

Mainstreaming Reproductive Health and Integrated Coastal Management in Local Governance: The Philippines experience

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Abstract



The Philippines' marine environment ranks among the 25 topmost "biodiversity hotspots" on the planet – areas of extreme species richness, diversity and endemism threatened by exceptionally high rates of human population growth. This necessitates an approach to conservation – such as integrated coastal management (ICM), that allows policymakers and planners to take population issues into account when looking at the pressures, threats, and opportunities facing coastal areas. In 2001 an important initiative was launched to explore ICM models that incorporate reproductive health

interventions that can slow population growth/momentum and address the high unmet need for family planning in the Philippines coastal zone. The project's overall strategy – called Integrated Population and Coastal Resource Management (IPOPCORM), follows directly from an ICM framework set forth by the government to achieve "three critical results" requisite for food security. The framework calls for decreasing population pressure on the resource base in coastal communities as an element of reducing fishing effort to sustainable levels. IPOPCORM directly responds to this call for action. Community-based subprojects implemented by local government-NGO (LGU-NGO) partners support *barangay* action planning/budgeting, paralegal training for volunteer fish/forest wardens, establishment/strengthening of marine protected areas, alternative livelihood/enterprise development, family planning outreach, and AIDS prevention education. During 2001-2003 the approach was scaled up to 18 coastal municipalities that span seven of the country's 14 hotspots ranked as extremely high priority areas for marine conservation effort. Program investment totaled about US \$2.1 million during the same period of which \$300,000 was contributed by local communities and LGU-NGO partners. Mid-term evaluation findings indicate LGUs have a greater appreciation of the linkages between ICM and RH and recognize the need to budget accordingly. Other results show the integrated strategy lends sustainability to ICM interventions, while ICM provides a comprehensible context for coastal residents to recognize the necessity of limiting family size to achieve food security and improve their family's welfare.

Introduction

Biologists have identified 25 areas on the planet – called “hotspots,” that are exceptionally rich in endemic species and increasingly threatened by human activity. Over 1.1 billion people worldwide live in biodiversity hotspots, and population growth in the hotspots is nearly 40 percent greater than globally¹. The Philippines is a case in point. It contains some of the most biologically diverse coral reefs on the planet, ranks second to Australia’s Great Barrier Reef in diversity of reef fish, and its sea grass communities are considered the most diverse in the Indo-Pacific region². However, the topmost areas of species richness, diversity and endemism in the Philippines are the very same locations where human population is increasing most rapidly,³ with rates of growth exceeding 4% in some locations compared to 2.36% nationwide.

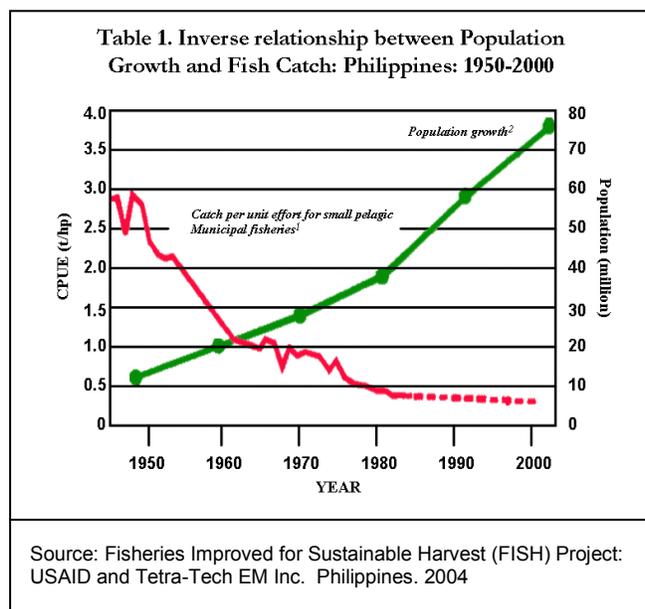
At current levels of unbridled growth, the Philippines population will double in less than 30 years. Even if fertility plummeted today to two children per couple, the numbers of people would still soar because of the country’s high population momentum – which exceeds that of India, China, Indonesia and many other countries in Asia⁴. Over 37% of the Philippines population is aged 15 or younger, and in the hotspots the proportion reaches as high as 45%. Population momentum is expected to account for 65 percent of the country’s foreseeable population growth, and its concomitant impacts on the environment portend increasing degradation and escalating conflicts among resource users that could threaten social stability in coastal communities⁵. The sheer number of people about to enter the reproductive age group has never been larger and the work required to reach them with timely fertility management information and services is beyond the capacity of any single sector necessitating multi-sectoral involvement and cross-sectoral approaches. The environment sector has much to gain from linking with reproductive health. Indeed, without such collaboration it is doubtful that conservation gains in the hotspots can be sustained in the longer term.



