

Impact of Coastal Resource Management Initiatives to the Community

The Sarangani Bangsa Moro Affiliates (SBMA) Experience

By Christopher Rey Diaz Cadiz and Rasid Bani*

THE open access municipal waters had long prevented the marginalized municipal fisherfolk from controlling their main source of livelihood – the coast and municipal waters. Even with the passage of the Fisheries Code of 1998, settlement and food security and sovereignty were far from the grasp of the municipal fisherfolk sector.

Development institutions have applied Community-Based Coastal Resource Management as a sustainable development framework to promote the community's rights to manage, protect and utilize their resource base while maintaining the integrity of the environment. At the forefront are the people's organizations and their community, the key players in the success of the initiative to claim these rights.

This case study shows how development initiatives of various players were optimized by a Moro fishing community to enhance its life. This study examines how the claim-making and strengthening of stakes over a long-established fisherfolk settlement, the assertion of rights over fishing areas, and cooperation with the other people's organization, nongovernment organizations, government and other development agents, led to the continuing development intervention opportunities for the coastal community.

General description of the Sarangani Province coastal community

The province

Sarangani was administered under the Cotabato Empire during the American Period and was incorporated into the province of South Cotabato in 1966.¹ It was carved from South Cotabato through RA 7228 on November 24, 1992 and became a component of the South Cotabato – Sultan Kudarat – Sarangani – General Santos (SOCSKSARGEN) Growth Region, now part of the newly reconstituted Region XII.

It is located at the South of Mindanao and bounded by the provinces of Sultan Kudarat in the West, South Cotabato in the North and Davao del Sur in the East. At its South is the Celebes Sea.



It is composed of six coastal and one upland municipality. The commercial and urban center of the Growth Region, General Santos City, separates the eastern coastal municipalities (Alabel, Malapatan and Glan and the upland municipality of Malungon) and the western coastal municipalities of Maitum, Kiamba and Maasim. Including the City of General Santos, the coastline stretches 240 kilometers from Pinol in Maitum to Tinaca Point in Glan.

The 4,441.79-sq. km. land area of the province is principally agricultural-based. Its key agricultural products are coconut, corn, rice and copra. High-value crops such as lanzones, rambutan, mango, peanut, papaya, guava, atis and jackfruit are also produced in the province.² It is slowly being known for its bangus (milkfish) and marine cage fisheries.

Waves of settlers: a brief history

The Province had been the home of different people even during pre-hispanic times. The B'laans, Kalagans, Maguinadanaos, T'bolis, Tagabilis, Tagacaolos, Samal, Tausugs and other ethnic tribes in the uplands, inhabited the area.

The first wave of Christian migrant-settlers were the Cebuanos who arrived in Glan in 1914. They saw the peaceful coexistence of the Muslims, B'laans, Manobos, T'boli, Tagabilis, and other ethnic

¹ Sarangani History, www.tourism.gov.ph

² Sarangani Province Profile, Growth with Equity in Mindanao

* Christopher Rey Diaz Cadiz is the Research and Information Officer of CASCO; Rasid Bani is the ProNet coordinator in Malapatan.

Tambuyog Development Center, Community Property Rights and Strategies*

THE objective of the Tambuyog Sustainable Coastal Area Development (SCAD) – Sarangani Program is to address the triple issues of poverty, powerlessness and resource degradation in the coastal areas in Sarangani.** These are the result of the open-access state of the coastal resources.

Tambuyog Development Center operates under the framework of Community Property Rights. Tambuyog believes that control and management should be given *de jure* or *de facto* to the community. Formal property rights could be attained through the assent (through law and policies or tacit consent of the state) of the recognized authorities or informal, through acquisition of property rights by way of steps beyond the conventions. Basically, it promoted the transfer of task in management and decision-making to the coastal community. Community-Based Coastal Resource Management is the operationalization of the concept. Thus, CBCRM is the vehicle for the appropriation of property rights to the community of users of the resource.

