CREATION OF A MULTI-SECTORAL PARTNERSHIP IN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT: Philippine Experience

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Introduction
The Mekong River stretches 4,661 kilometers across six countries: China, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand. Having common watershed, some externality and transboundary issues often create disputes among the said countries due to differing priority in water use. For instance, at the upper catchment area, the Lao PDR government has begun constructing dams for power generation aimed at supplying its energy needs as well as export it to Thailand. However, this alters the other ecological functions of the water flowing downstreams, such as, for irrigation, domestic consumption, inland fishery, water transportation, and wetlands fauna habitat.

The Mekong River Commission as a regional institution envisages to mediate any conflict over international allocation of the river’s water. However, constraint by incomplete country representation and suffered from insular bureaucracy, the Commission seemingly lacks full political will to go in between.

The Philippine government has just completed the piloting of the Philippine Strategy for Improved Watershed Resources Management. The underlying philosophy is that “there should be a demand-driven and community-based approach involving two parallel components. Firstly, one where the demand is determined by national priorities and concerns. Secondly, one in which the direct stakeholders can articulate their needs and actively participate in the conservation, planning, management and sustainable utilization (for multiple purposes) of their local watershed resources.” Bringing together stakeholders across varied political, social, cultural, socioeconomic divides into partnership posed big challenge to this New Strategy.

The Philippine case may be viewed as just a microcosm of the Mekong watershed management dynamics. However, its experience in creating an institutional mechanism for multi-sectoral and interagency collaboration may shed light in resolving the current water rights issues and concerns of the Mekong countries.

This paper presents the lessons learned in the pilot testing, particularly the creation of a Watershed Management Council in the Philippines. It highlights the different innovative participatory processes and their effects towards creation of a broad-based...
watershed management council. It argues that “unless on-site stakeholders are directly and actively involved in the council formation, there is no true sense of co-management and certainty of organizational sustainability.

Setting
In Asia, the Philippines stands out for its exemplar efforts in implementing a decentralized system of governance. This has been exemplified by the many socially-oriented and community-based natural resource management programs being tested and implemented. The Philippines Strategy for Improved Watershed Resources Management (PSIWRM) is the most recent modality with underlying philosophy:

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This is the prevailing paradigm of the World Bank that supported the pilot project in cognizant to Agenda 21’s complex demand of a single coherent strategy involving local stakeholders and communities at multiple scales and zones while addressing ecosystem interconnectivity concerns. For this reason, many countries under the WB bilateral loan agreement, such as India, China, Philippines and Indonesia gave their first try of the so called “participatory watershed management” (Rhoades, 1998).

Critics of this management modality however, are skeptical about such ambitious and ambiguous attempt to address multi-scale, multipurpose and multidisciplinary management hurdle through participatory approach. Ironically, they even claimed that some projects of this kind have even reverted to the usual top-down, sectoral, component approaches (e.g., hydrology without people, watershed models without local participation) which serves mainly the academic inquiry of scientists and the bureaucrats rather than addressing local people’s needs (Rhoades, 1998).

This paper presents the various participatory processes of creating the multi-stakeholder partnership for the sustainable management of the Kaliwa Watershed. It attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Why the creation of a Watershed Management Council (WMC)?
2. Why participatory processes necessary conditions for the formation of a multi-stakeholders WMC?
3. What are the basic social mechanisms towards achieving participatory watershed management?
4. Will participatory process work as exemplified by the PSIWRM’s project experience?

Watershed Management Council and Participatory Governance
The creation of WMC is embodied in the PSIWRM. The idea is to spread among stakeholders the burden of safeguarding the integrity of a common resource under threat. Oftentimes, various stakeholders compete for the limited resource. Therefore, the challenge in participatory watershed management is how to make partnership
functional as oversight body for the formulation, implementation and enforcement of common rules to prevent further resource degradation inside the watershed. The intention is to transcend individual or sectoral short-term gains to long-term societal benefits.

This is not an easy task as it confronts the trade-offs between short-term and long-term, or between “on-site” and “off-site” or between individual and societal concerns. To arrive at a “win-win” situation for sustained participatory management, it requires a continuous process of consultation and social negotiation of rights among various stakeholders.

