

Bringing Back the Sea's Bounty

The people in four coastal municipalities in the province of Iloilo have long relied on the sea and its bounty for their livelihoods. However, illegal fishing activities and overfishing have killed many of the fish in the area. This project has started to turn the tide.

For generations, the residents of the coastal villages in the province of Iloilo relied on Banate Bay and Barotac Bay for their livelihoods. The bays are located in the southeastern part of Panay Island. They are known as rich fishing grounds.

However, according to local fisher folk, the amount of fish caught has been declining for decades. Illegal fishing using destructive gear and overfishing have killed many of the fish in the area.

To address the problem, the four municipalities of Barotac Nuevo, Anilao, Banate, and Barotac Viejo forged an agreement to manage and conserve the coastal and marine resources of Banate Bay. The municipalities formed the Banate-Barotac Bay Resource Management Council, Inc. (BBBRMCI).

JICA has supported BBBRMCI's activities since October 2007 through a project called "Capacity Enhancement Program for the Metro Iloilo-Guimaras Economic Development Council and the Banate Bay Resource Management Council, Inc."

Under the project, Japanese experts, Filipino consultants, and members of BBBRMCI staff conducted a comprehensive coastal environment survey. The study included oceanographic, mangrove forest, sea grass bed, and coral reef surveys. It also updated the environmental situation and management issues of marine protected areas. Lastly, it included a feasibility study of the use of concrete artificial reefs in the area.

The survey guided BBBRMCI in formulating and adopting effective measures to stem the decline in the fish population.

The fishermen were taught about the harmful effects of illegal fishing gear, such as fine-meshed nets and dynamite. These fishing gear caught even the small fish and decimated the fish population.

Fisher folk were instead taught the benefits of using appropriate fishing gear, such as hand lines, which do not harm the fish and the marine environment. Small-scale fishermen easily adopt these tools; using them has greatly increased their catch and income.

Too much fishing had depleted the stock of fish in the two bays. To ease the pressure on the bays and offer the people other sources of income, they were taught alternative means of livelihood.

The residents of Banate learned how to make polvoron, a rich, crumbly type of cookie made of powdered milk, flour, sugar, and



CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM FOR THE METRO ILOILO-GUIMARAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AND THE BANATE BAY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COUNCIL, INC.

PROJECT SITE:

The four municipalities of Barotac Nuevo, Anilao, Banate, and Barotac Viejo, all in the province of Iloilo

OBJECTIVES:

- To strengthen the coastal resource management system in the four municipalities
- To reverse the decline in fish population
- To provide alternative sources of income for the fisher folk in the area

DURATION: 2007 to 2010

IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES:

Metro Iloilo-Guimaras Economic Development Council and the Banate Bay Resource Management Council, Inc.

COST: 51.4 million yen

butter. There are many variants of this popular Filipino delicacy, which may include a wide range of nuts and flavors. The high-protein version made by the residents of Banate includes a special ingredient: fish protein concentrate.

Residents in two barangays—namely, Tinorian in the municipality of Barotac Nuevo and Pantalan in the municipality Anilao—set up oyster farms on rafts. They installed them in locations that were identified by the coastal environment survey as appropriate for oyster culture. As a result, the residents have successfully harvested, and earned much, from oysters.

In the municipalities of Banate and Barotac Viejo, the residents were trained on the use of artificial reefs made of concrete. The reefs serve as fish nurseries and spawning sites.

The residents worked together to make the rafts used to transport the artificial reefs. They installed the reefs in strategic locations.

The steps taken by BBBRMCI have brought the fish back to the bays. Many of the residents have reported an increase in the number of fish and fish species in the area.