The Camotes Group of Islands (CGI) are part of the province of Cebu, in the Philippines. Located on the northeastern part of Cebu. CGI consists of 3 main islands and 4 municipalities, namely Poro, Tudela, San Francisco, and Pilar. Its total population is 89,324 individuals, 40% or 37,612 of which, are children. Poverty is experienced by 38.41% of the total population. The islands are in middle of the Camotes Sea which is one of the major fishing grounds in the Central Visayas region and plays a vital role in the livelihood of many fisherfolk living along the coast of at least three surrounding island provinces – Leyte, Bohol and Cebu. Even in CGI, where 68% of communities live along the coast, fishing is depended upon as the main source of livelihood. The three islands of the CGI were declared as Mangrove Swamp Forest Reserve under Presidential Proclamation No. 2152 issued on December 29, 1981. The Reserve has now been included as an initial component under the National Integrated Protected Area System (NIPAS). The CGI has also been identified as one of the priority conservation areas for reef fishes in the National Biodiversity Setting Action Plan. By virtue of enacted municipal ordinances the four LGUs in the three islands have also established nine marine sanctuaries, covering an estimated area of about 465 hectares that encompass mangroves, seagrass and coral reefs.

The Impacts of Climate Change
Over the years, the coastal habitats of CGI, particularly mangrove forests, seagrass beds and corals have continuously been degraded due to the impacts of Climate Change. These impacts include sea level rise, storm surges, coral bleaching — which are further exacerbated by environmental mismanagement actions such as cutting of mangroves, overfishing, coastal settlements and encroachments to the natural buffer zones of the coastal lines and the more than 600 hectares of lake within the island. Estimates show that at least 175 hectares of mangrove areas in the municipalities of Poro, San Francisco, Tudela and Pilar are in critical condition and require immediate rehabilitation. The mangrove forest cover has decreased because of: (1) conversion of mangrove areas due to conflicting land and water use; and (2) illegal cutting for economic and/or household uses like firewood. Other than the impacts of climate change and disasters, seagrass beds and coral reefs have been degraded because of destructive fishing practices such as blast fishing, poison fishing and other questionable fishing methods. With the destruction of these coastal habitats, the fish catch has steadily declined resulting in the decrease of income source for livelihoods, which deepens poverty in the area. This is further aggravated by limited options for alternative livelihood, and a lack of awareness of the people of the importance of preservation and protection of coastal resources, lack of knowledge on climate change mitigation / adaptation and on disaster risk reduction. CGI is also annually affected by hazards like typhoons, flash floods, storm surges and small tornados, the severity and frequency of which is exacerbated by climate change. These hazards cause destruction of properties and source of livelihoods of the farmers and fishers in the island.

Impacts on Children
During disasters, children are often one of the groups most affected and suffer the most. Most children drop out of schools after a disaster event due to lack of proper facilities when their classrooms are converted into evacuation camps. They can also experience trauma, hunger, sickness and displacement. Children are also affected when their environment is degraded due to climate change. Increased climate-sensitive infectious diseases, air pollution-related illness, and heat-related illness and fatalities also are expected. Increasing poverty is also another problem that affects children due to the negative impacts of climate change on the sources of livelihood of their parents. Despite the odds, children are one of the most resilient groups of stakeholders who can play significant roles in preventing or minimizing risks of disaster caused by climate change and other hazards. As evident in the programs and activities of Plan in the Camotes islands, children can and are able to contribute to strengthening resilience through participation in preparedness, mitigation, and environmental sustainability.

The Response
The local government units in the CGI have embarked on a coastal resources management (CRM) project to respond to the realities of climate change and disasters in the islands. However, this project and other local efforts were focused on preserving the environment and improving people's livelihood and economic situation without taking into consideration the importance of mitigating potential disasters and climate risks. Thus, Plan Philippines has implemented a climate and disaster risk reduction oriented CRM project in the islands that incorporates child-centered DRR and CCA practices. The project seeks to build the capacities of the four municipal government units, 56 village government units, 58 elementary schools, 14 high schools, 40 fisher’s groups, and 40 children’s groups to minimize the damage brought about by natural and human-induced hazards through developing and/or increasing the resilience and adaptive capacities of communities especially children in the covered areas.
The municipality of San Francisco in CGI is committed to work towards protecting their environment and making their communities resilient against the risks of disasters and climate change. With the implementation of the island-wide climate and disaster risk reduction oriented Coastal Resource Management (CRM) program, the local government of San Francisco, led by former Mayor and current Vice Mayor Alfredo Arquillano has forged strong collaboration with Plan, the communities and the children to push forth efforts in their municipality. In 2008 the municipality conducted assessments on hazards, vulnerability and capacities (HVC) and climate risk, the results of which became the basis of priorities and projects implemented in the municipality. Currently, regular consultation with communities are held and the allocation of funds for climate smart initiatives are given preferential consideration. Because of all their efforts, San Francisco has been recently awarded as the model town in the province of Cebu. Two of the many positive impacts of this initiative is that slash and burn practices are minimized and an increase in fish catch and harvest has been

