

Latest News and Developments About Sorsogon Bay (as Reported by Pilar Gabito)

Part Two of an Occasional Series on Sorsogon Bay

By Lolo Bobby M. Reyes of Sorsogon City and West Covina, California

Thanks to the Facebook, Pilar Gabito and I were reunited. She is a daughter of one of my mentors, Fernando “Tio Pando” Gabito, Sr. (now deceased). Tio Pando, as I mentioned in Part One of this series, was one of the persons that influenced my views on the ecology and the environment, especially in regard to Sorsogon Bay.

It seems that indeed caring for Sorsogon Bay and the environment of the province runs in the blood of the Gabitos of Sorsogon.

Here are excerpts from Ms. Pilar Gabito's Facebook messages to this writer (not much editing was done, except to correct obvious typos and do some paragraphing, as both messages came in one long paragraph):

QUOTE.

I am active in one people's organization here in Sorsogon. Actually, I'm the Executive Committee president of *Ugnayan ng Maralitang Mamamayan sa Sorsogon Bay, Inc.* (UMASA-SorBay), which deals with three concerns: KKK - *Kalikasan, Kabuhayan* and *Karapatan*.

First and foremost, our concern is to save Sorsogon Bay. If you are not aware, since the latter part of 2006 to the early part of 2011, Sorsogon Bay was declared under Red Tide Ban by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR); thus, banning the gathering, selling, consuming and transporting of shellfishes harvested in Sorsogon Bay.

However, I, as one of the shellfish traders, didn't find it wrong to consume said shellfishes. We were all (coastal people) consuming said seashells. We then came to know that the drilling operation of the PNOC-EDC Geothermal Plant at the mountains of Bacon and Manito, could

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have been the culprit of contaminating Sorsogon Bay. We have several documentaries about this issue. (I have a fan page here in Facebook, I'll give you the access so you could understand it well.)

We have been very-vocal about this, in fact, it reached to the point when we submitted our complaint with the *Bantay Kalikasan*, a foundation of the ABS-CBN, which is now the major stockholder of this Energy Development Corporation.

Our complaint pushed the company to acquire from the City of Sorsogon a (City Council) Resolution granting the EDC the permit for an Expansion Project, which has been in operation for the previous years even in the absence of the Resolution from the City Council. But they have favorably passed said request in lieu of ten-million pesos as allegedly rehabilitation fund brought about by the damage due to Typhoon Dante, which caused mud flows bringing down logs from the drilling site. And even before said incident, there were cases of skin diseases that afflicted residents along the river banks of Rizal and Cawayan (rivers). It's a very-long story. I'll send you a copy of my term paper on the Red Tide in Sorsogon. So you can follow the story better. (

Editor's Note

: As soon as Ms. Gabito's paper is received, we will reprint it in this online publication.)

But at present, the Red Tide (alert) has been lifted since January this year. But then, the *tahong* growers are now at a loss on how to start all over again. Adding up is another burden in acquiring a permit from the City Hall with a fee, but with no security if the "Red Tide" will strike Sorsogon Bay again, (God forbid). The fisher folks here are at a loss in terms of livelihood.

Grabe ang sakit ...

What we need is a sustainable livelihood. Please Google-search UMASA-SorBay, Inc., so you can access its files.

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UNQUOTE.

Here is the second message sent on Facebook:

QUOTE.

As of press time, the seashells like *halaan* (clams), *talaba* (oysters), bamboo shells, *ritob*, *kagot*, *takal*, *tuway* (all named in the Bicol language) and many more species, are restored and abundant along the shores of Sorsogon City, and probably also in the neighboring municipalities like, Casiguran, Juban and Magallanes. No cases of skin diseases or food poisoning due to the consumption of these shellfishes have been recorded. Thus, our declaration and claims that the toxic wastes derived from the drilling operation of the Geothermal Plant of the Energy Development Corporation (EDC), which caused the Red Tide in Sorsogon Bay four years ago, is no longer happening now.

If in the past, we have been very vocal about it, our proactive action paid off. Now they (at the EDC) are responsible enough to maintain and have adopted a method for their proper waste disposal, which we have demanded from them.

Now, by this observation, we pray that the SHELLFISH BAN due to the presence of RED TIDE in Sorsogon Bay, be lifted now by the BFAR.

Let us all promote the shellfish trade in Sorsogon. We have been deprived of the most-delicious mussels (*tahong*) in the Region, let us not allow that all other shellfishes be affected as well. We love Sorsogon Bay and all its produce. It is God's blessings to all of the Sorsogueños. Let's take care of the bay and ask Overseas Sorsogueños to help us at UMASA-SorBay and other fishermen's groups.

UNQUOTE.

(To be continued . . .)