

The “Save Our Sorsogon (SOS) Bay” Initiative - MabuhayRadio

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

Tuesday, 31 May 2011 14:18 - Last Updated Thursday, 16 April 2015 04:58

Part One of an Occasional Series on Sorsogon Bay

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

Introduction. This writer assembled in 1987 a five-person group to prepare a 25-year Executive Summary of short-, medium- and long-term socioeconomic development programs for Sorsogon. The group was composed of Fernando (Tio Pando) Gabito, Sr., Dr. Antonio F. Dioneda, Tobing Labalan, David Ayo and this writer. Messrs. Labalan and Ayo worked then for the Sorsogon office of the Department of Trade and Industry, although they were participating in the project in their personal private capacity. (Mr. Gabito and Dr. Dioneda are now deceased.)

The idea of the group was to recommend that the proposed projects be treated like items in a conveyor belt and long-term projects could be accelerated to become medium- or even short-term projects if circumstances such as funding and right economic environment were present. Since at that time computers were not available in Sorsogon, a 52-page (single spaced) Executive Summary was typed by Messrs. Ayo and Labalan. We presented Xerox copies of it to the Convenors' Group (CG). The CG was the provincial political opposition composed of some 30 local politicians, as part of its supposed Economic Platform for the local elections that were to be held that year. Former Gov. Juan G. Frivaldo was the CG standard bearer for governor. Atty. Cleto Arnedo and this writer competed for the vice-gubernatorial nomination. Atty. Arnedo won the nomination and to add insult to injury, the CG decided to

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reject the Executive Summary. To quote one of the CG’s traditional politicians, “Local politics did not need to produce an economic platform.” The slate of Mr. Frivaldo and Atty. Arnedo won that year’s elections. Eventually, Mr. Frivaldo was disqualified over his American citizenship and Vice Governor Arnedo completed the term as acting governor. (Atty. Arnedo is also now deceased.)

Prior to his death, former Governor Frivaldo met with this writer in Los Angeles, California. Mr. Frivaldo told this writer that he regretted having not pushed the economic programs contained in the said Executive Summary. Although he said that even if he liked to do so, he was eased out from the governorship. And so everything was moot and academic. By the way, in front of several Sorsoganon-American community leaders, Mr. Frivaldo said that this writer was his choice for a running mate but several leaders vetoed his selection on the threat of junking the slate if I was chosen to run for vice governor. (But then Mr. Frivaldo could have been just diplomatic about it, especially since this author was hosting the event where the former Sorsogon governor was the guest speaker.)

Among the “impact projects” that the five-person study group recommended was the “Save Our Sorsogon (SOS) Bay” initiative. Our model was the “Heal the (Santa Monica) Bay” of Los Angeles County

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California, which was started in 1985
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{xtypo_quote} **Editor’s Note:** To read a description of Sorsogon Bay circa 1960s, please read

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this article,

["Silent Springs" \(With Apologies to Rachel Carson\)](#)

{/xtypo_quote}

[The Filipino](#)

URL: <http://www.mabuhayradio.com/ecology-and-the-environment/the-filipino-silent-springs-with-apologies-to-rachel-carson>

Several parts of the study eventually were apparently incorporated in some advocacies about “saving” Sorsogon Bay. Here is a 2000 report (apparently done by the “Radyo Serbisyo” program), a copy of which was provided by a concerned citizen of Sorsogon to this writer. I publicized it in the now defunct [www.yimby.com](#) (the forerunner of the [www.mabuhayradio.com](#)):

QUOTE.

SAVE SORSOGON BAY MOVEMENT

Rationale

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SORSOGON BAY is a vital source of food for the province of Sorsogon.

It is also the main source of livelihood of at least 20,000 marginal fishermen and their families, not to mention the equally large number of families who are engaged in fishery-related businesses like buy-and-sell, fish preservation, aquamarine culture and the likes.

The bay covers a total area of about 35,000 hectares and is rimmed by seven municipalities – Magallanes, Juban, Casiguran, Sorsogon, Castilla, Pilar, and Donsol.

The bay holds more than ample resources to sustain the needs of the community, until about 15 years ago.

