

Philippines Business for Social Progress
Debt-for-Nature Swap Program, Third Tranche

TERMINAL REPORT

I. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

Project Title	:	El Nido Marine Reserve Project
Project Number	:	Cooperative Agreement No. 001-02-00
Project Life	:	April 1992-October 15, 1993
Project Site	:	El Nido, Palawan
Proponent	:	Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)
Funds Approved	:	PHP 3,143,634.00
Funds Released	:	PHP 3,143,634.00

II. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

The El Nido Marine Reserve (ENMR) is a critical zone of the Palawan Biosphere Reserve and located within the territorial jurisdiction of the municipality of El Nido, Palawan. The area was proclaimed a marine sanctuary thru Administrative Order 518, Series of 1984 of the then Ministry Natural Resources (MNR A.O. 518). This sanctuary was later elevated in 1991 into its present Marine Reserve status by DENR A.O. No. 14. It has a total coverage, both marine and terrestrial areas, of 95,000 hectares.

As recipient of the Debt-for-Nature Swap Program-Third Tranche (DFNS-3), the El Nido Marine Reserve had made significant achievements on marine and forests protection. Activities such as spearheading the drive against illegal logging, and the apprehension of those caught fishing illegally i.e. cyanide fishing, dynamite fishing, use of un-prescribed fishing gear, and the confiscation of illegally cut lumber and paraphernalia related in illegal forest activities had enabled the project to make headway in its mission of protecting the environment/natural resources within the reserve.

Indeed, the project had demonstrated its strength in implementing environmental protection activities. Its community organizing activities, however performed less satisfactorily due to the community organizers' inadequate skills and exposure in

organizing. On the plus side, the project was able to establish good relationship with the local communities and other local organizations in El Nido. A strong information campaign of the project helped to enlighten the people on the importance and value of protecting and conserving the environment. This was a manifestation of their learnings in the course of project implementation.

During its initial implementation phase, the project was perceived by local residents as a big threat to them especially to those whose major source of livelihood depended on the waters and the forests. Not only the local folks resisted the project but the government officials who were not properly informed on the project's rationale.

Through continuous public information campaign and community consultations, this opinion gradually changed. Of course it would take some time before people totally understand the project's objectives.

The project also embarked on initial introduction and identification of some alternative livelihood which the affected communities could get into. This included mangrove reforestation and duck-raising project for local communities.

The research component of the project also made notable achievements in pursuing practical researches considering the limited technical pool of the project. Some research work on coral reefs status, swiftlets ("Balinsasayaw" Bird), mangroves, among others were undertaken. Support from other technical experts were requested and extended to augment the needs of the project.

The Mayor's lack of cooperation was a major problem that the project had faced. Apparently, the Mayor had been previously involved in some legal matters such as issuances of permits that violated the policies of the Reserve.

The project's financial and organizational systems, modest though, also improved. The staff under the accounting unit, however, would still require more training and exposure to improve its process of documenting transactions to meet bookkeeping and accounting requirements.

For a better implementation of the ENMR, the following should still have to be put in place: settlement of jurisdiction over the area with DENR local office (CENRO) which the DENR should properly act on, review and revision of existing policies and regulations to effectively complement the project, interaction with the local government and NGOs and capability building for existing personnel complement.

The El Nido Marine Reserve Project has already created a niche in the arena of protection and this initial achievement should be complemented with continued support to meet the regular functioning of the project in its technical, organizational and financial stability.

The project, as a whole, is already geared towards sustainable protected area management in its own unique way; in a modest manner, and this requires sustaining gains which the project has worked for.

