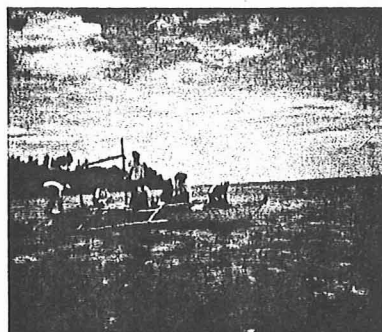


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FOCUS ON:
CBCRM Festival in the Philippines
2 - 4 June 2003, Subic, Zambales



learning

A Regional Newsletter in

CBCRM

Learning and working together towards enabling coastal communities to sustain their resources and livelihood



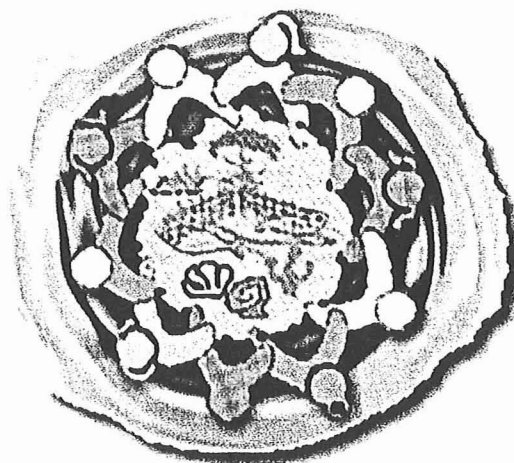
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NOTES from the ROOTS

Distilling lessons, drawing inspiration: Reflections on the CBCRM Festival

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CBCRM Festival

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It was a privilege to be invited to the CBCRM Festival. In accepting I felt guilty, for my motive, as I told Tata de la Cruz when she asked me, was selfish curiosity. I thought I would have a lot to learn and to gain from the experience. I was not mistaken. Coming as I did, knowing so little about either CBCRM or the Philippines, many things struck me.

One thing I did know from the past was the Philippines is a centre of innovation. It is so often in the Philippines that new things are done and done in new ways, especially in participation. In the 1980s it was to the Philippines that people came from all over the world to learn about participation in irrigation management. It was at Santa Mercedes, Maragondon, Cavite in October 1992 that participatory mapping of the seabed, and a sea transect, were to the best of

my knowledge first done anywhere in the world. It was in Palawan, in a South-South international PRA workshop and training, that women, again perhaps for the first time, used coloured strips to indicate monthly income and expenditure. For years I have used a photograph of that to illustrate creativity in the expression and analysis of complex realities. And the Philippines is known internationally as an epicentre for energisers¹ in workshops.



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Learning CBCRM aims to facilitate regular information exchange among CBCRM practitioners and advocates within the Asia-Pacific region. Readers are invited to send contributions, questions, and comments.

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Distilling, from page 1

The festival was in this tradition. I was able to pick up ideas which I hope to use elsewhere. The march and the market were memorable, as were the panels and presentations. The daily feedback sheets encouraged reflection. In the main sessions, it was such a good idea to use Powerpoint to display the simultaneous translations from Tagalog to English and from English to Tagalog. And the demonstration by Artists Inc., of how to enliven dull details of law and enable groups to enjoy learning them, was quite simply brilliant.

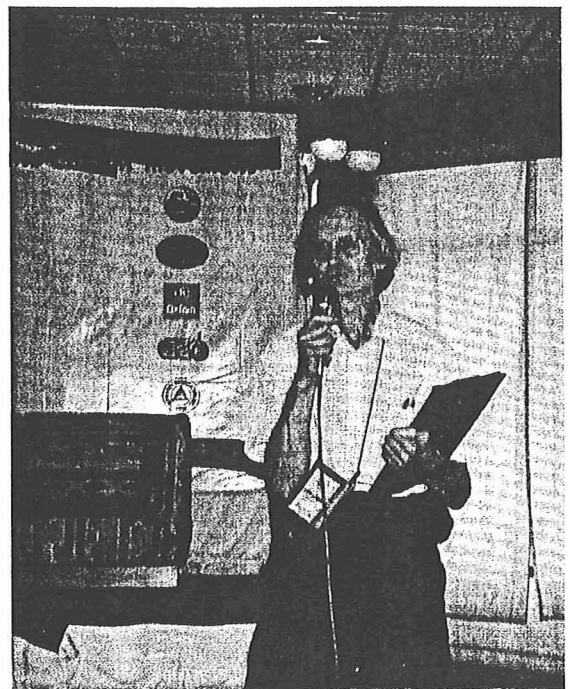
Repeatedly, I was impressed by the pervasive importance of law, rights, paralegals, solidarity and vigilance in the struggle for livelihoods, prosperity and protective and productive management of the sea and its resources. I had not realised how profoundly threatened these are. I had no idea that so much could hang on an administrative order (DAO 17²) which could be revoked administratively without consultation or legislative process. Conflicts of interest have not been major concerns in most of my work, so it was a shock to realise how sharp and damaging they have been and can be. It was a relief to meet John Galit again, for I remember well a conversation with him on Palawan in 1995 when his life had been threatened because of his actions against illegal felling of the forest. It was sobering and moving that the five awards at the end of the festival recognised the courage and sacrifices of two who had been killed and three who were in prison. I can only salute, with deep admiration, those like them who risk and sometimes lose their lives and livelihoods in the pursuit of justice and right living.

