

**Marine Ecotourism & Community Participation:
Case Studies From Bohol, Philippines**
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the potential of coastal ecotourism and its role in community-based Coastal Resource Management Programs in Bohol, Philippines. It focuses on case studies of tourism products operating in three different coastal ecosystems: a coral reef sanctuary, deep-sea waters and a river estuary. The case studies highlight a variety of issues and some successes encountered with community-based tourism initiatives in Bohol's coastal communities.

The first case study looks at diving, Bohol's main tourism product. It examines conflicts between village residents and dive operators over a community-managed coral reef marine sanctuary on Cabilao Island, Loon.

The second case study is on dolphin and whale watching, an emerging tourism product. It looks at Pamilacan Island, Baclayon where a traditional whaling community now run and manages community-based marine mammal tours. This case study examines the changes in the last five years since a nationwide ban on whale hunting. It looks at the impact of a WWF funded project designed to assist the residents of Pamilacan and create a local whale and dolphin watching industry.

The third case study focuses on a community-run river cruise in the village of Cambuhad, Buenavista. This case study focuses on the changes in the community since the tour was introduced. The economic and resource management benefits that have accrued to the community are then discussed.

Broad lessons learned from the three case studies are described and recommendations are made on how to strengthen ecotourism development as a strategy for community-based coastal resource management.

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INTRODUCTION

Coastal areas offer numerous possibilities for tourism and recreational activities, with many examples of recreational travel to coastal areas. Marine ecotourism is therefore nothing new. However, in the past, the marine environment was relatively sheltered from tourist use. Inaccessibility, safety concerns and the relatively high cost of leisure trips in and around coastal areas prevented large volumes of tourists from visiting the coast and experiencing the marine environment (Orams, 1999).

Over recent decades, technological advances and the rapid expansion of the international tourism industry have made marine environments more accessible. Coastal and marine-based tourism is now one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy in the Asia Pacific region. According to the United Nations Economic & Social Commission for Asia and Pacific, it accounts for almost 20 percent of total spending by international tourists. Although domestic tourism is not as well documented as international tourism, coastal areas are some of the most popular destinations for domestic tourists in the region.

THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippine economy relies heavily on its natural resources. Agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors employ over 40% of the country's labour force, produce 30% of the country's goods and services, and earn 36% of the country's export income. However, continuing poverty jeopardizes the carrying capacity of the natural resource base (Foundation for the Philippine Environment (1999). With a ballooning population and many destructive fisheries activities being introduced, the country's marine biodiversity has become increasingly threatened and some species have been driven close to extinction.

Weak implementation of laws, inappropriate land use, sedimentation, and the widespread use of illegal fishing devices such as dynamite, cyanide and illegal trawls present serious threats to coastal communities and marine organisms alike. The high incidence of poverty in coastal communities has become alarming and provides little impetus for any marine conservation and management related activities. For many coastal communities, daily survival - putting fish on the family table - takes priority. Conservation and management of coastal resources are often alien terms.

In 1991, national legislation decentralized many responsibilities and laws from the central government to local government units (at provincial, town and village levels). This led to a rapid growth in the number of community based initiatives in coastal management and protection. Many coastal communities are now actively involved in managing their local resources. This has brought a glimmer of hope for the coastal resources of the Philippines and the quality of life for the people living along this area.

In recent years, ecotourism has become widely viewed as a policy instrument that can minimize the destruction of coastal resources whilst simultaneously providing economic opportunities for coastal communities. In the Philippines, like elsewhere, ecotourism has become a useful buzzword to quote, a sound bite to be used by government officials, local NGO's and foreign funded development agencies. Expectations are therefore high and many promises have been made to local communities.

In the more developed countries of the region the private sector is more active in coastal tourism. Private enterprises such as tour operators often take the lead and develop new marine-based tourism products. As far as I am aware this is the case in Malaysia, although some community-based initiatives such as coastal homestay programmes do supplement existing private sector activities.

In contrast, community-based coastal ecotourism is common in the Philippines. It is often communities that take the lead and develop coastal tourism products, often with NGO or local

government support. Quite often private sector participation is limited in the initial phases, although this is changing.

The number of community-centred projects is increasing. A significant number of ecotourism initiatives have taken place in Palawan and Bohol. Although well meaning, some of these projects have faced serious problems. Although there have been successes, many projects fail to live up to expectations. Some have led to community conflict, disappointment and even damage to the very coastal ecosystem they were meant to protect. But lessons have been learned from each of the projects and the successes are providing models for development elsewhere in the Philippines.

Interest in ecotourism as a means to encourage community-based conservation and development is growing apace (Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Cater and Lowman, 1994). Likewise a number of studies have examined the potential for ecotourism to encourage environmentally sound development (Barkin, 1996; Brown et al., 1997).

The key question seems to be “How to make ecotourism both socially and economically viable” and at the same time integrated with the objectives of protection and conservation of coastal habitats and the fauna and flora that dwell therein, whilst integrating the development needs of the community as a whole”?