III. SOURCES OF DATA/INFORMATION

Interviews:

Ms. Nilda S. Baling, Project Leader

ENMR Staff

Mr. Michael Orr, Peace Corps Volunteer

Mr. Proferio Austria, El Nido Resident

Mr. Edwin Vidal, El Nido Vice-Mayor

Documents:

Progress Reports

El Nido Marine Reserve PBSP/DENR Cooperative Agreement

Field Visit Reports

IV. ATTAINMENT OF OBJECTIVES

A. Resource Protection

- 1. Patrolling and law enforcement at the protected marine and terrestrial areas of the Marine Reserve.**
- 2. Monitoring of illegal/destructive activities within the Reserve including tourism.**
- 3. Implementation of existing fishery laws**
- 4. Implementation of the Reserve Zoning Plan**

Results:

During the project implementation, the personnel assigned under the Protection Component led a prominent role in monitoring and patrolling the area covered by the Reserve. During this time, also, cooperation from different community members helped the project through reporting illegal activities occurring within their area. The following are the major activities undertaken:

- a. Apprehension of illegal violators such as those involved in cyanide and dynamite fishing and imposition of administrative fines which would go to the municipal treasury. Some apprehended fishermen were identified to come from within El Nido and Taytay, Masbate, Cebu, Batangas, Dagupan and other Visayan islands.**

A major problem encountered was the apprehension of an El Nido resident who happened to be the brother of the incumbent mayor. As expected, the mayor intervened and even raised a counter charge against the Reserve's rangers. This case was elevated to court and at the DENR national level and is still awaiting the judge's decision.

- b. Illegally cut logs and other forest products had been confiscated, and those involved in illegal activities were arrested. Items seized included chainsaws, boats and other paraphernalia were impounded, and kept at the ENMR Office.**
- c. Illegal collectors of sea shells were also apprehended due to their violation of the policies of the Reserve.**
- d. Regular seaborne patrolling was undertaken which resulted to sightings and actual encounters with entrants who were not aware of the policies. Consequently, information on the area's regulation under A.O. 14 were disseminated by the concerned rangers.**
- e. Monitoring of kaingin activities and illegal poaching within the Reserve had been conducted and strengthened. Local residents who were caught doing swidden farming had been issued with summons and asked to execute waiver for their illegal activities.**

Tourists who unknowingly visited the Reserve's core zone areas were advised of the policies and asked to leave the area.

To complement personnel efforts, particularly of those assigned for marine protection, a UHF radio communication system had been used.

B. Community Development/Education

1. Population census of occupants within the Reserve

Result:

Census on population was conducted in three (3) barangays and five (5) sitios. The activity also focused on the migration pattern of the communities as well as their present livelihood activities.

- 2. Information dissemination of environmental issues in four (4) barangays re: "kaingin" and others.**

Result:

As part of its information campaign, the project conducted community consultations on the effects of kaingin practices and on zero-waste management with focus on the use of plastic containers and their subsequent effect to the environment. Positive feedbacks were received from the beneficiaries on the said activity. Different posters and other informative materials were distributed to different communities

- 3. Formulation of educational modules on teaching about environment**

Result:

An educational module on environmental protection had been developed and produced. This environmental module now used in elementary and high school level was approved by the Department of Education and Sports (DECS) for implementation in El Nido. Furthermore, the project's Information Officers conducted formal classroom sessions with elementary and high school students.

- 4. Community organizing in island communities**

Result:

Four (4) barangays namely, barangays Vigan, Cadlao, Calitang and Malapacao were tapped for community organizing. Core group members were already identified while value formation inputs were simultaneously provided. In Bgys. Malapacao and Calitang, a core group composed of women, leadership inputs had been given.

- 5. Conduct of Summer Job for Youth**

Result:

A group of 25 youth participated and joined the summer environmental program. The group, known as the Green Movement, visited kaingin sites and led the beach

clean-up drive. It also launched a tree planting program which involve other local organizations and community residents.

6. GO/NGO Linkage

Result:

The project assisted the Association for the Conservation of El Nido (ACENI) locally-based organization, in accessing funds and implementation of mangro reforestation through DENR. Organizational support was also extended by the Project Leader in terms of project evaluation and activity setting.

C. Research and Rehabilitation

1. Establishment of a methodology for the identification of critical coral reefs infested with acanthaster ("crown of thorns")

Result:

The project's Research Component conducted assessment on different areas where acanthaster had been reportedly present. These areas were Cadlao, Miniloc, Dibuluan and other corraline areas. Eradication of acanthaster who fed on soft polyps of acroporas, was also undertaken through actual collection.

