

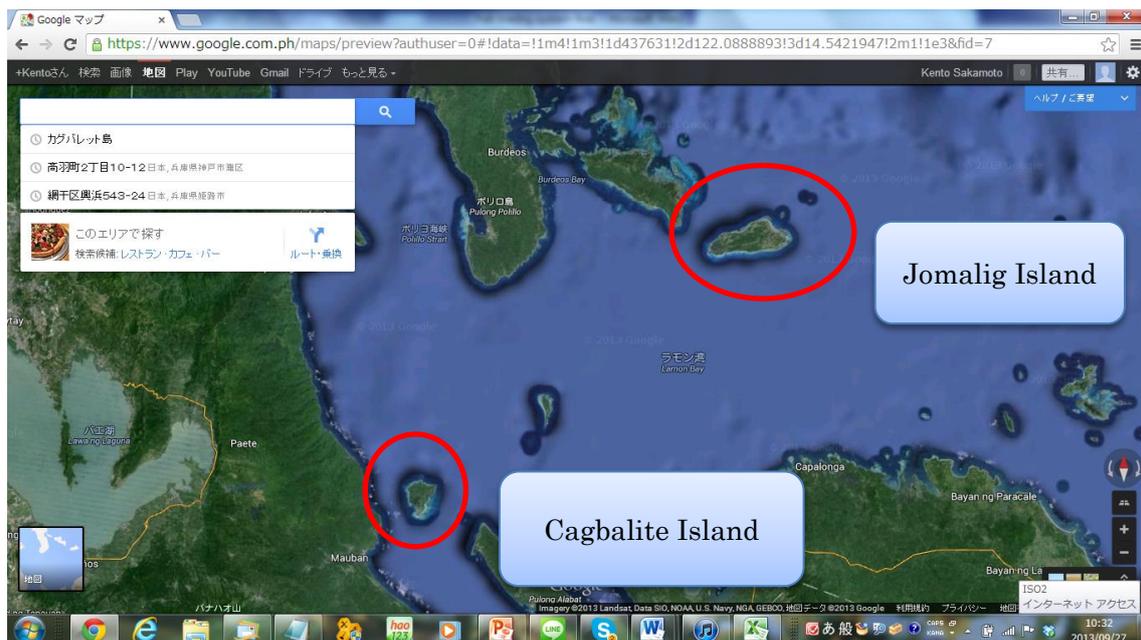
Issues of Islands in the Philippines

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1. Introduction

On this paper, I am going to explain the situations of fisher folks communities of Jomalig Island and Cagbalite Island. 2 island communities that I had visited during my internship in the ISO. This paper is an attempt to find the similarities and differences between the 2 fishing communities.



2, Situation of Jomalig Island

2.1. Current people situation in Jomalig

Jomalig Island is a small island located in Quezon. Around 1,500 families live there. Jomalig Island is composed of 5 barangays. The main work of the people in Jomalig is fishing. However, most of them have second jobs like farming, since the income from fishing

is unstable and not enough for them to sustain their daily living. Actually, the amount of fish they catch per trip depends on the weather and the season. On a good day they can get enough income, but on a bad day, they can get no fish at all. One of the fishers I interviewed can get a net income of Php9,000 per trip at most, but there are also days that they do not earn anything. To avoid being affected by such a situation, they plant some kind of vegetables and fruit such as coconuts, sugar cane, rice and banana and get a sub-income. From the survey conducted by ISO and PhilDHRRA, out of 144 household respondents, the average monthly expenditure is estimated at Php 10,671.19 per month. The share of expenditure on food is 39% per month or Php 4,117.50 and is mostly spent on rice (37% or Php 1769.05) and fish (18% or Php 540.54).¹

There are some causes why the income of fishing is unstable and low.

①. Climate change

There are some impacts of climate change to the fisher community. First, during typhoons, they cannot go to sea to catch fish. Second, the temperature of the ocean increases which compels the fish and other marine organisms to swim farther from the shore. As a result, the fishers have to exert more effort (and more cost) just to catch these. Third, increased sea surface temperature also cause coral bleaching.

