

Malalison makes full circle

AQD writes finis to a community fishery resource management project

BY **MB Surtida**

In 1981, AQD researchers Lacanilao and Young stated that to produce more fish and at the same time conserve coastal resources, there were two options. These were (1) impose and enforce mandatory restrictions on municipal and commercial fishing; and (2) develop attractive alternatives to capture fishery to reduce dependence on fishing. Relative to option 2, both researchers proposed the development of extensive mariculture and seafarming considering the Philippines' total marine waters at 1,666,000 km² over 17,460 km of coastline. Other considerations were that the water temperature of the country is stable throughout the year which is ideal for fish farming year round while growth of marine fish and shellfish is rapid.

Looking to Japan for its mariculture success, both researchers recommended a development program with three related but distinctive studies. These were studies to assess the present levels of aquaculture techniques and management of our coastal waters; the potential productivity of unexploited waters; and an integrated plan that included increasing productivity of coastal zones with pilot-scale culture systems and training programs.

In 1988, FJ Lacanilao, then already Chief of AQD, wrote about the neglected artisanal fishers. Proposing to grant territorial rights over municipal waters to artisanal fishers, he said that they could be "... developed into a strong and more productive fishery sector." Saying that this implies giving them a fair share of distributive justice in allocation of fishery resources, they have to be helped to organize themselves as independent managers of coastal resources from which they derive sustenance. "Coastal dwellers could be just as effective as resource conservators ..."

In 1989 again, Lacanilao wrote that these fishers' associations must be empowered to be able to make rules and regulations to be followed by members. These must include catch regulations, fishing seasons and restrictions, and protective measures against intruders. "The success of this proposed countryside development depends on the recognition of the integrated and complementary character of the three proposed programs: (1) seafarming and searanching, (2) artificial reefs, and (3) grant of territorial use rights. To take them up as separate or unconnected projects will result only in minimal benefit."

Thus was spawned the seed for AQD's community resource management project at Malalison Island, Antique. In 1990, the seafarming project was started with partial funding support from International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada.

Selecting the island community

Site selection was two-pronged using biological and socioeconomic criteria. Biological criteria used in site selection were: pre-existing firm and hard substrate; proximity to coral or past reef growth; absence or distance from large river outflow or major terrestrial influence; extensive shelf area of at least 1 km² with a depth of 1-30 m; existence of subsidiary site types in the area; current flow patterns permitting cross-reef metabolic exchange; and sheltered area from intense wave action.

The socioeconomic criteria used were presence of fishers' association; presence of non-government organization in or near the area; availability of alternative sources of livelihood preferably land-based; fishing and aquaculture practices; and peace

and order situation.

The coastal enhancement studies addressed the issues of degraded coastal habitats, dwindling fish stocks, failure in law enforcement, and need for alternative job opportunities. Identified solutions to the above stated problems included deployment of concrete artificial reefs and release of fish juveniles into coastal waters. The artificial reefs were for habitat rehabilitation while the release of fish juveniles was for stock replenishment and searanching.

The details of the project were many but the vision was to institutionalize granting of exclusive territorial right as the most effective approach to resource conservation. It was perceived to be the best strategy for law enforcement as the fishers themselves would have the right and responsibility to guard the occupational area against violators. According to Lacanilao, "it is the absence of property rights, or the existence of open access over the resource, that causes competitive scramble among users."

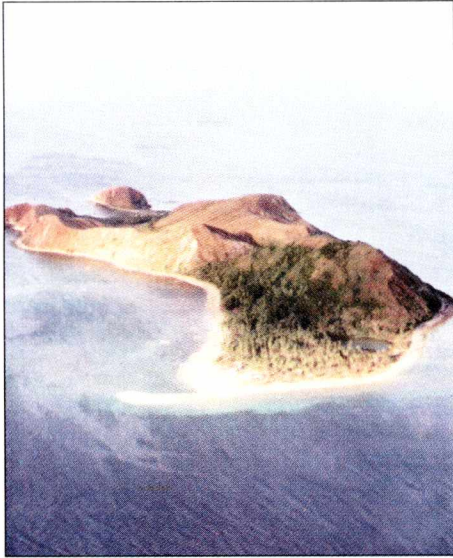
The project was expected to serve as a model for other countries in Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the world.

On March 20 1998, after eight years, AQD's CFRM project came to a close. AQD facilities and equipment were turned over to Malalison (building, tables, beds, etc.) in ceremonies attended by special guests from AQD, local government units, a media representative, and officials from Land Bank of the Philippines.