This paper examines three ecotourism case studies in the province of Bohol. It traces the projects from inception through to implementation and looks at issues raised and some of the lessons learned. I was personally involved in the first and third case studies. Although I was not directly involved in the second case study I closely followed the development of the project.

BOHOL'S TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

With its friendly people, historic buildings, cultural events, high quality handicrafts and a beautiful natural environment, Bohol has many features that make it conducive to tourism development. Although Bohol's cultural attractions and inland areas do attract visitors, the island's tourism industry is primarily focused on the coast. The island's main attractions are its white sand beaches, small offshore islands, diverse coral reefs and rich marine life, including large numbers of whales and dolphins.

Diving is the island's primary tourism product and Bohol is regarded as one of the top diving destinations in the Philippines. Although Bohol has its own dive operators, many divers do not actually stay in Bohol but opt for day trips from nearby Cebu City, only an hour and a half away. As such many of the dive boats seen offshore from Bohol are actually based in Cebu. Cebu is a major tourist destination with over 1 million arrivals per year (Department of Tourism, 2001). With its international airport it has excellent air access. Cebu effectively serves as an international jumping off point for Bohol.

Despite rich natural resources, a nearby international access point and significant potential, Bohol's tourism industry is relatively small. Arrivals for the first half of 2001 were approximately 44,000 (Department of Tourism, 2001), of which some 22% were international visitors. In addition to these visitors, Bohol receives large numbers of day-trippers, mostly divers staying in Cebu.

Although tourist arrivals are still relatively small, Bohol is determined to get itself on the national tourism map. The Department of Tourism has picked Bohol as one of the top eight Philippine destinations and the provincial government recently decided to make “Eco-Cultural Tourism” one of its top three development strategies. Bohol has a new dynamic Provincial Governor Erico B. Aumentado and has established its very own tourism office, the Bohol Tourism Office which gives hope for the future.

Bohol's coastal ecosystems and their multitude of attractions will continue to form the base of Bohol's tourism industry. Efforts are being made to diversify the product range. Over the last five years a series of coastal ecotourism products have been developed within the critical marine ecosystems. Some are still in process, some have been packaged, whereas some have great potential but due to a variety of factors have still not yet blossomed. Three case studies discussed in this paper focus on tourism products operating in three different coastal ecosystems: a coral reef sanctuary, deep-sea waters and a river estuary.

CASE STUDY 1

Cabacongan Marine Protected Area, Cabilao Island

Background

Establishing marine sanctuaries in and around coral reefs is becoming one of the most popular tools for marine resource management and conservation. The Philippines now has over 500 community-based and managed marine sanctuaries scattered around the country. Although most are relatively small in size, they are an excellent way for communities to begin to manage their marine resources.

The Philippines also has a large dive tourism industry, but many reefs have been damaged or degraded and good dive sites are becoming fewer and fewer. Marine sanctuaries are normally managed and run by communities in cooperation with the local government, tie-ups with the local diving industry are surprisingly rare. This case study traces the development of one marine sanctuary and the impact of dive operators 'discovering' the sanctuary.

Cabilao Island, Loon, Bohol

Cabilao Island lies on the west of Bohol, in the municipality of Loon. One of Bohol's largest islands, it is composed of five villages of which one is Cabacongan village. The area has a population of some 2,500 people and faces Cebu Island. Cebu-based dive operators operating out of Mactan Island can reach Cabilao in about an hour.

Cabilao is also home to a very strong and vocal group of fisher folks, the Cabacongan Small Fishers Association. The association is composed of about 40 fishing families. The whole island depends on fishing as its main source of livelihood. In the village of Cabacongan over 80% of population are engaged in full and part time fishing.

The Project

In 1997 a Bohol-based NGO and Voluntary Service Overseas, a British based organization, entered the area and set up a series of community development activities. The local government officials in Loon were also fully involved in the project. The main objective of the project was to integrate community based natural resource management into the wider development of the community.

After a series of workshops, seminars and visits to other areas of the Philippines, the community began to focus on how to begin the task of managing the resources within their jurisdiction. After a year or so of advocacy and marine education work, the community decided to create their own community based marine sanctuary in a high quality reef section. A few months after this decision to proceed was made, the community finally launched their 11.8 hectare coral reef and sea grass sanctuary.

No fishing was allowed within the sanctuary but villagers were allowed to fish in the waters surrounding the sanctuary. To begin with many people would mistakenly enter the sanctuary to carry on their fishing activities. Signboards and marker buoys were installed and gradually after a series of meetings with neighbouring villages, all local fishers were informed of the proposed sanctuary and everyone agreed to respect the rules of the sanctuary. The Loon council then passed local legislation declaring the area a marine protected area. The community also set up a roster so that villagers took turns to guard the sanctuary.