②. Lack of money for equipment

Most of fishers in Jomalig cannot afford to buy good equipment for fishing; thus compared to commercial fishers, they cannot easily get enough fish.

③. Commercial fishing vessels and illegal fishers

Commercial fishers get a lot of fish near the area where only municipal fishers are supposed to fish. These commercial fishers sometimes encroach in municipal waters, thus the number of municipal fisher folks who can fish within it is decreased. Similarly, illegal fishers affect not only the fisher folks: they also break marine resources in their fishing operations, especially when they use dynamite that destroys coral reef.

2.2, Fish trading system in Philippines, especially in Jomalig

¹ *Surviving Climate Change in Small Islands: A Case Study of Fishing and Farming Communities in Jomalig, Quezon*, ISO and PhilDHRRA Luzon, 2013

2.2.1 The fish trading system in Jomalig

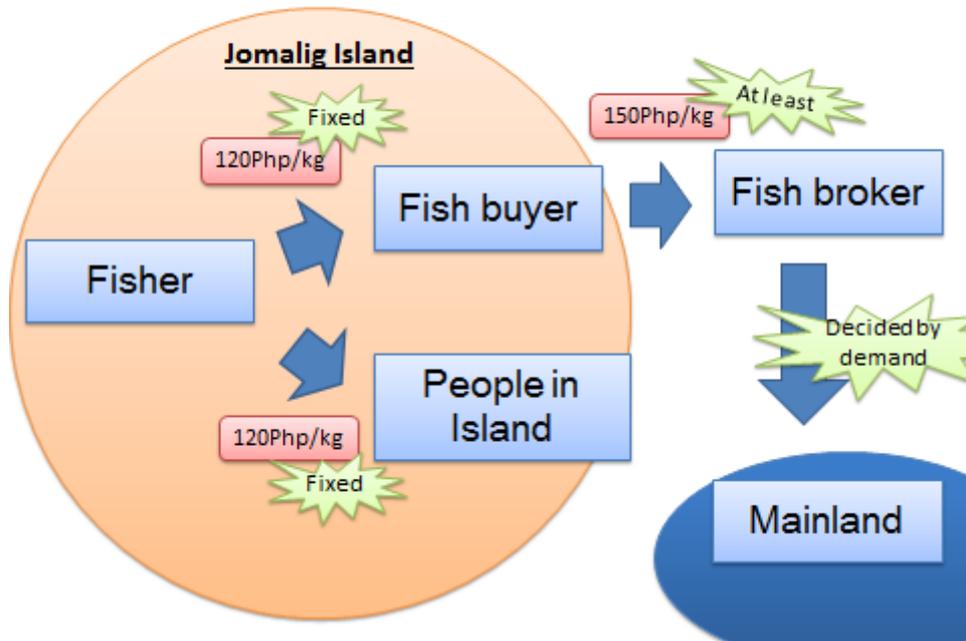


Figure 1 –Market flow for mackerel in Jomalig, Quezon

As the graph shows, fishers in Jomalig usually have two options to sell their catch, one is to fish buyer and another is to community members. According to my respondents, the price of mackerel is generally “fixed” Both prices are the same regardless of whether the fisher sells it to the fish buyer or to the community. In a way, the fishers will not be affected by the demand of mainland as long as the fish buyer does not stop buying from them. Actually, fishers and farmers in Jomalig sell their products to neighbor in community at a fixed price. Therefore, we can say that they have their own economy in the Island. On the other hand, fish buyers have risks that they are affected by demand of the mainland. If the demand of mainland is decreased, sometimes they have to sell fishes at the price of 120Php/kg to fish broker. And it costs some expenses to transport fishes from the Island to the mainland. At times, in the end they have deficit. Because of this unstable income, just like the fishers, the fish buyers also farm.

3. Situation of Cagbalite

3.1 Current situation of Barangay Cagbalite

I went to Cagbalite with my classmates from Japan as a part of their study tour. We conducted a participatory research in Cagbalite. From this research, I am going to explain

the current situation of fishing communities Cagbalite Island. Barangay Cagbalite is an island barangay of the Municipality of Mauban, which is classified as a 1st class municipality. According to the latest census, the population of Cagbalite was 3658(NSCB, 2010). The main source of income of the community is mostly fishing.

