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**CONSTRUCTION OF ABATAN ECOLOGICAL AMPHITHEATRE
AND THE
REHABILITATION OF ABATAN DOCKING AREAS
IN SUPPORT TO ECOTOURISM**

TERMINAL REPORT



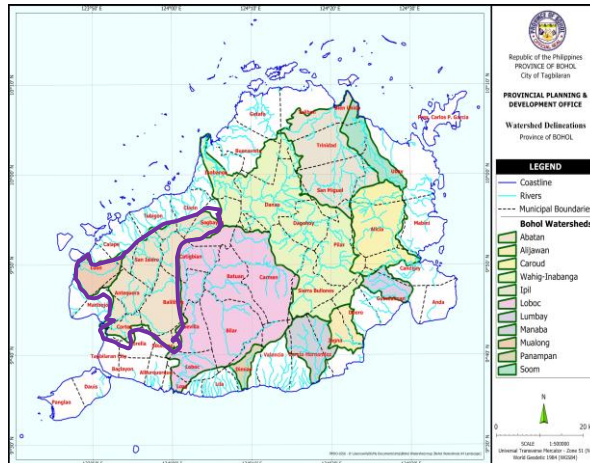
Implemented by PROCESS-Bohol, Inc.

**Funded by SEACOLOGY
with counterpart from the Abatan River Development
Management Council (ARDMC)**

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BACKGROUND

The Abatan watershed occupies all or parts of 115 barangays in thirteen (13) municipalities. Four (4) of these municipalities are considered major as most of their land area is located inside the watershed boundaries. These are the municipalities of Antequera, Balilihan, Catigbian and San Isidro. The combination of these big four municipalities accounts 63% of the total watershed area, or approximately 24,224. has..



Although 85% of the total land area is alienable and disposable lands, yet the land still has good vegetative cover of forests, wooded lands, shrubs, and mangroves that cover more than half of the area. This makes for a biologically diverse watershed.

The watershed has a population of 333,349 inhabitants (2010 census), who are generally agriculture dependent. However, the watershed is gifted with several tourist attractions and natural endowments of which some were already tapped for ecotourism purposes.

Its main tributary is the Abatan River that provides freshwater to Maribojoc Bay. This river serves as the natural boundary between the municipalities of Maribojoc and Cortes, Antequera and Balilihan, and San Isidro and Catigbian. The river width (bank to bank) varies from 25 to 50 meters up to Sampilangon Bridge linking the municipalities of Catigbian and Tubigon. Its total meandering length from the sea to its headwaters is estimated to be 40 kilometers. Its estuary and delta is located approximately 7 kilometers from Tagbilaran City.

The Maribojoc Bay-Abatan River area is one of the most diverse mangrove ecosystems with an area of 400 hectares (988 acres) of mangroves. In the latest mangrove ecosystem survey, it was found out that a total of **35 mangroves in 15 families**, including one hybrid, and **20 associated species in 17**



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families (excluding unidentified ones) were identified in the area. (*PROCESS-Bohol Mangrove Survey Report, 2016*).

An endemic specie that is found only in the Philippines and some parts of South East Asia, i.e., *Camptostemon philippinensis* or the **Gapas-gapas** in local name is also found here in Maribojoc Bay particularly at the estuary of Abatan River. As emphasized in the report of Middlejans, 2014, this mangrove specie is very rare and has a limited and patchy distribution in Indonesia and the Philippines (Duke et al., 2010c). It is the rarest species in the Philippines and classified by the IUCN Red List as ‘Endangered’ (the only Philippine mangrove classified under this category). It is endangered under Criterion C, which means it has a small population size estimated to be less than 1,200 mature individuals globally, with continued decline (Polidoro et al., 2010).



On the other hand, a total of eight firefly species were found that congregates along the Abatan River. One of them is the *Pteroptyx macdermotti*, a very rare firefly specie This specie is endemic to the Philippines and has not been studied since it was first described by Ballantyne and McLean in 1970.

The Abatan River Development Management Council (ARDMC)

Initiated by then Congressman now Governor Edgar M. Chatto, the Abatan River Development Management Council (ARDMC) was organized through Executive Order issued by the former Governor Erico B. Aumentado.

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The ARDMC launched its ecotourism project, the Abatan River Community Life Tour in 2010. Initially covering the 5 municipalities along Abatan River, namely: Cortes, Maribojoc, Antequera, Balilihan and Catigbian. With funding assistance from the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Tourism Infrastructure and Zone Authority (TIEZA) tourism facilities were established in the 5 tourism sites. After more than 5 years of operation, some of the facilities were damaged due to calamities such as the 7.2 magnitude earthquake and several super typhoons that struck the area.

Fortunately, the Seacology has awarded a grant to the Abatan River Development Management Council (ARDMC) in the amount of 1,534,868 PHP (approximately 33,000 USD) through the Participatory Research, Organization of Communities and Education towards Struggle for Self-reliance (PROCESS) – Bohol as the Project Management Office for Construction of Abatan Ecological Amphitheatre and the repair of river docks along the river, in exchange for the protection of 400 hectares (988 acres) of mangroves along the Abatan River for 10 years.

THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

a. Preparatory activities

As part of the preparatory activities, an on-site inspection and meeting with the contractor was done to finalize the design, program of work and the schedule of activities. During the meeting, the group agreed to prioritize the toilet renovation including the water tank and the Antequera Docking Deck. After all the required documents were finalized, a Contract of Service was signed between PROCESS-Bohol and Gworks Architectural Services, represented by



Arch. German Janus Nino S. Guidaben, UAP.



The present condition of the Sto. Rosario docking deck in the municipality of Antequera. This is the effect of the two calamities, the 7.2 magnitude earthquake and super typhoon “Senyang”.

Photos below shows the present condition of the docking area at the Abatan Main Village Center located in Salvador, Cortes, Bohol which will be transformed into an Ecological Amphitheatre.



THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

a. The Repair of Docking Deck

Photos below show the condition of the docking area before and after it was repaired.



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b. Construction of the Ecological Mini-Amphitheatre.

Photos show the status of the back portion of the Abatan Main Village Center prior to the construction of the ecological mini-amphitheater



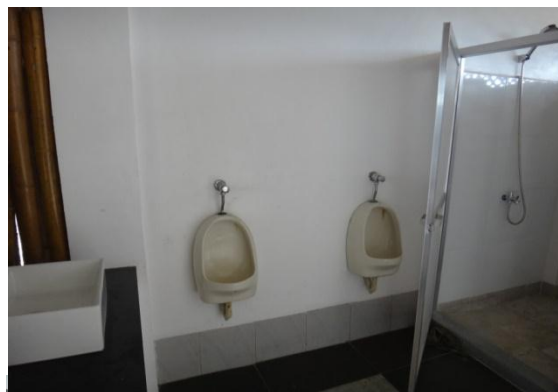
Below shows completed construction of the ecological mini-amphitheatre, the docking area, the floating jetty and water tank based at the Abatan Main Village Center.



c. The Renovation of the Toilet

The first thing that a guest is looking for upon arrival at the reception center is toilet. In the province of Bohol where tourism is one of the economic drivers, the tourism authorities including travel and tours operators are very strict regarding toilet facilities. In fact, some of the toilet facilities in the tourism destinations like Loboc River and Chocolate Hills are already air-conditioned.

The renovation of the toilet at the Abatan Main Village Center created a big impact because we received positive feedbacks from our guests and travel and tours partners.



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d. Construction of Water Tank

Parallel to the renovation of the toilet is the construction of water tank. A good toilet is nothing without a good supply of water. The newly-constructed water tank is just beside the toilet.



e. Landscaping of the Abatan Main Village Center

To complement the new face of the Abatan Main Village Center, the Project Management Office (PMO) facilitated the landscaping of the surroundings of the Center.

The photos below show the landscaped back portion of the Center.



Landscaped front portion of the building.



f. Continues Operation of Eco-Tourism Activities

With all the facilities almost completed the ecotourism activities is already running smoothly. Tourists continued to come although not as many. During the month of October, 2016, two big groups from MS Hanseatic Cruise Ship (Europeans tourists) and a group of Chinese tourists availed the Abatan River Community Life Tour enjoying the kayaking adventure and riding the bandong boats.

g. Mangrove Management and Protection

As part of the mangrove management and protection, a revalidation of the mangrove survey results was done in partnership with Dr. Nida Calumpong, a mangrove expert from Silliman University, to validate the diversity of mangroves in the area. Indeed, as validated the total mangroves in Maribojoc Bay and Abatan already reached to 35 true mangroves species in 13 families and 21 species of mangrove associates

Four species are in the IUCN (2015) threatened species list: Aegiceras floridum Roem. and Schult.– Near Threatened ver. 3.1, Avicennia lanata Ridley– Vulnerable B1+2c ver 2.3, Camptostemon philippinense (S.Vidal) Becc.– Endangered C1 ver. 3.1 and, Ceriops decandra (Griff.) Ding Hou– Near Threatened ver. 3.1.

h.

- i. Also, a volunteer staff with a degree of Environmental Science and Management from USA whose root is from Bohol is currently tasked to formulate a research policy in preparation for the eventual declaration of Abatan River as an Eco-*

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Museum. When realized, this will be the first Eco-Museum in the Philippines and the 401st in the world.

j. We are now closely collaborating with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in this regard.

k.

l. Sustainability

The Abatan River Community Life Tour is already operational. With the enhancement of the facilities, it is hoped that there would be an increase in tourist arrivals. However, based on experience, community-based tourism destinations is not yet that popular compared to mainstream tourism destinations. But the income could already support the daily operations.

SecondWe will just help the communities and the ARDMC do the aggressive promotions and marketing. We firmly believe that with the new leadership of the Abatan River Development Management Council, the income will also increase sustainability of the project depends on how strong a particular PO is. In the case of SAVIMA, after successfully resolving the issues and challenges in protecting their CBFMA, PROCESS-Bohol is very much confident that the project will be sustained. PROCESS-Bohol is always able and ready to provide technical assistance only whenever POs needed our services.

Because by empowering the grassroots through their own collective reflection and action, PROCESS aims to make itself progressively immaterial as communities increasingly take control of their own destiny.

Prepared and Submitted By:



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