

# Information dissemination and communication in stakeholder participation: the Bohol-Cebu water supply project

*Karen T. Fisher and Peter B. Urich*

**Abstract:** *Development theories in the 1990s embrace a much more people-centred perspective than in previous decades. At the same time, foreign direct investment is increasingly being touted as a new form of development assistance, and transnational corporations as new aid agents. However, the ideology of the free market is incongruous with the people-centredness of contemporary development theory. The result is a polarisation between participatory development and market driven paradigms. This study introduced the models of instrumental and transformative participation and the way they influence information flow and communication. These models are used to examine a project proponent's and stakeholder's actions in a privatised development setting, using a Philippine case study. The case study is the Bohol-Cebu water supply project, a project of water capture, treatment, and transmission, linking the islands of Bohol and Cebu. Communication and information dissemination between the project proponent and stakeholders is viewed under the requirements of Philippine legislation for participation in development. The findings from this research suggest that the proponent tended to exclude or only partially include affected stakeholders in the development process. Sources of information were often nongovernmental organisations, the Church, and, in many instances, the media. The proponent's method of disseminating information was primarily to target the municipal or provincial government level, thus disenfranchising the 'grass roots'.*

**Keywords:** *Philippines, development, stakeholder participation, information dissemination, communication.*

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## INTRODUCTION

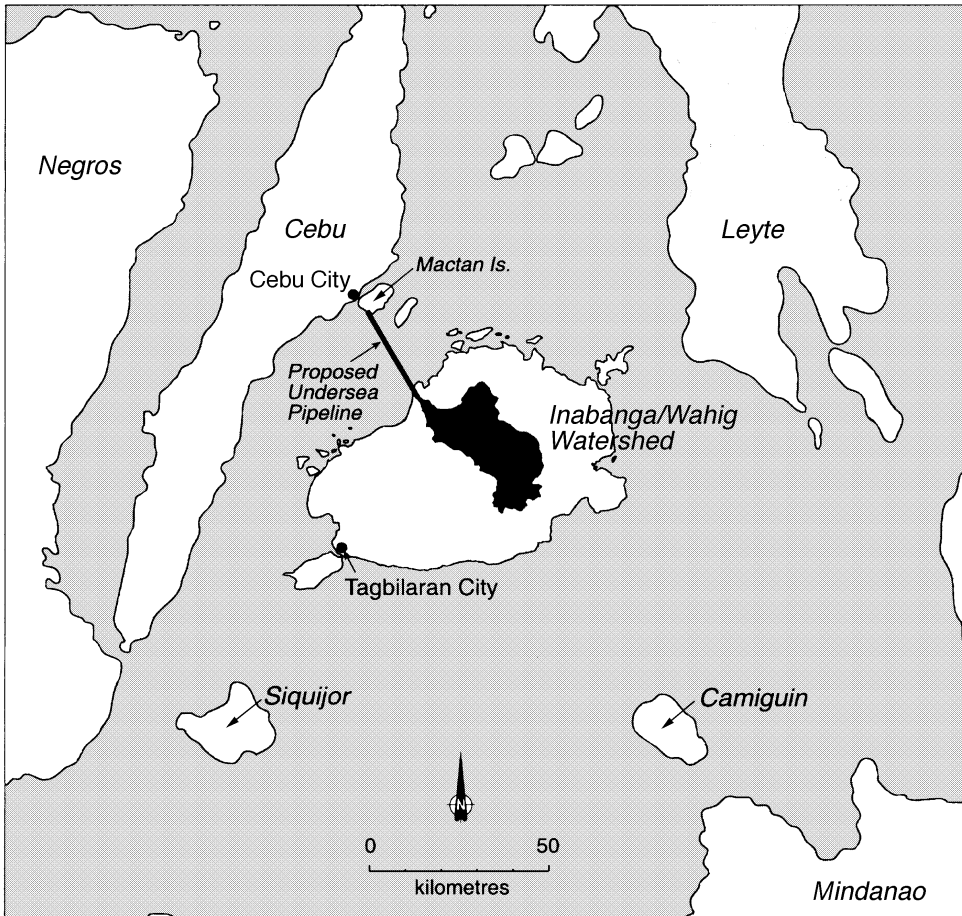
As the twentieth century draws to an end, developing countries are increasingly being driven by policies ascended from the New Right development paradigm which advocates increased economic integration and globalisation. Consequently, over the last decade developing countries have undertaken a myriad of reforms and adjustments to liberalise, privatise and open up their economies to promote private sector development and attract foreign capital (Bretton Woods Commission, 1994; Ghai, 1991; van Bergeijk and Haffner, 1996). Foreign direct investment (hereafter FDI) has been touted as the most important component of private capital flows, and as a result many countries are being transformed to accommodate greater freedom for investment.

The Philippines has been one such country which, since the 1980s, has liberalised its economy to attract inflows of foreign capital to bolster economic development (Rivera, 1996; Scalise and de Guzman, 1995). In the mid 1980s, development focused on promoting economic growth by improving infrastructure and providing investment incentives to attract foreign capital (Scalise and de Guzman, 1995). Investment laws were later consolidated through the 1987 Omnibus Investment Code, and the economy further liberalised by the 1991 Foreign Investment Act (Scalise and de Guzman, 1995).

