

# Learning Networks: Mentoring Program for Marine Sciences

## Answering a need to spread expertise

Enormous strides have been achieved in natural resources management since the devolution of governance to local governments in 1991. However, the capacity for various aspects of fisheries management and conservation of marine resources is still limited by unstable supply of human resources, funding constraints, and a host of other economic and political considerations. Extension services and funds to enable national agencies to provide technical support to local government units (LGUs) are also insufficient.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) located in coastal areas are in a position to provide much needed scientific support for decision-makers; however, not all them are fully equipped for the task. Although there are national centers of excellence in marine science and related fields that continue to provide research outputs relevant to coastal resources management, there are too few of them to cover the technical needs of all coastal municipalities. Many of them are also located far from coastal areas where technical advice to inform decision making is desperately needed.

## Linking institutions, developing expertise

The general focus of the Mentoring Program for Marine Sciences is to develop relevant and reliable partnerships between universities and local government units. The overall outcome is to have HEIs in the Coral Triangle Support Partnership (CTSP) priority geographies (i.e., Verde Island Passage, Palawan, and Tawi-Tawi) networked with centers of excellence in marine and related sciences, which will improve capacity of these HEIs to provide technical assistance to LGUs in the implementation of the Coral Triangle Initiative National Plan of Action (CTI NPOA).

The specific program objectives are:

- ▶ to enhance the capacity of HEIs to conduct research to help address local coastal and marine resource management needs.
- ▶ to enhance the capacity of HEIs to provide technical support to LGUs in CTSP priority geographies; and,
- ▶ to provide mechanisms for exchange of information and linkage-building between HEIs and LGUs.



*University Professor Emeritus Edgardo D. Gomez (center), tells the mentees some of his experiences as a student of marine science*



*Mentees learn how to measure dissolved oxygen from water samples collected from the sea*

## Program Structure

The Mentoring Program for Marine Science covers three phases of implementation for each batch of mentees selected. During Phase 1, mentors evaluate applicants from the mentee universities and identify those that need to take the Science in Coastal Resources Management (CRM) Foundation course. Mentees are also initially matched to the expertise of the mentors.

In Phase 2, mentees undergo a practical 12-day Science in CRM Foundation Course instructed by scientists from the different centers of excellence. The mentoring program also provides research grants to qualified mentees, allowing them to pursue case studies on issues relevant to a nearby municipality, city, or province.

The Science in CRM Foundation Course aims to provide participants with an overview and appreciation of the different sciences that underpin successful coastal resource management in the Philippines. It includes lectures and field exercises on topics ranging from physico-chemical characteristics of the marine and coastal environment to the biology and ecology of coastal habitats, flora, and fauna. It is intended to provide practical knowledge and the most basic skills for providing technical support for local governments and will provide mentees with enough background to implement a case study or research proposal.

In Phase 3, mentees prepare, defend and implement research proposals, results of which are presented to stakeholders. CTSP assists the mentees in collaborating with local governments to ensure that the research is participatory and relevant to the needs of the target municipality, city, or province.

Five universities with center of excellence designation on biology, marine science, or chemistry currently serve as mentors. In 2011, two faculty members from each of the six mentee universities completed the program, followed by ten more faculty members selected for inclusion to the 2012 mentoring cycle.

The Mentoring Program also supports the mentee universities through other advanced trainings (e.g., on habitat monitoring, fisheries monitoring, and climate change vulnerability assessments) and research collaborations with the mentor universities. A memorandum of understanding has been signed among the 11 universities to formalize the network and facilitate support for developing marine science and services in the mentee universities.