Many youth are attracted to environment issues and conservation work; this can be capitalized upon to ease population pressure in the hotspots. Three simple interventions that conservation groups can integrate into their programs that will help to slow population momentum include: (1) information, education and communication (IEC) messages that encourage youth to complete high school and delay early marriage and childbearing, (2) advocacy communication that informs leaders about population momentum and its implications for the sustainability of natural resources, and (3) integration of

community based family planning activities into field based conservation programs. Many environmental NGOs feel the latter is beyond their mandate and capacity. This paper discusses ongoing experience in the Philippines which suggests otherwise. Photo (left): Teens excited by their first snorkeling experience at an IPOPCORM-sponsored Youth Camp (2004).

Literature Review



Majority of the Philippines population reside in the coastal zone and over 50% of the country's protein requirements are derived from fish caught in municipal waters. In coastal communities, fish supply up to 80% of the population's dietary protein⁶. Average daily fish catch, however, has decreased to a fifth of that post - World War II while population has increased eight folds (Table 1)^{6,7}. Fish are also smaller and of poorer quality which results in long excursions away from home and reliance on destructive fishing practices (dynamite, cyanide etc.) to increase yields. Efforts to protect marine habitats and ecosystems have been ongoing since 1980s⁹ but currently only 7% of the country's coral reefs are protected in 136 marine reserves, and barely 20% of the original mangrove

forest remains intact. The overexploitation exacerbated by mangrove and coral reef destruction, have brought grinding poverty to many coastal communities⁸ prompting a government warning in 1999 "if current trends of over fishing and environmental degradation continue, coastal resources will not be able to provide enough food for the Philippines' growing population⁶. "

Results of recent studies conducted by PATH Foundation Philippines and partners in six coastal areas of Palawan and Bohol (2001) support the government's concerns. Over 80% of respondents surveyed in six study municipalities said their "barangay may soon face a crisis because there are too many people and not enough fish to go around. " Seventy percent (70%) also said "sometimes there is not enough food to go around and the family goes hungry⁹." Parallel biophysical assessments document evidence of Malthusian over-fishing in some of the same Palawan communities¹⁰, while household survey data reveal high rates of childhood malnutrition and unmet demand for family planning – ranging from 2-3 times the national average¹¹. Multiple variable analyses indicate childhood malnutrition was most pronounced in areas where the coastal environment was degraded and in households where fishing was the primary occupation and mothers were not currently practicing family planning¹¹. Other information and reports of sexually transmitted disease (STD) transmission in hotspot areas highlight the potential for HIV spread in coastal sites targeted for tourism development¹².

Two important gender issues common to coastal areas include females' lack of access to credit and training for alternative livelihood, and males' lower level of secondary education attainment. Although the overall level of education has increased over the past generation, there is still a gap of 8-9% between boys' and girls' level of high schooling (Table 2). The same data also show the proportion of males engaged in fishing has increased, and young men today are twice as likely to be living in poverty as males of their fathers' generation¹³. Given the decline in the fisheries sector mentioned earlier, it is imperative that boys in coastal areas complete high school so as to broaden their employment options beyond fishing.