Tambuyog integrates dual efforts to build Centers in strategic areas and Advocate policy changes, build networks and shape public opinion at the local, national and international levels which are supportive to the local resource management initiatives. To achieve this, Tambuyog SCAD Sarangani framed six core strategies to effect development in the project areas. These are:

Resource Management Cooperative (RMC) Building which has two-pronged approach towards capacitating the partner organization in taking the lead role in CBCRM in their respective community. These are advocacy for the designed use of the resource base and business development to provide livelihood for its members and service to the community.

Resource Management Plan Formulation that is agreed by the users and stakeholders. It shall determine the management arrangements, access policies and control of the management unit.

The **Creation of Co-Management Bodies** wherein the RMC and other users and stakeholders shall define the shared roles, responsibilities and accountability of all players in the management of the area.

With **Enterprise Development**, viable resource and non-resource based livelihood opportunities is being developed and implemented. It is expected that this will help increase the household income of the RMC members.

To provide venues for the recognition of women's role the reproductive and community management spheres, **Gender Development** is given priority. Aside from just making the RMC aware of gender issues there is a need to address the specific gender needs thus the formation women's organization.

There is need to network CBCRM practitioners to strengthen the grassroots influence in the resolution of coastal community issues and advocate the delivery of the basic social services for the rural communities. To attain this, **Provincial Networking and Advocacy** is to be undertaken by the RMCs and Tambuyog. Cutting across these strategies are facilitating approaches of **Participatory Research and Education and Training**.

* CBCRM Training Module, Tambuyog Development Center and Center for Empowerment and Resource Development

** Guiam and Farid, 2000

groups.³ The Ilocano settlers, who set up home-steads in Kiamba in 1918, followed them. A wave of Christian migration in the 1920s followed. Ilonggo settlers arrived in Malungon in the 1930s.⁴

In 1939, General Paulino Santos through the National Land Settlement Administration's Program led the largest batch of pioneering Christian settlers mostly from Luzon (Tagalog, Ilocanos, Capampangans, etc.), to resettle in the vast plains of Cotabato. The Ilonggos, Cebuanos, Boholanos, and other Visayans came soon after.⁵

The coastal Community

The six coastal municipalities of the province and General Santos City border the 135,000 Has. of Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape⁶, one of the biggest and most diverse Protected seascapes in the Philippines.

The Province has a total household population of 82,896 (National Statistics Office, 2000) with 63,972 households living in coastal municipalities. The trend in the coastal communities is such that 52 percent of the families along the coast engage in direct fishing (commercial and municipal or subsistence fisheries are equally divided in number) while 40 percent are into fisheries-related occupations such as fish vending, boat making and bangus fry gathering.⁷

A Sarangani fishing household is basically a nuclear family.⁸ A Mindanao State University (1995) study shows that the majority of the municipal fishermen are from the Visayas. A great number of municipal fisherfolks are literate and had gone to at least primary education (67 percent), 13 percent has secondary education while 9 percent either finished high school, have reached college or graduated college.

Around 49.80 percent of the population was poor in 1997. It worsened to 51.50 percent in 2000. In 1997, fishermen earned as much as P30,000–34,000 per annum.⁹ This is equivalent to as low as 200 pesos a month, a way below the P9,843¹⁰ per month needed to achieve the basic needs of the family in 1997. A large chunk of the household's expenditures is allocated for food that is about 30–50 percent or more in most cases. (*Mindanao State University (MSU) 1995*)

³ www.trek-site.com

⁴ Sarangani Socio-Economic Profile, PPDO

⁵ www.trek-site.com/gen_santos/gensan_history.htm

⁶ There are two definitions of Sarangani Bay, (1) Greater Sarangani Bay (Protected Seascape- Jurisdictional Definition) which has an area of 135,000 has as defined in Presidential Proclamation 756 and (2) the Inner Sarangani Bay (Technical Definition) which has an area of 44,900 has.

