

# De La Salle University Community Engagement

## Local fishers protecting Nemo and friends: an effort in Coastal Resource Management of Talim Bay

### About the project

#### Summary

De La Salle University is one of the Philippines' premier tertiary education institutions. Aside from its impeccable research and academic portfolio, it is also known for its relevant Community Engagement endeavours. The project essentially started as a study of the coastal ecosystems of Talim Bay in Lian, Batangas. The results of this research were sent to the local government unit of the area for further discussion and served as the basis of a proposed Coastal Resource Management Plan for the mentioned Bay.

The effort focused on a consultative process of listening to the problems besetting the fishers and their families and informing them that a possible solution can come from basically, protecting and conserving their natural resource base. Fishers, among other stakeholders, essentially were encouraged to take a closer look at establishing their own version of a Marine Protected Area, a key resource management option designed to protect a vital part of the municipal coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangrove forest to ensure the integrity of these ecosystems. The operative concept was to sustainably utilize through regulation and people's participation.

#### Project partners

DLSU faculty & administrative members, students, Peoples' Organization, Local Government Units and National Government Agencies

### The results

#### The problem

Problems being addressed by the project include: Low fishery production of the Bay, Degraded coastal ecosystems, Non-implementation of Environmental laws and low environmental awareness of local residents.

#### The approach

- Conduct resource and ecological assessments;
- Empower the local fishers;
- Promote protection and conservation activities;
- Advocate for the enforcement of laws;



- Higher Education Institution
- 18,000 students for AY 2015-2016
- 2, 165 staff for AY 2015-2016
- Urban

De La Salle University positions itself as a leader in molding human resources who serve the church and the nation. It is a Catholic coeducational institution founded in 1911 by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The University is a hub for higher education training renowned for its academic excellence, prolific and relevant research, and involved community service. Nestled in the heart of Manila, Philippines, De La Salle University is home to local and international students seeking quality education for a brighter future ahead. It is situated in a vibrant city where culture and diversity are well manifested.

- Continued capacity building sessions; and
- Identify supplemental livelihood.

## Our goals

Actualize 3 pillars of Lasallian Education (Teaching, Research and Community Engagement); and Address fundamental issues of open access nature of fisheries through science and community participation.

## Obstacles and solutions

Low environmental awareness among the local residents	Conduct environmental campaign among the residents/fishers in partnership with the local schools for children of the fishers;
Reliance on the University for Ecosystem monitoring	A team composed of local fishers and officers from the local government unit were trained as open water scuba divers and in reef monitoring techniques;
Limited economic opportunity among the local fishers	Project is implementing a local version of eco-tourism wherein local fishers are now reef guides assisting visitors in the Marine Protected Area; referred to as Reef Rangers, these fishers receive a token amount for their services in water safety;

## Performance and results

The project highlights include the following:

- 1) Establishment of 2 Marine Protected Areas within Talim Bay; 2) Facilitated the formation of local resource management councils lead by the local government unit and fishers' group to lead the ecosystem monitoring and legal/institutional aspects; 3) Promoted the eco-tourism component (reef appreciation) of the project with potential volunteers/visitors; and 4) Encouraged students to join mangrove forest restoration activities.

## The future

### Lessons learned

- 1) Often we regard community members as mere recipients of assistance from schools and other agencies. COSCA, through this project, transcended this traditional perspective and encouraged the fishers and their families to be major partners in local development, in crafting their own path and promoting their own appropriate brand of conservation;
- 2) People in academia do not have the monopoly of knowledge. This is especially true for Coastal Resource Management. Our teachers and researchers have gained more in listening and interacting with fishers and local residents;
- 3) Resource management is essentially managing people not resources. Unregulated utilization using a variety of unsustainable methods of extraction leads to a severely degraded ecosystem, one that cannot contribute sufficiently to much needed ecological services, thus an appropriate management option

necessitates regulating how people use these naturally occurring resources while at the same time conserving to ensure intra-generational benefits;

### Sharing your project

The project was started through the initiative of the head of the Municipal Environment and Natural Resource Office (Lian, Batangas) to upload information about the Marine Protected Areas on Facebook and has since gathered interest from both local and foreign visitors.

### What has it meant to your institution to be a GUPES Green Gown Award finalist?

"This has become a source of institutional pride and at the same time a reminder that these types of initiatives should be replicated in other areas as well."- *Br. Raymundo B. Suplido FSC PhD, President, De La Salle University*

### Further information

For more information about this Project, please contact:

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