

## A MULTI-PURPOSE SURVEY OF FOUR FISHING VILLAGES IN EASTERN MINDANAO

### Introduction

The Eastern Mindanao Research Consortium (EMARC) which is composed of four social research centers (Ateneo de Davao University, Holy Cross of Digos, Notre Dame of Cotabato City, and Urios College of Butuan City) has completed the first phase of its poverty survey of four fishing communities in eastern Mindanao. The focus on fishermen and fishing villages appeared as a research imperative since fishermen are often alluded to as "the poorest of the poor" in many poverty studies. Each of the EMARC members selected one research site in its locality in which the survey was conducted.

The multi-purpose study was primarily undertaken for the purpose of providing information which will hopefully help in the formulation of policies and programs that will improve the living conditions of fishermen; and secondly, for the purpose of generating hypotheses as to why fishermen are poor and remain so. More specifically, the survey intended to:

1. present a socioeconomic profile of coastal households;
2. describe economic activities related to fishing communities;
3. determine fishermen's participation and attitudes towards existing organizations;
4. determine their attitudes and perceptions towards government-assisted programs; and
5. describe their perception of poverty, aspirations, needs, and sentiments.

The single research design divided the work into three phases:

- I. preliminary survey of the fishing communities;
- II. final selection of four fishing communities, pretesting instruments, immersion activities, and community survey;
- III. mapping/household listing activities, selection of sample households, interviews.

Household listing and mapping activities were undertaken simultaneously for one week. The listing generated 150 eligible respondents for the study and 100 fishermen-respondents were randomly chosen from the list. Substitute respondents equal to ten percent of the sample were likewise chosen.

## I. BAGO APLAYA, DAVAO CITY

CORAZON MAE BAYLON  
LOURDES J. MAMAED

### General Profile of the Village

Bago Aplaya is one of six sitios in Bago Gallera, Davao City. Approximately eleven kilometers from Davao City Poblacion and 1.1 kilometers from the national highway, it is reached either on foot or by tricycles that ply the route from Toril. Bago Aplaya is inhabited by 361 squatter families, majority of whom are full-time fishermen. In January 1981, the Ministry of Human Settlements inaugurated its BLISS Project in the area and relocated 50 families to the BLISS Site. "Old" Bago Aplaya now refers to the area that is not included in the BLISS Project. This study includes "Old" Bago Aplaya and the BLISS Site. There are 50 fishermen-households in the BLISS Site, while 155 fishermen households are scattered all over the rest of "Old" Bago Aplaya.

The village's proximity to the poblacion gives the household members access to secondary occupations like carpentry and utility work. The construction of a 17-hectare modern beach resort on an adjacent area, for example, gave the household members the opportunity to work as casual laborers, carpenters, and utility men. There are two types of fishing activities in the area: marine fishing and fishpond farming. Two hundred and one families are engaged in marine fishing, while five families manage fishponds. Households engage in fishing the whole year round. The months from May to July are considered peak months, while February to April are the lean months.

A number of government agencies, established mainly to extend government assistance to the households, can be seen in the BLISS Site. These are the Ministry of Human Settlements, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Ministry of Local Government, Population Commission, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Social Services and Development. In contrast, no government agencies hold office in Bago Aplaya.

The presence of two boat manufacturers, mat weavers, and a noodle factory is an indication of the growing industrialization in the area.

### Demographic Characteristics

Of the 100 respondents interviewed more than three-fourths (78 per cent) of the respondents are married while the rest (18 per cent) are single or widowed (2 per cent). Fifty-three percent of the fishermen are below 40 years old, and the mean age is 38.7 years. More than half (53 per cent) of them have resided in

the place for more than three years. Forty-one were born in Davao City; thirteen were born in Bago Aplaya. One third of the fishermen had migrated from the Visayas, mostly from Cebu and Leyte, and three came from Luzon. Seventy-seven respondents have no secondary education. Three finished Grade V and forty are elementary graduates. Only three respondents are high school graduates. The educational attainment of the fishermen is low with 5.5 mean years of schooling. A good majority (86 per cent) of the respondents are Catholics, six per cent are *Iglesia ni Kristo* followers, and four percent are Protestants.

### Socioeconomic Characteristics

Eighty of the 100 respondents reside in houses which are constructed of wood and bamboo with *nipa* or *cogon* roofing. Forty-two of these houses are in great need of repair. Only seven respondents are living in houses built of strong materials. Forty-five respondents constructed their houses on somebody else's lot without paying any lot rental. Fourteen of them live in houses on rented lots while twenty are recipients of the BLISS housing program and pay a monthly amortization of P50.00. Almost one-half (47 respondents) live in three-room houses (sala, dining room, and one bedroom). Thirty-seven live in two-room houses (sala, and at the same time, a dining room and one bedroom). All together, the average number of rooms in the fishermen's home is three.