⁷ *Coastal Environment Profile, Louis Berger International Inc., 1993*

⁸ *Mindanao State University, undated*

⁹ *Silliman University 1997*

¹⁰ National Statistic Coordination Board

The natural resource pool

In the studies of MSU (1995) and Silliman University (1997), the bay supports around 490 species of commercially important fish and marine organisms. Production of the municipal fishery in the Bay is at the 10,000–15,000-metric tons range since 1988–1998. The preponderance of small-sized and juvenile catch is an indication of overfishing.

According to Canlas and Enderes (2003), the Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) for small pelagic species has been continuously declining in the period 1950–2000. The total annual fish catch has already leveled at around 450 tons since 1975. The decline in CPUE is a result of the increase of fishers rather than the decrease of fish catch.¹¹

The coastal and marine resources of Sarangani Bay are generally in various states of degradation.¹² In a study of MSU (1999), only 8 of the 28 transect sites surveyed exceeded the 50 percent hard coral cover and only one site was found in excellent condition.

A history of exploitation¹³

From tradition, the elders tell of time when grasslands were vast and the fishing grounds abound with marine organisms. The bay and its tributaries were the main source of food for these settlers. The prevalent gear then was hook and line.

Changes came fast when the Americans arrived. Christians arrived and intermingled with the early inhabitants. The latter were forced to move to

the coastal areas of Sarangani Bay and highlands of the region. The lumads and Moro tribes became minorities. Extensive pineapple, coconut and corn plantations took over the lush forests.

After the Americans left, more clearings were made by the new waves of migrants from Luzon and the Visayas. The minorities—the Muslims and Lumads—were further pushed away from their ancestral domain, which was gradually shrinking.

In the coastal areas, the new migrants brought in new fishing technologies. Fishermen started to use high-yielding gears such as *sensuro* and *basnig*. Municipal fisheries also flourished along the bay. The new fishing gears and methods that were introduced were mostly nonselective, high-yielding and destructive like trawls, seines, fine meshed nets, obnoxious chemicals and explosives. Commercial fisheries intruded the municipal waters.

In the 1960s, General Santos City's fishery industry started to grow. By 1980s, the demand for sashimi by the Japanese increased. The fishermen focused on tuna fishing to supply the export need.

In the late 1980s to early 1990s, the Sarangani and General Santos area saw the opportunity in aquaculture. Many mangrove forests were converted to fishponds and hatcheries. This contributed to the further decline in the balance of the ecosystem.

Even then, the area catered to the increasing global need for its resources. Further destruction took place in exchange for the promises of the globalized economy.

Sapu Masla, Malapatan: A profile of a coastal community

Malapatan was said to be abundant in pepper in the 15th century thus the name, which literally

¹¹ Tambuyog Evaluation Report (2003), Corinne A. Canlas and Edmundo Enderes

¹² Tambuyog Mid-Term Evaluation Report (1998–2000), Tambuyog Development Center, Inc.

¹³ *Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape Profile, unpublished, ADPO-PMU*

The Fundamental Components of CBCRM*

THE components of CBCRM are the 'bundle of rights' given to the community, and the statutory instruments for the exercise of those rights.

Use Rights

This component primarily responds to the problem of exclusivity of common property resources. By clearly defining use rights, competition and conflicts can eventually be addressed and the primary role of communities in resource utilization is given emphasis.

Exchange Rights

Resource rent is valued in the market. Thus, the community must likewise have command over marketing channels and processes. In addition, community control should be asserted not only in the actual production channels but also for input markets (e.g. fishing supplies). Cooperatives and other forms of collective efforts play a major role in the realization of market strength and control.

Distribution Entitlement

This recognizes that there are initial endowments in communities and that some communities may be better endowed than others. Efforts in CBCRM should be directed towards achieving equal endowments of economic and political power. The allocation and distribution of benefits and values from resources must be equitable in nature.

Management and Authority Schemes

A community is composed of various classes and sectors. Thus, conflict resolution mechanisms must be identified and enforced so that compliance with community policies and programmes is guaranteed. There are no definite and clear-cut prescriptions for management and authority instruments. They would vary depending on a number of factors such as the 'organizational landscape,' cultural values, norms and codes of behaviour.