Studies show that for the last 15 years the bay had suffered untold destruction from the hands of some unscrupulous fishermen who used sinister methods of fishing.

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Continuous forest degradation and environmental pollution also contributed heavily to the regression of the bay, which one study group described as a dying bay.

Some 34 rivers from all over the province empty to the bay, which contribute to siltation.

Though some local government units and non-government organizations (NGOs) have initiated some moves to avert this potential disaster government officials themselves admit that these are haphazardly done and no serious efforts are being carried out towards this end.

Government agencies and the NGOs concerned trace the failure of their efforts to save the bay to the lack of consistent and meaningful information and education campaign (IEC), which could help educate our people about the man-made hazards being faced by the Sorsogon Bay.

In response to this, Radyo Serbisyo has initiated an advocacy campaign through the airlines to help the government in this aspect.

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Also, we have been conducting a series of forum and dialogues among the various government agencies concerned and the NGOs especially the fishermen to find ways in tackling this problem.

These series of activities gave birth to the concept of the ISALBAR- Integrated Sectoral Alliance for Bay Rehabilitation (Save Sorsogon Bay Movement).

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) To help and assist the government in its efforts to rehabilitate the bay through IEC.
- 2) To mobilize the private sector and the various NGOs in this campaign.
- 3) To initiate an anti-pollution campaign.
- 4) To initiate an environmental protection drive.

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PURPOSES:

- 1) To educate the fishermen on the effects of unabated illegal fishing.

- 2) To educate the people of the hazards being caused by environmental degradation and pollution.

- 3) To coordinate all government and private sector programs relative to the bay protection.

PARTICIPANTS:

- 1) Provincial Agriculture Office

- 2) Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

- 3) Integrated FARMC

- 4) Municipal governments of Sorsogon, Magallanes, Juban, Casiguran, Castilla, Pilar and

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Donsol

- 5) Social Action Center
- 6) Philippine Information Agency
- 7) Provincial Government of Sorsogon
- 8) Provincial Agriculture and Fishery Council
- 9) ISDA
- 10) PESPASOR
- 11) Mussel Farmers Association of Sorsogon
- 12) Radyo Serbisyo

METHODOLOGY

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The campaign shall be aired over the radio as well as the forums and dialogues whenever necessary and possible.

Fishermen organizations shall be regularly consulted on the various issues that affect them and these shall be relayed to the government agency concerned.

All fishermen will be issued some sort of an ID card attesting to their membership to the movement and that as member of the movement they will be the guardians of the Sorsogon Bay. These card-bearing fishermen will be tapped as a network of informers against those who shall continue to engage in illegal fishing.

The movement will also serve as a monitoring body of government programs and projects intended for the bay and for the fishermen.

The movement will also endeavor to be able to put up a marker, either at the Sorsogon pier or right at the bay, as tribute to fishermen.

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This marker would somehow give pride to our lowly fishermen who have been one of the main backbones of our local economy.

The marker being envisioned, if possible, shall be designed in such a way that it could also serve as beacon at night.

The movement will be officially launched on Oct. 25, 2000, during which a Fishermen’s Olympics shall be held to give fishermen a chance to share and show off their skills and talents.

The Fishermen’s Olympics shall be held annually, if ever possible, for such purpose and to improve cooperation and camaraderie among the fishermen.

UNQUOTE.

No further report was provided to this writer by his source in Sorsogon City. Perhaps, the said “SAVE SORSOGON BAY MOVEMENT” was just a public-relations exercise by the powers that

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be and done only in “praise releases.”

The 2000 study did not mention our 1987 report that the dumping of garbage in Sorsogon Bay should be stopped at all costs and that about the idle 4,000 hectares of fishponds along its shores and on the Pacific-Ocean shores of the province. It did not contain either our recommendation that the province build sewage-treatment plants to clean the waters coming from the rivers and farm runoffs before they are discharged into Sorsogon Bay

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Tio Pando Gabito was our primary source of information about Sorsogon Bay and other environmental tasks such as reforestation described in the said Executive Summary. # # #

(To be continued . . .)

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