In the past, it was only the government that set limits on resource use and rights. However, under participatory governance, various stakeholders can now agree on certain terms through consultations, lobbying, legislative representations, and other legal means in resolving resource conflicts. In essence, collaborative management resorts to participatory process because rights and limits to exploitation are the core concerns of management, which determines who controls what, and by how much or under what constraints (Ingles, et. al. 1999).%

Meanwhile, in some countries, watershed management councils merely serve as either educational or advocacy group. One example is the Oregon Watershed Councils, a unified broad-based bodies composed of representatives from various sectors for the promotion of integrated watershed ecosystem management in the area (Rebugio, 2004). Accordingly, the councils are mechanisms for facilitating conflicting multi-sectoral groups or stakeholders to collaborate in natural resource conservation and habitat restoration through continuous education and advocacy.

In general, WMC may serve either as oversight or collaborative management system or merely advocacy body, depending on the nature of the need to be addressed in certain watersheds. The process of creating the Council however, is critical because it determines the extent of its usefulness and sustainability. Hence, it requires extra care in recruiting the membership, as well as in laying the groundwork for collaborative management.

In the case of the PSIWRM’s experience, it took three (3) years of intensive social preparation before the Kaliwa Watershed Management Council was formally created.

**Forerunners of Watershed Management Councils in the Philippines**

Creation of WMC in the Philippines has long begun way back in the 80s. The earlier ones are rather fast track government driven-initiatives borne out of political expediency. Executive Orders in the form of Presidential Proclamations came first before the local people got informed about the proposed management modality of the natural resources.

The Lake Lanao Watershed Protection Development Council was created in response to the growing threat on the sustainability of water yield at Lake Lanao. Apparently, as a national concern to address the impending water shortage that affects the supply
of power generated from the hydroelectric plants, the central government took the initiatives by virtue of Presidential Proclamation by then President Aquino on February 26, 1992 to create an instant Council. The grassroots and other local stakeholders have no idea at all about the urgency of the formation of the Council. It was purely a government administrative fiat. The Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) being the custodian of all public lands, including other natural resources was mandated to chair the Council.

For more than 10 years after its creation, past efforts and attempts to operationalize the Council’s mandate failed because it was always met with multifarious challenges, cynicism and even defiance by the locals (Lake Lanao Integrated Development Plan, 2004). The local people, who are basically Maranaos did not recognize the mandate of the Council. As such, they did not participate in the protection of the watershed.

Only on June 11, 2003, when the Assistant Secretary for Muslim Affairs, Mr. Matanog “Diego” M. Mapandi (who is also a Maranao) was designated as the new Chairman under a Special Order No. 454 that a new hope is dawning. Following his appointment was a corresponding restructuring of the Council's membership with much bias for the local groups, in particular, the Maranaos. Accordingly, the Maranaos are beginning to participate because they found a leader of their own kind.

The other Council created in pursuant to the devolution and people empowerment programs of the government on March 22, 1995 through a Memorandum Order 270 issued by President Fidel Ramos was the Bukidnon Watershed Protection and Development Council. The Council was mandated to generate policies and guidelines and coordinate all programs and projects concerning watershed management in the entire province. Apparently, the Framework Plan was crafted without public consultation. The social processes, such as IEC, public hearing and constituency building were identified as targeted activities that have yet to be pursued under the Plan.

Reflecting on the lapses of the two aforementioned Watershed Councils, both suffered from lack of local support mainly due to the top-down approach of evolving the partnership arrangement. The various stakeholders were not consulted, whether there is a need for such council and whether they would support it. Furthermore, the composition of the Council was not the result of consultation or consensus building (JICA Study Team, 2003).

Creating the Kaliwa Watershed Management Council
The Kaliwa Watershed Management Pilot Project (KWMP) demonstrated how the participatory processes have been carried out from July 2000 to June 2004 to create an entirely distinct WMC.

Setting
The Kaliwa Watershed lying within the towns of Tanay Rizal and General Nakar, Quezon is strategically located at the backdoor of Metro Manila (Figure 1). With a total land area of 27,608 hectares covering seven (7) barangays (local communities):
Laiban, San Andres, Sto. Niño, Cayabo, Tinucan, Sta. Ines, and Lumutan, it has about 7,000 households or a total population of 37,000 people (based on Population Survey 2000). Subsistence farming and forest products extraction consist the locals’ main livelihood.