Coterminous with the rise in FDI has been the importance of undertaking development strategies that involve and benefit those most likely to be affected. Empowerment of marginal groups, and targeting social services at the grassroots level has become a priority concern; development is to be far more people-oriented and participatory (Bretton Woods Commission, 1994; Brohman, 1995a; Brohman, 1995b; Chambers, 1995; Gwynne, 1996; Kilby, 1996; Rollasen, 1996; Watkins, 1996; World Bank, 1996). The theoretical elements of contemporary participatory approaches have come to form the foundation of development guidelines and legislation for organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (hereafter UNDP), and nation-states like the Philippines. The result is a polarisation in development between a participatory development paradigm, and a market driven development paradigm. There is also a noted gap, which continues between academic inquiry and development practice (Booth, 1994; Peet and Watts, 1996; Schuurman, 1993; Slater, 1993). The information we present looks at the gap between academic inquiry and development practice and is based on the findings from research carried out in Bohol, Philippines, from June to August 1997. This paper explores the nature of participation and communication between stakeholders and actors in a privatised development setting, and is viewed under the requirements of Philippine legislation for participation in development. The case study is the Bohol-Cebu Water Supply Project (hereafter BCWSP).

### *The study area*

Bohol and Cebu are neighbouring island provinces in the Central Visayas region of the Philippines. Bohol comprises an area of 4,117 square kilometres,



**Figure 1.** Location of the proposed undersea pipeline linking Bohol and Cebu of the Central Visayas, Philippines

with a population of 994,440 (National Statistics Office, 1998a). Cebu comprises an area of 5,809 square kilometres, with a population of over 2.9 million people (National Statistics Office, 1998b). The major industries for Bohol are agriculture and fisheries (JICA, 1986). Bohol is comprised of 47 municipalities, including 1,114 *barangays* (villages). The province's main port and capital city is Tagbilaran, which has a population of 66,683 (National Statistics Office, 1998a). Cebu comprises five cities and 48 municipalities (1,201 *barangays*). The largest city and provincial capital is Cebu City, with a population of approximately 662,299 (National Statistics Office, 1998b). The Cebu Metropolitan Area (Metro Cebu) comprises Cebu, Liloan, Mandaue and Lapu-lapu and the municipalities of Talisay, Consolation, Compostela and Cordova. Lapu-lapu and Cordova are located on Mactan Island, adjacent to Cebu City, and connected by the Mactan-Mandaue Bridge (Figure 1). The population for the Metro Cebu area is 1,304,370 (National Statistics Office, 1998b).

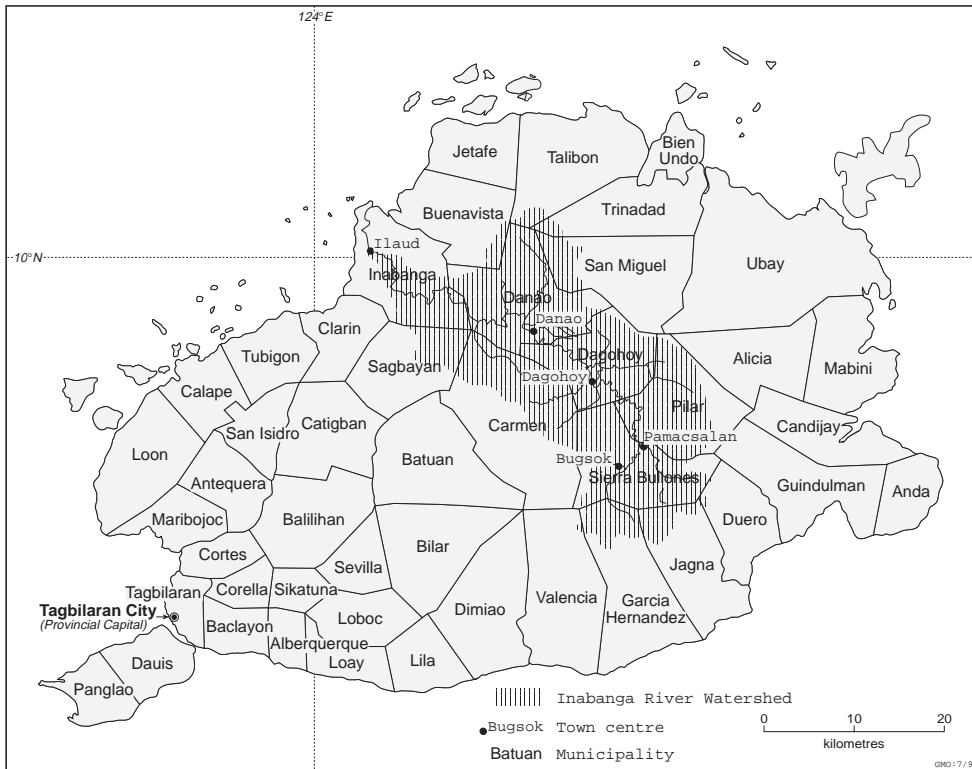
*Project description*

The Bohol Cebu Water Supply Project is a project of water capture, treatment, transmission and storage, linking Bohol and Cebu. The project proponent, the Alliance, is a conglomeration of three corporations: Brown and Root (a Division of Halliburton Multinational, United States), Anglo-Philippine Holdings Corporation, and Itochu Corporation. The project's proponents propose to divert an average of 130,000 cubic metres of 'excess' freshwater per day from Bohol's Inabanga-Wahig River. The water will then be transported to Cebu by a sub-sea pipeline. The intake will only divert approximately 10–12% of the river's flow thus allowing a continuous flow downstream, and require virtually no impoundment upstream (Alliance, 1996).