### ACTIVITIES

- Removal and transfer of the communities and structures prone to storm surges in Santiago and Mangodlong
- Regular clean up drive of the coastal areas
- Establishment of marine protected areas
- Organizing of the Camotes Off Road Biker’s Association (CORBA) as a campaign for the use of mountain bike throughout the islands as a climate change mitigation effort.
- Establishment of plant nurseries with endemic trees from the lake and watershed areas
- Organizing and strengthening of the Camotes Island Emergency Response Team
- Conduct of training for Basic Life Support and First Aid
- Tree planting and tree growing activities
- Establishment of early warning systems (EWS)
- Identification of watershed areas
- Mangrove rehabilitation
- Training of teachers and administrators on integration of climate change and DRM
- Adopt a tree / adopt a watershed area project
- Regular conduct of annual DRR Consciousness Month; Earth Day Celebrations
- Construction of water impounding areas for flood control projects and increase of water table level in the islands
- Development of programs on community based eco-tourism and livelihood initiatives and CCA
- Establishment of foot paths and bike trails along the lake side for monitoring of lakes
- DRR/CCA film showing and analysis
- Meeting of illegal fishers, chain saw operators, and slash and burn farmers
- Banning of compressor fishing

### CHILDREN’S INVOLVEMENT

#### Governance

- Participation in all decision making in government efforts related to CDRM and Development
- Involvement in Local Disaster Coordinating Councils (LDCC) meetings and consultations
- Set-up and strengthening of Children’s Organization
- Child-led risk assessment and early warning system
- Training for children’s delivery of local and indigenous warning system
- Child participation in the Rights Based Participatory Risk Assessment and Planning (RipRAP) with the members of the Municipal Disaster Coordinating Council (MDCC) in the four municipalities

#### Knowledge Management and Information

- Child led Theater productions and Cultural Shows on DRR and CCA actions
- Mobilizing other students and fellow children for school and community based DRM works
- Joint actions with the teachers on disaster risk management
- Facilitate child led film screenings and reflections on disaster risk management
- Development of children’s participatory video documentation related to CCA and DRR
- Coordinating the Earth Day Celebrations with the other municipalities

#### Reducing Underlying Risk Factors

- Mobilizing communities for tree planting and growing campaigns
- Supporting the establishment and management of Marine Protected and Watershed Areas
- Promoting bike to school campaigns
- Adopt a tree / adopt a watershed area project
- Promoting Disaster Preparedness and Response at school and community levels
- Supporting and participating in contingency planning
- Facilitating in Water Search and Rescue and basic life support and first aid training
- Participating and co-facilitating in community drills and simulation exercises

#### Small Scale Mitigation Projects

- Installation of solar powered lighting system to hard to reach areas
- Planting of endemic trees (2 million trees targeted in the coming first 3 years)
- Municipal-wide campaign for cycling
- Preservation and expansion of mangrove forests
- Watershed and lake side reforestation
Lessons Learned

- Children are capable of positive contributions on DRR and CCA. They can be communicators of risks as well as implementers and organizers of intervention actions.
- Increased awareness among children can influence their action towards DRR and CCA.
- Employing a variety of media, such as creative and performing arts is an effective strategy to engage children and raise children’s awareness and participation in DRR and CCA. It also provides an opportunity for children to share knowledge with their families and the community.
- Schools are one of the most effective means in transferring knowledge about DRR and CCA to children. Curriculum development involving DRR and CCA is a worthwhile strategy.
- Community-based children’s organizations and peer support plays an important role to educate and engage children in DRR and CCA efforts.
- Appreciation of small time projects from the sub-village level result can encourage the development of more positive local initiatives.
- Local collaboration between communities with children and local government can enhance the sustainability of the project.
- In Camotes, having children maintain and manage the reforestation and protection of mangrove activities will greatly contribute to the sustainability of the effort.
- Mobilization of resources from external support increases rapidly when local funds are maximized.
- Increasing children’s participation means more adults are influenced and taught.
- “Leadership by example”.
- Alliance and networking with NGO’s, CSO’s, the church and religious organizations, as well as transparency, consistency and strict implementation of laws is contributes greatly to program success.
- Responsible governance promotes active citizenship and acknowledges children as major stakeholders in DRR and CCA action now and for the future. Reforestation and protection of mangroves and small pockets of forest will be maintained and managed by today’s children and future generations.
- Engagement of schools, teachers and parents in DRR and CCA action, and acknowledging their role as real sustainable multipliers who are key informants to reach wider audiences for building adaptive capacity.
- The issue of climate variability has led to the realization that natural hazards have to be managed as well, not just disasters.
- Aside from natural hazards, “social hazards” (i.e. poverty, vices, gambling, smoking, drug use, alcohol, etc) contribute a lot to cause disasters that affects children’s lives.
- Effective awareness programs in schools, homes and communities can create a culture of prevention and empowerment.

Plan's climate and disaster risk reduction oriented Coastal Resource Management project which was initiated in Eastern Samar has recently been replicated in Camotes Islands in Cebu and has contributed to an increase in income and livelihood in those areas. The establishment of marine protected areas in these provinces, as well as the plantation, protection and management of mangroves has created or improved local livelihood which is very much appreciated by children and their parents. Other coastal and marine management efforts has also introduced community-based tourism activities in Camotes Islands which led to an increase in local livelihood. Plan’s climate mitigation and adaptation campaign in agriculture has also increased the agricultural economy in the Plan covered areas.

**Resources:**
- Plan’s Disaster Risk Management Strategy 2009-2013
- Case Reports on Eastern Samar and Camotes Islands, Plan Philippines
- "Building Child-Centered Climate and Disaster Resilient Communities in Camotes Group of Islands", Plan Philippines

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**Strengthening Climate Resilience (SCR)** is a DFID funded programme that aims to enhance the ability of governments and civil-society organisations in developing countries to build the resilience of communities to disasters and climate change as part of their development work. The programme seeks to develop a ‘climate smart’ approach to managing disaster risk and development with the aim to protect society from the threats posed by climate change.

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