2. Collection and potting of 500 mangrove propagules

Result:

At least 2000 pieces of mangrove propagules were collected and planted at the mangrove rehabilitation sites. A nursery for the propagules was put up at Dagal-dagal.

3. Identification and reforestaion of two-hectare mangrove area

Result:

A 1.5 hectare area in Dagal-dagal which was planted with mangrove registered at least 80% survival rate. Aside from this, a 1.45 ha. expansion area in Camago was already planted with propagules.

4. Gathering of baseline information on nido nest for policy formulation

Result:

The project conducted a study on the status of the edible bird's nest. Aspects covered were the manner of gathering, ownership of concessions and the bird's life pattern.

5. Others

Result:

The Research Group together with the marine rangers, monitored the presence of sea cow ("dugong"), sea turtles (pawikan) and other marine species. Tagging of sea turtles also became part of the project's activity which was done in coordination with Task Force Pawikan. On March 1993, a 1.73 m. leatherback turtle was caught accidentally by fishermen in El Nido and was believed to be first leatherback turtle seen in El Nido. This sea creature was later reported to the project and was tagged with the prescribed clip by PAWB.

D. Maintenance and Infrastructure

1. Completion of repair works and maintenance of existing project facilities and equipment
2. Overhauling and repainting of two (2) patrol boats

Result:

Regular repair and maintenance of project's facilities such as:

- a. The rangers stations in Cadlao and Pinagbuyutan were repaired and upgraded.
- b. Construction of research station's mezzanine and other facilities for research were undertaken. A nipa hut was also constructed in Dagal-Dagal for the mangrove rehabilitation project staff.
- c. Repair of fence and reroofing of the office building.
- d. Pumpboats were regularly maintained and improved. One boat cabin was constructed for the 4DR5- powered boat.
5. Signages and other interpretative signs which centered on environmental protection were constructed and installed.

E. General Administration

Result:

1. In the absence of a formal community organizing Seminar, the project coordinated an exposure trip at PBSP-implemented Cabuyao Integrated Community Development Program (CICDP) in Cabuyao, Laguna for the

Community Organizers (CO's). An on site visit was done so that community organizers would have chance to see actual community-led projects which could be possibly replicated in El Nido.

2. Training for all the staff on map reading, surveying and report writing had been conducted.
3. Project staff underwent training on sea turtle tagging conducted by staff from PAWB.
4. Ten (10) project rangers attended the Advance Training Course for Rangers in Puerto Princesa .

V. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED/ACTIONS TAKEN BY IMPLEMENTING AGENCY

1. Mayor's apathy towards the project

It had been considered that the role of the local executive is crucial in protection activities in any given protected area. In the case of the project, the Mayor did not show expected support to the project. There had been instances when the Mayor would side with the violators whom the project staff had apprehended.

Some permits which the said Mayor issued were not in line with the policies of the Reserve and effect creating misunderstanding during apprehension time for the rangers.

Action Taken:

Efforts to elicit support for the project from members of the Sangguniang Bayan and the Vice-Mayor had been undertaken. As a result, some municipal ordinances to complement the project's activities had been passed through efforts of the Municipal Council.

2. Delays in the release of initial project funds

The operations of the project continued even without the expected funding during the early phase of DFNS-3. Payment of the staff salaries and the operating costs, especially for protection purposes had been delayed which affected the efficiency of the project staff.

Action Taken:

The project sought bridge financing to borrow money from external sources and operated at a minimum level. The releases of funds under DFNS-3 was fasttracked to meet the funding requirement of the project's normal operation.

3. Management Plan still not available

The management plan which would be the framework for operationalizing the project had not been properly produced and validated. Important details were missed as well as the community consultation activities which the NIPAPS law had strongly advocated.

Action Taken:

In the absence of the Management Plan, the objectives set in the Cooperative Agreement and the yearly plan became the reference of the project in the implementation of the project. Furthermore, different activities had been organized with the support of other groups to validate and complete the requirements of the Management Plan.

