

IDRC in the Philippines

IDRC has been supporting research in the Philippines for more than 35 years. The country's strong universities and research institutions and active civil society have enabled IDRC to support many research activities on a broad range of topics, from aquaculture to distance education to coastal management.

The Philippines is the third largest recipient of IDRC support in Southeast Asia, after China and Cambodia. Current research focuses on poverty monitoring, natural resource management, and the effective use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Since the 1990s, IDRC has supported the design and piloting of systems that enable communities to monitor people's welfare and local development. The community-based monitoring system (CBMS) is a low-cost, easy-to-sustain method of collecting information on the local dimensions of poverty. This information is often an essential component in the design, implementation, and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies and programs. Because CBMS surveys are carried out at regular intervals, it is easy to determine whether conditions are improving, worsening, or remaining stable, thus enabling local planners to make informed, evidence-based decisions. As the community helps collect and monitor the data, CBMS also allows people to assess the local government's performance, thus increasing accountability.

Pilot-tested in two Philippine villages in 1996, by the end of September 2006 CBMS operated in 22 provinces, 243 municipalities, 20 cities, and 6 478 villages. At the national level, the government has incorporated CBMS indicators in the design of national poverty plans. The Philippine Department of the Interior and Local Government has adopted the system to monitor progress toward the Millennium Development Goals.

Work is now underway in the Philippines to integrate a stronger gender dimension in data collection and analysis. CBMS has now spread to 14 Asian and African countries. The Angelo King Institute of De La Salle University, in Manila, coordinates the CBMS Network.

For more than a decade, IDRC has supported research on the conservation of natural resources. The Philippine economy depends on natural resources, which are degrading at an alarming rate. For example, the once lush forest cover of the Philippines has been reduced to approximately 18 percent of the country's total land area. The forests that remain have been pushed to the limit of sustainability. The same is true of the Philippine's coastal resources.

An IDRC partner, the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, based in the Philippines, is promoting effective community forestry. Researchers helped policymakers identify successes and failures in efforts to decentralize forest management, allocate rights to users in

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upland areas, and develop private industry. IDRC-supported researchers in the Philippines and Canada have also helped empower coastal communities to manage, protect, and rehabilitate the resources they depend on.

Philippine researchers also collaborate on a number of regional ICT projects, such as the creation of the International Open Source Network in the Asia-Pacific region and the establishment of a scholarly network on ICT policy and regulation. With IDRC support, researchers from the Department of Science and Technology are also studying how ICT projects are transforming Philippine society and distilling lessons for policy. Others are examining ways in which women can best use these technologies for their own development. A number of Philippine researchers have also received grants from IDRC's Pan Asia ICT R&D grants program, which was launched in 1997 to build institutional research capacity in Internet networking in the region's developing countries.

Since 1972, IDRC has allocated more than CA\$42 million to 255 projects in the Philippines, some of which were regional in scope. There are 10 active projects in the country, representing an investment of CA\$2.5 million.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Supporting Communities in Managing Forests

Community-based Forestry Management is a program created by the Philippine government in 1995 to promote sustainable forestry development. It aims to provide democratic access to resources, alleviate poverty, and sustain forest resources. However, more work still needs to be done to realize these goals. For example, about 5 million hectares of forests and forestry lands in the Philippines are under the stewardship of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which continues to restrict access and use by communities through requirements they cannot meet.

In the first phase of this project, researchers from the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction conducted in-depth participatory research in three communities. The research confirmed that community-based forestry management is hampered by overly complex and bureaucratic procedures; it is often driven by the desire for a short-term success story rather than long-term positive change. The Institute presented field-based lessons at national-level consultative workshops that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources used to draft new community-based forestry management guidelines.

Researchers and communities are now testing the new forestry guidelines and working to upgrade the skills of forestry professionals.

(Project # 101468, Community Forestry (Philippines) Phase III; Duration 2003–2007; IDRC allocation: CA\$379 780; IDRC contact: Hein Mallee; Research partner: Scott Killough, International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Silang, Cavite 4118, Philippines; Tel.: 63-46-414-2417; Fax: 63-2-886-4385, Email: scott.killough@iirr.org; Website: www.iirr.org)

Poverty Monitoring: Taking Gender into Account

In 1995, the Philippine government earmarked 5 percent of all departmental expenditures in national and subnational budgets for programs for women. This, however, led to a misallocation of funds and the realization that gender mainstreaming required a targeted effort to identify appropriate programs or policies for women.

The Community-based Monitoring System (CBMS), developed with IDRC support, is one of the tools that could be adapted for this purpose. CBMS is an organized way of collecting household data, with local involvement, to help governments develop policies and programs that meet people's needs.

The CBMS Network Coordinating Team at Manila's Angelo King Institute has now launched CBMS Gender Responsive Budgeting, a project

to develop and pilot a gender responsive tool. It is also designing an approach to make more systematic links between data gained through CBMS and the planning and budgeting processes. This will facilitate gender-responsive, equitable planning and budgeting that analyzes the different impacts of budgets on women and men, girls and boys. The analysis can inform government decision-making as well as advocacy efforts.

