

**SORSOGON COMMUNITY ECOTOURISM PROJECT
PROVINCE OF SORSOGON**

PRIETO DIAZ COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION WORKSHOP

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Introduction

The Prieto Diaz Community Mobilization Workshop signaled the start of implementation of the Communications Plan of the ecotourism projects of the municipality of Prieto Diaz, Sorsogon. The Communications Plan was drawn up on July 18-19 in a workshop on Site Management Planning at the Sangguniang Panlalawigan at Sorsogon, the expected outputs of which were the site management plan and communications plan of Prieto Diaz and Bulusan municipalities drawn by their respective technical working groups (TWGs).

This community mobilization activity, which was identified as the immediately needed communication task of the ecotourism project, was held in August 18 in the Teachers Hall of the central school. More than seventy (70) persons attended representing various sectors of the community. These sectors consisted of officials and personnel of the national, provincial, and municipal governments, barangays (mostly in the project site), non-governmental organizations, church pastoral council, teachers, project consultants, and others.

The objectives of the activity were to inform the community concerning the ecotourism project; win over the support and cooperation; and gather initial questions and recommendations regarding the ecotourism project from the community leaders and government officials.

Proceedings of the Community Mobilization. The panel that presented the ecotourism project to the participants of the community mobilization was headed by Mr. Rustum Mirasol, the team leader of TWG and who has been recently appointed as acting provincial tourism officer.

The activity started at nine o'clock in the morning with the customary opening ceremony consisting of prayer, singing of the national anthem, remarks by the municipal vice-mayor, and a message each by the principal of the central school and a

representative of the governor. The mobilization proper followed with the presentation of the ecotourism project, the proposed management guidelines, lunch break, workshop which included SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, action planning, and covenant drafting. The activity ended with the signing of the covenant by the participants.

In the SWOT analysis, the concern and cooperation within the community and the financial and other kinds of support from various agencies were considered strengths. The weaknesses were identified as lack of funds and facilities, people's lack of knowledge, and lack of unity. The opportunities perceived were researches and studies, livelihood projects and employment. The threats dealt with the conflict between the national and local policies regarding protected zones, negative attitudes of people, and lack of political will.

To elicit the participation of people in the project the TWG included action planning in the workshop. First the participants who were divided into groups were asked to express problems regarding the implementation of the ecotourism project in the community. Second, the participants were asked for solutions to the problems presented. Finally the groups rendered a report to the general assembly the problems and solutions recommended.

The actions recommended included seminars, trainings, and information, education, campaign to address the need of the community for knowledge and information regarding the project and the long-term need of environmental protection and development. The next recommendation was the establishment of facilities at the site to answer the needs of the tourists. This was followed by passing of ordinances regarding ecotourism, allocation of funds for ecotourism in the municipal budget, close coordination of all concerned private and government agencies, and finally regular evaluation of the project.

It has been observed that the recommendations presented in the workshop were all contained in the site management plan that was drawn up by the members of the TWG in the site management planning workshop of August 18 at Sorsogon.

Forecast. The communications plan of Prieto Diaz showed a duration of three years. The scope of this report covers only the community mobilization which was intended to address the immediate need of the project to inform the community leaders and solicit their cooperation and support for the project.

In order to achieve more support and cooperation on the grassroots level the community mobilization should be echoed in the eleven barangays which are covered by the project by those who attended the July 18 community mobilization, with help of the TWG. Important in these subsequent mobilizations of the various barangays is the environmental education component and solicitation of support and cooperation for the project.

In the meantime the project management should coordinate the support and cooperation of the various government agencies such as the DENR, DOT, DECS, DA, DPWH, DSWD, DOH, others and NGOs, SEAMANCOR and Tambuyog for the project.

Another important activity is to finalize agreements with the local and national tour operators to promote the project as an ecotourism destination and request technical and other assistance available from them to be able to meet the standards of the industry.

Critical in the continuing implementation of this communications plan and of the whole ecotourism project is the management set-up that is supported by the LGU, equipped with initiative, creativity and a strong resolve which are required in a pioneering activity, and given some autonomy in the implementation of the project.