Lessons from the project

There were seven lessons learned from the project. These were: (1) importance of



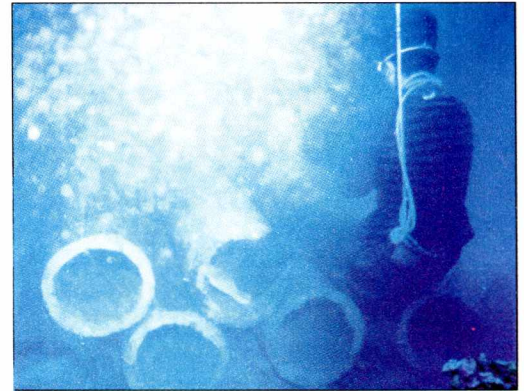


IMAGES OF THE ISLAND

A view of the 65-hectare Malalison Island from the air. The CFRM-project was initiated by then AQD Chief Dr. Flor Lacanilao in 1992

As the CFRM project was completed in March 1998, present AQD Chief Dr. Rolando Platon turns over the management of the artificial reefs and other project resources to the people of Malalison

One of the gains of the project is the deployment of artificial reefs in protected areas in 1995, where these became colonized by reef organisms. AQD will continue to monitor these artificial reefs beyond the project.



scientific data in policy making, (2) importance of training and continuing education for all stakeholders, (3) recognition of the role of media, (4) advantages of cross visits, (5) linkaging and networking, (6) advantages of holding an annual forum to discuss status of project and resolve conflicts among stakeholders, and (7) necessity of a phasing out period.

Perhaps Romeo Macuja, former barangay captain of Malalison Island, says it all when he says, "we will guard our fish sanctuary because it is our bank. We have passed municipal resolutions for penalties on violations. We fish outside of the 600 meter diameter area where fish stock has increased by 50%. There is enough for all fishers who follow our rules and regulations." ###

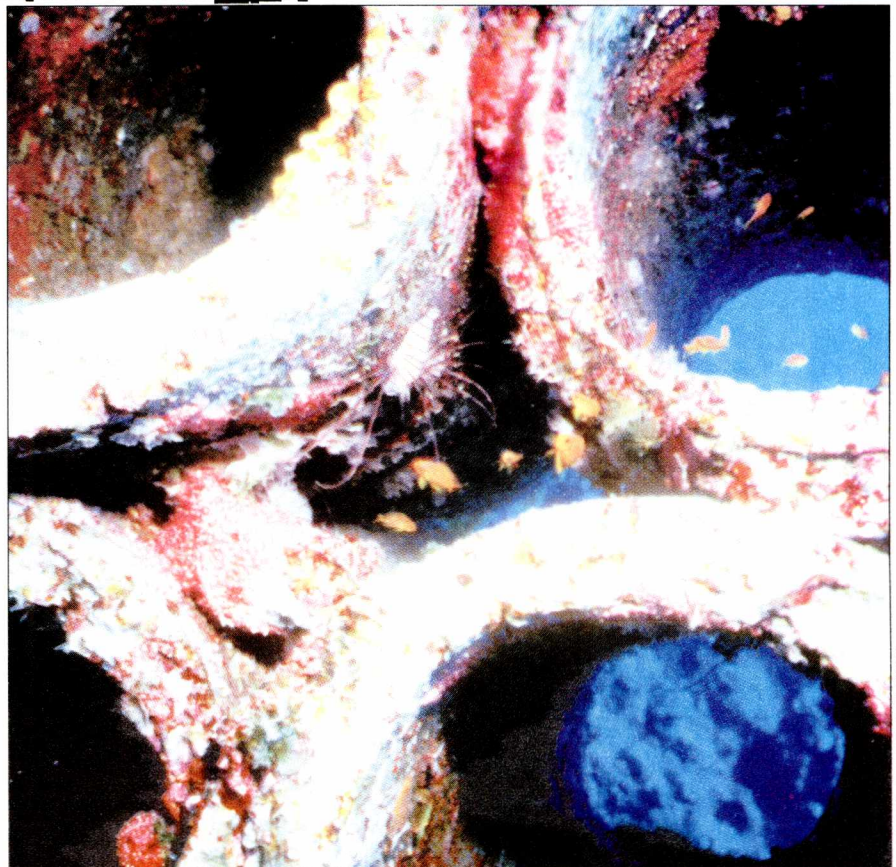


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