Up until 1999 all was well; fewer and fewer fishermen intruded into the area and those that did were promptly arrested and fined and rarely returned again. The two Cabilao-based dive shops were present during the sanctuary declaration process. They agreed not to dive in the sanctuary and only

enter when asked to join regular scientific monitoring of the sanctuary alongside the community members.

The Cabacongan Marine Protected Area was a resounding success and a great example of a community taking the lead in managing their resources. Fish catches around the sanctuary doubled from previous times and the community clearly saw the benefits from their efforts. Research showed that the fish quantity has increased by over 600% inside the sanctuary and by over 300% outside over 1997 baselines (Uychaioco, A. 2000). In addition, many more species of fish began returning to the area, species that were not present in the original baseline research.

Dive Tourism

By late 1999, dive boats from Mactan Island in Cebu began arriving at the sanctuary and started to dive inside the protected area. At first only a limited number of boats dived in the sanctuary but once word spread about the abundance of marine life the number of boats increased markedly. On weekends an average of 6-10 dive boats would be anchored at the side of the sanctuary.

Cabilao Island is a renowned diving spot in Central Visayas, but the area where the sanctuary was declared had never been dived in before. It is on the far side of the island and well away from the three small beach resorts, two dive shops and previously visited dive spots.

Every time the dive boats appeared, the community guards (women in the day, men at night) would paddle their boats up to the dive boat and politely request the boat operators to leave and dive somewhere else. The boat operators would make excuses, tell the guards that their dive masters were in charge and told them to go to this area and that is what the tourists wanted.

After their polite requests were repeatedly ignored, the community decided to take more action. Signboards were placed around the sanctuary in English and letters were sent to the dive shop owners in Cebu but again this seemed to have little impact.

The local government unit was not prepared to dispatch police officers to arrest divers as they felt it would cause too many embarrassing situations. In addition, they were pro-tourism development so felt that it was better to keep a low profile and not take action on the issue.

The community was in despair with what was happening; the divers seemed to be having great pleasure in the sanctuary, yet community members were not allowed to enter the sanctuary. The community had spent many voluntary hours guarding the area, arresting illegal fishers and fining them but received no benefit from the divers. Villagers were also concerned that the divers would scare away all the fish, though this was disproved through the regular biophysical monitoring.

In the months to come, a situation arose that affected the dive operators' business. But the operators poor relations with the local community meant that the diving industry were unable to open a dialogue with the community in order to safeguard one of Cabilao's great diving experiences – viewing hammerhead sharks. With no real channel of communication and distrust between the two parties, Cabilao lost an attraction that drew divers from around the world.

Shark Fever

Cabilao used to renowned for its sharks, schools and schools of Scalloped Hammerheads (*Sphyrna lewini*) and Giant Hammerheads (*Sphyrna mokarran*) were present in the area, especially in the early months of the year. In 1999 a group of long lining fishers from another area were blown off course from one of their fishing expeditions by a typhoon and ended up in the Cabacongan community.

With little food and money for the rest of their journey these fishermen decided to try their luck in and around Cabilao Island. On the first day that they laid their baited hooks along the deeper portion of the reef. To everyone's surprise that night they caught 18 huge hammerhead sharks. The local community had heard of the sharks but never really believed there were that many.

All of a sudden everyone on the island got 'shark fever' with local fishers jumping on the bandwagon and going shark fishing. The market rate for one shark was between US\$ 50-60, with meat going cheaply to the local community and the fins dried and sold to shark's fin dealers in Cebu.

Over the next four weeks over 350 hammerhead and other sharks were removed from the island. The dive operators, beach resort owners and foreign tourists were disgusted that one of Cabilao's selling points was being destroyed. Local and Cebu based dive shops held numerous meetings and lobbied for a stop to the shark fishing.

The communities however felt that the divers and beach resort owners had no right to tell them how to manage their resources. Especially as the community had been so upset by the divers in the past who refused to listen to their request to stop diving in the sanctuary. Eventually the Local Government intervened through a local village elder who saw the impact that the shark fishing was having on the island's tourism industry.

Unfortunately, the halt in shark fishing came too late to save the hammerhead sharks. The hammerheads have never been seen again around Cabilao and with a very low fertility rate and long age until they give birth they may well never return to the island again. A loss for all, but the community didn't dive and saw no benefit in preserving the sharks as they only considered them as dangerous animals with no value except for their meat and fins. They also saw no economic or other benefit in protecting the sharks just for the divers. In short they did not benefit from tourism and so saw no reason to help the dive operators.

If You Can't Beat Them Join Them

After four years the Cebu based dive shops have now pretty much stopped entering the marine sanctuary at Cabacongan, thanks to continued information dissemination, advocacy and communication by the community. Most dive operators now understand that the sanctuary is off-limits to divers, fishing and all other human access.

After a series of consultations begun in 2000, the community has also agreed to stop the extraction of sharks in and around the island, as long as they start to receive some benefits from tourism.