List of Annexes:

1. Program of Community Orientation/Mobilization, 18 August 2000
2. Action plans recommended by participants
3. SWOT Analysis
4. List of participants
5. Communications Plan

Annex 5
COMMUNICATIONS PLAN
FOR SORSOGON ECOTOURISM PROJECT

Situationer

The local government units (LGUs) of Prieto Diaz, Gubat, Bulusan, Matnog, and Pilar sought the assistance of ARD-GOLD for the development of Ecotourism projects in their respective municipalities. Due to limited resources and time, Prieto Diaz and Bulusan were chosen to pilot the project. The former selected the mangrove area and diving sites as its ecotourism attractions, while Bulusan chose the lake, a waterfalls and river. From the experience of these two, the rest of the municipalities through their staff are expected to learn and later on approximate the experiences in their own respective ecotourism projects.

To insure the development of ecotourism sites among the municipalities a series of activities were facilitated by ARD-GOLD. Among these were organization of the technical working group (TWG) among the different representatives of the municipalities and government agencies of Sorsogon, orientation seminar-workshops on ecotourism concepts, goal-setting for TWG, marketing, environmental concepts related to ecotourism, quick site visits and evaluation of the different potential ecotourism sites of the province, and profiling of Prieto Diaz and Bulusan.

The profiling activity consisted of bio-diversity study, resource utilization, and carrying capacity of the ecosystems which were proposed as ecotourism sites. The reports of the profiling activities of Prieto Diaz and Bulusan served as input materials for the site management planning workshop held last 18-19 July 2000 in the Sangguniang Panlalawigan at Sorsogon.

Part of the site management planning is a communications plan that ensures that the needed information flow between the management of the project and its various audiences to guarantee the accomplishment of desired goals and objectives.

Communications Plan

A communications plan is a plan to guide the management what information to give, to whom, for what purpose, how, and when in order to accomplish the goals and objectives of the project. It includes all written, spoken, and electronic interactions with one's audience and puts in writing: audiences or persons concerned, objectives, tools/methods, cost, time frame, and evaluation (Scott, 1997).

It is assumed that the implementation of the communications plan rests on the management of the project who is either a person or group of persons given the authority to make decisions and implement the project activities on a day-to-day basis and subject to the review of a board or council.

In a community project such as ecotourism which requires the support and cooperation of various groups of people, there is a need to inform and persuade them to participate before they can be mobilized. Hence, a communications plan is needed to inform and win over the cooperation of all into the project.

The concerns in the management of the ecotourism project includes people, programs, and materials. The communications plan covers only the people component which include those who are directly and indirectly affected by or involved in the project.

Communications Plan of Prieto Diaz

The people concerned in the Prieto Diaz ecotourism project consists of the following: residents within and around the project site, residents outside of the project site, government organizations, non-government and people's organizations, tour operators, contractors, and ecotourists. A brief analysis will make a better understanding of the communications requirement of the respective groups of people.

Residents within and around the project site are mostly fishermen and farmers. Before the rehabilitation of the mangroves some ten years ago, many of them were party to the destruction of the mangroves which they processed into charcoal for fuel of bakeries and restaurants in the provinces of Sorsogon and Albay. With the firm political will of the local government unit to forbid the harvesting of mangrove with stiff penalty, they were inhibited from doing further damage to the mangroves.

From the lesson of the recent past, they can be stopped from being destroyers of the mangroves by strict enforcing of local environment-protecting and development ordinances.

Furthermore, the project management should go beyond the law enforcing. For immediate mobilization for the ecotourism project, they must be given a massive information on the direct and indirect benefits of the project for them and the community. And for the long term environmental sustainability there is no substitute for educating them on keeping the integrity of the ecosystems that enhance their livelihoods of fishing and farming. They have to be made to understand that the health of the estuarine flora and fauna, the mangroves, corals and sea grasses in the project site will also mean abundance of farm harvest and fish in the nearby fishing grounds. Thus, if they understand this relationship then

they will willingly be party to protect these ecosystems from destroyers coming from among them and surrounding areas and municipalities.

Residents outside of the project site can be classified into the business sector, church sector, education sector, civic organizations, ordinary citizens. These sectors because of their higher income and education can form an effective support group of the ecotourism project. To mobilize this group into supporting the project, there is a need to give them adequate information regarding ecotourism and their roles in the project.

