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For grassroots development

A c-o-n-t-i-n-u-i-n-g PROCESS

PROCESS (Participatory Research, Organization of Communities, and Education Towards Struggle for Self-reliance) is the offshoot of an experiment encouraged by the International Labor Organization to stimulate self-help initiatives among rural communities in Antique and Batangas. Its operations today extend to 10 provinces, touching the lives of thousands of farmers, fisherfolk, women and other marginalized sectors.

Since 1982, PROCESS has facilitated the formation of strong, autonomous people's organizations (POs), building up their capabilities for participatory and self-reliant development. By empowering the masses -- the grassroots -- to protect and advance their interests through collective reflection and action, PROCESS hopes to become progressively "immaterial" as communities develop and increasingly take charge of their own destinies.

The objectives of PROCESS are:

- To facilitate the formation and strengthening of participatory sectoral and multi-sectoral people's organizations at all levels;
- To help the masses develop legal resources to protect their rights, advance their interests and enhance their participation in society and in governance;
- To help communities develop appropriate communications media for information, cultural enrichment and the protection of collective interests;
- To promote social justice through the democratization of access, control and management of productive resources, and the more equitable distribution of benefits and opportunities;
- To promote sustainable development through

the protection, conservation, rehabilitation and wise use of natural resources; and

- To help improve the condition of women through economic, social, cultural and political initiatives and the creation of an environment sensitive and responsive to the needs of women in the Third World.

PROCESS may be reached at its principal office at 54 Estrella Street, Bel Air 3, Makati, Metro Manila (Tel. no. 817-5825). Its regional offices are: in Northern Luzon c/o Romeo Ordoñez, Plaridel, Santiago, Isabela; in Bohol, 55 M. Torralba Street, Tagbilaran City (tel. no. 411-36-41); and in Panay, 31 Avanceña Street, Molo, Iloilo City (tel. no. 77-386).

PROCESS and the fry gatherers of Antique

Since 1983, PROCESS community facilitators have actively helped the coastal fishermen of Antique in their struggle for economic self-sufficiency.

Antique is one of the richest milkfish fry grounds in the country. About half the families living along the coast depend on fry gathering for livelihood. A 1983 survey concluded that bangus fry gathering sustains about 8,000 to 9,000 families in Antique.

The problems caused by the exploitative concession system and the alleged difficulties in marketing bangus fry became the primary concern of PROCESS' organizing efforts in Antique in 1986. The goal was to ascertain the realities of the bangus fry industry throughout the Philippines, and specifically in Antique.

Bangus fry catchers (BFCs) work along the shores of thirteen towns of Antique. Ranked according to the average volume of fry production in 1985, these towns are: Patnongon, San Jose, Barbaza, Culasi, Hamtik, Pandan, Tibiao, Belison, Dao, Sebaste, Anin-y, Laua-an, and Libertad. From these towns, 49 BFCs representing the common experience were interviewed.

After the PROCESS initiative, almost 80% of the BFCs in Antique have become members of a people's organization. Seventy-two percent of the respondents are members and hold responsible positions in 16 people's organizations, all of which are municipality-based.

The organized fry catchers in the different towns find ways to obtain privileges for themselves. They present their demands in unison, and make the town governments listen, assess the merits of their suggestions, and either agree to the fry catchers' stipulations or negotiate a compromise.

One significant gain of the fry catchers is that now they are allowed to operate the fry grounds as concessionaires themselves. Concessions are awarded to the local fry catchers associations. The operations of the fry grounds become largely an internal matter to the organizations, which institute their own rules and procedures for fry collection, accounting, storage and marketing. The fishermen find many opportunities to engage in problem-solving and decision-making, both essential to voicing.

For instance, the Board of Directors of the various BFC organizations are composed of the respective presidents or vice presidents of the barangay chapters. They consult their constituencies regarding collections, income distribution, and other matters in the concessions. The board members submit all plans to the barangay assemblies for discussion. Objections raised are discussed in the meetings of the board, threshed out, and referred again to the barangay members. The barangay Katilingban Association also try to meet regularly. Through participative mechanisms, the members know about developments in the town and the board of directors of the Katilingban

also have a continuous flow of information from the individual members.

