



## State of the Mangrove in **SAMAR**

*The Editors, based on inputs from Samar participants*

### **I. Introduction**

The province of Samar (Western Samar) has a total land area of 559,100 ha. It is composed of 24 municipalities and two cities (Catbalogan and Calbayog). Catbalogan City is the provincial capital. There are four municipalities that are landlocked and 22 that are coastal. The province has 951 barangays, subdivided into two congressional districts (427 barangays in the 1<sup>st</sup> District and 524 barangays in the 2<sup>nd</sup> District). According to the latest demographic survey, the population of the province is around 780,481 (PSA, 2015).

#### *Importance of mangroves*

Mangroves provide protection against typhoons and shoreline erosion. It also maintains water quality. Mangroves are also known as source of food and income to local communities, and opportunities for ecotourism. Recently, on celebration of Earth Day on April 21, the City Government of Catbalogan held the soft launching of Cabugawan Eco Park at Barangay Cabugawan in Buri Island. This Eco Park highlights the three-hectare mangrove area, with 350-m boardwalk. The Eco Park will be managed by the barangay council as part of the ecotourism program of the city for the Sustainable Tourism Ecological Protection (STEP) Program under the Office of the City Tourism, Culture, Arts, and Information.

### **II. Status of Mangroves**

From the Coastal Resources Assessment report in 2007 (conducted by the Provincial Agriculture Office), the mangrove forest in the province is estimated at around 10,170 ha. Some of the perceived threats to mangroves are pollution and harvesting for timber. Other identified threats are land reclamations, aquaculture, agriculture, and tourism.

### **III. Mangrove Protection and Management**

The Mangrove and Beach Forest Development Project (MBFDP) of the National Greening Program (NGP) of the DENR was implemented in the province. The Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB) is the overall coordinator for the program. The project planted new areas, rehabilitated/replanted existing mangrove areas, and established mangrove nurseries in the entire province. It is a national program and implemented by PENRO and CENRO, with partner NGOs and POs.

The total target area for mangrove planting is around 50,000 ha. There were 13 municipalities and cities composed of 67 barangays that benefited from the project (**Table 1**). A total of 1,900 ha of mangrove area and beach forest were already planted (as of the latest report).

**Table 1.** Recipient municipality/city that benefitted from the MBFDP of DENR.

Municipality/ City	Area (ha)	No. of barangays
Sta. Rita	412	9
Calbiga	228	2
Pinabacdao	48	1
San Sebastian	476	11
Talalora	25	1
Villareal	311	8
Calbayog	283	3
Daram	93	8
Gandara	283	1
Paranas	156	2
Sta. Margarita	568	4
Tarangan	404	16
Zumarraga	113	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,900</b>	<b>67</b>

The survival rate of re/planted mangroves is around 25 %. The low survival is attributed to improper handling of seedlings and inappropriate substrate-species matching. There is a need to do a thorough assessment if the site is suitable for mangrove planting. The project is monitored quarterly through geo-tagging. Nonetheless, the communities living or near mangrove stands benefitted from this project. Communities are contracted per seedling that they planted. Each community has its own PO that maintains and manages the plantation.

Based from the survey form, some of the problems encountered in the implementation of this project is the lack of prioritization on mangrove management program. Abandoned fishponds could have been used as plantation site. However, some fishpond owners are still insisting legal ownership.

#### IV. Summary and Recommendations

Samar is one of the poorest provinces in the country but is still one of the major sources of fisheries products in the region. It has mangrove protected areas that are covered under the Presidential Decree 705 (Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines). Although mangroves

are protected by law, there is still a decline of mangrove cover due to poaching and conversion to fishponds and commercial areas. The loss of mangroves will lead to the vulnerability of the province to the impacts of climate change. Currently, the province is implementing the MBFDP of the DENR. This program aims to enhance mangroves and improve the resiliency of the province against climate change.

The province recommends for a more united coordination among agencies to improve the implementation of the program. Effective monitoring scheme should be applied to regularly document the progress and outcome of the program.

#### V. References

Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). 2015a. Census of Population: Region VII (Central Visayas).  
 Survey form (implemented by GNP Coordinator, Samar SEP 2016, PENRO, CENRO).