In 2001 key individuals from Cabilao Island and Loon town visited a marine sanctuary in Gilutongan, Cordova, in neighbouring Cebu province. The visit was arranged so that residents and government officials could see how another community had successfully managed its relationship with local divers. The community at Gilutongan imposes an entrance fee for divers who wish to enter its sanctuary. In 2001 the community collected close to US\$ 20,000 from diver entrance fees (personal communication **Menguito, T, 2001**)

After the cross visit to Cebu the community at Cabilao unanimously agreed that they would now like to invite regulated divers into the sanctuary and charge US\$1 per head per dive. Fees collected will go towards the management and protection of the sanctuary, the placement of buoys and other community related activities.

Today the Cabacongan Marine Protected Area is thriving. The community is benefiting from increased catches and the sanctuary is rich in marine life. Ironically, it is also now home to a group of black tip sharks that have taken refuge in the overwhelmingly rich resources of the sanctuary. The community are also starting to develop better relations with the dive operators. After four years both dive operators and the community look like finding a way to work together so that divers can

experience the marine life of the sanctuary and the community can receive some economic benefit for their efforts in marine conservation.

Lessons Learned

- Tourism activities can develop rapidly and spontaneously in coastal areas. Within a very short time an area that previously received no tourists can suddenly find that it has been ‘discovered’ by a large number of tourism operators. Government planners, NGOs and community leaders often cannot keep up with the fast pace of developments on the ground.
- There is a need for greater interaction between government officials, community leaders and private sector tour companies that operate in coastal areas.
- Tourism operators and their clients are often unaware of the serious damage that they can cause to vital conservation activities. They should be more aware and eager to ask and get involved in these conservation activities. The diving communities’ lack of knowledge regarding the sanctuary at Cabilao shows how little interaction took place between the Cebu based dive operators and the local community.
- Resources can no longer be termed ‘open access’; divers and fishermen can no longer go anywhere, anytime, resources need to be treated with ownership for all the stakeholders to ensure sustainable management. Once this management is in place other activities in the area must be decided by the community, in coordination with the other stakeholders such as divers.
- The main objective of the sanctuary was to improve the livelihood of the local fishers. As the area was previously ‘undived’, no-one even considered that there may be potential for diving in the area. Even the development workers were caught off guard by the huge increase in fish stocks in the area and the subsequent demand for it as a dive site. Coastal Resource Management programmes will increasingly need to factor in scenarios for possible tourism development, even if that is not the main objective of the programme.
- Dive tourism is often considered as one of the great hopes for mass dissemination of marine conservation, yet in this case it has caused serious damage to a community-based conservation effort and caused divisions amongst the local community.
- Lack of clear guidelines for the diving industry can result in major conflicts with local communities and lead to undermining community efforts at managing their nature resources. Irresponsible tourism operators, many of whom were selling their tours as nature-based products, can cause major problems to the environment and the community in which they operate. Things are slowly coming together on Cabilao but a responsible approach by dive operators in the early stages could have prevented many problems from arising.
- Simple “adopt-a-reef” projects and/or more regular interaction between the divers and the community can bring major benefits. On Cabilao it could have prevented problems and resentment and may in fact have saved the hammerheads from being fished out.
- Coastal communities enthusiastically embrace coastal resource management programmes. Projects take time to implement but communities are very good at managing the resources of their local area, once they see and understand the benefits.
- Levying an “entrance fee” looks like a win-win solution for divers and the local people that manage marine sanctuaries. However, this arrangement is still being worked out and the dive shops are not very enthusiastic about paying for something that they previously had access to for free.

- Some coastal communities still treat tourists and visitors as a threat and not an opportunity. The private sector and local governments need to do more resolve this. Coastal communities are often slow in reaching out. NGOs can provide a bridge between the tourism operators and local governments but often lack the specialised tourism knowledge to handle a fast changing situation.
- Community-based marine sanctuaries have huge potential for ecotourism. However the community must get preferential benefit and a say in the management of the tourism.
- More interpretation and interaction between divers and the local community is required. Historical background materials on why the community initiated the sanctuary and a small interpretation centre could benefit the community and visiting tourists. However, funding is often a problem.
- A phased approach to marine sanctuaries may be the way forward. Priority must be given to successfully getting the sanctuary up and running before introducing tourism. Conservation and livelihood aspects (e.g. increasing fish catch) should form the first phase. Once the community has successfully managed this, and marine life increases, then a tourism component can be considered. Attempting too many things at once may be difficult. In addition, introducing tourism in the first phase may be premature and raise hopes. If tourism does not take off, disappointment may set in before the sanctuary is established.
- Cross-visits to successful marine sanctuaries are an excellent way for a community to understand issues, benefits and the possible tourism spin offs of establishing marine protected areas. Presentations by government officials, NGOs and private tour companies as well as community dialogues do get results but they take time. Cross-visits can speed the process up and convince a sceptical community.
- Dive industry with the coastal community members can be trained to conduct assessment of coral reef conditions providing valuable monitoring data needed to sustain reef management.