Table 2. Characteristics of Rural Populations in Six Coastal Municipalities of Palawan and Bohol Provinces, Philippines. PATH Foundation Philippines IPOPCORM: 2001

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Population Subgroup</i>			
	Male Adults	Male Youth 15-24 yr	Female Adults	Female Youth 15-24 yr
Mean Age	38 yr	19 yr	35 yr	19 yr
Some High Schooling	49%	66%	57%	75%
Percent Fishers	30%	42%	0%	0.8%
Percent Below Poverty (<P1500/mo.)	35%	72%	41%	74%

Source: DRDF Final Report of Baseline Survey for IPOPCORM Initiative: 2003

Materials and Methods

Integrated coastal management (ICM) is an approach to managing resources that allows policymakers and program planners to take population and gender issues into account when looking at the pressures, threats, and opportunities facing coastal areas. In 2001 an important initiative was launched to explore ICM models that incorporate reproductive health interventions that can slow population growth/momentum and address the high unmet need for family planning in the Philippines' coastal zone. Designed by the private, non-profit PATH Foundation Philippines Inc. (PFPI), the project – Integrated Population and Coastal Resource Management (IPOPCORM), aims to improve the quality of life of coastal communities while maintaining productivity and biological diversity of marine ecosystems. IPOPCORM offers planning, technical and financial assistance to communities interested in working towards three desired outcomes: (1) improved reproductive health, (2) enhanced management of marine and coastal resources and (3) increased awareness and support for integrated ICM-RH approaches.

To achieve these results, IPOPCORM targets three groups in critical coastal habitats: youth, fisher folk, and entrepreneurs. The program seeks to educate and encourage youth entering reproductive age (15-19 years) to become stewards of their sexuality and the coastal environment. Small-scale fishers, seaweed farmers and other coastal dwellers reliant upon aquatic resources are targeted for assistance because the project's research shows they comprise the bulk of the coastal population and considerable proportions are living in poverty and have unmet needs for family planning services. IPOPCORM works to address this need by providing them with information on reproductive health and by strengthening their capacity to implement community-based and integrated conservation, reproductive health, and environmentally-friendly enterprise development (EED) activities. Finally, the program directs resources to small entrepreneurs in coastal municipalities, particularly drugstore owners and shopkeepers who have the potential to become social entrepreneurs through participation in social marketing activities the project supports to increase availability of affordable reproductive health products in coastal areas.

Cost-recovery mechanisms built into the scheme enhance the sustainability of community-based distribution (CBD) of non-clinical methods of family planning, which is a relatively new concept for the Philippines. To better understand how it works, PFPI organizes study programs for LGU-NGO teams – including Municipal Mayors, to observe Thailand's family planning program and the activities of the Population and Community Development Association (PDA) which have used CBD approaches since the mid-1970s.

Conceptual Framework

IPOPCORM's overall strategy follows directly from the ICM framework jointly developed by the Philippines Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA/BFAR) for fish food security⁶. Based on current conditions and trends in coastal resources and aquatic food production, three critical results are put forward as essential for sustaining coastal resources to assure food security in the coming years; these require that:

- Fishing effort is reduced to sustainable levels,
- Illegal and destructive fishing practices are stopped, and
- Coastal habitats are protected and managed.

The framework specifies the various interventions that need to be undertaken to achieve these results, which are similar to many coastal conservation projects. The innovative element is a call for decreasing population pressure on the resource base in coastal communities as an element of reducing fishing effort to a sustainable level. The framework calls for strengthening of family planning (FP) in these communities - not typically a part of environmental management programs. IPOPCORM responds to the program outlined by the DENR/DA/BFAR framework, and specifically to the need to promote family planning practice in marine hotspot areas.

Implementation Arrangements



IPOPCORM is managed by the private, nonprofit PATH Foundation Philippines Inc. (PFPI), which mobilized grant funds from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to finance the development, implementation and evaluation of program strategies and activities during 2001-2005. Local government-NGO partners and target communities also contribute cash and in-kind support for implementation and monitoring of conservation and reproductive health activities.