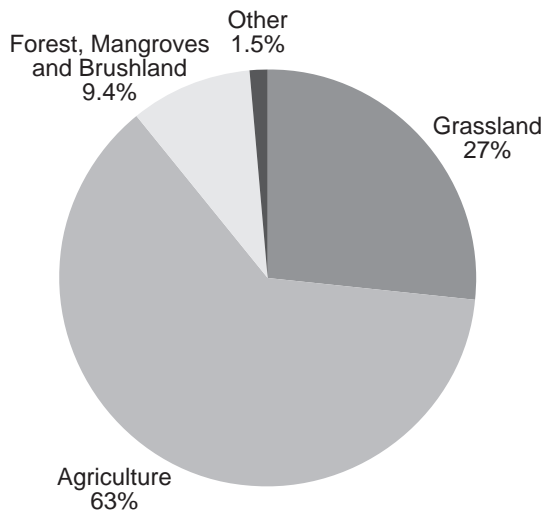
The water will be treated according to World Health Organisation drinking standards, and will then be pumped from the treatment plant to the northwestern coastline facing the Bohol Strait in the town of Inabanga. Approximately 23,500 cubic metres per day will be allocated to Bohol's towns and the remainder to Cebu – an average of approximately 106,500 cubic metres per day (Anonymous, c1996). The pipeline will traverse approximately 30 kilometres of seabed and make landfall at Cordova, Mactan Island. The Alliance proposes to operate the project as a Build-Operate-Transfer project (hereafter BOT), which is a privatised mode of financing a public utility. The shareholding distribution is: Brown and Root 38.25 percent; Anglo-Philippine 38.25 percent; Itochu Corporation 13.5 percent; and, the Bohol Provincial Government 10 percent. The term of the BOT contract is 25 years after which time the Alliance will hand the project over to the Provincial Government. The Provincial Government's 10 percent stake entitles it to a share of the equity dividends, and to be involved in the management of the business. The project is expected to significantly increase revenues within the province by providing the Provincial Government with dividends, and municipalities with compensation and royalty packages. The sustainability of the project depends on the viability of the Inabanga-Wahig watershed. Therefore, the watershed needs to be managed in an environmentally sound manner.

*The Inabanga-Wahig watershed*

The Inabanga-Wahig watershed – approximately 56,700 hectares in size – is one of five major catchment areas in Bohol province. The population residing in the watershed has been estimated to be between 90,000 and 100,000 (Republic of the Philippines, 1990; Republic of the Philippines, 1994). The Philippine Government's Proclamation 468 established the Inabanga-Wahig watershed forest reserve for the purpose of protecting, maintaining, and improving the water yield of the watershed (Republic of the Philippines, 1994) (Figure 2). Approximately 35,500 hectares is used for agricultural purposes, 15,000 hectares is classified as grassland, 5,400 hectares is designated forest, brushland and mangrove, and 845 hectares has other uses (including built-up areas, orchards and water) (Alliance, 1996) (Figure 3).



**Figure 2.** Inabanga-Wahig watershed of Bohol, Philippines



**Figure 3.** Landuse (in percent) in the Inabanga-Wahig watershed. (Source: Alliance, 1996)

## THE CONCEPT OF PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT

Participation has become a widely accepted term within development discourse, and amongst development practitioners. Its general appeal and the 'warmness' that the term connotes tends to mask the actual processes involved, and blurs the variety of meanings and implications that are embedded within different organisations, institutions and ideological standpoints (Nelson and Wright, 1995; Rahman, 1995; Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994; White, 1994). The term participation has become so much a part of the development discourse that its inclusion has come to be expected in project proposals (Mayo and Craig, 1995; Roth and Franks, 1997; White, 1994). However, the kind of participation alluded to may differ from project to project based on the source of funding, the type of project, and the way in which the project will be implemented.

Participation models vary in definition and conceptualisation within modernisation, new right, and post-modernisation paradigms. These variances are largely due to the differences in expectations that each paradigm places on development processes and outcomes (Chambers 1995; Jacobson, 1994; Long, 1992).

### *The nature of participation*

Nelson and Wright (1995), Chambers (1995), Stiefel and Wolfe (1994), and White (1994) distinguish between the forms of participation within development: participation as either a means or instrumental participation; and, participation as an end or transformative participation. A third form of participation is also identified: cosmetic participation (also referred to as token participation).<sup>1</sup> It is also acknowledged that the type and quality of participation varies depending on where in the project cycle participation occurs: planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, or take-over (OECD, 1997g). Each form of participation implies a different set of processes and relationships amongst the development parties.

## INSTRUMENTAL PARTICIPATION

The trend for participation in the 1990s parallels the pervasive shift in development from modernisation to post-modernisation approaches, and illustrates what Chambers (1995) notes as a shift in the past two decades 'from a professional paradigm of things to one centred on people' (Chambers, 1995: 32). Participation models associated with modernisation development projects can be viewed as instrumental models of participation, or what White (1994) terms 'pseudo-participation'. To draw from Chambers (1995), instrumental participation '... describes a co-opting practice, to mobilize labour and reduce costs ...' in which '... "they" [local people] participate in "our" project ...' (Chambers, 1995: 30). Participation within this paradigm was aimed at transforming people from 'traditional' to 'modern' citizens within the political economy of the developing country. This generally

required participation of local people in a national programme, through contributions of labour, cash or in kind (Chambers, 1995; Jacobson, 1994; Nelson and Wright, 1995; Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994).

Instrumental participation implies that local people have limited power in terms of involvement and decision making. Due to the nature of modernisation projects, control and decision making power frequently sat with development planners (and on many occasions with community elites) (Nelson and Wright, 1995). To this White (1994) notes that 'the level of participation of the people is being present to listen to what is being planned for them and what would be done unto them' (White, 1994: 17).