CASE STUDY 2

Pamilacan Island, Turning Whalers Into Whale & Dolphin Spotters

The Traditional Whalers of Pamilacan Island

The small island of Pamilacan is situated in the heart of the Bohol Sea off the south coast of Bohol. The deep waters around the island offer rich fishing grounds to local residents. The sheer abundance of fish and deep waters also attract a range of marine mammals. Twelve species of resident and migratory marine mammals have been sighted in the waters of Pamilacan. Five species of dolphin and seven species of whale are commonly seen in the area.

Pamilacan is home to 265 families and the community has a rich indigenous knowledge and fascinating history of whaling. A whale fishery has existed in Pamilacan for over a hundred years. The island's name is derived from the Visayan word "*pamilak*", a large hook used to hand spear whales, manta rays, whale sharks and occasionally dolphins.

Historically, whaling was essentially a subsistence activity for the islanders. A limited number of whales were captured each year and the meat was consumed by the villagers or sold locally in Bohol. In the early 1990's, the introduction of new technologies and financing for new engines and fishing boats transformed local whaling into a commercial operation. Financiers and dealers played an increasingly important role and whaling became a lucrative business for the islanders. Although whale meat was still consumed locally much of it was sold to outside dealers and exporters.

In 1992 the national government banned the hunting of all whales and dolphins. At first the regulations were not strictly enforced so islanders continued to hunt whales. However, as enforcement improved Pamilacan's fishing fleet turned their attention to whale sharks and manta rays.

Until recently, whale & manta ray fishing was the main source of income for residents of Pamilacan. One whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) was sold locally for around US\$ 1,000 whilst manta rays (*Manta birostris*) fetched US\$ 30-40 per piece. During the peak of this boom period up to 200 whale sharks and 400 manta rays were being caught every year. The take was unsustainable. It quickly led to the effective demise of the whaleshark population and reduced income for the island's fishing fleet.

The Project

In 1997 WWF-Philippines, under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Marine Mammal Conservation, started to implement a community-based whale watching project in Pamilacan Island. This project was part of the "Integrated Development Plan for Pamilacan Island Dolphin and Whale Watching Village," developed by members of a task force composed of government and non-government agencies. The plan also included the establishment of a marine mammal museum, scientific research and the declaration of the Bohol Sea area as a marine mammal protected area.

With a US\$150,000 grant from Citibank, WWF and their Philippine counterpart the *Kabang Kalikasan ng Pilipinas* established a field and research station in the island and conducted a series of consultative meetings with the community. WWF-Philippines produced a business plan and destination planning report. They also conducted surveys and profiles of the local community and their fishery resources and livelihoods. A series of ecotourism seminars were held in order to prepare the island community for whale watching and raise awareness of the possible economic opportunities brought about by the presence of the whales and dolphins.

The WWF also helped with community organizing and the formation of the Pamilacan Island Dolphin and Whale Watching Organization. Loans were also made available so that fishermen could purchase the necessary safety equipment and refurbish their boats to make them suitable for whale watching.

Pamilacan's Ecotourism Potential

Undoubtedly Pamilacan has the potential to become a major dolphin and whale watching destination. The island is easily accessible, only a short drive and boat ride from the provincial capital and Panglao Island, the centre of Bohol's tourism industry. The community has a vast pool of knowledge on whales and dolphins and are proficient at spotting marine mammals from a distance. These factors, combined with the sheer volume of marine mammals found in the waters, suggested that the ingredients were in place to develop an excellent community-based ecotourism product. The WWF project was also well funded. But despite this and the immense potential, the project faced serious problems.

Problems & Issues

In the pre-start-up phase of the project there was little transparency and limited local participation in the planning of the project. Project officials essentially worked alone in the community. In Bohol, it is common practise for NGOs from outside the province to work with a Bohol-based NGO. This is especially the case with foreign NGOs but also occurs when an NGO from elsewhere in Philippines sets up a project in Bohol. Such 'counter-parting' increases the chances of success. Local NGOs also have the necessary links to work closely with the provincial government and local government units.

However, no counter-parting took place in Pamilacan. In addition, the local government was not involved in any meaningful way in the early phases of project. As a result the project lacked local political support. Local politicians believed that the project could cause harm to the short-term livelihood of their electorate. As they were not fully briefed or involved they were not aware of the goals and potential benefits of the project.

Another major problem was that the community was not united; it was split into two factions. One faction was keen to develop whale and dolphin watching tours but the other group was happy to continue whale hunting.

Another constraint was that the project actually focused more on scientific research and conservation than actual community development. The community development component was limited to providing whale and dolphin watching and catering services. No other resource management, law enforcement or enterprise elements were introduced. A wider scope could have assisted in uniting the community to back the project.

