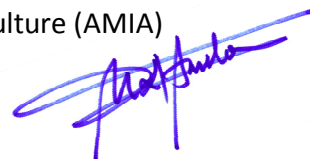


IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE TO PHILIPPINE FISHERIES*

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Abstract/Statement

The Philippine fisheries is among the largest fisheries in the world in terms of catch and production. It contributes significantly to the national economy and it provides employment and food to majority of coastal communities, which comprises about 70% of the total population of the country. In terms of biodiversity, the country harbours the highest number of marine species per square area in the world. Unfortunately, the sustainability of this rich fishery resource and diversity is threatened by numerous threats including unsustainable fishing practices, habitat degradation, pollution, invasive species and now climate change concerns.

The Philippines has been consistently predicted to be one of the main countries to be impacted by climate change. Consequently, the fisheries sector of the country is predicted to be most impacted since about 70% of the population lives in coastal communities, about 70% of protein requirement of coastal communities comes from fish, and fisherfolks have low levels of socio-economic capacities and are considered “poorest of the poor”.

A Climate Change – Disaster Risk Reduction Management (CC-DRRM) Strategic Framework has been established and institutionalized in the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to address CC-DRRM related issues that beset the fisheries sector in the country. Three (3) main strategies has been identified 1) Develop knowledge management and information system network, 2) Establish institutional mechanisms and 3) Promote fisherfolk empowerment to enhance adaptive capacity.

And as part of developing knowledge management and information system, we started to collect data (primary and secondary) to understand and/or detect impacts of CC to the fisheries sector and use this for development planning. Here, we present the impacts of CC, using El Nino, which is predicted to increase in occurrence as predicted effect of CC. Reviews and actual studies conducted revealed a number of negative impacts of El Nino specific to the fisheries sector including the reduction of aquatic food supply and livelihoods. We likewise conducted vulnerability assessments following the tool (FishVOOL) that we developed for the purpose of assessing the different fisheries sub-sectors in the country. We determined variable, location-specific vulnerabilities (low to medium). Finally, we noted that the fishery sector’s weakness lies in its adaptive capacities, particularly low income, lack of support and limited access to information.

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