The watershed was chosen as a pilot site for the PSIWRM for the following reasons:

- **Potential Source of Drinking Water for Metro Manila**: The growing shortage of Metro Manila’s water supply for domestic and industrial use prompted the Manila Waterworks and Sewerage Systems (MWSS)- a private corporation to consider Kaliwa watershed as potential source of potable water in the near future.

- **Overlapping Tenurial Regimes**: The watershed was once declared as tribal reservation in 1914, permanent forest reserve in 1969, certain portion for stock farming in 1972, became a national park 1977, then as a protected area under the National Integrated Protected Area System Act of 1992, and recently as a critical watershed area. Likewise, inside the watershed are Alienable and Disposable (A&) titled lands. This precarious tenurial regimes makes it open for squatting.

- **Vast de facto Open Lands**: Almost 70 percent of the 27,608 hectares land size of the watershed was heavily logged in the 60s, resulting to a bastion of grasslands, certain portion turned to “kaingin” (slash and burnt agriculture). Most of these areas are open public lands without tenure yet. Given this setting, the influx of lowland migrants coming from different regions in the country increase overtime.

- **Ecotourism Potential**: As a habitat of endemic wildlife along with the beautiful landscapes, natural pools, waterfalls, beautiful caves and the cool climate, the area has great potential to become an ecotourism destination nearest to Metro Manila.

- **Show Case for Integrated and Sustainable Development**: With the continuous sprawling urban growth at all sides (i.e., Tanay City in the south and Antipolo City in the Northwestern side), the area is at the crossroad of development. On the one end, there is a need for new settlement areas due to urban expansion. On the other hand, there is the strong imperative to maintain the ecological balance through nature conservation. Under the new management strategy, the watershed could be a good show case to demonstrate integrated and sustainable development in the context of urban growth.
Project Location
Participatory Processes:
As early as May 2001, KWMP had been conducting many preparatory activities for
the creation of the WMC as being guided by the following processes, not necessarily
in chronological order:

1. **Alliance and constituency building.** At the very start, the pilot project
   engaged in intensive IEC through project briefings from one office to the
   other in order to recruit partners for the sustainable management of the
   watershed at the supra local level. At the local level, conduct community of
   meetings, convocations and site visitations formed part of the regular
   activities of the project building a critical mass of on-site partners. Overall,
   there are about 30 organizations and institutions comprising the alliance with
   cross cutting membership from the Indigenous Communities (ICs), People’s
   Organizations (POs), LGUs (Barangays, Municipal and Provincial),
   Academeces, NGOs, line agencies (community, provincial and regional),
   private sector, and media.

2. **Capacity building.** Throughout the duration of the pilot phase, capacity
   building had been a continuous thrust of KWMP towards local empowerment
   and bureaucratic value re-orientation. Six (6) educational tours to successful
   projects outside were conducted with themes ranging from grassroots
   empowerment, local governance of natural resources, community-based
   management to livelihood enterprise building. Eight (8) training-workshops
   were carried out, excluding the quarterly capacity building seminars that
   were held “on-site”.

3. **Consensus building.** After recruiting a critical mass of potential partners, the
   project started adopting participatory process of decision making through
   consultative meetings, public hearings and conducting multi-stakeholders
   convergence conference. For controversial issues with cross cutting effects,
   consultative meetings were carried out at different actors’ levels. This was
   usually followed by public hearings at the community level. For crucial
   decisions that involve greater mass participation, multi-sectoral convergence
   conferences were usually conducted. Likewise, under same process, all
   major issues and concerns obtained from individual institution’s consultative
   meetings and public hearings were briefly presented as a means to level the
   ground for wider participation in the decision making. Two (2) big
   convergence conferences were held that led to the creation of the multi-
   stakeholders’ partnership for Kaliwa watershed. This later became the
   Kaliwa Protected Area Management Board (PAMB).

4. **Social negotiation.** As part of the participatory process of trying to address
   varied concerns at all sides, the project adopted a management policy to
   listen and respond as it is applicable to all sectors’ requests or complaints
   relative to the management of the watershed. Most of the requests and
   demands of the on-site stakeholders, particularly related to their rights of
occupancy and project participation were elevated to the partnership council through this process. The same was done in determining the final membership composition of the Council and its organizational structure.

