
Status and Challenges of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources – Funded Fishery Projects in the Municipality of Binmaley

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This study sought to assess the status and challenges of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)-funded fishery projects in the Municipality of Binmaley, Pangasinan covering the years 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022. The research aimed to describe the profile of fisherfolk associations involved in these projects in terms of their names, locations, membership, registration status, years of operation, and funding sources. Furthermore, it summarized the BFAR-funded fishery projects implemented in the municipality, evaluated their present conditions, and identified the major challenges encountered during implementation.

The study adopted a mixed-method research design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gather comprehensive and accurate data. The quantitative aspect involved summarizing measurable characteristics such as the profile of the associations and project status, while the qualitative aspect explored deeper insights into the beneficiaries' experiences, perceptions, and challenges. This design was selected to provide a holistic understanding of the implementation and outcomes of BFAR-funded projects in Binmaley.

The research locale for this study was the Municipality of Binmaley, located in the second district of Pangasinan. According to the 2020 Census, Binmaley had a population of 86,881 people distributed across 33 barangays. The municipality is known for its aquaculture and fisheries industries, which play a crucial role in local livelihood and food security. In 2018, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that Binmaley achieved a 6.56% poverty incidence, a notable decrease from previous years—indicating improvements in local socio-economic conditions. The Local Government Unit (LGU) of Binmaley, through its Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO), provides agricultural support services, infrastructure projects, and livelihood assistance to farmers and fisherfolk. Among these efforts are programs funded and implemented by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to strengthen the fisheries sector and support sustainable livelihoods.

The Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) serves as the main agency in charge of agricultural and fisheries development within the community. Its programs are centered on improving the socio-economic well-being of farmers and fisherfolk, particularly those from marginalized sectors. Meanwhile, the BFAR-National Fisheries Development Center (NFDC) based in Bonuan, Dagupan City, oversees the implementation of BFAR-funded fishery projects across Pangasinan, including Binmaley. The NFDC provides both financial and technical assistance to ensure that the projects are properly executed and beneficial to local communities.

The researchers utilized purposive sampling in selecting respondents. Out of the 14 active and accredited fisherfolk associations in Binmaley, six associations were chosen as primary respondents. These associations were among the beneficiaries of four BFAR-funded fishery projects implemented between 2017 and 2022. The presidents or representatives of these associations were interviewed to provide detailed information about their organization's profile, project experiences, and encountered challenges. Additionally, key informant interviews were conducted with focal personnel from the Municipal Agriculture Office of Binmaley, BFAR-Regional Field Office I based in Sual, Pangasinan, and the BFAR-National Fisheries Development Center in Dagupan City. These interviews provided institutional perspectives on project implementation and monitoring.

To gather the necessary data, the researchers conducted oral interviews and document reviews. A structured interview guide was developed, which contained questions about the associations' profiles, the fishery projects they received, their implementation status, and the challenges faced. The interview questions were formulated based on related studies and were refined by the researchers to suit the local context. Prior to data collection, formal requests for permission were made to the Office of the Municipal Mayor, the Municipal Agriculture Office, and the BFAR offices involved, ensuring proper coordination and ethical compliance.

The study focused on four BFAR-funded fishery projects, namely: Oyster Project (2017), Mangrove Rehabilitation Project (2018), Gill Net Project (2019), and Fish Processing Training and Distribution of Kits (2021–2022). Each project had distinct objectives and activities designed to improve the productivity, sustainability, and income of fisherfolk beneficiaries. The Oyster Project aimed to revive oyster farming in Binmaley by providing fishermen with essential materials and training. Beneficiaries reported that the assistance helped them restore oyster production and increase local income opportunities. However, one of the major challenges encountered was the infestation of black mussels, which damaged oyster rafts and beds, resulting in production losses.

The Mangrove Rehabilitation Project focused on environmental restoration and coastal protection. Thousands of mangrove propagules were planted along coastal areas, with a 77.7% survival rate in some sites and 33.33% in others. While this project contributed significantly to environmental sustainability and biodiversity, it also faced challenges such as theft of propagules and insufficient community monitoring, which affected long-term survival and maintenance of the mangrove areas.

The Gill Net Project, on the other hand, provided fishermen with durable gill nets to enhance their fishing capacity. This project was well-received by the beneficiaries as it directly improved their means of livelihood and income generation. The gill nets were used effectively for several years; however, delays in procurement and distribution posed challenges to timely implementation.

Lastly, the Fish Processing Training and Distribution of Kits Project aimed to add value to fishery products by training fisherfolk in fish processing techniques and providing equipment kits to support microenterprise activities. This project involved two fisherfolk associations and conducted four major activities, including hands-on training and product marketing assistance. The project was particularly successful, as beneficiaries reported earning thousands of pesos monthly from their fish processing ventures and expanding their market reach. However, similar to other projects, procurement delays affected the distribution of equipment and limited the early operation of these enterprises.

Across the four projects, the status of implementation showed that most were active for about two to three years and conducted at least two major activities. The BFAR's continuous technical support and monitoring were crucial in ensuring sustainability, but external challenges such as environmental threats, logistical constraints, and administrative delays affected long-term project outcomes.

Based on the challenges identified, several recommendations were proposed. For the Oyster Project, continuous research and the introduction of environmentally safe solutions to control black mussel infestation are suggested. Regular monitoring and cleaning of oyster beds can also help minimize damage. For the Mangrove Project, the establishment of community watch groups and partnerships with local schools or organizations can help protect planted areas from theft and ensure maintenance. In the Gill Net and Fish Processing Projects, it is recommended that procurement processes be streamlined to prevent delays and ensure that materials and equipment reach beneficiaries promptly. Additionally, providing entrepreneurship training and marketing assistance can further help fisherfolk associations sustain their operations and increase profitability.

Overall, the study concluded that the BFAR-funded fishery projects in Binmaley have made substantial contributions to improving local fisheries, supporting livelihoods, and promoting environmental sustainability. However, the success of these projects depends greatly on effective monitoring, proper fund management, and the active participation of beneficiaries and local authorities. By addressing the identified challenges, future BFAR initiatives can further strengthen community-based fisheries development, enhance food security, and promote inclusive economic growth in the Municipality of Binmaley.