The research based component of the project was certainly valuable but it caused problems and misunderstandings with the community. In the initial phase WWF conducted research on historical and current catches in order to assess the status of marine mammals in the area. Initially, the community were very sceptical about the research and kept their activities secret and went whaling when the researchers were not around. Eventually the researchers gained the community's trust and were given a good insight into the local industry.

The WWF research team discovered a huge decline in the number of whale sharks and manta rays being caught. It goes without saying that the WWF is a media savvy NGO, well known for pushing its conservation agenda. Shortly after completing its research in Pamilacan and gaining the community's trust, WWF research findings started to appear in a number of national media reports. This publicity certainly helped push the conservation agenda. However, it set in motion a series of events that were to cause major social and economic problems in Pamilacan and put WWF in the spotlight.

These problems came to a head in March 1998. Alarmed by the falling numbers of whale sharks and manta rays in the area, the National Bureau of Fisheries suddenly banned the sale and capture of all whale sharks and manta rays. Within the space of a day and without much consultation the main livelihood of the community was suddenly cut off on March 25th, 1998. Over 100 large fishing boats were affected by the ban.

The ban threw the whole community into a state of war and divisions between the pro-whaling faction and the pro-tourism faction grew. The ban came at a bad time for the WWF who were caught in the middle of the new law. The community lost trust in the WWF, as many villagers believed that WWF's research activities contributed to the ban. Shortly following the ban there was a mass resignation from the Pamilacan Island Dolphin and Whale Watching Organization. For safety reasons, the project's base and staff were shifted from the Island to the mainland.

Despite the ban some hunting continued for a while. WWF also worked to build bridges and continue to develop the whale and dolphin watching tour. It was not until recently that the ban was effectively enforced and certain villagers actually stopped the slaughter of the whale sharks. The government ban was a little late for the whale sharks. Very few have returned to the area.

Limited Success

Although the project faced difficulties, WWF continued to work with the pro-tourism faction of the community and develop the tour. WWF's involvement in the project ended in early 2000. Since then the Pamilacan Island Dolphin and Whale Watching Organization has run the tour on its own.

The tour has received good feedback from tourists. Tourists on a typical tour usually see large groups of dolphins and during the migratory season (March-June) whales are often seen. The publicity surrounding the ban also generated publicity for the tour. Film makers and researchers also frequently visit Pamilacan and make use of the services of the community.

The tour is a success of sorts but much work needs to be done to market the tour and increase the benefits to the community. The private sector have not really been involved in the initiative and without their support it will be difficult to increase visitor numbers.

Since 1998, the community has conducted over 400 tours, grossing a total of approximately 1 million pesos (US\$20,000). The community organization now has over 120 members and continues to work to improve the tour. The project implementers have also developed better links with the local government unit. Pride in the local area has increased and there is now greater awareness the whales and dolphins and the benefits their presence can bring.

Lessons Learned

- It is vital that the whole community is united around some common goals or problems before a community-based coastal ecotourism initiative is implemented.
- Local government units should be involved from the beginning. Their support is essential for the success of community-based coastal ecotourism. Outside NGOs should also link up with local NGOs.
- Projects that focus purely on ecotourism development and do not include other essential coastal management activities are more likely to face problems. Law enforcement, resource management, education, capability building and support are essential components. Tourism alone is often not enough to generate sufficient benefits to bring the community together.

- Transparency and effective community liaison are essential, especially in the early stages of the project.
- Education and interpretation are vital elements. For example, the Pamilacan marine mammal museum never took off and this left a gap in environmental education. In addition to providing information for tourists the museum could have played an important role in local education, not only for the community on Pamilacan but also for other coastal communities in Bohol and for domestic tourists.
- Having accessible world-class marine attractions is no guarantee of quick success.
- Marketing and promotional activities need to be factored in at the beginning of a coastal ecotourism initiative, not treated as an afterthought.

CASE STUDY 3

Cambuhat River and Village Tour

Background

The small village of Cambuhat, Buenavista is situated in Northwest Bohol, around two hours from the Capital City, Tagbilaran City. The community is composed of fishers and farmers who live along the banks of a picturesque river.

In late 1998, the Coastal Resource Management Project of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, funded by the United States Agency for International Development began working in the town of Buenavista and with the community of Cambuhat.

After a series of community awareness sessions and participatory research activities, it was decided that the integrated coastal management project would focus on rehabilitating the river, as this was the mainstay of the community's development. The project focused on transport, fishing, mangrove harvesting, establishing an oyster farm and providing technical and marketing assistance to increase the village's income from handicraft production.

Ecotourism Packaging and Development

Owing to the attractions of the natural environment and the wide variety of interesting day-to-day activities it was proposed that the community develop a tour for visitors. It was decided that the main theme of the tour should focus on the community's relationship with its abundant natural resources.

The tour was designed to illustrate the vital link between the quality of the life of the community and the quality of the surrounding resources. Guests are first met at the river by local fishermen who then paddle their boats downstream through the mangrove and Nipa palms. The guests are then led to the oyster farm and a small visitors centre on the bank of the river. Visitors are then treated to a riverside lunch of oysters and other seafood. They learn how the oysters are cultured and how the community now manages the river and mangroves. A short trip up to village follows and visitors then observe activities such as nipa making and weaving on traditional looms.