The Daily life of a fisher in Barangay Cagbalite

Time	Male	Female	Time	Male	Female
12am	Go to sea to catch fish	Sleep	12pm	Lunch	Prepare and eat lunch
1am	↓	↓	1pm	Go around the community (work except for fishing)	Her children go to school (They work until then)
2am	↓	Wake up and prepare for coffee for her husband	2pm	↓	Work at the store
3am	↓		3pm	Fix nets	
4am	↓	Wake up and prepare for sarisari store	4pm	↓	Children come home
5am	↓	Buy at bakery for sell	5pm	Rest with his family	Prepare dinner
6am	Drink coffee and take a bath	Open the store	6pm	Eat dinner	Eat dinner
7am	Wash, fix nets and eat breakfast	Eat breakfast	7pm		Rest of children Take care
8am	↓	Clean the house	8pm	Watch dinner Rest with his family	Watch TV Children go to bed
9am	↓		9pm		
10am	Sleep	Laundry time	10pm	Sleep	Go to bed
11am	↓		11pm	Wake up and prepare for fishing	↓

Figure2- 24Hour Biological Clock of people in Barangay Cagbalite

These are the schedules of two respondents from Cagbalite. One is a fisherman and the other one is a wife of a fisher who manages a sari-sari store. It could be said that the female respondent would have plenty of free time, if she did not have a sari-sari store. It is actually for 8 hours in her case. However, in general, wives have a lot of domestic chores such as laundry, cooking, taking care of children, etc...

On the other hand, the fisher-respondent has a busy schedule. In a certain day, he slept only for 3 hours. Besides the actual fishing, he has to do other fishery-related tasks such as fixing the nets, which takes a very long time. From the focus group discussion, they told us that their daily schedule depends on the seasons and the kind of species that they catch. They do also have days when they can get enough sleep. But it can be said that they spent

most of the time for fishing.

Seasonality Calendar

There are 3 kinds of season which affect the fisheries sector in the Philippines. Let me explain the features of each season.

HABAGAT

Habagat is a monsoon wind coming from the southwest. According to the respondents, this usually occurs from May to September. During this time, the waves in Cagbalite are relatively calm in the morning; however, in the afternoon, the sea becomes rough and it rains.

AMIHAN

Amihan, or the northeast monsoon, occurs from October to February. During this season, the waves are very rough. According to them, it is very difficult to fish during this season, which lasts for almost 5 months.

KALMADA

KALMADA is the season when there are no monsoon winds; hence, basically waves are very calm. According to the fishers, this is the best season for them since they can catch lot of fish.

As the table below shows, the best season for catching fishes is KALMADA, which lasts just for 2 months. On the other hand, especially during AMIHAN, fishers have a very hard time to catch fish. For 10 months in a year, fishers have difficulty catching fishes because of the season. The species of fishes and gears are also different from each season. I could tell that a fisher's life really depends on the seasons.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
HABAGAT (Wind from South West)												
Baby Shark												
Balintong												
Nokus												
Squid												
AMIHAN (Wind from North East)												
Jack Fish												
Batalay												
KALMADA (Calm Wave)												
Crab												
Mackerel												

Important Issues in the Community

We also asked the respondents what for them are the most important issues in their community. These are as follows:

① **Electricity**

The electricity in Cagbalite is limited. They can use it only for 4 hours in a day from 6PM to 10PM. Though they can see the power plant from their island, they use a generator, since Cagbalite is an island. Sometimes the generator is problematic. In a certain village, for instance, they have not used electricity for 2 weeks already because of the generator broke down. Actually, this inconvenience affects several aspects of their life. For example, they cannot use the refrigerator, so they cannot preserve their produce for a long time. This causes the fishers to sail many times, since they have to sell them after every trip: otherwise these will spoil. Also for the children, they have difficulty studying the afternoon because of limited electricity.