At the national level, PFPI links and coordinates the program's inputs with the DENR, DA/BFAR and the Department of Health (DOH). At municipal levels, PFPI works with and through selected environmental NGOs and community development organizations that link with relevant local government units (LGUs) for joint implementation of project strategies. The local government-NGO (LGU-NGO) partners jointly execute Memorandum of Understanding that clarifies the roles and tasks of each partner – including fiscal responsibilities. The LGU-NGO teams advocate with provincial and municipal leaders for development of linked ICM-RH plans and/or integration of family planning into existing fisheries management and ICM agendas. At village (*barangay*) level, the LGU-NGO teams work with the multi-sectoral Barangay Development Councils (BDC) and local Peoples' Organizations (PO) to facilitate participatory coastal resource assessments (PCRA) and barangay-specific action plans and budgets for ICM and RH activities. The partners also deliver paralegal training, technical assistance for strengthening/establishing marine protected areas, alternative livelihood/enterprise development support, family planning outreach services, and IEC about population-environment linkages and approaches. LGU-NGO teams also train and supervise the work of the social-marketing partners that make non-clinical methods of family planning available to eligible acceptors. Photo (left): Typical sari-sari (convenience) store in a rural coastal community with a project sign board announcing “ This is a Community-Based Distribution Outlet: We Provide Basic Family Planning Services.”

At subvillage (*sitio*) level, the BCD and PO members identify indigenous leaders from among the target groups who implement and monitor the action plans and project activities. These volunteers are trained by PFPI and the partners to serve as grassroots change agents and peer educators (PE) for environmental stewardship and responsible sexuality/reproductive behavior. Some are trained to motivate potential family planning (FP) acceptors while others serve as distributors of family planning products and/or volunteer fish/forest wardens who patrol designated marine/mangrove protected areas. Several adult volunteers function in two or more capacities. Youth peer educators typically spearhead coastal clean-ups and mangrove reforestation efforts while other youth organize non-traditional media events that disseminate IPOPCORM's messages through local radio stations, community theatre events and during barangay fiestas. To sustain volunteerism, the project prioritizes active peer educators and community volunteers for alternative livelihood training and micro-credit that have viable small business plans and are creditworthy.. About 2,000 volunteers, fisher folks, and other coastal dwellers benefited from training in alternative livelihood under the program during 2001-2003. The various components and multi-disciplinary approach advanced by IPOPCORM is shown below in Table 3.

Table 3: Community based and integrated ICM-RH strategies applied in the Philippines IPOPCORM Initiative. PFPI and partners: 2001-2004

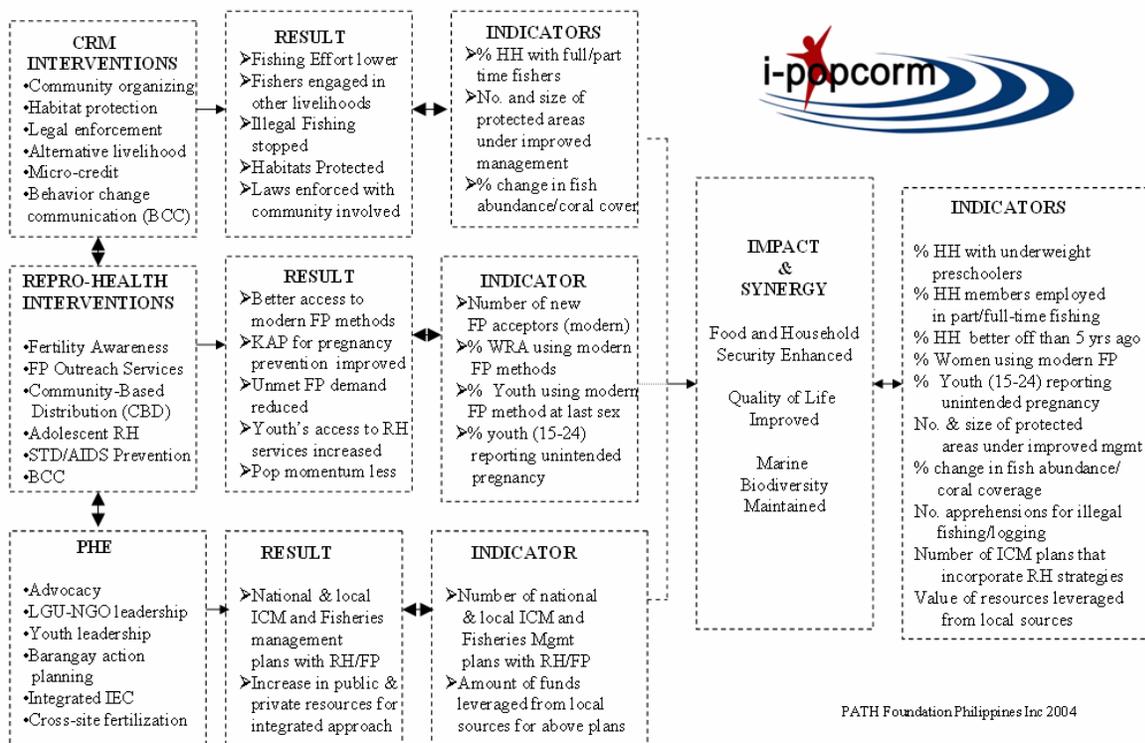
Reproductive Health Management	Human reproduction / sexuality IEC
	Family planning and family budgeting
	Community outreach and peer education
	Community based distribution of non-clinical methods of contraception (condom, pills)
	AIDS and STD prevention education and referral
Coastal Resource Management	Community organizing
	Participatory coastal resource assessment (PCRA)
	Habitat protection and enforcement
	Environmentally-friendly enterprise development (EED) and micro-credit support
	Coastal conservation education
Advocacy and IEC	Integrated Population-Environment
	Barangay action planning/budgeting
	Behavior change communication and monitoring

