



Risk management pilot gives hope to Kinatarkan Islanders and beyond.

Location:
Kinatarkan,
Philippines

Partners:
Cordaid

Author:
Sumi Martin



Mr Tribunaldo congratulating the islanders on their recent harvest representing the “first fruits” of integrated risk management
Photo credit: Cordaid



A Kinatarkan Islander amongst chillies, tomatoes and other produce grown with low-cost drip irrigation
Photo credit: Cordaid

‘The first fruits of IRM’

*Baltazar Tribulano Jr,
Head of Cebu
Provincial Disaster
Risk Reduction and
Management Office.*

Something magical occurred in a shed on a pleasantly hot afternoon on Kinatarkan island, in the Philippines, in mid-November last year.

What was intended to be a debrief of the island’s first harvest festival, transformed organically into a platform of stakeholders so moved by what they witnessed that morning, that they spontaneously made suggestions and even commitments on how to strengthen the gains experienced by the islanders, and replicate them in neighbouring islands.

It all began when Baltazar Tribulano Jr, the head of the Cebu Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office, and Anat Prag, head of Cordaid Philippines – collaborators of a pilot Integrated Risk Management project to address acute water shortages and dwindling livelihoods on Kinatarkan, and which culminated in the harvest festival - decided to have an impromptu post-mortem on the event along with invited guests.

Mr Tribulano prompted the wave of enthusiasm earlier in the day. In his rousing address to the throng of islanders gathered at the festival launch, he described the bounty of vegetables, fruits and crops recently harvested by the community and on display at the festival, as the “first fruits” of IRM. Integrated Risk Management (IRM) – a holistic approach towards preparing for and reducing disaster risks, and related drivers such as climate change and environmental degradation – is the crucial element of the pilot project in Kinatarkan. It is also the passion of the Partners for Resilience, an alliance of



www.partnersforresilience.nl | partnersforresilience@redcross.nl



Kinatarkan villagers proudly showing their bounty of vegetables harvested through the project
Photo credit: Cordaid

Kinatarkan is a little strip of an island located in Cebu province, in the middle of the Philippines, with a population of about 8,000 people.

five Netherlands-based organizations, which Cordaid Philippines is part of, and which is present in the Philippines and nine other countries.

Back in the shed, Mr Tribulano kicked off discussions by noting that the success of the pilot project undertaken from April to December last year, meant that the Kintarkan Integrated Plan would be revisited to ensure that the project's water and livelihood interventions would be incorporated into the Plan for replication and long-term sustainability of the island's resources and communities' livelihoods. The understanding gained on climate and disaster risk, as well as the capacities of existing water and land resources will also be reflected in the Plan. Kinatarkan is a little strip of an island located in Cebu province, in the middle of the Philippines, with a population of about 8,000 people. It was affected by the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan which devastated the country.

Almost everyone in the shed took the opportunity to express their delight at what they had witnessed and offer support towards sustaining the gains of the project. An NGO specialising in business training made an offer to train villagers in marketing their produce. A representative of the Cebu Provincial Environmental and Natural Resources Office said legal support to protect the island's natural resources, was on standby if needed. A church-based NGO noted that the project had given the island community financial freedom – produce from the island is now sold on the main island of Cebu. And a representative from the Santa Fe municipality – approximately 1.5 hours by boat from Kinatarkan and which includes Bantayan island, a tourist hot spot - said the Kinatarkan experience would be used as a guide in the preparation

of the municipal-wide Local Climate Action Plan – climate action funding is available from the Government but is contingent on sound analysis and a plan. Santa Fe is part of the wider province of Cebu.

Also present in the shed were leaders of the island's three villages. They noted that there was no need anymore "to go to other islands to buy vegetables for ourselves". More importantly, they could now gain incomes from their produce – incomes which could supplement or perhaps even replace fishing as a livelihood. According to the villagers, fish catch was so poor that some fishermen had even resorted to sailing all the way to the waters in Palawan province, the most westerly point of the Philippines. Significantly, for all three village leaders, they noted that the pilot project and the harvest festival marked the first time all three villages, had come together.