* Community Based Coastal Resource Management (CBCRM): Tambuyog's Experience in the Philippines

means place of pepper in B'laan. The municipality was part of the Municipality of Glan before it was chartered as a separate municipality on June 21, 1969, through RA 5328. Barangay Sapu Masla is one of its 12 barangays. It is approximately 7 kilometers from Poblacion, Malapatan and 41 kilometers southeast of General Santos City. NSO (2003) data show the household population at 1,278 with an average household size of six. Almost half (49 percent) of the population is Maguindanaon, followed by the B'laans (37 percent) and Tausog (12 percent). Only 2 percent of the population are Visayan settlers.

Seventy percent of the residents of Sapu Masla have Islam as way of life while the various Christian sects comprise 23 percent of the population. Most of the latter are B'laans from the highlands.

Although a minority, Cebuano is used as the main dialect by the population. Maguindanaon and Tausog were used only in interaction with the members of the same group.

Although a coastal barangay, most of the people are into farming. The main product of the barangay are coconut and copra. Corn and fruit trees such as durian, mango and lanzones are also produced. The farmers still depend on rain for their farms, for no irrigation was put up. No more than 6 percent consider fishing a main livelihood.

In the year 2000, 71 percent of the people earned as low as P1,000–3,000 a month while more than 4 percent still earn lower than P1,000. Only 21 percent were in the range of P4,000–7,000. The main water source of the community are level II communal faucets. No sewerage system exists. The residents utilize the open pit toilets and the majority use the antipolo toilets.

Most of the coastal households own their houses while their lots are either free of rent or marine land.

Brief history¹⁴

The B'laans were reckoned to be the earliest settlers in Sapu Masla. Since the 15th century, they have mostly inhabited the hinterlands of Sapu Masla. There were accounts of an indigenous system of governance among the B'laans, called the *Kasfala*, an assembly of five to seven Chiefs or *Furlongs*.

There were also accounts of brief contacts with a group of settlers, believed to be Dutch, in the 16th Century. They were called the giant people or

The Basic Principles of CBCRM*

THE process by which CBCRM is put into practice is as important as its components. There are five basic principles that must be present in CBCRM, namely:

i) *Empowerment*. The marginalization of coastal communities has led to the problems of poverty and resource degradation. Addressing marginalization would require empowerment or the actual transfer of economic and political power from a few to the impoverished majority. By transferring the access and control of resources from a few to the community at large, the community is gradually empowered in the economic realm. Simultaneously, political empowerment ensues as community management and control over the resource are effectively operationalized.

ii) *Equity*. Linked with the principle of empowering coastal communities is the objective of promoting equity in the access to and control of resources. Equity means that a few people cannot appropriate a particular resource. Equity could be attained if coastal communities rather than a few individuals have access to the opportunities of coastal resources.

iii) *Sustainability*. There is a need to ensure the sustainability of development through resource extraction practices that consider the limits of the resources - their carrying and assimilative capacity. There is trust in the capacity of the community to manage its resources in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, intra-generational equity or equity between the present and future generations is aimed at through the sustainable use of coastal resources.

iv) *Systems orientation*. This principle gives recognition to the dynamics of relations. The community is not set apart from other communities, just as their resources are ecologically linked to bigger ecosystems.

v) *Gender-fair*. Women have always been taken for granted in development efforts and even in community management thinking. Yet a recognition of the role of women in the household and in community management is crucial for development to succeed. Besides being a part of the community, women have distinct characteristics and needs. Development must address the practical and strategic needs of their being involved in the management and control of community resources.

* Taken from the SCAD Program Proposal and RIVERA R. Approaching Coastal Resource Management Through Community Property

Sula. The Sangils from the island of Sangir in the Celebes Sea came and fought the Sulas. With the help of Chieftain Katiali Albaba of the Ternate, the Sangils overwhelmed the Sulas. Thus, Sangils inhabited the place.