Evaluation Design

IPOPCORM's evaluation plan was designed to explore and test hypothesis about cross-sectoral program synergies between reproductive health (RH) and environment/ food security efforts in coastal areas. Its underlying assumption is that integrated strategies yield a bigger pay-off than stand-alone initiatives. Evaluation activities, which are being implemented by independent researchers, are ongoing in six of IPOPCORM's eighteen (18) target municipalities. To provide comparative data, some of the evaluation sites have only ICM activities, others have only RH activities while yet another group has both ICM and RH activities.

The selection of indicators used to measure the project's success was guided by IPOPCORM's conceptual framework, which centers on household and food security. Among others, the project collects outcome data on such variables as the percentage of households with full-time fishers and underweight preschool children, the number of protected areas under improved management, changes in contraceptive prevalence among women age 15-49, and changes in unintended/unwanted pregnancy among youth aged 15-24. Indicators used to measure the sustainability of the integrated approach include the number of municipalities and barangays with ICM plans that include RH strategies and the value of resources leveraged from local sources for ICM-RH activities. Observers of P-E projects worldwide have commented that IPOPCORM's evaluation design is "a breakthrough in that it attempts to measure actual biodiversity impacts¹³" by collecting outcome data on such variables as change in fish abundance and coral coverage (see Figure below)

IPOPCORM Results Framework & Indicators



Results and Discussion

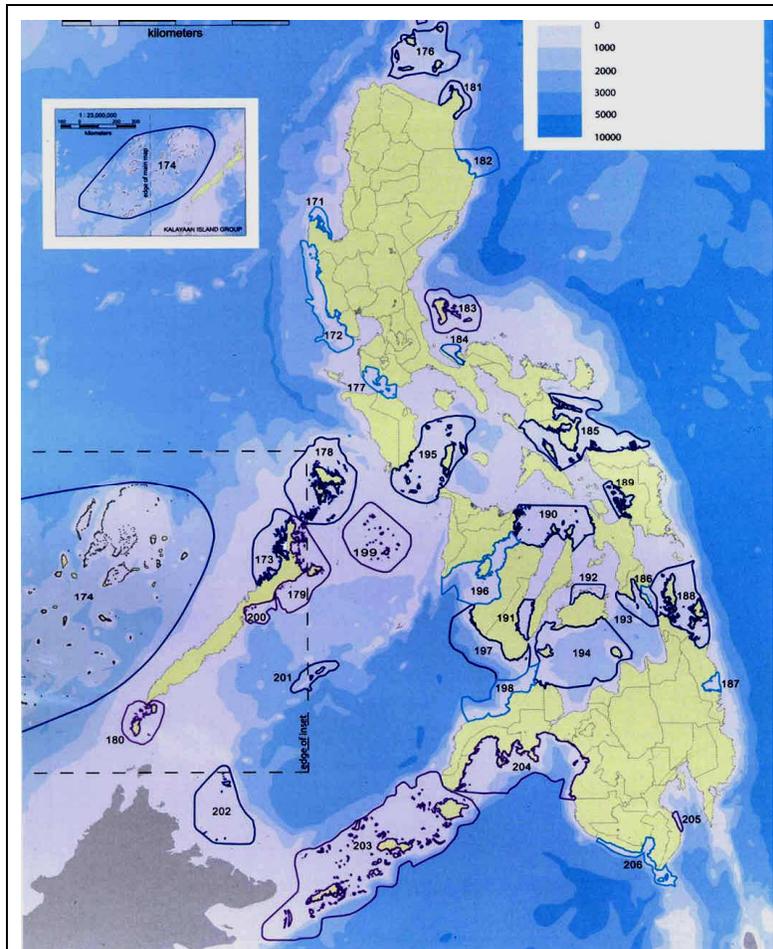
IPOPCORM has a large NGO component through which PFPI channels technical, financial and commodities assistance to target coastal communities. Fourteen (14) local NGOs currently serve as implementing partners to PFPI and LGUs in eighteen (18) target municipalities. The majority of the NGO partners specialize in community development and/or conservation work and only two have previous family planning experience. All the partners implement cross-sectoral activities, except in sites where single sector approaches are being applied for comparative purposes.