Development projects typical to the modernisation era included infrastructure and programmes to encourage industrialisation, therefore the number of affected 'participants' was potentially very large. The failure of modernisation development strategies in reaching those most at need, and the importance placed on development which has long term sustainability, forced the drive towards constructing an approach which would allow for greater participation (Chambers, 1995; Ghai and Vivian, 1992; Rahman, 1995).

#### *A model for instrumental participation*

The following represents a step-by-step model of how a project may be implemented incorporating an instrumental approach to community participation. The first step is the formulation of a project proposal. Citizens are not involved in planning what is proposed; they may become involved later in the process. Not all affected stakeholders are included in negotiations. Participation of people is required in the form of contributions of labour, cash or in kind to ensure project sustainability (Chambers, 1995; Nelson and Wright, 1995; Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994). However, negotiations and discussions are held between selected 'powerful' parties (Nelson and Wright, 1995). Stakeholders have a limited input into the actual outcome and participation resembles people being told what is being planned for them (White, 1994). There is limited flow of information to and from stakeholders. Conflicts may arise as a result of resistance and require changes to the proposal or hinder progress (World Bank, 1993). Alternatively, NGOs and POs are utilised to inform and involve affected stakeholders during the project implementation stage. Stakeholders become involved in community organising and embrace new livelihood options to tackle economic and social problems. While this scenario bears some resemblance to transformative participation (through grassroots community organising for livelihoods), it is in fact an example of instrumental participation. Engaging stakeholders in such activities after the project has been approved and implemented does not enable stakeholders to have an active influence in decision making. Instead the decision has already been made for them and stakeholders have very little influence or control over their own lives. Attempts to 'empower' stakeholders mask the fact that they have in the first instance been marginalised. And stakeholders are reduced to being told what is being planned for them and would be done unto them (White, 1994).

## TRANSFORMATIVE PARTICIPATION

Uphoff (1993) and Chambers (1995) argue that ‘paradigms’ in development thinking ‘tend to coexist, overlap, coalesce and separate’ so that inquiries into development ‘need to be “both-and” rather than “either-or”’ (Chambers, 1995: 36). As such, the post-modernisation paradigm of development does not profess to have replaced the former, but has become important in influencing and reshaping the discourses and activities that focus on participation in development (Chambers, 1995). The paradigm of people focuses much more on the contextuality of the development practice, embracing diversity of perspectives within a local/decentred setting. This perspective is echoed in post-modernisation development theory and post-modernism in social theory (Peet and Watts, 1996). Post-modernisation places individual and social self-determination among the central goals, which in turn makes participation of central importance in the development process.

Chambers (1995) describes transformative participation as ‘... an empowering process ...’ which enables local people to have control over their development process, in which ‘... “we” participate in “their” project ...’ (Chambers, 1995: 30).

Transformative participation enables local people to become involved in their own development, and emphasises strategies for empowerment. Greater emphasis is placed on self-reliance in decision making in contrast to people being informed about procedures for achieving pre-determined goals. This approach is viewed as very positive because people’s goals become the basis for decision making in projects, thus increasing sustainability of specific projects, and improving ability of local people in making decisions and planning in general (Jacobson, 1994). Transformative participation allows for communication among equals, rather than to broadcast information from experts. This can be facilitated in a variety of settings, including meetings, media, planning procedures, and radio (Jacobson, 1994: 66).

In contrast to the narrow definitions placed on participation in the modernisation paradigm, Jacobson comments that:

Post-modernization definitions go beyond representations of the masses to focus on social change and emphasis on self-reliance as an outcome of the development process (Jacobson, 1994: 61).

The ‘targets’ for development projects – the local people – are seen as actors in the process. This implies a much more active involvement in the development process by people at the local level, as opposed to the earlier term ‘beneficiary’, which implies a more passive role in development. This approach calls for an increase in popular participation, and a heightened sensitivity to individual and local experiences in the development process (Chambers, 1995; Jacobson, 1994; Long, 1992). As a result, communication (particularly inter-communication between actors at the varying levels) has been identified as playing a significant role in participation (Jacobson, 1994; White, 1994; Bordenave, 1994).



Jacobsen (1994) comments that:

Communication is sometimes directly involved, as in studies or participation as 'information sharing'. In other instances it is only indirectly involved, as in studies of participation as 'transactions with a social system' (Jacobson, 1994: 69).

This connection is supported through empirical research in sociology and political science (Jacobsen, 1994).

#### *A model for transformative participation*

There is also a step-by-step model of how a project may be conceived and implemented incorporating transformative participation. In contrast to instrumental participation, citizens are included in planning from an early stage. This fosters a sense of project ownership and enhances project sustainability (Bretton Woods Commission, 1994). The development process promotes empowerment of marginalised groups and stakeholders in a bottom-up approach. Local groups and civil society are encouraged to participate (Brohman, 1995a; Edwards, 1989; Long, 1992). A dialogue is constructed between the project implementer and interest groups based on a two-way flow of information. Negotiation between these parties result in changes to the proposal so that all parties are reasonably satisfied (Long, 1992; World Bank, 1996). The project progresses because of the flexible nature of the project proposal which focuses on processes, not blue-print planning (Overseas Development Administration, 1995). This scenario supports transformative participation of stakeholders and interest groups.

#### *Enhancing transformative stakeholder participation*

Stakeholder participation enables a broad range of groups to be directly and indirectly involved in a development project. As a process, stakeholder participation gives those with rights, responsibilities and/or interests, the ability to have an active role in decision making and activities which affect them (Overseas Development Administration, 1998). The UNDP remarks that 'experience has shown that participation improves the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of development actions' (UNDP, 1998). This is because people are placed at the centre of actions. Therefore development efforts have a much greater potential to empower stakeholders, and lead to a stronger sense of ownership of results. Acknowledgement by multilateral and bilateral institutions of the importance of stakeholder participation in ensuring project sustainability, has led to the development of methods and guidelines to enhance and facilitate stakeholder participation.

