

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Over the last decade, the Philippines have adopted several landmark policy decisions and legislation on effective governance and resource management to address critical issues of poverty alleviation, sustainable development and greater citizen participation in effective governance. Among these laws are the Local Government Code of 1991 (RA7160); National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act of 1994 (RA 7586); Philippine Fisheries Code of 1997 (RA 8550); Clean Air Act of 1999 (RA 8749); Solid Waste Management Act of 2001 (RA 9003); and more recently, the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act (RA 9147).

On the other hand, local level efforts at achieving preserving, protecting, rehabilitating and conserving, the country's natural resources and ecological systems and mobilizing the local citizenry and LGUs as direct managers of local resources have also been piloted and implemented by various donor-assisted programmes and projects such as UNDP, USAID, World Bank, ADB, JBIC, Canadian International Development Assistance (CIDA), European Union, AusAid, Ford Foundation, World Wildlife Fund, among others.

Among the major resource management and governance programmes include UNDP's Integrated Environmental Management for Sustainable Development Programme (IEMSD), Local Environmental Management (Local EPM) Project, PRIME, GEF- Samar Biodiversity Project; USAID's Natural Resource Management Programme and Local Development Assistance Programme/GOLD projects; World Bank's Environment Natural Resources Sector Loan (ENR-Secal), Watershed Management Project, Community-based Natural Resources Management Programme (CBNRM), and the Conservation of Priority Protected Areas Project (CPPAP); EU's National Integrated Protected Area Project (NIPAP); ADB's Forestry Sector Project (ADB-FSP), Fisheries Sector Project (FSP), Fisheries Resources Management Programme (FRMP); and CIDA's Local Government Support Programme (LGSP) and Philippine-Canadian Environmental and Ecological Management Project (PCEEM).

Many of these projects adopted and pursued field level piloting and implementation of community-based resource management strategies and LGU-community partnerships in local governance. While many of these projects have achieved varied levels of success in mobilizing communities and capacity local government units into taking more active responsibility and accountability of the management of their resources, these initiatives have remained scattered, if not unsustainable, beyond many of the project's life. Institutionalisation and adoption of these methodologies and systems on resource management and governance have yet to be maximized despite the closure of the projects that supported them.

Likewise, many individual initiatives by local government units and communities to engage in resource management and governance such as Palawan, Bohol, Samar, Quirino, Cagayan de Oro City, Davao City, General Santos City, Gingoog City, Bais City, Malalag, Naga City, Lipa City, Olango, Marikina, Calape, etc. are sources of valuable field experiences in local ecological governance that remains untapped and unreplicated.

On the other hand, the capacities of key government agencies and LGUs to pursue effective management of local and natural resources remain limited, if not, ineffective. Perennial lack of resources, bureaucratic apathy, and institutional pathos to changing environments and clientele needs are persistent baggages that leads to ineffectual implementation of resource management and governance policies formulated and adopted by the government.

Similarly, several on-going and prospective donor-assisted projects are continually funding projects that aim to develop and strengthen further local governance initiatives and capacities in resource management only on site-specific and sectoral resource uses without benefit of an integrated, wholistic and rational framework for local resource management and governance.

These include the ADB's Fisheries Resource Management Programme (1999-2004), USAID's Coastal Resource Management Project (1995-2003); WB's CNBRM (1998-2004), CPPAP (1994-2001), Watershed Management Improvement Project; ADB's Metro Air Project; JBIC's Southern Mindanao Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project; and CIDA's LGSP2.

Meanwhile, the issue of effective local governance and management of the country's remaining natural resources and potentials are reaching critical proportions. Uncollected garbage, air and water pollution, flash floods, inundation of croplands, erosion, coral reef destruction, lower fish catches, etc are the tell tale signs of the lack, if not, absence of a cohesive resource management and governance strategy. What further aggravates the situation is that these issues directly relates to the continued poverty of majority of the country's population who depend on these resources for their existence.

It also drains whatever limited national and local government resources allocated to address its impacts on health, sanitation, settlement, food security, and general well being of local citizens. Such misallocation and ineffective allocation of scare resources leads to further deterioration not only of the local environment but also the economic conditions of local people, especially on women and children.

Not only does poverty deprivation prevalent in the country's rural areas affecting more than 45% of the total population, but also it affects the poorest of the rural and urban poor. Women and children in particular are not only vulnerable in terms of health and infant mortality but also deprivation of economic opportunities and decision-making roles in managing local resources at both family and community levels.

Many LGUs and their local constituencies directly confront many, if not most, of these ecological and resource management issues. Existing legislations have mandated LGUs to be directly accountable to address these issues. However, the capacity of LGUs and local communities, specially 4th-6th class LGUs, is limited, to say the least, to effectively respond to the mounting clamor and pressure of their local constituencies to these problems.