The education sector has a special role in the formation of the future citizens. The management of the project will be able to facilitate the environmental education, in general, and environmental education on the specific ecosystems, in particular, if appropriate linkage is made with the DECS in the regional, provincial and local school level in the training of local teachers, and construction of needed modules and collection of reference materials. This way the environmental education of the young is assured.

Government organizations (GOs) such as the DENR, DA, DPWH, DOH and others can give substantial support to the ecotourism project. Technical assistance in terms of flora and fauna researches and studies and environmental education services and financial assistance in terms of ecosystem re-planting and rehabilitation are expected from the DENR. Some infrastructure projects can be expected from the DENR and DPWH. The DA can assist the people in terms of more technically advance and sustainable methods of agriculture and fishery. The DSWD can assist in creating alternative livelihood projects that will stop people from destroying the ecosystem. The DOH can help the residents technically and financially in health and nutrition education, sanitary disposal of waste, and other health related concerns.

The management will do well to meet with representatives of these government agencies so that they can be mobilized to help develop the ecotourism project.

Non-government organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs) such as the SEAMANCOR can assist effectively in guarding the ecosystems from possible destroyers and in implementing re-planting of mangroves in areas where needed. They can also tap funding agencies for projects to generate alternative livelihood in projects like re-planting and rehabilitation of the ecosystem.

Local and national tour operators can also assist the ecotourism project by advising the project management on the proper establishment of the ecosystems, landscaping, infrastructure, facilities and especially in promoting the site as part of the destination of prospective ecotourists.

There is a need to create colorful brochures and posters that can be used by operators in promoting the project. The management has to make representations with the operators, consult with them, and ask their advice concerning the promotion of the project.

Local and national contractors can assist in advising the management on the landscaping, appropriate infrastructures and facilities and to build them at reasonable cost.

A seminar-workshop with prospective contractors by the members of the TWG who are architects and engineers can be scheduled on these concerns.

Ecotourists are a special group of people who have the means to visit and see places whose attraction rests on the pristine beauty of nature in the forms of

ecosystems and various flora and fauna. Creation of a web page will enhance access of the site to prospective clients.

The management can reach the ecotourists through the operators in the local, national and international levels. Colorful brochures, posters, and printed materials will facilitate the information dissemination by the operators.

The communications plan matrix for the Prieto Diaz ecotourism project immediately follows.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN OF PRIETO DIAZ ECOTOURISM PROJECT

Audiences/ Persons Concerned	Objectives	Tools/ Methods	Time Frame	Cost	Success Indicators
1. Residents within and around the ecosystem	1. Short term To get support and cooperation for immediate mobilization for the ecotourism project 2. Long term Environmental education	Assemblies, dialogues, seminars, radio Conferences, seminars, workshops School, classes	3 months 3 years		Residents are protecting the ecosystem
2. Residents outside the ecosystem: a) business sector b) church sector c) education sector d) civic organization e) ordinary citizens	1. Short term To get support and cooperation for immediate mobilization for the ecotourism project 2. Long term Environmental education	Assemblies, dialogues, seminars, radio Conferences, seminars, workshops, school, classes	3 months 3 years		Residents are protecting the ecosystem
3. Government Organizations (GO), such as DENR, DOT, DECS, DA, DPWH, DSWD, DOH.	To tap and coordinate their support and cooperation for the project	Dialogues, conferences, Meetings, Letters	1 month	20,000	Government projects are in place
4. Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs & POs)	To tap their support and cooperation	Dialogues, conferences, Meetings, Letters	1 month		NGO projects are in place
5. Tour Operators	To get technical assistance & packaging/marketing	Brochures, tours, posters, internet, ads.	6 months	500,000	Bookings are sufficient to defray operating expenses
6. Contractors	To get quality information on project	Dialogue, strict monitoring of proper qualifications	1 month		Infra-structure & facilities are done well
7. Ecotourists	1. To provide quality tour 2. To derive income from tourists	Ads, brochures, posters, internet	1 year	200,000	Ecotourists are satisfied

DIAGRAM OF THE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN OF PRIETO DIAZ ECOTOURISM PROJECT