The enhanced CBMS is being tested in two locations, E.B. Maglona and the city of Escalante, both in the province of Negros Occidental. The local governments are working with the CBMS Network Coordinating Team, as are the Development Through Active Women Networking Foundation, a Negros Occidental-based women's NGO, and the Philippine Institute for Development Studies.

(Project # 103628, Developing and Piloting a Gender Responsive Community-based Planning and Budgeting Tool for Local Governance; Duration: 2006–2007; IDRC allocation: CA\$148 700; IDRC contact: Martha Melesse; Research partner: Celia M. Reyes, Angelo King Institute, De La Salle University, 2401 Taft Avenue, Malate, Manila, Philippines 1004; Tel./Fax: 63-2-526-2067; Email: reyesc@dis.edu.ph and mimap@dls-csb.edu.ph; Website: www.pep-net.org)

Learning from ICT projects

Since the introduction of the Internet in the Philippines in 1993, information and communication technologies have multiplied. Although there are now numerous connectivity options, many rural areas still lack access to this technology. The Philippine government, private sector, and civil society have all responded with projects to reach these underserved areas. Much can be learned from these various projects; however, networking among them has not been strong and information has not generally been shared with policymakers.

With this grant, the Philippine Department of Science and Technology is working to address these problems by studying whether, how, and to

what extent ICT projects are transforming the country. It has created a digital database of close to 500 key projects and will publish its findings in a series aimed at policymakers, program managers, and researchers. The department has already shared research results through a series of conferences and has established a grants program to fund ICTs for development research.

(Project # 102043, Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D): Lessons for Policymakers (Philippines); Duration: 2004–2008; IDRC allocation: CA\$325 000; IDRC contact: Maria Lee-Hoon Ng; Research partner: Fortunato T. de la Peña, Department of Science and Technology, General Santos Avenue, Bicutan, Taguig, Metro Manila, Philippines; Tel.: 63-2-837-2945; Email: ftdp@dost.gov.ph; Website: www.dost.gov.ph/)

Improving Marine Protected Areas

Reef fisheries in the Philippines are critically important, providing about 25 percent of the population's protein intake. But catches are declining. Overfishing, habitat destruction, and marine pollution have significantly damaged fish stocks and fish breeding grounds. Marine protected areas (MPAs) may offer a new way to manage tropical fisheries. In theory, these protected areas are havens for increasing the number of fish species, and the number and size of individual fish. However, there has been little research on how well these areas work, biologically, economically, and socially.

IDRC-supported researchers from Project Seahorse, based at the Fisheries Centre of the University of British Columbia, Canada, are working to address this gap. The Project Seahorse team in the Philippines has helped establish several MPAs on Danajon Bank in the province of Bohol. Here they are working with fishers to undertake management research, modify fishing practices, develop strategies for marine conservation, increase local organization and leadership capacity, provide environmental education, and develop alternative livelihood modes. Research results are regularly reported to the community.

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The intensive collaboration with fishers, villagers, and other stakeholders has created local awareness and inspired communities to pursue marine conservation, improve management practices, and advocate for policy change. During a regional workshop held in Bohol in April 2005, participants identified common issues and challenges and discussed solutions to improve the effectiveness of MPAs. Through the project, three PhD students have also completed substantial data collection underwater and among fishing communities.

(Project # 100607, Understanding and Improving Marine Protected Areas, Philippines; Duration: 2001–2006; IDRC allocation: CA\$443 470; IDRC contact: Merle Faminow; Research partner: Amanda Vincent, Project Seahorse, Fisheries Centre, University of British Columbia, 2202 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4; Tel.: 604-827-5138; Fax: 604-827-5199; Project Seahorse Foundation for Marine Conservation, 222 First St, Happy Valley Subdivision, Guadeloupe, Cebu City 6000, Philippines; Tel.: 63-32-262-8032; Fax: 63-32-254-1390; email: foundation@projectseahorse.org.ph; Website: <http://seahorse.fisheries.ubc.ca/>)

Small Grants Program Encourages Research on New Technologies

IDRC runs an annual Research on Knowledge Systems competition to promote analysis and debate of key issues in the evolution and functioning of “knowledge systems” in developing countries. In 2003–2004, the competition focused on understanding the social and public policy dimensions in the South of transformative technologies such as biotechnology, genomics, and nanotechnology. Southern policy and governance systems are scrambling to keep pace

with advances in these fields in order to meet goals of poverty reduction, economic growth, sustainable development, and environmental stewardship.

The nine research projects supported aimed to understand how these technologies affect social equity and public policy and to identify mechanisms governments and public stakeholder groups could use in making decisions. For example, award recipient Linda Penalba of the University of the Philippines at Los Baños studied how Filipino farmers are using innovative technologies to grow crops such as rice and corn.

Winners of earlier competitions in the Philippines have studied the development and implications of public–private partnerships in fish genetic research and local capacity-building approaches to bridge the learning and knowledge divides in small island developing states.

(Project # 102334, Third Research on Knowledge Systems Competition; Duration: 2003–2007; IDRC allocation: CA\$817 000; IDRC contact: Jean Woo; Research partner: Linda M. Penalba, University of the Philippines at Los Baños Science Community Foundation, Inc., UPLBFI Building, Lanzones Street, UPLB Campus, College, Laguna, Philippines, 4031; Tel.: 63-49-536-4761, local 20)

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