

Abstract

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Roundtable: Investing in a Blue Economy for Conservation and Impact

Seaweed Farming in Guimaras Province under the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP)



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Implemented by the Department of Agriculture of the Philippines, the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) is designed to contribute towards the national government's goals of inclusive growth, job creation and poverty reduction. Launched in 2014, the 6-year project aims to increase farm and fishery productivity and incomes in target areas in all 16 regions of the country. The project is composed of four central components: 1) Local Planning (I-PLAN); 2) Infrastructure Development (I-BUILD); 3) Enterprise Development (I-REAP); and 4) Program Support (I-SUPPORT). The Project is jointly funded by The World Bank, the Government of the Philippines and the Local Government Units (LGUs), with a grant fund from the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The GEF-funded initiatives mainly support natural resources and biodiversity conservation by strengthening Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in locations of global biodiversity significance and select fishery co-management arrangements, while establishing coastal-based commodity enterprises. While GEF implementation follows the standard planning and implementation process of PRDP employing science-based tools, such as value chain analysis, expanded vulnerability and suitability assessment, and formulation of a commodity investment plan (CIP) for the identified priority agricultural commodity, its added value is the identification of interventions for coastal resources and marine biodiversity conservation in the MPA site linked to the identified agri-fishery enterprises.

The province of Guimaras is one of the GEF-supported areas covering 4 Municipal LGUs, 4 MPAs and 8 proponent groups (PGs). The PGs are active partners in the protection of their respective MPAs and the implementation of Integrated Coastal and Fisheries Resources Management Plans (ICRMP).

In the Municipality of Nueva Valencia, fishing was once the staple source of income for the community. However, with the decline in fish catch, the community fishermen have opted to explore other means of livelihood through seaweeds farming. However, the lack of capital to support production and its facilities are among the identified constraints for seaweeds development. Through PRDP-GEF, the Panobolon Unified Fisherfolks Association (PUFA) has been identified as the proponent group for seaweeds production and trading enterprise. The seaweeds enterprise is projected to generate an average net income of PhP267,400 for the association and a return on investment (ROI) of 20.6% after one year of operation. The project is expected to be expanded in other viable sites within the province.



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About Arnel V. de Mesa:

Arnel V. de Mesa currently works as the Department of Agriculture Regional Technical Director for the Davao Region, the National Deputy Project Director for the Department of Agriculture Philippine Rural Development Project, and as the Deputy Program Director of the Department of Agriculture Mindanao Rural Development Program. His main duties are to lead in the implementation of the Program's activities in the four major components; (1) rural infrastructure; (2) natural resources management; (3) livelihood; and (4) program management and training. He is also responsible for the preparation and development of policy strategies and procedures relative to the goals and objectives of the Programs, the translation of the development plan of the Program into operational policy procedures and the formulation of program guidelines, and many more.