Another effect of organized effort is that the fry gatherers are forced to learn and to understand bureaucratic procedures involved in obtaining concession rights, something that they did not know as mere fry collectors. They discover many alternatives to the old concessionaire-gatherer system. One innovation instituted by the BFCs in Culasi and Barbaza is profit-sharing on the income from bangus. With this arrangement, the fry catchers are spared the risk of not having enough earnings to pay the concession fee. The town extracts revenue from the fry grounds commensurate to the actual fry harvest rather than the projected levels. The Katilingban safeguards the interests of both the municipality (by ensuring that honest and complete reports of fry collections are made) and the fry catchers (by giving them the earnings due them).

Other fry catchers have been able to negotiate lower concession fees from the Sangguniang Bayan. In San Jose and in Belison, the fry catchers succeeded in lowering the fee from P80,000 to P70,000. In Patnongon, the fee remained as stipulated by the town officials, but the KASIPA was able to modify the surety requirements of the concession and to reduce the amount of the first payment. In Hamtik, instead of a straight fee for the concession, the use of collection gears became the basis for the payments.

Since the BFCs themselves had to deal with the municipal councils directly, they had to obtain "bargaining" skills. Thus, the community facilitators engaged them in a series of planning, problem-solving and role-playing sessions, so that they may anticipate what could transpire during the negotiations, and plan their course of action. In the end, the officers and BFCs who took part in these meetings felt greater personal strength and self-confidence than before.

Among the new-found skills of the fry catchers are the ability to preside at meetings, to talk about the community situation and answer questions from members. The BFC leaders also perceive themselves as having developed skills in mobilization. For instance, through the work of these local organizers, the fry catchers in Belison



worked together to build the bodega (storage hut) for the collected fry, and together, built artificial reefs. In Hamtik, the members of the KASIHA not only participate in production activities but also join community affairs such as rallies, independence day parades, and other activities of the barangays. New leaders emerge from these dynamics.

Source: Amaryllis T. Torres and Rosita B. Sia. *A Study of People's Power: Bangus Fry Catchers in Control of Production*. 1988. Southeast Asian Forum on Development Alternatives.

PROCESS and SEAFDEC/AQD for FAMI

Roughly four kilometers off Culasi, Antique is Malalison Island, site of SEAFDEC/AQD's Community Fishery Resource Management Project or CFRM. (See *Aquaculture Clinic*, p. 22). Complementing CFRM's integrated seafarming and searanching program is PROCESS, the NGO that undertakes the community-organizing and institution-building components of the project. Thus was born FAMI, or the Fishermen's Association of Malalison Island.

The fisherfolk have participated in a series of training activities conducted to strengthen the Association, which will eventually manage the island's resources. The training included (1) Membership Orientation Seminar, (2) Organizational Management and Development, and (3) Project Management and Development.

PROCESS has set four key objectives in the Malalison project: (1) formation of a strong and active people's organization, the FAMI, (2) strengthening of the PO's capability in socioeconomic and political interventions, (3) improving the socioeconomic base of the PO, and (4) empowering the PO through networking with local government units, other NGOs, GOs and support and development institutions like SEAFDEC/AQD.

SEAFDEC/AQD pursues the following objectives for FAMI: (1) to develop model marine hatchery-nursery systems of selected species for culture and release of juveniles; (2) to provide additional livelihood through cultivation of appropriate fishes, seaweeds, molluscs, and crustaceans; (3) to regenerate fish habitats such as coral reefs and seagrass beds; (4) to increase fish stocks by releasing juveniles of suitable species; (5) to develop the community into a strong and organized association granted territorial use rights; and (6) to extend seafarming and searanching activities to other fishing communities.

With an active membership of 46 fisherfolk to date, FAMI is on its second year of operation. While there are yet many areas of improvement in achieving goals, the fact remains that FAMI, SEAFDEC/AQD and PROCESS are getting into one working system to pilot a model of community empowerment and sustainable resource management. The model may then be replicated in other coastal towns in the Philippines.