



Bohol Seafarers and Sama-Bajau: Social Capital and Re-Integration in a Central Visayan Island

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Visayan-speaking seafarers seem to dominate Filipino maritime labor—number one for a long period now—engaged in world shipping. A good number of them come from the island province of Bohol. They labor hard to send money back home. Question is how else do they contribute to the development of their home communities. This part of the presentation extracts descriptive qualifications of social capital formation in seafarers' associations in select Visayan communities (Maribojoc in Bohol; Naval and Almeria in Biliran, and; Bgy Abucayan in Balamban, Cebu). It asks what factors aid social capital contributions to improvements in livelihood, education and health of those left behind. It seeks to develop a link between social capital (in its "cognitive" and "structural" forms) and "social anchors" to more or less complete the picture of seafarer associations' involvement in community development.

Sea people no less, the Sama-Bajau (SB) have sailed on small canoes from the southernmost islands in the Mindanao-Sulu-Tawi-tawi area to Central Visayas and Luzon. In Bohol, earlier batches of the SB have retained fishing and related activities as livelihood source in areas where they have built their homes, particularly in Daus, not far from Tagbilaran, Bohol's capital city. Impoverished by subsistence livelihood, inadequate national and local support for their health and education, some of the SB keep mendicancy as a handy survival tool, earning the ire of the local population. Other practices that they maintain fuel continuous "othering" by a great many. Recent state and NGO initiatives to re-integrate the SB makes imperative a culturally sensitive framework.

(Small sample surveys, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were conducted separately for these two groups in April-August and September-November 2013.)

In both instances, seafarers (and their families) and the SB are spatially contained but temporally and culturally divergent. The former's globalized employment occasions exposure to advanced economies and different cultures or ways of life in developed countries while the latter's marginal existence deprives them of minimal improvements in human condition. They are worlds apart, in a manner of speaking.

Is there any way that can put them on the same boat that sails towards development (modernity)?