In the early stages of the tour only study/educational groups (e.g. from NGOs and government departments) from the Philippines were targeted. These groups were seen as more open to experience the tour in its experimental phase. After every tour the visitors and community sat down and discussed the tour. These evaluations helped the community improve the tour.

During the whole process the local village and town leaders were always present, made many valuable contributions to the activities and helped with financing some of the activities. The Cambuhat women's organization played an active role in developing the tour. Other partners from the Provincial Government, National Government agencies, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources also helped in the process.

After about three months of experimental tours, the tour began to evolve and prices were fixed. Bohol based tour operators were then invited on the tour and asked to make suggestions. This was coordinated by the Bohol Federation of Tour Operators. After experiencing the tour an agreement was immediately drawn up between the tour operators and the community. The tour operators agreed to help sell the tour and started to offer it as one of their packages. They also became active partners, offering hints and suggestions on how to better develop the tour.

As the tour became more established, the village formed their own village cooperative called Cambuhat Enterprise Development and Fishermen's Association (CEDFA). The cooperative allowed

everyone to take an active role in deciding how best to manage the tour, share the benefits and invest and plan future activities. The community also developed their own ecotourism enterprise development and management plan, which laid down the legal framework for the management of the area, development of sustainable products and services, and user guidelines. This was integrated with a five-year coastal management plan for the whole of the town and is currently being implemented by the local Government and villages of Buenavista.

Two and a half years after the project begun the tour became more widely available to the general public. Since then a steady flow of visitors have come and visited the area. The community has operated over 100 tours and feedback is very positive. Although visitor arrivals are relatively small the project has enabled the community to generate extra income through tour fees, the sale of oysters and local handicrafts. Residents have also developed a number of new skills and are getting good at lobbying national agencies and the local town for tighter management of their resources.

The community at Cambuhat have developed an interesting coastal tourism product that highlights the estuarine environment in which they live. They have received local recognition for their work, media exposure and an international ecotourism award. The residents would very much like to increase visitor numbers. However, the project does face a number of difficulties in increasing tourist volume. Some issues, such as improving interpretation facilities and guiding, can be solved locally. However, access and marketing issues are not so easily solved.

For example, the site is about 2 hours drive from Tagbilaran City, the provincial capital. This is considered quite far for tourists who tend to stay in the major beach resort areas situated close to Tagbilaran. Lack of promotion in neighbouring Cebu also needs to be addressed. The community are not so business minded and although they have an interesting tour they still lack the skills and links to market and promote their product. Cebu-based tour operators arrange many of the tour packages to Bohol. As such it will be necessary to tap this 'feeder' market in order to increase visitor numbers. Relying purely on Bohol-based tour operators may not be sufficient.

Lessons Learned

- Tourism development came naturally once the facilitating agency had already got the attention of the community through the other components of the coastal resource management project. Successful enterprise, education and resource management activities provided an entry point before development of a tourism component.
- Marketing community-based ecotourism can be problematic. The community often lacks the skills and industry links in this area. The private sector through the Bohol tour operators helped greatly with the marketing and promotion of the tour, as well as with a series of interesting media articles.
- Clear definition of roles within the community was essential; the strong leadership of the women was the main driving force of the project. The women focused on running the tour and managing the upland resources while the men provided tourism services (boat trips and paddling) as well as management of the oyster farm and coastal resources. This role definition united the community and allowed them to solve the various problems that arose during the evolution of the tour.
- Co-management of the tour between the local government and community, with the intervening agency merely acting as catalyst and bridge between the two, contributed to the successful development of the product.
- Cooperation and coordination between various government agencies was essential to ensure that everyone had a stake in successful developing the tour.

- Large investments are not necessarily required to develop community-based ecotourism projects. However, experienced implementers who can offer technical assistance and advice are essential, as is local government support.
- When a whole community opts for tourism, a project often becomes a focus for community cohesiveness. Peer pressure ensures that everyone pulls his or her weight. Meetings and discussions about tourism bring the community together on a regular basis.
- Awareness of local markets and initially focusing on study and education tours from government offices, development agencies, etc., helped to allow the community to build their capability. Domestic and local markets were essential to develop the tour and the skills of the community. Only once the tour became established was the tour sold to international tourists via local operators.
- The tour, enterprise and resource management activities created a complimentary menu of activities for the community. It also ensured that the community could always rely on other activities when tourism was slow. The initial resource management activities brought benefits to the community (e.g. increased fish catch and improved mangrove management), while the enterprise component increased incomes and diversified livelihood activities. The success of these initiatives ensured that the community was enthusiastic to take on something new such as tourism.
- A project life cycle master plan involving all stakeholders is useful. It helps to ensure a smooth implementation of the project and clarifies roles and responsibilities.
- Long-term assistance commitment from the initiator is essential. Developing a community-based ecotourism product takes a long time, in this case close to three years. Project implementers should, however, gradually reduce their role as the project develops and the community (and local government) takes complete control.
- Good ecotourism products with perceived access problems can face problems increasing tourist numbers. Access issues were not really considered in the initial phase of the Cambuhat project.