NGO subprojects are staffed based on site-specific demographic and geographic information and subproject coverage targets. NGO teams typically have 3-5 field workers per location and, between them, the field team members usually have prior training and experience in at least three of the following disciplines relevant to IPOPCORM work: primary health care, community organizing, coastal conservation/resource management, micro-credit management, information, education and communication (IEC), alternative livelihood. In transferring know-how to NGO partners, PFPI uses a unique methodology that engages the participant in the delivery of the training for which s/he is a partaker. In this way, the NGO trainees grasp technical knowledge and training skill at the same time. It takes approximately 12 months of sequential training to build local NGOs' capacity to develop and delivery IPOPCORM's outreach delivery systems and services. IPOPCORM's experience demonstrates that environmental NGOs can perform at equal levels of competency as health NGOs – given appropriate training and technical support in community-based reproductive health and family planning.

Program Coverage

The IPOPCORM program currently works in 702 sitios (subvillages) located in 105 coastal and island barangays of 18 municipalities that overlap with 9 marine conservation priority areas and hotspots. Throughout the country, there are 36 marine hotspots of which 14 are ranked as “extremely high” priority areas for marine conservation. IPOPCORM works in half of those areas as well as two other second-tier areas ranked as “very high” priority (see Map below). It required 40 months of field work and an investment of \$2.1 million to scale-up IPOPCORM to its present level of coverage. The project is now the largest ongoing population-environment initiative in the Philippines – and perhaps the region. Of the total project investment, about \$300,000 was contributed by LGU-NGO partners and local communities and the remainder was financed by the project. Efforts to further scale - up the approach to more ecologically-significant levels are currently underway with a planned expansion into other “extremely high” priority areas in the Mindanao and Visayas regions, in collaboration with the USAID-assisted Fisheries Improved for Sustainable Harvest (FISH) project, and WWF-Philippines.

**Map Showing Philippine
Marine Biodiversity Conservation Priority Areas
(IPOPCORM works in #173 to #199)**



Source: DENR-Protected Areas & Wildlife Bureau, Conservation International and Biodiversity Conservation Program – UPCIDS.: A second iteration of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2002). Page 38 The fourteen “extremely high” priority areas for marine conservation include clusters with following numbers 173, 174, 176, 178, 185, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 201, 202

Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

The IPOPCORM project has demonstrated that – with appropriate training and support, environmental NGOs can effectively advocate for population-environment policies and directly assist communities to plan and implement community-based family planning strategies in conjunction with coastal conservation activities. So far, three (3) target municipalities and 76 barangays have developed linked ICM-RH plans which far exceed the program’s original target of 10 integrated plans. Moreover, 95 Peoples’ Organizations have been capacitated in ICM and/or RH, 6,000 couples have received family planning assistance, 5,000 youth have received IEC, 2,000 fisher folk benefited from alternative livelihood training, and 22 different marine and mangrove protected areas have been established and/or strengthened. Other project accomplishments and results are summarized below in Table 4 by project objective.