The 18th century brought Karamat Barindong and the Maguindanaos who soon settled and intermarried with the B'laans. They named the place Sapu Masla, the Maguindanao term for "big flesh", named after the Sulas. It was not known when the Tausogs from Sulu arrived.

The people of Sapu Masla were displaced during World War II. Most of them evacuated to the forests and mountains. The Christian settlers, mostly Cebuanos, came after the war.

Poverty and Resource Degradation

The elders tell of stories when they would just cast their hook and line from the shore and catch

¹⁴ The Sarangani Moro Ethnicity Study, Sapu Masla Profile, Tambuyog Development Center, Inc.

enough fish for dinner. Not even an hour is spent for this. Until the 60's, there was an abundance of marine resources in Sapu Cove. Hook and line catch Marlin (marang and tangigue) while shrimp, *tabios*, *dillis* (*anchovies*) and crabs were plentiful.

Deer, bats and birds can still be hunted. However, due to slash-and-burn farming and hunting, the animals moved to the highlands.

*Until the next decade, fish catch was plentiful. Fishermen would fish inside Sapu Cove and catch 45 - 90 kgs of small pelagic fish per night with the indigenous abaca-net lantaw.*¹⁵

It was also in the 1970s that dynamite fishing peaked and the commercial fishers started to encroach on the municipal waters of Sarangani. Due to this, fish catch declined. The old growth mangroves along the mouth of the Sapu Masla River started to die due to the change in the river course. Illegal logging already existed; however, chainsaw was not yet in use. Even though this might be so, the deforestation must have been already extensive. The flashflood in 1971 killed many people and destroyed properties.

At the background is the ensuing leadership and land ownership struggle between the Visayan Christian Ilagas and the Maguindanon and Tausog Muslim Blackshirts. Due to the continuous armed encounters until 1972, many upland residents and farmers evacuated to the coasts and added to the number of fishers in the cove. In 1974, a Moro National Liberation Front military camp was established at Prk. Kiayad by Faruk Mohamad Hussein. Mangroves were also converted into fishponds and *payaos* were established in Sarangani Bay. Fishers from Davao City and Davao del Sur using active gear considered illegal arrived.

When the cease-fire agreement between the government and the MNLF broke down in 1977, a composite of seven infantry battalions conducted military operations in Sapu Masla, which led to the declaration of the area as a "No Man's Land". Residents evacuated to other areas. This was the second time the residents were displaced from their homes.

The return: picking the pieces

It was only after the signing of the Tripoli Agreement in 1978 that the residents returned. Accounts tell of the cove teeming with fish after the brief diaspora. It was not until the later part of 1984, after a local Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Commander returned to the fold of the law

that the civilians truly started to rebuild their homes and mosque.

The 80's was one of the lowest in the fisheries and environment of the cove. It was also the start of the use of the chainsaw. Even moderate rainfall would result to flashfloods. In response, DENR initiated a 10-year reforestation program in 1989.

Commercial fishers from Davao came in 1986 and operated using the active encircling nets *basnig* and *kolibo*. Due to the proliferation of commercial fishing, the small fisherfolk were forced to turn to illegal means of fishing. Sodium, triple nets, dynamite and cyanide were employed. However, the catch was still not enough. The small fisherfolk could not compete with the large and efficient commercial fishing vessels.

The fisherfolk were reduced to bartering their chicken and ducks if not asking for fish from the commercial fishing operators. Mangrove and hard wood from the forest areas were felled to make commercial fishing vessels and firewood. This extended until the early 1990s. Purse seines or *unay* continued to intrude into the municipal waters.

During this time, most of the houses in the coastal puroks were made of *sawali* and *nipa*. The fisherfolk, considered the poorest of the poor even in the barangay, used motorized bancas.

Awakening, awareness and consolidation

This was the situation in 1995 when the Umma Center for Development (UCD), a Moro nongovernment organization based in Cotabato City gave an orientation to coastal residents on Coastal Resource Management. Many joined in the organizing effort. This was the time when the Sarangani Bangsa Moro Affiliates was organized. The fisherfolk and the community rallied against commercial fishing intrusion and the impending demolition of the coastal houses by the Laiz Family. SBMA took the lead in pushing to nullify the title given to the Laiz Family. The fisherfolk organization reasoned that the Official Certificate of Title is highly questionable, for it was acquired in 1974 at the height of encounters, when the residents evacuated from the area. They said they have resided in the area since time immemorial.