For participation to be transformative, information needs to be available for all stakeholders in a timely manner, preferably during the early stages of the development cycle. This enables stakeholders to engage in a dialogue with the project designers to negotiate parameters for participation and consultation

from the outset. Ensuring stakeholders are informed as the project progresses empowers stakeholders and allows them to have more control in decision making (OECD, 1997g; World Bank, 1993).

Engaging people in a dialogue facilitates a two-way flow of communication from developer to the local community, and vice versa (World Bank, 1993). Therefore, constructing a dialogue with stakeholders early in the development process can preclude the need for intensive negotiations and conflict resolution in later stages of development. This is because stakeholders can identify relevant issues and potential problems early on:

Developing sound mechanisms to provide information on the project and elicit feedback early in the project cycle can avoid more costly design changes later (World Bank, 1993: 8).

Information dissemination is a necessary precondition for consultation and participation. It has been acknowledged that stakeholders have varying degrees of power and access to information. As a consequence, some stakeholders may lack the organisational basis for negotiation (Overseas Development Administration, 1998; World Bank, 1998). Therefore, in order to participate effectively in decision making, stakeholders need to have access to appropriate information, in an appropriate form, keeping in mind language, culture and constraints to accessing information (Overseas Development Administration, 1998; World Bank, 1993). In overcoming these problems a variety of tactics can be employed in a participatory approach to allow communication among equals, rather than to broadcast information from experts to receivers. These include such things as meetings, planning procedures, and radio talk shows to name a few. The variety in the types of settings also lends itself to greater accessibility, for example, people who live in remote areas, or who have little money, can still be informed through radio and news media (Jacobson, 1994). Methods such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) are effective in enabling transformative participation as it allows people in the local area to access, understand, and share community based knowledge with the development proponent to negotiate development design, where primary stakeholder's perspectives are taken into account.

In adopting a participatory approach, the issue of legitimacy in representation of stakeholders is critical in ensuring that the concerns and perspectives of the disenfranchised and powerless are properly represented. For example, in undertaking participation in forest and conservation management it is important to involve primary stakeholders since such a programme is likely to have a direct impact on the local area (World Bank, 1998). Therefore, the views and inputs of the local community need to be voiced.

## **PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATION IN THE PHILIPPINES**

In 1991, the Philippine Local Government Code (hereafter LGC) brought about decentralisation and devolution of powers and responsibilities from the national

to the local level. This increased local level autonomy and provided increased opportunities for involvement by stakeholders in participatory decision making, planning, and implementation (Bulatao, 1994; Rivera, 1996; Scalise and de Guzman, 1995). The Provincial Planning and Development Office, (the planning arm of the Provincial Government), is mandated to formulate and integrate plans, as well as to monitor their implementation. The LGC provides for a participatory planning process through facilitating greater nongovernmental organisation (hereafter NGO) involvement with local government units at all levels of decision making: *barangay*, municipal, and provincial.

The Environmental Impact Statement (hereafter EIS) system mandates stakeholder participation in development undertakings, and mirrors the international trend in promoting stakeholder participation in development strategies. Stakeholder participation enables a broad range of groups to be directly and indirectly involved in a development project, and gives those with rights, responsibilities and/or interests, the ability to have an active role in decision making and activities which affect them (Overseas Development Administration, 1998).

The Philippine EIS system is administered by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and requires the preparation of an EIS for every project or undertaking that will significantly affect the quality of the environment. An Environmental Compliance Certificate (hereafter ECC) is also required when the proposed project or undertaking is termed an Environmentally Critical Project, or is located in an Environmentally Critical Area (Republic of the Philippines, 1997).<sup>2</sup> The BCWSP is subject to the conditions of the EIS system and ECC since it is a project located in an Environmentally Critical Area: the Inabanga-Wahig watershed (Alliance, 1996; Republic of the Philippines, 1997). Issuance of an ECC is conditional upon the proponent's compliance with the requirements of the EIS system, one of which is social acceptability. The EIS system places a great deal of emphasis on participation and social acceptability. In obtaining an ECC, public participation is perceived as the most effective process to promote and enhance social acceptability (Republic of the Philippines, 1997).

The Overseas Development Administration (1998), OECD (1997) and World Bank (1998 and 1993) identify information dissemination and communication as essential features in stakeholder participation. Ensuring stakeholders are informed as the project progresses empowers stakeholders and allows them to have more control in decision making, which may preclude the need for intensive negotiations if conflict emerges (OECD, 1997; World Bank, 1993).