Although electricity is available in the area, only 31 respondents use electricity while 47 use kerosene for lighting purposes. A great majority (92 per cent) of the respondents use wood as fuel for cooking. While 33 respondents use the Davao water system, 30 of them get their water from public artesian wells, 17 have their own water pumps and 12 get their water from open wells. Eighty-two respondents have toilets, most of which are water-sealed type. Sixteen respondents do not have toilets at all.

More than half or 57 respondents eat their meals on the floor and only 43 have dining tables or dining sets. Fifty-eight fishermen have no sala sets; wooden benches serve as their sala set/chairs. Only 42 own a simple sala set. A large majority (91 per cent) do not have beds. A good majority, or 82 percent, of the respondents have radios; seven have television sets, and two own refrigerators.

Seventeen percent own other properties. Two of these have farm lots or own a tricycle. Livestock raising is a rare activity. A small number supplement their income from fishing by raising pigs and chickens. Thirty families own from one to four pigs, nine have two to five chickens, and three households own 20 to 40 chickens. Nine households raise goats.

Of the 100 fishermen, 56 percent own one or two fishing nets or a hook and line. Forty-four percent have no equipment and work as hired crew members. Forty-four own a motorized boat; 35 percent own non-motorized, and 24 percent are either boat renters or hired crew.

The average household size in Bago Aplaya is six. Of the household members of working age, 154 are actually working or employed. Majority of the

wives in the area keep house and take care of the children. They also help sell the fish caught by their husband. Almost all of the households (93 per cent) are nuclear families.

Ninety-eight percent of the fishermen depend on fishing as the primary source of income. The mean annual income of the households from fishing is P4,178.69. (Thirty-nine respondents did not report their income.) The highest yearly income from fish recorded is P15,000.00 while the lowest is P1,000.00. There are opportunities for the fishermen to earn secondary incomes. Household members who are of working age take jobs as carpenters or laborers in the ship-building and resort establishments found in nearby barangays. Some fishermen are jeepney/tricycle drivers during off-fishing days and lean fishing months. The mean annual income for these households from non-fishing activities is P1,151.38.

The food consumption pattern of the fishermen is a diet of rice and fish. Rice is the staple food for 83 percent of the 100 respondents. The mean value spent on rice a week is P37.00. Five households reported that they spend from P40.00 – P75.00 on rice per week. The mean value of fish consumption for one week is P25.80. However, 14 respondents reported that they spend an imputed value of P50.00 to P87.00 on fish in a week. The majority of the fishermen (79 per cent) take coffee for breakfast. Eighty percent serve vegetables for lunch with the mean value spent on vegetables per week being P4.17. While dried fish is present on the table everyday, 58 percent of the respondents also have meat in their diet. Thirty-three percent consume at least one kilo of meat per week. Moreover, of the 100 household interviewed, 41 said that they also take snacks.

Ninety-four fishermen mentioned that flu/fever and colds are the most common ailments in the barangay. A high incidence of these ailments can be expected among fishermen and seashore dwellers. Thirty-eight households also report the incidence of gastro-diarrhea especially among children. However, although flu/fever and colds are common, only 52 household members got sick during the past year. Of these, 24 needed medical treatment, but only ten (mostly children) were brought to the doctor for consultation and treatment. Self-medication and treatment by an *herbolario* are common practices among fishermen.

### Fishing As A Primary Occupation

Ninety-eight percent of the fishermen are engaged in full-time fishing activities. Fishermen in Bago Aplaya have devoted a mean of 16.3 years in fishing. The number of years the fishermen have been fishing ranges from four to sixteen years. Sixty-five percent of the respondents are the only fishermen in the household. Twenty-eight percent have one other household member who goes off-shore fishing with him. Twelve percent of the households spend three hours a day fishing. The rest spend ten to twelve hours daily fishing. Fishermen go out fishing three to seven days a week. Thirty-one percent fish seven days a week; twenty-five percent fish six days a week, while the remaining twenty-one

percent fish five days a week. Four percent fish three days a week, while nineteen percent go out fishing four days a week. The remaining days are spent mending nets, resting, or working in secondary occupations.

### Knowledge of Fishing Technology

Fishermen learned fishing through experience, from friends, parents/relatives, and others. Thirty-eight percent of the fishermen learned fishing through experience. They also learned the craft by going out fishing either as a crew or as a companion. About 34 percent learned fishing from parents and relatives, while 24 percent learned it from their friends.

Fishermen were also asked if they had opportunities to attend seminars or trainings which teach them new methods of fishing. Sixty-one percent said "no." Seventy-three percent of those who said "yes" were unable to use the knowledge learned from the BFAR seminar. One reason given for not using the new knowledge is that some of the methods taught required too much capital.

