). Cost of damage for the provinces of Albay is P44,540,000; for Sorsogon, P 5,909,000; Camarines Sur P30,151,000, and Catanduanes P 7,767,000.”

The Philippine Agenda 21 (PA21) was

formulated in response to the government's commitment to the Earth Summit in 1992. The PA21 resulted in the enactment of different laws, policies, regulations and guidelines for the protection, conservation and management of the environment and natural resources, geared towards attaining sustainable development. These laws are;

a) Wild Life Conservation and Protection Act of 2001, b) Republic Act (RA) 9072 or the National Caves and Cave Resources Management and Protection Act, c) RA 8550 or the Fisheries Code of the Philippines, d) The Philippine Mining Act of 1995, e) RA 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, e) RA 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004, f) RA 8749 or the Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999.

The slow-paced localized implementation of mandated national laws, or poor or lax compliance with laws promoting balanced ecology and biodiversity aggravates

the condition of the various ecosystems; it continues to endanger people's lives and makes it hard to realize sustainable development in the region.

Monitoring the MDGs

The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Region V, in compliance with DILG Memorandum Circular 2004-152 for the localization of MDGs in 2006 for the six provinces of Bicol, reported that only 66 LGUs of the total 120 LGUs submitted the monitoring form that determines LGU programs anchored on MDGs.

Recognizing the weakness of LGUs and systems for tracking down the progress of MDG localization, the Regional Statistical Coordination Committee and the NEDA Region V passed two joint major resolutions: Resolution No. 02-2006 "Designating the National Statistical Coordination Board Regional Division V

Human inflictions and natural calamities

THE vulnerability of Bicol to natural calamities worsened due to the environmental destruction inflicted by humans in the name of economic gains. Although since time immemorial, extractive industries such as mining and quarrying did not prove any substantial alleviation from poverty in its real sense, poor communities are still driven to embrace such environmentally disastrous ventures. The case of Lafayette mining in Rapu-Rapu Albay is a classic case of government priorities aims to promote economic growth, employment but however it faced wide oppositions from various stakeholders because of the occurrences of fish kill in the sea water resources in Albay and part of Sorsogon due to mines spill caused by the mining activity.

Strict implementation of the provisions of the various environmental laws and processes shall be judiciously implemented with transparency and accountability should be cleared. Likewise, other stakeholders are needed for a strong and active monitoring of the provisions of the law including the implementing rules and regulations

The successive typhoon (Milenyo, Reming,) in 2006 that claimed lives, property and livelihood particularly in Albay, are expected to aggravate the poverty situation. The Department of Agriculture Region V reported the agriculture sector losses in Bicol to some P 2.6 B worth of crops and agricultural infrastructures destroyed. Some 101,308 farming families who lost their means of livelihood. The DA Region V also reported that the sufficiency level for vegetables right after the occurrences of the two typhoons, from 83.2 percent to 26.5 percent.

The Coconut industry has the most losses with more than P 350 million worth of production destroyed while the high value crops that included vegetable followed with estimated P 343 M worth losses, corn P 45 M. Around 29,581 hectares of abaca plantation over Bicol destroyed, For rice production some 70,208 MT with an estimated value of 154 M from the total number of hectares planted last year have been destroyed that directly and immediately affected some 23,085 families. Livestock and Fisheries had their share of losses in the overall agriculture industry in Bicol at P137 M and P 138 M, respectively.

The poverty situations in Bicol are expected to worsen. Thus, support need to be delivered particularly to the agricultural sector that comprises the bulk of the population if the region.

"Good Governance" at all levels should be advocated and practiced to cushion the impact of the crisis and to advance the sustainable development.

as Repository of the MDGs Indicators in the Bicol Region” and Resolution No. 03-2007 Requesting the DILG V to Include the Monitoring System for the Localized MDGs of Region V in the Orientation for Newly Elected Officials.

Coping through planning

The Regional Development Council is updating the Bicol Development Plan for 2007 to 2010, taking into consideration the effects of Typhoons Milenyo and Reming and other current national thrusts. The

national government created the super-regions wherein Bicol is part of Central Philippines as the tourism center.

The mechanisms to localize MDGs started in 2005 and some of the aspects are already in place now with the LGUs. However, concrete programs and projects responsive to MDGs remain a nonpriority in terms of funding and policies, despite glaring manifestations of poverty, malnutrition, high dropout rates in schools and environmental degradation in local conditions. ■