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The Famous Chocolate Hills of Bohol Province.

BOHOL PROVINCE

THE PHILIPPINES

Provincial Profile

The province of Bohol, Philippines, has a population of 1,137,260, and a land area of 4,117 square kilometers. The Gross National Income *per capita* is US\$ 1,080 and the provincial budget is US\$11.8 million (2005).

Key economic areas	Agriculture and tourism
Urban management approach	Integrated development plan
Environment entry point	Biodiversity conservation, coastal and forest resource management, eco-tourism

Why this Case Study is Important

The Bohol Province case study shows how poverty and environment are connected. The

poor are heavily dependent on natural ecosystems and resources for their livelihood, but they are also most vulnerable to environmental hazards, and their health suffers directly from the impacts of pollution. Dealing with poverty and ensuring environmental sustainability requires a balance between these pressing priorities.

Urban Context

The island province of Bohol consists of 47 municipalities and one city. The economy is heavily dependent on agriculture and fishing. Bohol province is known for its eco-tourism attractions, among them the famous Chocolate Hills and pristine white beaches. Identified as a tourist hub and a haven for scuba divers, the coastlines are internationally famous for their coral reefs. Bohol's provincial government was the first local government in Southeast Asia to acquire an Environmental Management Systems certification.



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The Manila skyline.

Urban Management Approach

Bohol's urban management approach is rooted in the Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP), mandated by the national government for regional, provincial and municipal authorities. Bohol's MTDP for 2004–2009 is based on the 1998–2003 development plan, which focused on eco-tourism and agro-industrial development. The Programme Framework on Poverty Reduction which local officials initiated aimed to ensure a common basis for formulating poverty-focused policies, plans, programmes and projects, integrated within the MTDP.

Case Study

The MTDP calls for the strengthening of local government institutions to deal with multi-dimensional problems that cut across the responsibilities of sectoral departments. The 2004–2009 Plan identified five development sectors: Social development, economic development, environmental management, development administration and Infrastructure development.

Preparation of the MTDP took six months, not counting the time spent in monitoring and reviewing the Plan for 1998–2003. The Plan went through a series of consultations and revisions. Municipal mayors submitted their five-year municipal development plans which were then studied by the Provincial Planning and Development Office (PPDO). The office, in consultation with other provincial departments, prepared a final document collating and synchronizing the development goals of the municipalities which was submitted to the Provincial Development Council for approval. The council is composed of municipal mayors, district representatives, community-based organisations like farmers, fisherfolks associations and NGOs. After the council's approval, a resolution was passed to the Provincial Council for approval and adoption.

Following the adoption of the Programme Framework on Poverty Reduction and the MTDP for 2004–2005, the provincial government pursued various initiatives to improve the health, living standards and livelihood of people. Programmes that strengthened institutions, built capacity and provided financial and technical assistance in the areas of education, health and nutrition, water supply and sanitation, and urban development and housing, among others were initiated.

Bohol's development plan reflects the province's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals which are focused on reducing poverty and hunger, disease and premature death, inequal-

⁹Detailed information on the 10-Point Agenda is available from www.gov.ph/listings/10ptagenda.asp.

ity and inequity. Development is anchored on pro-poor and environmentally sustainable growth. It also supports the Philippine President's 10-Point Agenda, which called for the stabilisation of economic growth, global competitiveness and good governance.⁹ The plan, developed through extensive consultations with the provincial stakeholders, summarises the kind of development that the Boholanos want.

To attain the objective of establishing projects that can expand the outreach of basic services to disadvantaged groups and to ensure sustainable economic growth that benefits the poor, the MTDP has set specific targets. In the social development sector, for example, the targets include:

- Reducing the number of households living below the poverty line from 47.3 percent to 38 percent;
- Reducing the population growth rate from 2.9 percent to 2.6 percent; and,
- Reducing households without access to sanitation by 75 percent.

On the other hand, the environment and natural resources management sector aimed for qualitative, rather than quantitative targets such as:

- Institutional monitoring and evaluation systems for biodiversity conservation;
- Establishment of a water quality monitoring body; and
- Rehabilitation of small watersheds.

The sectoral targets determine the public investments for the five-year period of the MTDP. They define the priority areas where government funds should be directed to.

Bohol's Programme Framework on Poverty Reduction led to the establishment of the Local

Governance Poverty Database Monitoring System (LGPLDMS), which records and ranks levels of deprivation. Developed in partnership with the Bohol Local Development Foundation, the software has 18 indicators; child mortality, child malnutrition, crime, disability, electricity, food shortage, food threshold, garbage disposal, literacy, income threshold, meals, health insurance, sanitation, school drop-outs, tenure status, unemployment, water, and waste water disposal.

The database can identify and rank levels of deprivation at the municipal, village and household level. It is currently being expanded to include more environment-related indicators. As a tool, it accurately identifies households and villages for projects in need of poverty reduction support. It can also track the impact of specific interventions including their correlation over time. This database is invaluable in that it provides data on which policy decisions can be made.

Environment Entry Point

As part of its fight against poverty, the provincial government carried out initiatives and offered management tools to preserve the natural heritage and provide employment opportunities. These included the creation of the Bohol Biodiversity Conservation Framework, the founding of the Biodiversity Research Centre, the implementation of the Biodiversity Monitoring System and the implementation of the Coastal Resource Management (CRM) Certification System. Successful projects include the organisation of eco-tours to Pamilacan Island and the Candijay Mangrove Sites.

In addition, the province, with a grant from the European Union's Asia Urbs Programme, is currently implementing ecoBUDGET, an environmental management system developed by ICLEI for local governments.

Results

Performances in basic education generally improved compared to previous school years. Non-vocational and technical courses were offered by Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Department of Education on eco-cultural tourism and agro-industrialisation, reflecting Bohol's development strategy.

Health gains were significant—life expectancy rose, and mortality rates dropped. Improvements in nutrition levels resulted in Bohol receiving the Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition Award. With aid from the private sector international agencies the province implemented projects for children that reduced birth defects among newborns, and improved child health through immunisation.

Initiatives were undertaken to provide access to safe water supply and sanitation. In poor communities which have security and other problems, livelihood projects to redress these are ongoing.

Lessons Learned

As is the case for most in the Philippines local authorities, while the Provincial Government of Bohol was able to come up with a comprehensive development plan, the main challenge was always the availability of resources. Even with fiscal prudence and transparency in governance, many well-meaning projects are put on hold because of the lack of financial resources. This has also affected the quantity and quality of staff working for the local authority. To address this problem, the provincial government is building partnerships with development institutions. It has also prioritised the development of its database, a major criterion required by agencies that provide aid.

To support poverty reduction, one of Bohol's strategic goals is to transform all private and public institutions into instruments for good governance. Even with adequate resources, poverty reduction will not be achieved without good norms and practices related to pro-poor processes, systems and procedures at all levels and in all institutions.

The Provincial Government regards the MTDP as an effective tool for setting the course of development, recognising which issues are urgent and how public resources should be allocated. In addition, the plan calls for “shared accountability” over resources, responsibilities and aspirations.

Replicability

Bohol Province used a wide-ranging, supra-sectoral approach, anchored in national policy, to deal with the problem of poverty in the province. The case study shows how a firm commitment at every level is instrumental to ensuring a successful outcome. Replication lessons can be drawn from the provincial government's innovative use of national development structures for provincial ends and the focus on heavily on good governance, an approach also suitable for replication in other urban settlements.

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