

BIO-RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND OUR COMMON FUTURE**Agnes C. Rola, Ph.D.**

Professor and Director
Institute of Strategic Planning and Policy Studies
College of Public Affairs, University of the Philippines Los Baños
Email: arola@laguna.net

Societies survive or collapse depending upon how their inhabitants are able to manage the bio resources. Bio-resources management involves responsible use of our living resources- plants, animals and the natural environment that support these, for both traditional and new applications. Bio-resources' utility vary temporally and spatially. In the early times, when customary rules prevailed and societies were able to check population growth, bio resources were managed in a sustainable manner. These approaches were rooted on religious beliefs and myths, legends, and cultural norms. Collective action evolved in the villages to share responsibilities to safeguard the land, water and the biological resources for sustainable use.

As population grew, the state became the more powerful steward of the bio resources. Protected areas in forests and marine sanctuaries were set-up. But the weak property rights, the lure of commercialism and the seemingly lack of collective action to protect these resources contributed to bio resources' destruction. Recent data (2005) show that the Philippines ranked 125 out of 146 countries in terms of environmental sustainability index. This reveals the sorry state of bio resources management in the country.

In the paper, we hypothesize that policies and institutions influence bio resources conditions and reforms of these will contribute to sustainability. The paper is divided into three parts. Part 1 describes the situation of bio resources in the country and the circumstance that led to their current state. Part 2 discusses the current management strategies and notes the impact of the recent laws including the devolution of some of the environmental services to local governments. Part 3 answers the question -where do we go from here? What are some of the optimal strategies for bio-resources management that will ensure our society's survival? Discussions will revolve on institutional reforms and mainstreaming bio resources management into the development agenda; changing mindsets, attitudes and practices; and pursuing innovative partnerships, including more active participation in international treaties governing bio resources.

Keywords: bio-resource management, environmental sustainability, international treatise