The EIS system also identifies information dissemination and communication as key elements for ensuring the meaningful participation of stakeholders. According to the EIS system, the project's proponent(s) bears the responsibility for developing, organising and disseminating information to the public in a language and manner that is easily understood. Dissemination of information can be achieved in a number of ways, including field visits, informal dialogues with community members and community meetings, information and education campaign materials such as film or video, printed

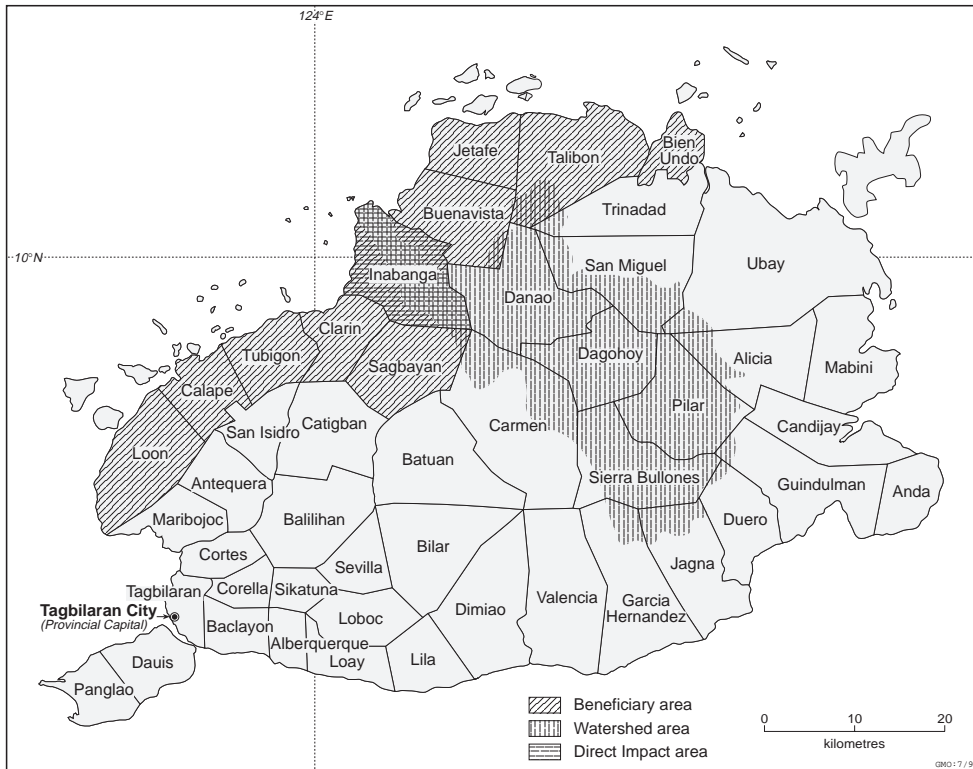
media or local radio, streamers, exhibits, and leaflets/flyers (Republic of the Philippines, 1997).

*Identifying stakeholders*

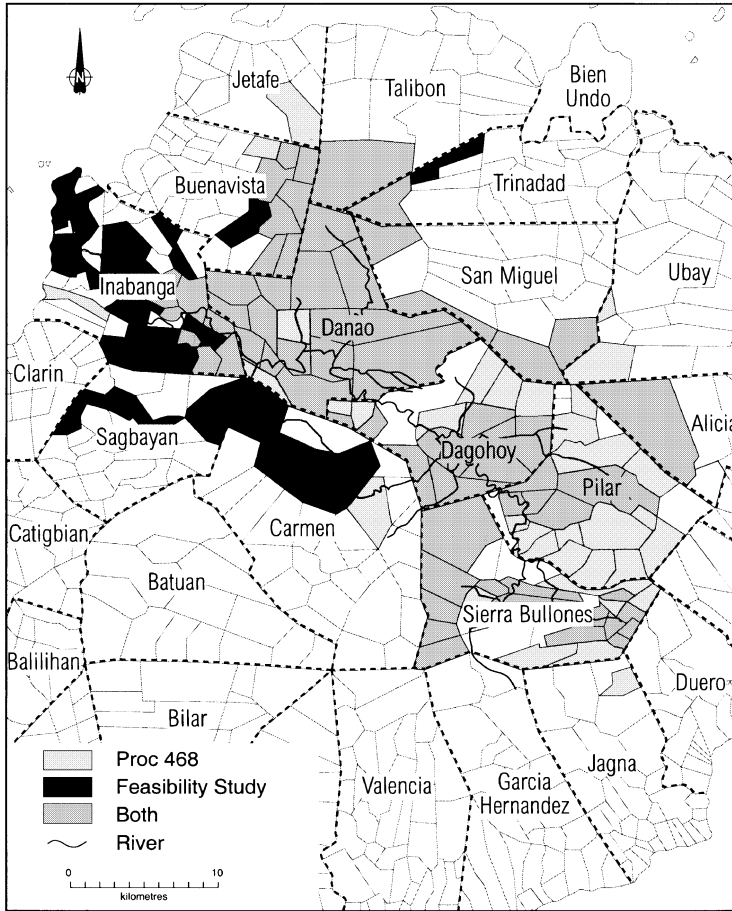
The project Feasibility Study prepared by the Alliance identified the municipality of Inabanga, Bohol, as the only municipality to be directly impacted by the project. The remaining 11 municipalities in the Inabanga-Wahig watershed were disenfranchised (Alliance, 1996). The watershed area defined in the Feasibility Study differs from that defined by Proclamation 468, which established the Inabanga-Wahig watershed as a reserve area (Republic of the Philippines, 1994) (Figure 4).

Proclamation 468 identifies 16 municipalities within the watershed area, with a population of 99,017 (Republic of the Philippines, 1994; Republic of the Philippines, 1990) (Figure 5).

