



PHOTO & CAPTION

Fish Tales: Sustainable Harvests



Photo: Cleto L. Namola Jr

All community members participate in fishing to make ends meet in Bongao, a demonstration site for USAID's Fisheries Improved for Sustainable Harvest (FISH) project in the Philippines.

The Philippines is experiencing a tremendous dilemma in the developing world. Although located in the marine world's highest diversity of coral reefs, the country's fishing industry finds its coastal fishers battling poverty, its fisheries in decline, and habitat destruction resulting from unsustainable fishing practices. Maintaining profitable fishery harvests amid areas where over 70 percent of the coastal fishing grounds are reported to be overexploited is daunting.

USAID's Fisheries Improved for Sustainable Harvest (FISH) project is helping fishermen in the Philippines by assigning an independent team to assess the current fishing industry challenges and to recommend good fisheries management practices. The project sites are situated in four strategic fishing grounds that also are important biodiversity conservation areas—the Danajon bank in Bohol, the Calamianes Islands in Palawan, the northern coastal bays areas of Surigao del Sur, and the areas around Bongao, Tawi-Tawi.

Aside from managing fishing efforts, the project is providing for creative and innovative ways of har-

monizing biodiversity conservation with increased fisheries production. FISH is establishing baseline information on fisheries and related resources as a basis for measuring impacts for project-influenced interventions, as well as to better understand resource dynamics and exploitation risks. Participatory planning and implementation are the fundamental strategies to ensure ownership and sustainability. The provision of expert coaching and guidance to the implementers is likewise a key approach in this project, particularly in introducing and establishing best practices in fisheries management.