② **Livelihood for women**

As I mentioned before, if women do not have their own jobs, they have free time for around 8 hours in a day. From what mothers in Cagbalite mentioned, there are a lot of wives who do not have a job. Even if it is the season that their husband's income declines, they cannot contribute to their household income due to the lack of women-based livelihoods in the community. Thus sometimes, they really have to save their money. Actually, the woman who has sari-sari store is a rare case among woman in Cagbalite.

③ Health

There are no hospitals in Cagbalite. There is only a health care center which is managed by a midwife. There are also no doctors: hence, in cases of emergency, they have to go to the mainland by boat. But if the sea is rough, it is a very risky situation to travel. They usually rely on *hilot* who is a healer in the community who uses traditional techniques like herbal medicine and therapeutic massage.

④ Education

In Cagbalite, there is only one elementary school and one high school. They are planning to build a university which is focused on fishery and agriculture, since there is the problem that students have to transfer to the mainland to study at a university. Another problem is that teachers, who usually reside in the mainland, cannot come to Cagbalite, if the sea is rough. On very bad weather, the classes are cancelled for almost a week.

⑤ Food

Cagbalite is a small island, so they cannot grow enough vegetables and rice. They also have difficulty getting potable water. Because of this situation, they mainly eat rice and fish, therefore children can be easily undernourished. Especially during amihan, they have food shortage. As a result, they resort to eating instant foods.

⑥ Financial support

Basically, there is no financial support for people in Cagbalite. During the season they cannot catch enough fish. Sometimes they are forced to sell their catch to the middleman, which they call a "manager". Nonetheless, there is still an option to get financial support. They rely on informal credit sources such as from Indian business men that they call "Bumbay" or "5-6". They lend money to the community especially during times of need. However, they charge a very high interest rate. Once a borrower fails to pay within 40 days, the interest balloons to 20% of the original amount borrowed. As the community members mentioned, they resort to the "Bumbay" only in emergency, since the interest is relatively high.

⑦ Transportation

Actually, for me, the transportation is the most serious problem in Cagbalite, It seems that this problem is connected with all others. That means the issues in Cagbalite are caused by the inconvenience of transportation. For example, as it was explained, the teachers cannot come to the schools in Cagbalite, when the sea is very rough. And also, when someone needs to go to the hospital in case of emergency and the sea is very rough, it is very hard to send him/her to the hospital. This can be regarded as a peculiar problem for islands.

