

FUTURE SEARCH

A Case Description of a Future Search for the World Bank Institute
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Water Resources on Cebu Island - Philippines

1. General Background

In the province of Cebu, a crucial factor in the sustainability of social and economic development was the efficient management of its water resources and water regeneration capacity. Cebu has minimal aquifers to rely on for its domestic, commercial and industrial use. Only sustainable management and development of its resources envisioned Cebu to be able to sustain its steadily growing need for water.

Environmental and natural resources management in the Philippines increasingly focused on the watershed and ecosystem approach, as outlined by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Cebu Uniting for Sustainable Water (CUSW), as the broadest multi-sectoral organisation, had focused its activities towards a sustainable approach in the protection, management and development of Cebu's water resources and supply.

CUSW, in cooperation with DENR and the Water Resources Center (WRC), submitted a proposal for a Future Search to the Royal Netherlands Embassy in June 2000. Netherlands' technical support was provided by Delft University of Technology in cooperation with Delft Hydraulics. Approval was granted in August. The purpose of this Future Search was to consider the commitment and feasibility of addressing the water issues of Central Cebu. Under these assumptions, this workshop also served to facilitate the identifying of a roadmap into the future with concrete programs of activities for sustainable development.

▪ Objectives

The Future Search objectives related to the encapsulation of situational issues in Central Cebu, relating to water resources and land-use management, strategic visioning with commitment of stakeholders, identifying the feasibility of a strategic management programme for water resources and land-use in Central Cebu and the outline of a masterplanning activity.

The expected output was:

- Common problem encapsulation on water resources and land use issues.
- Shared vision on integrated approach water resources and land use.

- Agreed strategies/scenarios for sustainable water resources and land use management.
- Feasibility of a project on the development of a Masterplan for Central Cebu.
- Agreements on demonstration projects / activities.
- Workshop report and action plan.

▪ *Stakeholder groups*

The following stakeholder groups were invited to the workshop, whereby each group was represented by 5-10 participants from various agencies and organizations:

1. Water providers
2. Policy and regulations sector
3. Local government units
4. Land owners and business sector
5. Local residents
6. Non governmental organizations
7. Education and communication sector
8. National and line agencies
9. Water consultants

Final Outcomes and Action Programs

Based on an analysis of the outcomes of trends (external factors) and desired future scenarios (what are we doing now and what should be done) the following program themes for actions were identified:

1. Community extension and awareness
2. Socio-economic and livelihood
3. Environmental protection and bio-diversity
4. Pollution control and sanitation
5. Soil and water conservation
6. Policy / systems analysis
7. Capacity and institution building

Participants were asked to suggest specific actions to be taken to improve the water resources and land use situation in Central Cebu. The (about 150) proposed actions were categorized according to these themes and worked out in (rough outlines) of action programs. This resulted in 18 programs (the details are available on request). Table 1 gives an overview of the resulting programs. Some programs are strongly connected and share specific actions. *These final outcomes were based on common ground and general consensus.*

What Happened Next?

Maybe the most important outcome of the Future Search was that an impasse was lifted, a deadlock broken, movement created. Movement with vision and trust:

Water had long been an emotional issue in Cebu. Over the two decades, it had been recognized that Metro Cebu was facing an impending water supply crisis. Sustainable social and economic developments in Cebu Province increasingly depended on water supply, especially in heavily urbanized and industrializing areas. The rapid industrialization and high population of the area coupled with a fragile small island ecosystem brought about the present concern.

Metro Cebu traditionally relied mainly on the underground aquifers, but there was consensus that present extraction rates were not sustainable. This was most evident in salt water intrusion of coastal aquifers as far as three km inland. The aquifers are replenished by groundwater flows that originate from the upland watersheds. In view of the high annual rainfall received by the province, the tapping of surface water from the watershed areas is presently considered.

The watersheds of Cebu added another, complex dimension to the water supply equation. Given the high population density, land scarcity was most acute in Central Cebu. The watershed areas were teeming with people, those that have been historically settled there and those that wish to develop the area for lack of space in the lowlands.

Only efficient management and development of its water resources and water regeneration capacity Cebu envisioned to be able to sustain its steadily growing need for water.

After the Future Search a 5 year programme, WATER REMIND, took off. Many parties invested heavily, something that had been unthinkable before (nobody would risk a peso in this polarized situation). This was a great sign of commitment. A great sign of something crucial had taken place. Yet, a Future Search is just a short moment in years of development and the project later had its ups and downs. The challenge will always remain to maintain the dialogue between parties, before they start to polarize again and drift apart. Future Search helps them do that, one small step at the time.