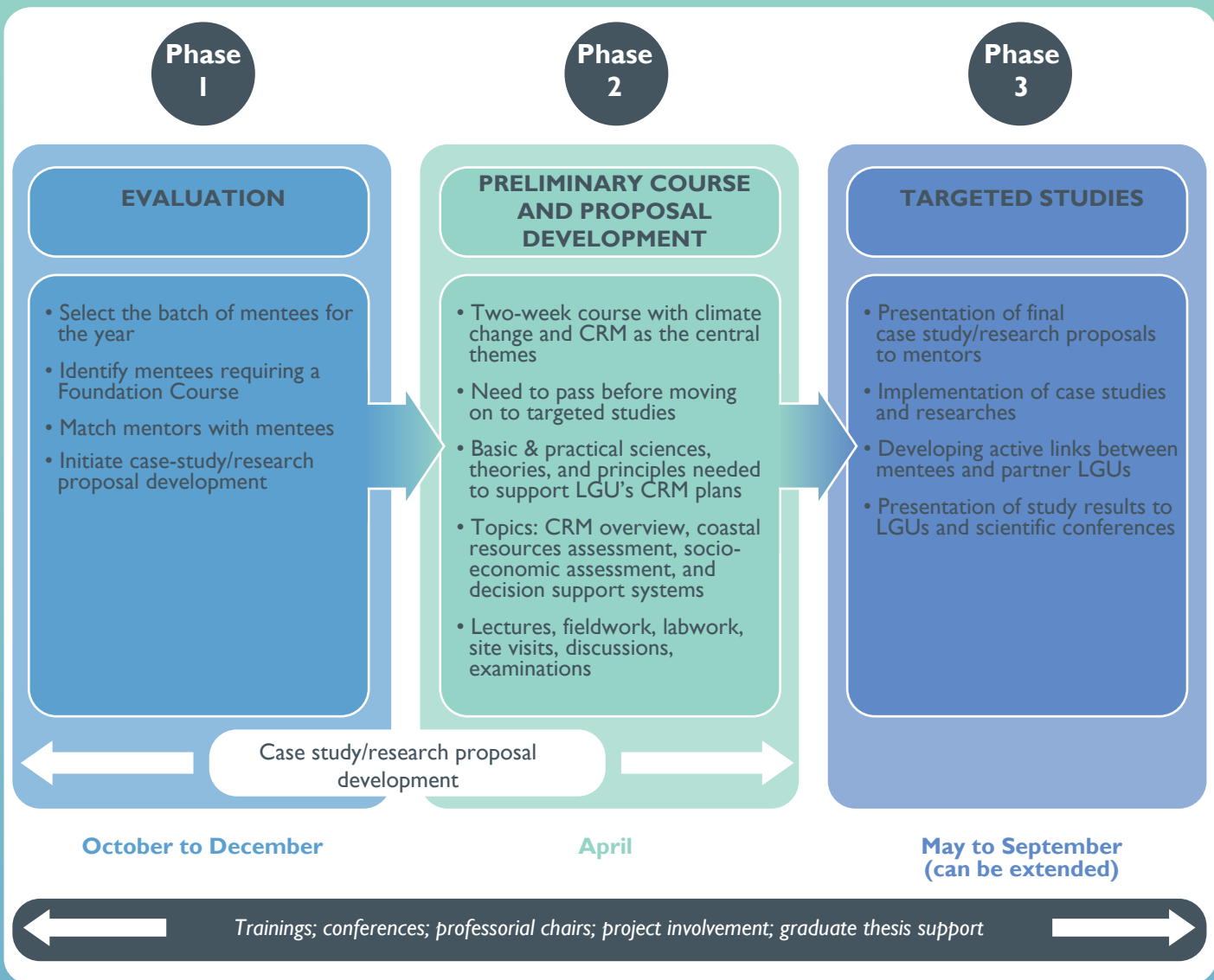
To complement the Mentoring Program on Marine Science, a similar mentoring program is being developed focusing on socioeconomics relevant to CRM.

## Making technical expertise more accessible

Decision makers need scientific information as they weigh the different options in managing coastal resource use and conservation. The Mentoring Program on Marine Science and the complementing program on Socioeconomics for Coastal Resources Management will bring science and information closer to local governments who are at the front lines in the protection and conservation of our natural resources.



**Figure 1.** The Mentoring Program aims to transfer knowledge and skills from Centers of Excellence to local governments through proximate Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).



**Figure 2.** Proposed Mentoring Program phases per year from October 2011 to September 2013. The program is flexible enough to allow participation of mentees to other opportunities that may come along during the program implementation.



Mentees from University of Batangas and De La Salle Lipa undergo ReefCheck Ecodiver Training Course together with local government staff of the municipalities of Lubang and Looc, Occidental Mindoro




1st batch of mentees learn how to use drogues for monitoring water currents from Dr. Cesar Villanoy (left)



This factsheet is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Conservation International and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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### Our Commitment

"Apprenticeship and Training Program in Support of  
Coral Triangle Initiative implementation"

We fully support and commit to the program entitled "Apprenticeship and Training Program in Support of Coral Triangle Initiative implementation" (initiated by Conservation International - Philippines through the USAID Coral Triangle Support Partnership with the following objectives, roles and responsibilities of MENTOR and MENTEE universities:

- I. Roles and Responsibilities
  - a. The MENTOR UNIVERSITIES shall:
    - i. Provide, where possible and appropriate, graduate level training, short-term training, apprenticeships, and thesis/dissertation advising to the MENTEES; and,
    - ii. Promote research collaboration, sharing of resources and exchange of information with the MENTEES.
  - b. The MENTEE UNIVERSITIES shall:
    - i. Commit themselves, through the designated people, giving necessary time and effort to the goals and objectives of the Mentoring Program for which it was organized;
    - ii. Promote research collaborations, sharing of resources and exchange of information with the MENTORS;
    - iii. Develop and promote research in areas of competence relevant to the Mentoring Program, and linkages with LGU; and,
    - iv. Render service to his/her mother institution on a 1:1 ratio for the time spent in the Mentoring Program, or as required by his/her mother institution.
- II. Other provisions
  - a. A committee will be organized which will be responsible for monitoring and assessment of the Mentoring Program on an annual basis during the project lifetime.
  - b. Intellectual property (e.g., data, products) developed as part of this Mentoring Program will be jointly owned by the mentor(s) and mentee(s) involved in its production. All reports, material and publications produced will contain appropriate co-authorship or acknowledgement of contributors.

