

ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN MANGROVE REHABILITATION IN REGION VI, PHILIPPINES

Josephine Savaris, Alice Joan Ferrer*, Rosalie Joven, Rodney Golbeque, and Basilio Bajoyo
University of the Philippines Visayas
aj_ferrer2005@yahoo.com

Given the substantial decline of mangrove forest in the Philippines, the rehabilitation and restoration of mangrove areas is urgent. Pioneering community-based mangrove rehabilitation efforts has been on-going in six sites in four provinces in Region VI, Philippines covering 103.22 hectares. In each site, the mangrove rehabilitation program is undertaken by a local organization of men and women and currently with technical and financial support from the Community-based Mangrove Rehabilitation Program (CMRP) of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL). Using these sites as cases, the paper focused on the role and contribution of men and women in mangrove rehabilitation efforts. Specifically, the paper described the female and male members' socio-demographic and economic profile, their entry and retention in the organizations at each site, their activities related to mangrove reforestation, and the formation of the organizations with focus on the positions occupied and responsibilities performed by male and female members. Primary data were collected through participatory rapid appraisal methods in 2009.

Men and women participated in mangrove rehabilitation efforts in six sites. Overall, the males outnumbered the females (315 males and 270 females) but females dominated three organizations. Two organizations started with all male members, two started with all female members and two with both female and male members. Mixed membership was encouraged under the CMRP-ZSL. External agencies were instrumental in the formation of the organizations. Four organizations formed earlier were strengthened under CMRP-ZSL starting 2009; two were organized under CMRP-ZSL in early 2009.

Although the organizations were headed by males as president or chair of the Board of Directors, the females played a significant role in running the organization as record keepers and fund managers. They shared with the males the major activities such as bagging of seedlings, hauling of planting materials, planting of mangroves, taking out algae from newly planted mangroves, and replacement planting. Particularly, the activities performed by females included organizing meetings and monitoring the growth and survival of planted mangroves. Meanwhile, heavier physical activities were usually performed by males such as setting up bamboo poles and binders during area demarcation, digging holes during planting, constructing foot walks and constructing breakwater. As wives of male members who were fishers, female members performed activities that their husbands were unable to perform while out fishing. Both the male and female members performed their activities voluntarily or with very minimal monetary incentive.

Among the female members, their major problem was time allocation for performing responsibilities at home, in the organizations and in the barangays. Most were also barangay health workers or barangay nutrition scholars.

The biggest challenge in mangrove rehabilitation efforts is sustaining the interest and help of both the male and female members, especially when the external support is finished.