The fisherfolk and the Laiz family nearly clashed when the latter tried to fence the area in 1996. The case was brought to the *Lupong Tagapamahala*. Through the intervention of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (the area in question is classified as marine land) and the Barangay government, four hectares were earmarked for the fisherfolk as settlement area.

¹⁵Focus Group Discussions

The fisherfolk also campaigned against the commercial fishing intrusion in Sapu Cove and Sarangani Bay. Using the media, SBMA wrote to a radio network in General Santos. This helped raise the awareness of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan on the plight of the small fisherfolk in the province. In the same year, a provincial ordinance prohibiting commercial fisheries in the bay was passed. However, the number of commercial vessels was substantially reduced only in 1996.

While this was happening, SBMA was networking with other fisherfolk organizations with stake in the coastal environment in the region. SBMA got the chairmanship of the Alyansa ng Mangingisdang Moro sa Katimugang Mindanao (ALMMOKAM), a federation of marginalized Moro fisherfolk.

Tambuyog Development Center first made contact with SBMA in its Community-Based Coastal Resource Management (CBCRM) School program. SBMA was one of its participants. When the Sustainable Coastal Area Development (SCAD) program of Tambuyog expanded to Sarangani, it forged a partnership and helped in the management initiatives of SBMA.

Environmental management and development initiatives

Sapu Cove is the communal fishing ground of Sapu Masla and its neighbor barangay, Sapu Padidu. In 1997, SBMA, a Moro people's organization, and the Sapu Padidu Small Fishers Cooperative (SPSFC), a fisherfolk organization from Sapu Padidu—majority of which are Christian Visayans—agreed to an integrated management of the cove.

With the help of Tambuyog, the Local Government Unit, other People's Organization and the DENR special project Coastal Resource Management Project, the Sapu Cove Integrated Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Council (SACI-FARMC) was formed.

The organization of the comanagement body united two barangays with ethnically diverse populations based on the management and protection of a common resource system.¹⁶

A year after, SACI-FARMC formulated its Resource Management Plan. The SBMA acquired training on Deputized Fish Warden, Advocacy, Leadership and Paralegal to help carry out the Plan. The RMP seeks to:

- (1) regulate aquaculture activities in the cove;
- (2) rehabilitate and protect the mangrove areas;

- (3) prohibit the entry of commercial fishing in the municipal waters and limit if not eliminate illegal fishing practices; and,

- (4) declare fish sanctuaries.

Cove-wide mangrove planting was initiated with Tambuyog and the DENR, both as rehabilitation measure and to raise the community stake over their settlement area. Members of the SACI-FARMC were deputized as Fish Wardens; hence, the community was given direct participation in the enforcement of the fishery law, and this strengthened the claim-making of the management unit.

Mangrove harvesting was halted and commercial fishing was barred from the cove. However, after two years, some of the plans did not push through. The proposed sanctuary was not pursued because of the silted condition of the coral reef areas in the cove; thus, the decision of the SACI-FARMC to act upon the problem of the upland.

During these years, the International Initiative for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) had an ongoing research on the small watershed of Sapu Masla and the water source in the area. The residents observed that the same problems identified in the small watershed by the study affected the coastal areas. Some leaders formed Coastal-Lowland-Near Upland-Far Upland (COLONEFAR) to spearhead their water resource management system.

The Sapu Cove Watershed Management Council integrated the Sapu Masla and Sapu Padidu Watersheds (COLONEFAR) and the Sapu Cove (SACI-FARMC). It is composed of the SBMA, SPSFC, and the religious sector, both barangay government units and other people's organizations from the two barangays.

