

## *Programme Area Summary*

**Country:** Philippines

**Programme Area:** Secure Livelihoods 2005-2010

### **What is the aim of the programme area?**

To improve the livelihood security of rural poor women and men in natural resource dependent communities of Regions 8 and 13.

### **Why is VSO working in this particular programme area and region?**

Though the Philippines' ranking in Human Development Index has been relatively stable in the last five years<sup>1</sup>, these figures are not reflective of the conditions in rural areas. Based on the 2000 figures, Eastern Mindanao (Region 13 or the CARAGA region), and Eastern Visayas (Region 8) demonstrate very low indices comparable to countries with low human development. These provinces also rank high in terms of poverty incidence.<sup>2</sup> Most affected are those who are largely dependent on natural resources to make a living: farmers, fishers, forest users, and indigenous communities. Because of limited economic opportunities, people still rely on traditional livelihood activities that are dependent on and even abusive to natural resources. This is evident in the remaining forest, marine, and freshwater resources in the CARAGA (Region 13) and Eastern Visayas. This situation is further compounded by the typhoons that frequently devastate the regions as well as the lack of physical infrastructures necessary in achieving economic growth and social development.

### **Key beneficiaries and partners:**

Government partners include:

- Provincial governments of Eastern Samar and Agusan del Sur
- Local Government Unit (LGU) alliances in Eastern Samar, Surigao del Sur, and Agusan and Surigao del Norte
- municipal government units in Eastern Samar and Surigao del Sur
- state university – Eastern Samar State University

NGOs include:

- National NGOs: Center for Community Empowerment and Resource Development (CERD), Sibol ng Agham at Teknolohiya (SIBAT), and Environmental Science for Social Change
- Regional NGOs: Runggiyan Social Development Foundation (RSDFI), Management and Organizational Development for Empowerment (MODE), Environmental Legal Assistance Center (ELAC)

Through these partners we work with farmers, fishers, forest users, and indigenous communities.

### **Key objectives of the programme and the crosscutting themes**

- Improve the coordination and delivery of livelihoods-related services appropriate and relevant to the needs of the rural poor in Regions 8 and 13
- Enable the rural poor women and men in Regions 8 and 13 to have greater influence on livelihoods-related policy formulation and implementation

Gender and Participation and Governance are crosscutting themes. Organisational development assessments integrate assessment of gender concerns, particularly how the lack of livelihood opportunities impact on women. Existing livelihood strategies should consider the accounting and recognition of women's concrete contributions to families and communities.

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<sup>1</sup> From 1999 to 2003, Philippine HDI ranges from a low of 0.749 (1999) to a high of 0.754 (2002).

<sup>2</sup> All the provinces in CARAGA, and five out of the six provinces in Region 8 belong to the 44 poorest provinces of the Philippines ([www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/2000](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/2000)).

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Despite the advantages of devolution or democratic decentralization<sup>3</sup> many LGUs in rural areas remain weak because of the political and economic challenges they face in terms of resources, capacity, and political conditions. Communities also need to increase their demand-making power to maximise opportunities for participation and governance.

### **Current programme activities**

#### *Focus of International Volunteer Placements*

- Organisational Development – management and organisational development advisers, human resource Management, resource mobilisation and financial managers and planners
- Information Technologists – knowledge and database management, networking
- Micro- and Small-Scale Enterprise Development – small and micro business skills, product development and design, marketing, product research and development, logistics, agri-business
- Natural resources management – coastal resource management, agro-forestry, agricultural rural livelihoods (horticulture, fisheries, livestock); watershed management
- Advocacy – media and communications, campaign organisers, policy researchers
- Gender specialists – especially dealing with mainstreaming concerns for women and livelihood skills
- Risk managers – disaster management
- Specific livelihood skills – based on needs of particular area

#### *Workshops, training & conferences*

As part of our exit strategy training workshops and mentoring activities are focused on three areas: 1) sustainability through resource mobilisation, 2) institutionalising learning through knowledge management, and 3) national volunteering.

Regular employer and volunteer workshops will also continue: volunteer sectoral workshops on SL-NRM concerns, partners' meetings and workshops, employer-volunteer workshops (cross-cultural and gender mainstreaming).

#### *Support to national volunteering*

Development and capacity building support to local volunteering organisations and linking our partners with existing local volunteering organisations.

#### *Research*

Monitoring and evaluation of clustering approach, tracer study on NRM interventions (exit strategy), and evaluation of governance approach (working with local government units).

### **Other partnership activities**

Advisory group meetings (3x year) represented by key partners and volunteers in focus areas.

### **What makes VSO's work in this programme area special?**

Our work in specific geographic areas creates more possibilities for programme impact. Our strategic and long-term partnerships enable us to progressively address the needs of partners. To maximise limited resources, we work through existing collaborative bodies of local government units (alliances) and through the clustering of volunteer placements.

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<sup>3</sup> The Local Government Code of 1997 is anchored on the principles of local autonomy, peoples' participation and empowerment.

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Existing volunteer clusters are strategically linked to clusters of partners with local government units. There are two big cluster areas: Eastern Samar through the Matarinao Bay Management Council (alliance of 4 LGUs) with 3-4 volunteers; and Agusan del Sur province with 5 volunteers. Successful clustering approach means interrelated placements (e.g. different NRM and livelihood) skills around a particular eco-system) and overlapping partner goals (co-management agreements and arrangements).