Table 4. Accomplishment by Intermediate Objective and Indicator: IPOPCORM (2001-2003)

OBJECTIVES	INDICATOR	ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING 2001-2003
Improve reproductive health outcomes of people living in rural coastal communities	Number of FP service points established in the program catchment area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 755 CBD points were established at sub village level (91% in private sector outlets i.e. sari-sari stores) Access to FP services increased ten-fold (from 80 to 803 points)
	Number of new FP acceptors recruited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6,000 new FP acceptors recruited. Majority is users of OC, condom and DMPA and 269 are BLT and NSV acceptors.
	CPR among WRA (modern method)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project established the first municipal-specific rates of contraceptive prevalence (CPR) for women of reproductive age (WRA) in the country. Baseline data (2001) indicate CPR averaged only 17% in 6 study municipalities (vs. 33% nationwide)
	Unmet FP demand among WRA ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unmet FP demand averaged 52% at baseline. During 2001 – 2003, unmet FP demand declined by estimated 15% in integrated sites compared to 11% in RH-only site and 2% in the control site.
	CPR among youth ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First municipal-specific CPR rates for youth established by IPOPCORM in 2001. Baseline data (2001) show CPR averaged 9.4% for young single males in six study municipalities and 4.8% for young single females in six study municipalities. Repeat surveys in 2004 will measure change in CPR among these same groups.
	Unmet FP demand among youth ³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline data (2001) indicate that unmet FP demand averaged 62.5% for young single males and 50.0% for young single females
	Partnerships established with government health units/personnel and private sector organs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships with 15 rural health units and 769 Barangay Health Workers established by the project during 2001-2003 ; 1,122 government health workers trained in modern FP method use. Partnerships with 14 environmental NGOs and 95 Peoples Organizations established and their capacity to facilitate and implement community based ICM-RH activities developed.

¹ Proportion of WRA who do not want any more children but are not currently using any FP method

² Proportion of single youth aged 15-24 who used a condom or any other FP method during last sexual intercourse

³ Proportion of youth aged 15-24 yr who have ever “been or gotten someone pregnant” who did not want to “get/beget someone” pregnant

OBJECTIVES	INDICATOR	ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING 2001-2003
Enhance the management of marine and coastal resources at community level	Number of current or new protected areas with improved management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 current and/or new protected areas are under improved management compared to 17 in 2001 (15 marine sanctuaries and “no take” areas, 5 mangrove stewardships and 2 migratory bird sanctuaries)
	Number of new regulatory measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four new regulatory measures (ordinances) passed by local governments to protect critical marine ecosystems in 3 municipalities⁴
	Number of individuals who received training & are applying it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 178 persons trained, deputized and actively involved in co-management and protection of MPAs and other stewardship in 12 hotspots. 2,000 coastal resource users trained in alternative livelihood and 134 managing small environmentally friendly enterprises.
	Changes in number of incidences of illegal fishing practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 82 penalties levied and/or fishing gear confiscated during 2002-2003 Dynamite fishing in Cogtong Bay (Bohol) ceased altogether after 24-hour patrolling was instituted in 2002.
Increase awareness/support for linked RH-CRM activities	Increase in resources for IPOPCORM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash and in-kind contributions leveraged from local sources totaled over Pesos 15 million during 2001-2003.

The following feedback from coastal residents provides additional qualitative insights into the project’s success and the benefits people perceive as the most valuable to their community¹⁴:

- “IPOPCORM not only promotes balance in the family but also ecological balance;”
- “Everyone in the barangay should know about RH-CRM because knowing how to plan our families and to take care of our coastal environment will make every family in the community healthy;”
- “IPOPCORM helps in preventing unwanted pregnancy and in protecting the seas for the future of the children”
- “ Improves family life with enough food and better future of the family.”

Other information generated by the program’s monitoring system suggests the integrated approach is helping to bridge community gender barriers. Greater buy-in from communities has also been observed in areas where the holistic approach is applied compared to areas where single-sector projects are being implemented.

Implementation Constraints.