As to fishing gear used, thirty-five percent of the respondents use the big net while twenty-eight percent use the small net. Sixteen percent use the single hook, and twenty-one percent use the multiple hook. A boat owner is one who owns a motorized or non-motorized boat. A boat renter is one who operates independently of the boat owners. He just pays a certain amount to the boat owner, and this is either a fixed rate or a percentage of the net income. A hired crew member is one who works with a boat owner or a boat renter. For his services, he is paid either a fixed rate or a percentage of the net income.

Seventy-four percent of the fishermen studied are boat owners: 60 percent fully paid for their boats, while fourteen percent are still amortizing. Twenty-six percent have no boat; they are either boat renters or crew members. Among the nine renters and seventeen hired crew members, ten revealed a cash-sharing arrangement while nine receive their share in kind. The rest receive their shares in both cash and kind. The mean sharing percentage is 37.6 percent. Only nine revealed some other benefits given.

### Production

Fifty percent of the fishermen report that they have four peak months and these are the months of March, April, May, and June. The lean months are August, September, October. The respondents catch an average of 121.5 kilos of fish a month. This has a total value of P616.65 during peak months. During this season, fish caught are sold at an average of P5.00 per kilo. The mean catch on lean month is 45 kilos per month, with a mean value of P289.34. The price averages P6.40 per kilo.

The fishermen's expenses for a fishing trip cover costs for fuel, food, and ice. Fishermen spend an amount of P5.00 on food and P3.00 on ice per fishing trip. When asked if credit is available for fishing activities, forty-nine fishermen said

yes; thirty-eight said no. Fourteen fishermen do not know if there is any source of available credit. Four sources of credit were identified. These are the government, banks, private individuals, and relatives. Twenty-six fishermen chose private individuals as their main source of credit. Only five identified the government.

### Marketing Activities

The fishermen said that the fish they catch are both for consumption and for sale: 10 percent for consumption, and 90 percent for sale. Usually, either husband or wife or both are responsible for selling the catch at the market, either in the *barangay* or the *poblacion*. It is worth noting that 31 percent of the catch is sold at the fish landing. Fifty-six percent of the fishermen sell their catch to middlemen, 22 percent to the final seller, while the rest sell directly to the consumer. The nearest market is approximately 17 minutes away from the fish landing. Eighty fishermen states that their biggest sale was P299.90, while their smallest was P58.00 for a fishing trip. The largest volume of fish sold was 50 kilos while the smallest volume was 4 kilos.

### Membership In Organizations

Fifty-three percent of the fishermen are not members of any organization. Of these, only one is willing to join a social, civic, or religious organization. Of the 41 percent who are members of an organization, twenty-two perceive themselves as active members. Nine say they are slightly active. Only three consider themselves very active. Twenty-seven of the members said they have received benefits from the organization. The benefits are either financial, social or in terms of facilities. Eleven members indicated not having received any benefits. When asked about the problems and constraints in the organization, 80 fishermen gave "don't know" and "no" replies.

Most of the fishermen (65 percent) are aware of government projects undertaken in the community such as the *Kilusang Kabuhayan at Kaunlaran* (KKK) and the *Biyayang Dagat* Programs. However, only three so far have benefited from the KKK, while 77 have not. As for *Biyayang Dagat*, only five fishermen have received grants. The other government projects like DBP loan, infrastructure, water system, electricity, and others are not known to the majority of the respondents.

Fishermen's opinions regarding government programs are varied. Although 39 fishermen were undecided, 32 agreed that for the most part, government programs serve the interest of organized groups such as business or labor and are not very concerned about the needs of people like the fishermen. An equal percentage (42 percent each) of the respondents either disagreed or were undecided that these days the government is trying to do too many things, including those that the government has no right to undertake.

### Needs, Aspirations, And Perceptions

Majority of the fishermen perceive their life as "happy" or "just happy." This feeling is consistent with their opinion on their organizational participation, presence of government projects, private agencies, and their family's ability to satisfy wants and needs. Fifty-six fishermen say that the government cannot do anything.

Eighty-seven fishermen were able to identify the step in a ten rung ladder where they feel they stand at present and five years ago. Thirteen do not know or gave no reply. When they were asked where they think they will be on the ladder five years from now, only 47 gave their answer. A question on needs and perceptions asked the fishermen the degree of importance they place on a comfortable life, a sense of accomplishment, family security, self-respect, social recognition, and salvation. All the above were considered very important, but salvation came out as the most important with family security coming second. Comfortable life came out as a poor third.

Forty-eight fishermen desire that their children finish college and land a stable job. Eleven wish them to have a happy married life. Eight wish them to help in fishing. Sixty-eight percent of the fishermen considered their meal intake enough for the family while about 32 percent considered it not enough. Seventy-five percent of the fishermen also believed that their houses are large enough for the family. The rest (18 percent) said that it is enough. Fishermen's perception of poverty revealed that almost half of them (48 percent) perceive themselves on the poverty line, while 44 percent perceive themselves below the line. Only 5 percent feel they are above the poverty line.