3.2 Fish Trading System in Cagbalite

2.2.1 The fish trading system in Cagbalite

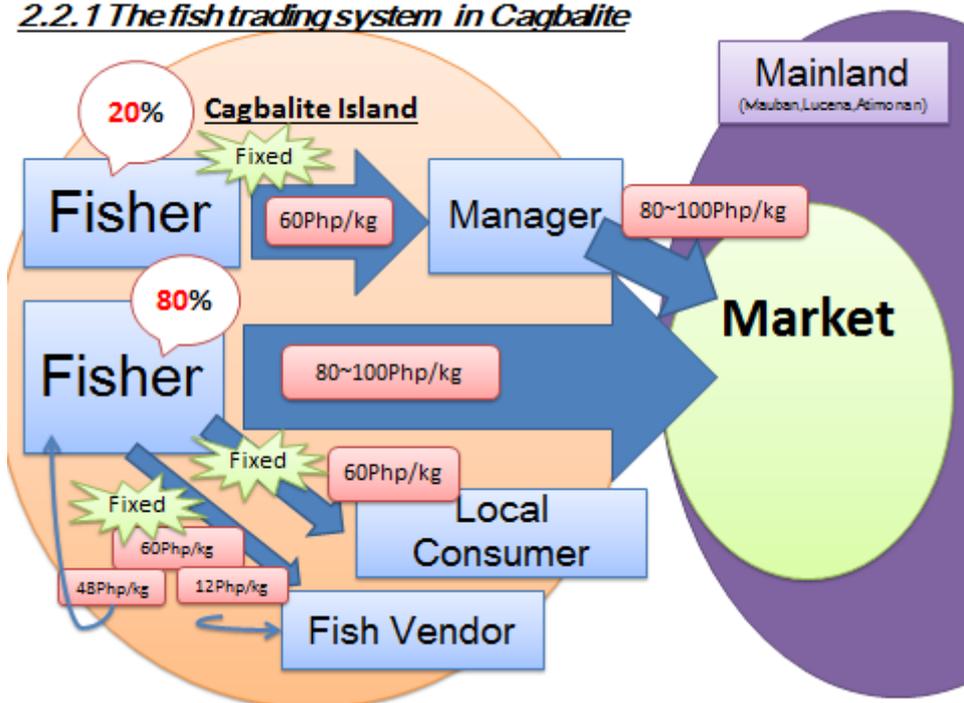


Figure3- Market flow for mackerel in Barangay Cagbalite, Mauban

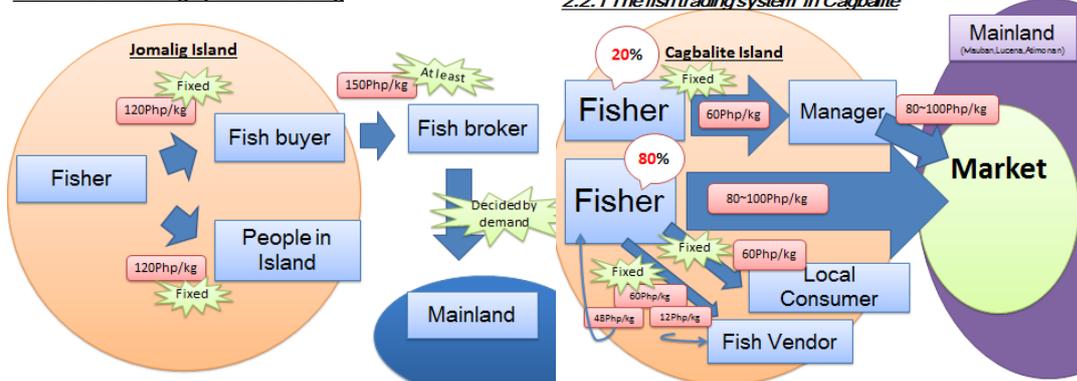
As the graph shows, 80% of the fishers directly sell their catch to the markets in the mainland such as in Mauban, Lucena, and Atimonan. They also sell their catch to local consumers. When they cannot find someone to sell their catch to, they sell it to local fish vendors. In the end, the fishers get 80% of the gross sale. For instance, in one kilogram of mackerel that sells for Php60, the fisher gets Php48, while the fish vendor gets Php12. On the other hand, the remaining 20% of the fishers in Cagbalite are employed by the middleman/manager. They have to catch fish that the manager requires them. The manager then buys fish from these fishers at a lower price.

From these, we can say that majority of the fishers in Cagbalite can have the initiative to dictate the price, since they sell it themselves directly. They are their own bosses. Therefore, we could say that the fish trading system in Cagbalite is relatively healthy compared to other areas like in Jomalig Island where most of the fishers rely on the middleman.

4. Similarities and Differences between Jomalig and Cagbalite

There are some similarities and differences between Jomalig Island and Cagbalite Island. By finding those similarities and differences, I am going to find the key that can contribute to improve their life.

2.2.1 The fish trading system in Jomalig



Similarities

Main consumer of their product

Both of them have consumers who are mostly from the mainland, because of steady demands. As such they can sell their catch at a higher price in the mainland than when they sell it to the neighbors. The proportions of local consumer are relatively low.

The Environment of the Island

The bottom cause of issues in both of islands is transportation, since they live in a remote island. For example, they do not have enough access to health care and they have difficulty getting electricity. For fishing, they don't have facilities to preserve fishes, because of limited electricity. So they have to bring them immediately to mainland to sell. After all, they have difficulties to get resources for livelihood. A lot of problems arise because they live in the island, wherein transportation is not readily accessible.

Livelihood of Woman

In Jomalig, the women are basically in charge of marketing the catch. In Cagbalite, they also help fishers, but it is difficult for women to get income for their livelihood. In both of the islands, women help fishers, but they do not mainly contribute to their household income, since in general, the women have a hard time to have source of income in both of islands.