After the festival I was fortunate to spend a day with Dick Balderrama and his colleagues in SIKAT, and to have discussions with Jun Evangelista and others. It was inspiring to learn about the participatory research carried out by paralegals – on mariculture and fish culture, fish cages, smuggled fish, local ordinances on fishing, and services for women, and how the findings had been presented to decision-makers. I only wish that I could have been witness, and seen (another innovation?) the solidarity expressed by 250 people all wearing orange T-shirts at the meeting where the research findings were presented. On other occasions I was told the shirts had been black for sadness, red for anger, and white when expecting a compromise. When I asked Jun, as a leader experienced in struggle, what his advice would be to others in other countries faced with similar situations he replied:

- If you really believe in your rights, you have to fight for them. Do not be afraid.
- Ask for help when you need it. Know who to ask.
- Be strategic, prepare.
- Unity.

The words used in the festival and of the CBCRM movement were part of what we must hope will become the development vocabulary of the future. There was much, again and again, about learning – this newsletter is “Learning CBCRM” and there is a Research and Learning Fund. The word was repeatedly used. Then I was struck that the vision of the CBCRM Resource Center is for a “society that affirms the love for life . . .” and that “people’s wellbeing, physical and spiritual, is based in the sea”. I was told by SIKAT staff that the parts of their training that paralegals appreciated most were the modules on values, the self and relationships with God. The paper by Elmer Ferrer and others, subtitled “Revisiting the Theory and Practice of CBCRM in the Philippines” had as its main title “Affirming the Forces that Give Life and Energy”. Elmer wrote and spoke about the importance of friendship, not a word much used hitherto in development; and Lot Felizco in her brilliant and lucid summation at the end of the festival stressed social energy, transforming relationships, and deepening friendship and solidarity.

I ended my remarks to the festival with an appeal. Let me repeat now. Please keep on pushing at the frontiers of practice with your experiences and innovations. You do not need me to tell you that you have much in common, and much to share, with fisherfolk and their supporters in other parts of the world. This is not only in neighbouring countries in Asia with whom you are in touch but also in Africa – Tanzania and South Africa for example. And there is much to be learnt from you for other struggles – lessons about law and paralegals, about alliances and solidarity, about relationships, and about commitment, vigilance, friendship and courage. “Learning CBCRM” is a wonderful source of insight. Could it, and other documents, be more widely distributed? Please keep up and expand all your good work, and let the rest of us hear about it. For there are many in the rest of the world, not only in CBCRM, who



Above: The author shown here sharing some thoughts during the NGO/Academe Conversations at the 2003 CBCRM Festival in Subic, Zambales, Philippines.

have much to gain from what you are continuing to pioneer.

Thank you for your welcome – a truly inspiring experience — and for everything I learnt.

¹ Group activities done at specific points during trainings, workshops, meetings, and similar events, meant to keep the participants on their toes and to facilitate the internalisation of lessons and insights gained from the discussions. Also known as “ice breakers”. A broader term for activities that have been specifically designed to help reinforce the learning process particularly during trainings is “structured learning exercises” or SLEs. (Editors)

² Issued in 2001 by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in accordance with Republic Act 8550 or the Philippine Fisheries Code. DAO 17 provides guidelines on the delineation of the 15-kilometer zone from the municipal shoreline wherein commercial fishing is prohibited. (Editors)