The discrepancies in the definition of the watershed area are significant because this affects stakeholder identification, and ultimately, participation and communication between the project's proponent and stakeholders. For example, according to the Feasibility Study, Inabanga contains the largest land area and population within the watershed (22,009 people, according to the



**Figure 4.** Inabanga-Wahig watershed and predicted direct impact and beneficiary areas as identified in the feasibility study. (Source: Alliance, 1996)

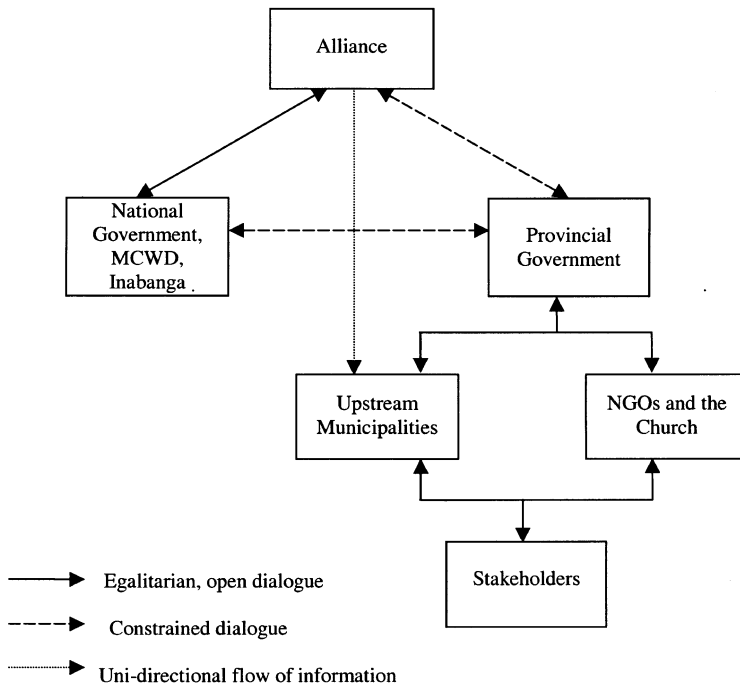


**Figure 5.** Discrepancy in the area constituting the Inabanga-Wahig watershed as defined by Proclamation 468 and within the feasibility study. (Sources: Alliance, 1996 and Republic of the Philippines, 1994)

1990 census). However, Proclamation 468 claims a smaller land area and population (5,762 people, according to the 1990 census). Therefore, the Feasibility Study skews the study to favour Inabanga as the major watershed stakeholder, when in actual fact, Dagohoy, Danao, Pilar and Sierra Bullones each comprise larger areas and populations than Inabanga. While it is true that the water processing plant would be located in Inabanga, the importance of watershed management by upstream municipalities to ensure project sustainability necessitates that these municipalities be given preference as primary stakeholders.

*Communication network and relationships*

The level of communication and information dissemination varied amongst stakeholders and the project proponent. The communication network that was



**Figure 6.** Hierarchy of the communication network between the Alliance and other stakeholders. (Source: personal investigation).

established formed a hierarchy of relationships between the Alliance and other actors (Figure 6).

The Alliance formed direct relationships in the first instance with the National Government (as the resource owner of the Inabanga River), Metro Cebu Water District<sup>3</sup> (hereafter MCWD), and Inabanga. The relationship with the Provincial Government was formed later. Upstream municipalities, NGOs and the Church formed an indirect relationship with the Alliance, becoming involved through their own efforts, or through a third party. The third party was usually the Provincial Government. The Alliance did not form a direct relationship with primary stakeholders at the local level. Instead, these stakeholders were generally organised and involved in the process through intermediary groups such as NGOs and the Church.

The relationship between the Alliance, Inabanga, MCWD, and the National Government was fairly egalitarian. Communication and negotiation was undertaken on a relatively level playing field, and included information sharing and exchange of ideas. By contrast, the relationship between the Alliance and upstream municipalities provided little feedback from the municipal level, suggesting a largely uni-directional flow of information. For example, communication was limited to water demand and household surveys for the purpose of information gathering. The dialogue between the Alliance and the Provincial Government was fairly constrained. Negotiations and discussions between these two parties were generally undertaken in a public medium: the

*Bohol Chronicle* newspaper. The Provincial Government acted largely as a facilitator in enabling and encouraging the involvement of municipalities, NGOs and the Church in representing stakeholder interests. In turn, these parties expressed their concerns and petitioned the Provincial Government to negotiate with the Alliance in the best interests of Bohol.

The Alliance provided information to the National Government, MCWD, and Inabanga. Upstream municipalities were subjugated to Inabanga, which received 'preferential treatment' in terms of consultations and information sharing. This is justifiable to an extent, considering that the Bohol-side facilities are to be located in Inabanga. Therefore, primary negotiations needed to include Inabanga. However, given that the project depends on a viable watershed, it is reasonable to expect that upstream municipalities within the Inabanga-Wahig watershed be included in negotiations and consultations, and as such be targets for information dissemination.

Residents in upstream municipalities were identified as stakeholders in the sense of watershed management, but were not identified as actors for participation or beneficiaries of services and/or income. However, consultation was undertaken with municipalities outside the watershed area who had been identified in the proposal as beneficiaries. The inclusion of beneficiaries ahead of watershed municipalities contravenes the notion of involving affected communities, as stated in Republic of the Philippines (1997) Section 4.1.1: 'it is their right to be informed of proposed changes that will affect them and to participate in decisions that will affect their lives'.

### *Information dissemination*

Two important sources of information on the proposed project were the *Bohol Chronicle* newspaper and the Church.<sup>4</sup> In August 1996 the *Bohol Chronicle* commenced publishing regular articles written by representatives from the Alliance and Bohol Nature and Conservation Society (BONACONSO), a Tagbilaran-based NGO, to raise public awareness about the project proposal. The debate delineated a range of environmental, socioeconomic and technical information and other matters relating to the project, through twice weekly publications written in English. The *Bohol Chronicle* was effective in disseminating information, but only to an English speaking/reading audience, and probably not much beyond Tagbilaran where most of its readership is based.