In some sites, there has been resistance from Church groups to the community based family planning activities introduced by the project. The overwhelming demand from the people for such service, however, has spurred the LGU-NGO teams to continue their efforts to outreach to under-served fishing communities and the densely population island barangays with reproductive health information and services.

⁴ Candijay in Bohol and Cuyo and Culion in Palawan province
Prepared for the Coastal Zone Asia-Pacific (CZAP) conference: Cebu Philippines, 2004

IPOPCORM has established important baseline information that can be used to measure added value of the integrated approach – something that is lacking worldwide and needed to guide future population-environment policy and program development. Nonetheless it has taken much longer than originally estimated for PFPI and partners to implement the project's evaluation plan – largely because the research sites are in remote, underserved island municipalities that lack communication and transportation infrastructure. For this reason, PFPI is seeking support from international and domestic sources to continue and expand the program's operations research and service delivery activities through September 2006 when the post-project biophysical assessments and population studies are scheduled for completion.

Lessons Learned

A recent mid-term process evaluation of the IPOPCORM program documented several important lessons and best practices¹⁵ including:

- Placing Reproductive Health and Family Planning (RH/FP) in a broader context that links family size to sound environmental management and ultimately food security helps people to recognize the importance of limiting family size by practicing contraception.
- IPOPCORM demonstrates that integrated approaches reduce the resistance to family planning by religious leaders and conservative followers because of the linkage with food security. This is particularly important for the Philippines where resistance from the Church has undermined previous efforts to promote family planning.
- Integrated strategies such as IPOPCORM's greatly facilitate informing youth about reproductive health, abating resistance by parents who might otherwise object.
- While RH/FP contributes to the sustainability of CRM, CRM provides the enabling context for promotion and acceptance of family planning that unidimensional approaches lack.
- It is possible for non-specialists in either CRM or RH to acquire sufficient knowledge to implement the project; however, they require support, coaching, and monitoring from others who have advanced training and experience in CRM and in RH/FP.
- The field office of implementing NGOs or even a small office of a local Peoples Organization can serve as an important focal point for community involvement and participation in project activities.
- It is essential for staff implementing community-based activities to reside in the communities where they work to gain credibility, acceptance, and knowledge of actual conditions and problems that people face.
 - Integrated program strategies that are community-focused require a mix of skills by those implementers, including community organization, basic knowledge of environmental management and reproductive health, and strong interpersonal skills.
 - IPOPCORM has made use of a well established community institution – the sari-sari store – to create a new channel for communication, information and motivation about ICM and RH. Once in place, these community-based distribution (CBD) outlets become a viable resource in the community that can be used for a number of other health-related services.
- Strong working relationships with local government and health officials is essential for any project, and working with government in support of its development plans and objectives is a key element in establishing such relationships.
- Partnerships, as opposed to competition, between government and the private sector can be created that serve common goals and objectives, such as community-based distribution that uses community shops as outlets for contraceptives.

Summary and Conclusion

The IPOPCORM initiative is the largest ongoing population-environment (P-E) project in the Philippines. It currently works in half of the marine hotspots in the country ranked as “extremely high” priority areas for biodiversity conservation. Approximately 40 months and \$2.1 million were required to expand the program’s coverage to an ecologically-significant scale. IPOPCORM’s overall strategy follows directly from the government’s ICM framework for food security in the coastal zone, which identifies family planning as a strategic intervention to reduce fishing effort and population pressures on coastal ecosystems. The project strengthens the capacity at the local level in government, partner NGOs and peoples’ organization towards self sufficiency and to become stewards of their local resources, as well as to become advocate of reproductive health. This capacity development is very likely to be one of the most important and lasting results of the project.

Other information generated by the program’s monitoring system suggests the integrated approach is helping to bridge community gender barriers. Higher levels of community buy-in have also been observed in sites where linked ICM-RH is applied compared to single sector approaches. Projects requiring behavior change, such as IPOPCORM, generally require at least four years of intervention to show results. Demonstrating biodiversity impact requires even a longer timeline. IPOPCORM ‘s rigorous evaluation design holds promise of contributing important information about the added value of integrated approaches – which is lacking worldwide and needed to guide future P-E policy and program investments.

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