INSIGHTS INTO COMMUNITY BASED COASTAL ECOTOURISM

Bohol offers government planners, NGOs, researchers, consultants, and private sector companies a number of valuable insights into the development of community-based ecotourism products in coastal areas. The Bohol experience is certainly useful for those who intend to implement community-based coastal ecotourism projects elsewhere in the Philippines. Hopefully it also provides some insights that may be use outside the Philippines as well.

Broad lessons from Bohol include.

- Integrated coastal management assistance incorporating enterprise development, education, resource management and ecotourism is often more successful than just focusing on “ecotourism alone”. Each element compliments the others. In addition the results from other components of coastal management, such as increased catches, often produce quicker results than tourism.
- Ecotourism is not a good entry point for coastal management projects, but more a condenser and synergizer that pulls together various initiatives within coastal communities as part of an overall master plan. Some initiatives may not even start off as ecotourism projects (e.g. Cabilao), but as projects evolve ecotourism may be able to come in later in the project life cycle, as other activities become successful and community awareness and skills develop.
- The more agencies and partners that work together the better. Tourism development in coastal areas often involves officials from various government departments. The project may initially start off with only a few agencies but as the project develops there is a need to draw in more and more partners to ensure its sustainability.
- Coordination among different ministries and departments (Tourism, Environment, Development, Fisheries, Enforcement, etc.) and consultation with the private sector are essential for the successful development of community-based coastal ecotourism.
- Local government support is vital for developing community based coastal ecotourism.
- Community-based coastal ecotourism products take a relatively long time to develop. It may take 3 or 4 years before a product is fully developed and a lot longer to successfully market the product.
- Tourism activities can develop rapidly in the coastal zone in areas where planners least expect. This rapid growth can have a significant impact on existing community-based work.
- Don't just focus on international tourists. The domestic market is often larger and can play an important role in developing a new product.
- There is still a need for capability building of tourism skills at local government levels and linking national plans with local communities and local product development.
- Only a few products are actually viable. Not every community can set up an ecotourism project. Markets and financing mechanisms need to be carefully studied prior to any activities in order to ensure that the product is viable.
- Being realistic about the financial benefits of tourism and stressing that tourism takes time helps to keep the community's expectations at a realistic level.

- Ecotourism is a great way to showcase the different coastal ecosystems and can play a vital role in education and raising awareness of the environment. It also makes communities proud of their resources and this encourages them to continue managing their natural resources.
- Projects should aim to achieve social development goals and not just focus on ecotourism for the sake of it. Let the community define their priority issues and problems and activate projects to resolve these initially. If the initial project is successful then ecotourism can always be built on top of these successes and groundwork will be a lot easier.
- A well trained and very capable implementing agency should take the lead initially but slowly transfer the decision-making responsibilities to the communities and local governments and other agencies involved. Breaking the different phases into 'bite size' chunks makes it easier for the communities to deal with. It also builds confidence.
- Link the ecotourism as much as possible to resource management and conservation initiatives, as well as enterprise development. That way both activities will build on each other as well as giving the community a fallback position and safety net if everything falls through. This also ensures that expectations for the ecotourism component are not so high.
- In answer to the question whether "ecotourism is both socially and economically viable" it seems that this can only be answered on a case-to-case basis. However if the project is well planned and implemented carefully it can be it seems.
- To the secondary question of whether it can be integrated with the objectives of protection and conservation of coastal habitats and the fauna and flora that dwell therein, whilst integrating the development needs of the community as a whole, again the answer seems to be on a case to case basis. However with an excellent set of well trained, experienced and highly motivated staff, adequate time and a very well planned project then again yes it can.
- There is much more room for the involvement of the private sector in community-based coastal ecotourism. For example,
 1. Communities need considerable help with the business side of ecotourism. Financial bookkeeping, marketing, budgeting, promotion and advertising are some of the weak areas. These can be developed as the project goes along but other mechanisms for this may need to be implemented initially. This is where the private sector can play a greater role, as this is normally their specialization.
 2. More private sector feedback in the inception and planning phase. The private sector has greater knowledge of marketability, transportation and access issues, and pricing and can provide valuable input to project implementers.
 3. Private sector opinion should also be sought on competing destinations, products and attractions. For example, there is little point in developing a world-class ecotourism product when the next village or island has exactly the same product, plus 20 years experience in operating and marketing it.
 4. In the Philippines the private sector may need to be the one to reach out to communities and not visa versa, communities are often distrustful and unlikely to take the lead. Private sector should be encouraged to reach out to the community.

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