VI. PROJECT STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Strengths:

- 1. The capability of the project personnel in patrolling and protection activities are the assets of the project. The staff's exposure in apprehending violators enabled them to act accordingly during these events (e.g. proper dealing with apprehended parties and filing of cases to court). The Research Component also showed significant gains during the last phase of DFNS-3 when assistance from a US Peace Corps Volunteer came in.**
- 2. Support from DENR for the project on legal matters especially during problematic period were extended. This was evident when Usec. San Juan came over last May 1993 with lawyers to assist during the filing of counter charges against the project staff by one apprehended violator.**
- 3. Various communities, local residents and LGU officials have already thrown their support for the project. Positive attitude towards the project, participation in some project efforts, reporting of illegal activities and others can be considered indicators.**

Weaknesses:

- 1. The management and leadership of the project had been lodged in one person only, the Project Leader. Although project relievers were asked to take charge of the project during the absence of the Project Leader, still no understudy was identified who can assume the leadership role. In effect, the project personnel were very much dependent on the direction and guidance of the incumbent head.**

2. The project's community development component was limited in terms of the inadequate skills of assigned staff. The community organizers lacked the necessary inputs on proper community organizing for effective approach to win active participation of communities on the objectives of the project.
3. The request of the project to revoke the ordinance on "basnig" fishing within the Reserve did not materialize. This policy which allowed "basnig" fishing, more often than not, had created a lot of trouble for the park rangers in apprehending violators.
4. The financial system of the project did not improve much even with the installation of the required system during DFNS-3. This can be traced to the lack of capability of the personnel who handled the accounting system who did not have actual background and experience in bookkeeping and accounting. The Accounting Clerk and the Bookkeeper were graduates of B.S. Nutrition and Secretarial Course, respectively.
5. The El Nido Marine Reserve was covered only by an administrative order that could be easily modified or changed by any incumbent DENR Secretary if so desired. In effect, the legal foundation of the project is weak. Thus, resolutions had been passed by the El Nido Municipal Council requesting the Secretary and the President to have ENMR proclaimed by an Executive Order.
6. Within the DENR level, conflict over authority for the marine reserve had not been resolved. The ENMR which was authorized to oversee the Reserve had limited its operation in the marine areas. Until now, jurisdiction over the forests within the Reserve is still unclear and unsettled. The office of the CENRO is still asserting its power over the area while the ENMR has its own operation.

VII. LEARNINGS AND INSIGHTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Protection activities, if not done simultaneously with education and information campaign will receive negative reaction from the local people. The initial implementation of the project suffered resistance from the people because they were not fully informed on the rationale of the activities being undertaken. Educational campaigns on environmental protection and community consultations, however, did remarkable changes in the perception of the people towards the project.
2. In dealing with the people especially on those who were directly affected by the project, monitoring and preventing them to do illegal activities would only be a transitory approach. People would always resort back to their old ways should there be no alternatives offered for their source of livelihood. In this case, other support especially from the LGUs and NGOs can be tapped to support this need.

3. In managing a protected area such as the El Nido Marine Reserve, coordination among the local government, people and the implementing agency should be ensured. Consistency in policy-making and implementation are two critical aspects that can be achieved if communication lines are open among the Reserve's different stakeholders.

Recommendations:

1. Push for the establishment of a foundation for the El Nido Marine Reserve.
2. Develop a mechanism to monitor the different activities of the incoming local and foreign visitors.
3. Conduct of capability building activities for the present personnel to improve and upgrade their skills.
4. Adopt a flexible and operational organizational and financial system that meets standards of funding agencies and donors.
5. Organize the advisory council that would initially function as interim management board for ENMR.
6. Review existing policies and legislations to meet and complement the needs of the project.
7. Coordinate with other organizations on the applicable alternative livelihood programs for the local folks.

VIII. ACTIVITIES/PLANS BEYOND PROJECT LIFE

1. Continue area resource assessment and other practical field research works both marine and terrestrial.
2. Initially identify members (from the NGOs, barangay representatives, LGU and others) of the advisory council for ENMR
3. Strengthen linkage with other government agencies, NGOs and individuals and seek their commitment or possible partnership in different project components.
4. Tap possible trainers for staff training and development
5. Establish organizational set-up in preparation for requirements by funding agencies.