5. **Value orientation.** This process formed part of the IEC and the capacity building activities regularly carried out by the project which is embedded on the structure or design of every training activity. The aim is to translate knowledge to behavioral or attitudinal change indicators.

6. **Scenario building/visioning.** This is a group dynamics exercise giving the stakeholders in convergence conferences to dream of a desired future scenario of Kaliwa watershed. It disclosed their perception, aspirations and passion for an ideal thing to happen in the future. This exercise helped to level-off stakeholders’ common goals for the protection of the watershed.

7. **Legitimization.** After a series of social and technical preparations which capacitated the stakeholders, the formation of the multi-stakeholders’ partnership followed. The conference resolutions and the corporate vision previously generated by the stakeholders during big meetings were translated into a mother legal binding document (Memorandum of Agreement) among stakeholders that served as legal instrument for the creation of the Council.

### Gains of Participatory Process in Creating the WMC

1. **Changed of Local Actors’ World View and Project Response:** Heightened the political awareness and social responsiveness of the locals to take part in natural resource conservation and development,

2. **Leveled the Ground for Widespread Local Participation:** Paved the entry of the one-time uninvolved and unconsulted sectors of society into the watershed management council,

3. **Facilitated the Free Expression of Collective Aspirations:** Provided the enabling conditions for the articulation of stakeholders’ corporate vision for Kaliwa watershed,

4. **Instilled the Sense of Worth of the One Time Neglected Sector:** Restored the sense of importance of “on-site” actors in nature and watershed protection,

5. **Created Communal Concern Over Kaliwa Watershed:** Developed a clear common rallying point for the stakeholders to work together as one,

6. **Challenged the LGUs to Deeply Engaged:** Mainstreamed local governance in natural resource management,

7. **Created More Space for the Locals to Come to the Fore of the Management System:** Slowly brought the powerless and neglected sectors at the fore of the natural management system,
8. **Slowly Moving the Power of Balance Towards the Unheard and Neglected Sectors:** It endeavored to move the center of decision making from the core (central agencies) to the periphery (local institutions).

9. **Provided Avenues for the Stakeholders to Discuss Openly their Resource Concerns and Conflicts:** Provided a convergence point among competing resource users to discuss openly, objectively and amicably their differing interests over the watershed, &

10. **Challenged the Bureaucracy to Shift from Top-Down Prescriptive to Participatory Governance:** It brought certain kind of new management culture to the bureaucracy.

**Conclusion**
In the Philippines, there is much reason to continue with the participatory process, as we are witnessing the growing advocacy from the bottom and the gradual change of gear in the bureaucracy towards improved governance. More and more success cases of co-management systems are emerging and spreading out like wild fires all over the country. In order to sustain this momentum, the government should create more spaces for the locals to come to the forefront of the management system through provisions of more enabling policies. Likewise, there should be a corresponding behavioral and value change that should take place in the bureaucracy to create a favorable setting for participatory watershed management.

We just need to keep on learning new things, testing improved systems and upscale better governance approaches. Soon we can conclude that participatory watershed management has its own context. It cannot operate under the old setting. Everything must adjust towards a new order. The process may be slow but surely, it is the best way to go in managing common resources in a world that is moving towards popular governance.

**Acknowledgement**
Due credit is given to the World Bank financed Water Resource Development Project-Watershed Management Component (WRDP-WMIC), Forest Management Bureau, DENR, for the valuable information and learning experience we obtained in working as Assisting Professionals for Institutional Development and Protected Area Management in the pilot testing of the Philippines Strategy for Improved Watershed Resources from March 2001 to December 2003. To Foresters Romeo C. Acosta (Director, FMB), Primitivo C. Galinato (Regional Executive Director, Region 4 and WRDP-WMIC Project Director), Maximo F. Soriano, Jr (PENRO, Rizal and Project Manager, Kaliwa Watershed Management Project). The Barangay Councils, People’s Organizations, Indigenous People’s Groups of Tanay, Rizal and Nakar, Rizal, PMO and field staff, fellow APs, UPLB-ISU-ERDB Watershed R&D Team, all of them contributed much in distilling the lessons learned from the pilot project.
References