"Before I used to grow vegetables for my own family's consumption. Now I grow to sell and earn money"

Vendor Kinatarkan

The spontaneity witnessed in the shed, was similar to what took place during the actual festival. About 100 woven handbags and purses featuring beautiful colour schemes and attractive designs were snapped up by a women's cooperative invited to the festival. The cooperative from Cebu also ordered an additional 200 units stored in the villages.

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The festival was held in a large, open clearing, with stalls set up on one side and a large marquee on the other for guests and villagers. The stalls featured mainly fresh agricultural produce, and some cassava-based snacks and handicraft. Located nearby were spacious vegetable plots with row after row of produce such as *kangkong* (water spinach), eggplant, okra, tomatoes and chilli peppers. One vendor attests: "Before I used to grow vegetables for my own family's consumption. Now I grow to sell and earn money".

Interventions undertaken to address the main risks identified on the island – an acute water shortage due to in part to a depleting groundwater affected by salt water intrusion which is turn is possibly linked to climate change, and dwindling fishing and farming livelihoods – were varied. To address the water problem, mini dams and rain water tanks were erected, along with innovative, low-cost water production units called desalinators that function by producing fresh water droplets from sea water through a process of condensation – each unit can produce 3 litres of water per day. Efforts have also been undertaken to refurbish wells built as part of Typhoon Haiyan recovery efforts, by humanitarian actors. Well maintenance and water collection are undertaken by villagers themselves through schedules on notice boards and well care-takers.

"There is no need anymore to go to other islands to buy vegetables for ourselves".





Beautiful handwoven bags which were snapped up quickly at the festival
Photo credit: Cordaid



The desalinators which are able to produce 3 litres of water a day
Photo credit: Cordaid



A Kinatarkan Islander amongst chillies, tomatoes and other produce grown with low-cost drip irrigation
Photo credit: Cordaid

Livelihoods interventions include training for villagers in climate-smart vegetable growing, and climate-smart cassava growing. Farming techniques include another low-cost innovation called drip irrigation that enables an efficient use of water – re-used plastic mineral water bottles are installed on vegetable beds, and water stored in the bottles is released in droplet form over a prolonged period of time through a small hole punched in the bottle cap. Other techniques include inter-cropping cassava with mung beans to increase soil health - prior to the project, the cassava grown by the community was of a variety that depleted the soil of its essential nutrients, thereby reducing crop harvest and sustainability. The agricultural initiatives were undertaken with the support of private partner, East West Seeds, which supplied seeds and on the ground expertise – the seeds are of an open-pollinated variety that is important for sustainability and the ability to produce need seedlings. The entire project – from assessments and planning to training, planting and harvesting – was based on the very first island-wide assessment – utilising the IRM approach.

Platform building is something which Cordaid is also investing in and witnessing in two other geographical areas, Coron island in the province of Palawan, and Guiuan municipality in the province of Eastern Samar.

Of course, the IRM pilot project - undertaken with funding external to PfR comprising assistance from Caritas Singapore and Cordaid private funds - was the crucial first step in getting the “buy-in” from local authorities and other stakeholders. Cordaid’s investments in the pilot in Kinatarkan and other locations, have included dedicated field-based staff. Once that is in place, the task of advocacy becomes easier, she explains. This strategy is working because Mr Tribulano is confident that the risk management approach adopted in Kinatarkan can be applied throughout small island municipalities in the province, including Cebu city. And as with the case in Kinatarkan, the PDRMO will be committing financial and human resources to the upcoming initiative in Cebu city, and in new municipalities in northern Cebu.

Under the 2016-2020 programme for the Partners for Resilience in the Philippines, Cordaid’s task is to build the capacity of targeted local government units and civil society organizations so that they are able to access different funding opportunities which support IRM initiatives. If the Kinatarkan experience can materialise in the second year of the 2016-2020 programme, the remaining years are definitely something to look forward to.

For Ms Prag, the spontaneous coming together of stakeholders in the shed, was a pivotal moment. She views it as the start of a “platform of stakeholders” that is vital in expanding the advocacy and practice of the IRM approach.