SCWMC started planting fruit trees along the slopes, both for the prevention of erosion and for the upland PO-members' livelihood. River rehabilitation through bamboo planting is being undertaken. This time, the floods are no longer as strong and as frequent as the 80s. No big flashflood was recorded since 2000.

Peace also became one of the advocacies of SBMA. The community does not want another social disorder, like the one in the 70s; and never poverty of that scale again. SBMA also became a member of the Provincial Network of Resource Managers in Sarangani (PRONET), a province-wide network of fisherfolk organizations and leaders.

The Deputized Fish Wardens were active in the fight against illegal fishing. However, they felt that there is not enough will to enforce the law. There was a time when the some people in the

¹⁶ Guiam and Farid, 2000

community pursued extra-legal means to pursue their claim over their waters.

Through the PRONET, LGU and MFARMC, the fisherfolk requested the formation of the Philippine National Police (PNP) Maritime Auxiliary and a detachment of PNP Maritime in Malapatan to help in the enforcement of the fisheries laws. SBMA is also monitoring and patrolling the cove twice a week.

Recovery and continuous vigilance

Catch is once again starting to be abundant in the cove. From traditional nonmotorized boats, some fisherfolk were able to own motorized fishing bancas.

The news of a good catch in the cove drew fisherfolk from other municipalities. Together with the local government, SBMA set dialogues with the fishers to explain the principles of community property rights and management of water resources. The continuous vigilance drew the ire of the commercial fishers and their protectors. However, SBMA did not waver on its promotion of commercial fisheries-less municipal waters.

In late 2002, an entrepreneur put up a fish cage in the cove. This is against the Fisheries Code¹⁷ so SBMA and SPSFC advocated, through the Municipal Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council¹⁸ (MFARMC), the cancellation and nonrenewal of its permit. The permit was not renewed and eventually the operator left Sapu Cove. Owing to the vigilance and active participation of the community in the resource management concerns, the planned dry dock in Sapu Masla was scrapped by a General Santos City-based fishing company.

Seeing the opportunity from the sea, more households migrated to the coast. To protect residents from flashfloods and strong waves, the local government put up gabion fences and seawalls. Relatives who worked in the Middle East further helped improve some of the fishing households. Houses are mostly concrete and wood and

most households have appliances. Nevertheless, daily sustenance is still from the sea. The SBMA was able to put up a mangrove nursery, which caters to the rehabilitation initiatives of the organization and the municipality. SBMA and SPSFC were able to put up their own fish cages in the cove through the help of United Nations, the Chamber of Aquaculture Industries in Sarangani and the Department of Trade and Industries.

The SCWMC was renamed Sandayong. The council expanded its reach to the other POs in the two barangays. Through its efforts, POs were organized to further community management of their resources. Both the municipality and barangays support its three-years plan. The LGU also pledged counterpart in the budget.

In recognition of the SWMC's efforts, the Office of the Municipal Agriculture suggested expanding the council to other barangays. Knowing its limitations, the council wanted to first focus in its area.

In all of these developments, SBMA was able to assert its advocacy. It coped with the changes and cooperate with the other players in the barangay, municipality and province.

What was once a "no man's land" is now one of the better-developed barangays of Malapatan. Every morning one could see *compradors* and small fishers trade in the coasts.

Future plans and challenges

The relative improvement in the life of the coastal community could not be solely attributed to Coastal Resource Management, but to the convergence of development efforts and initiatives from development players in the area. SBMA's cooperation with these players made it one of the recognized players in the barangay, municipal and provincial coastal resource management affairs.

However, owing to the lack of National and Local Laws that could help secure their right over their land, the community's claim remains at risk. Social mobilizations such as this would prove futile if left unsupported by law, programs and enforcement. Thus, there is a need to continue and broaden the engagement towards the realization of the fisherfolks' Community Property Rights.

¹⁷ The New Fisheries Code of 1998 (Republic Act 8550) states that only the small fisherfolks and their organizations can put up fish cages, corrals and other structure in the municipal waters.

¹⁸ The MFARMC is the recommendatory body composed of small fisherfolk organizations and the other stakeholders of the coastal resources in the municipality.