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Constraints in policing fisheries

Aquaculture Department, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center

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Constraints in policing fisheries

Fisheries production in the Philippines has enjoyed a reasonable growth in volume over most of the past 35 years. However, the volume has perceptively declined. The communities dependent on fishing for livelihood have remained poor, and the resources on which they have been dependent — the inshore and offshore marine waters, the coral reefs, the mangrove and seagrass areas, and the freshwater lakes, swamps, and rivers — have deteriorated. Why such problems?

Several reasons have been identified:

- Pressure of increasing population on decreasing resources
- Inadequate fishery resource management, development and conservation
- Use of destructive methods of exploitation
- Constraints in enforcing fishery laws and regulations
- Pollution of marine and inland waters with industrial effluents, sewage, garbage and persistent poisons
- Inequities in the distribution of benefits
- Resource-use conflicts — municipal vs. commercial fishing, aquaculture vs. capture fisheries in lakes, mangrove stands vs. brackishwater fishponds, fishing vs. sanctuaries on coral reefs, etc.
- Insufficient marketing infrastructure
- Low quality of fisheries education in particular, and environment-ecology education in general

Constraints in fishery laws, regulations, and enforcement

There are substantial regulations for the protection of fisheries and aquatic resources. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources has the primary responsibility for the conservation of aquatic resources. The Department of National Defense extends law enforcement assistance through the Coast Guard and the National Police. The Barangay and fishermen's association officials, and other qualified individuals are designated as Deputy Fish Wardens to help enforce fishery laws, rules, and regulations.

However, severe problems are encountered in the enforcement of the laws.

- Some laws are very vague.
- Some laws do not reflect the current situation, realities, and problems.
- The political situation in the country (peace and order problems) allows the proliferation of illegal fishing.
- Fishery enforcement facilities and funds are inadequate.
- Documentation of fishermen and other seagoing individuals is lacking.

Source: UNDP-FAO-DA-BFAR. *National Conference on Fisheries Policy and Planning*; 16-20 Mar 1987; Baguio City. Vol. 1, 115 p.