The Church took on the role of teaching and informing through the pulpit, as well as formulating a position paper that was broadcast in the vernacular (Visayan)<sup>5</sup> over the radio. There is a high weekly attendance at church from all sectors of the community, including large numbers from within the Inabanga-Wahig watershed area.<sup>6</sup> Through Mass and radio broadcasts, the Church was able to access a large proportion of the population, including stakeholders in remote areas, irrespective of economic power or literacy.

Other sources of information included household and water demand surveys undertaken by the Alliance as part of the EIS for the Feasibility Study, official documents, and meetings. The surveys were undertaken over a fairly limited

area, comprised a small sample, and were used primarily for information gathering, not information sharing. The informational material provided by the Alliance was considered to be very technical and inappropriate in terms of language since material was generally written in English. Examples include the Feasibility Study, pamphlets, and project information distributed at public meetings and hearings. Access to information was also an important factor limiting information dissemination. Arguably, the Feasibility Study was available for perusal by all parties at the office of the Governor in Tagbilaran. However, this fact was not widely known within the watershed area. Coupled with the distance of Tagbilaran from the watershed, primary stakeholders were either not aware that the document existed or were not willing or able to venture into Tagbilaran (see Figure 2).

By contrast, the information disseminated in the *Bohol Chronicle* (in English) and the radio (in Visayan) was much more accessible to the layperson. The Church was seen to be able to reach and inform stakeholders at the *barangay* level through weekly Mass. They were also said to be responsible for spearheading a demonstration by parishioners opposing the project at a public hearing held in Inabanga on 26 July 1997, as part of the ECC process.

Meetings to discuss alternative approaches to more directly involve watershed stakeholders were initiated by the Alliance in mid 1997 with the Mayors and *sangguniang bayan*<sup>7</sup> of Inabanga, Dagohoy, Danao, Sierra Bullones, Carmen, Pilar, and San Miguel. However, the level of information dissemination and communication between the Alliance and these municipalities prior to the meetings was fairly low. An information campaign targeted at the local community was not undertaken in watershed municipalities until October 1997, over one year after submitting the Feasibility Study.

The communication network that was established by the Alliance influenced the type and level of information dissemination amongst the actors. Of all the actors identified, MCWD, the National Government, and Inabanga were seemingly more 'powerful' than other actors in the sense that they received the most information, had conducted on-going dialogues, and were involved in negotiations and consultations ahead of other actors. This is true at least in the early stages of the proposal. Later in the process, the Provincial Government was able to redirect negotiations from the National to the Provincial government level, thus asserting its authority as decision maker and negotiator for provincial development as provided for by the LGC.

## CONCLUSION

The EIS system endows the proponent with the responsibility of ensuring meaningful participation by stakeholders and the public. The issuance of an ECC requires social acceptability, which can be best procured through public consultation and participation. The key to ensure meaningful consultation and participation of stakeholders is to provide information in an understandable manner to stakeholders so they are aware of all the issues prior to engagement. Information dissemination to and feedback from stakeholders early in the



process can avoid costly changes later on (Republic of the Philippines, 1997; White, 1994; World Bank, 1993). Therefore, it is seen to be in the proponent's best interest to engage a broad segment of stakeholders early in the process for early identification of likely problems and issues (Republic of the Philippines, 1997). The EIS system further advocates the importance of involving affected communities so that they are informed of proposed changes, and are able to effectively participate in decisions that will ultimately affect their lives (Republic of the Philippines, 1997: Section 4.1.1).

To an extent, the Alliance did comply with the requirements of the LGC and the EIS System. However, the consultation process was reasonably shallow. Stakeholders predominately received information from intermediary groups, who themselves often had to initiate consultations and meetings, and seek their own information. The Church and NGOs played the largest role in disseminating information and communicating with primary stakeholders. The findings of this research suggest that Philippine legislation has the potential for facilitating stakeholder participation and promoting transformative participation through a decentralised government system, and legislative requirements which mandate stakeholder participation. However, in the case of the BCWSP, participation was more closely aligned with the instrumental model of participation, where a hierarchy of actors involved in the process was identified, and unequal communication and information dissemination amongst stakeholders was observed. Philippine legislation has the potential for involving stakeholders in development strategies, and promoting transformative participation, there is also the potential for participation to be instrumental if the proponent lacks the good intentions to comply with the recommendations, and the government does not adequately enforce legislative requirements.

## NOTES

- 1 Chambers (1995) identifies cosmetic participation as that in which participation is given only face value attention in order to satisfy donor agency and government requirements. Ife (1995) identifies this kind of participation, as *tokenism*. Local people are virtually excluded from participation in this instance, and as such share little or no power in decision making.
- 2 Environmentally Critical Projects include heavy industries, resource extractive industries, infrastructure projects, or golf course projects. Environmentally Critical Areas include watershed reserves and national parks, tourist locations, habitats of endangered or indigenous species, and archaeological sites.
- 3 The Metro Cebu Water District (MCWD) is the party that was identified in the Feasibility Study that will buy the treated water from Bohol, and supply the consumers in Cebu.
- 4 The Philippines is arguably among the most religious and devout countries in the world. The dominant religion in the Philippines is Catholicism, and many NGOs and social action groups have historically been linked to the Roman Catholic Church (Rivera, 1995; Tigno, 1996).
- 5 Visayan is the vernacular language spoken in Bohol and Cebu.
- 6 Bohol is divided into two Dioceses: Talibon and Tagbilaran. The Inabanga-Wahig watershed falls mainly within the Talibon Diocese.
- 7 The *sangguniang bayan* is the Municipal Government Council comprised of elected officials.

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