Differences

The price of mackerel

As the graph shows, the price of mackerel in Jomalig is more expensive than the one in Cagbalite. One possible reason why the price of mackerel in Jomalig is relatively expensive is because the fish from the open sea such as the Pacific Oceans have better quality. It can be said that even if fish prices in Jomailg are fixed, they can get a profit more than the fishers, assuming that the amount of fish catch are the same with Cagbalite. However, this is just one species of fish. As the seasonality calendar show, the species that they catch vary in each season. Therefore, it cannot be judged that the gross income in Jomalig is higher than in Cagbalite. Actually, the class of municipality's income in Jomalig is lower than in Cagbalite. Mauban is said to be a first class municipality, primarily due to the huge profit they get from the coal fired power plant constructed in the area.

The existence of fish buyers

In Jomalig, the main problem of the fish trading system is that the fishers do not have the initiative to decide the price of their catch because of the existence of the middle man or the fish buyers. On the other hand, in Cagbalite, 80% of the fishers can sell their catch directly to the mainland. One possible explanation for this is because Cagbalite is relatively closer to the mainland than Jomalig. It takes around 45 minutes to the mainland from Cagbalite, but it takes 5 to 7 hours from Jomalig to the mainland. The point is that fishers of Cagbalite have the capacity to decide and adjust the price. Based from this observation, I can tell that the fish trading system in Cagbalite is relatively healthier compared to that of Jomalig.

Secondary source of income

In Jomalig, basically, when fishers cannot catch well, they also do farming. On the other hand, in Cagbalite, since the island is too small to maintain a farm, they do not have a

second job like in Jomalig.

5. Recommendation

Basically, both of the islands have geographic disadvantages such as transportation, limited electricity and limited resources. In other words, most of the problems are caused by the features of island. People in both islands have to consider this special disadvantage and find another way that can solve this or turn them to an advantage. In my opinion, the people in the island, especially fishers, should not compete with those from the mainland, because their situation is unique and different. They should determine what they could focus on to have a stable life by considering the features of their islands.

5.1 The Possibility of Women-Managed Processed Food Production

As the way to clear the disadvantage of the island, processed foods might improve the life of the people in the island. Processed foods are the food items that can be preserved, which can be made from raw materials from fishery and agriculture. One example of this is fish sauce. The followings are the merits that processed foods can deliver as well as things to look out for if processed food production will be pursued as a family business.

Could be secondary source of income and the work for women

As the 24-hours bio clock showed, the women basically do housework and assist their fisher-husbands work by selling and marketing their product. However, that does not contribute as another source of income. But if they can get more profit than just selling fish by processing their product as a small business, they might contribute on increasing and making their family income stable.

Does not need facilities using electricity

There are processed foods which does not need special equipment and electricity. In other words, there are processed foods which can be made by using their own materials in their house such as fish paste, so that they can cut the cost for managing this business as many as possible.

Can be preserved for a long time

Processed foods can be preserved. That means they can get income by selling processed food even during amihan the season when it is hard to catch fish. Thus, they can get a stable income by balancing selling fish and making processed food.

Concerns

They really have to be organized to manage this business. If there is a women organization or cooperative, managing this would be better. The most concern is that people who are not directly involved in the production (e.g. catching the fish) gets the profit instead of the fishers of the island. People in the islands should be the one to get a profit.

To solve this concern, the ISO can assist them to help them organize and strengthen their group. The NGOs and the local government should assist them in terms of capturing market to sell and promote their products.

5.2 Possible Processed Foods

From the survey in Cagbalite, dried fish is the most popular processed food sold in the community. They also mentioned that they are familiar with fish paste, fried squids, pickled/preserved sea cucumbers and sea urchin. However, fish sauce is not made by the respondents. In Mauban, they produced lambanong which is a wine made from nipa, a kind of mangrove as a special product. If they try to get enough profit, they have to make different values and originality from other product. Thus I recommend that they will make a special product from their islands and make it a primary industry in the future. In Japan, people in rural areas are trying to make their own special product from products which they grow up or catch, so that they can make different values from other area and flourish their economy. I also recommend that they will imitate other country's food and design if for Filipino. After I go back to Japan, I will look for the suitable processed food in Japan for the island communities in the Philippines and update it to the ISO.