



**UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES  
OPEN UNIVERSITY**

**MASTER OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION**

**ROEYNA MAY F. TOSINO**

**Empowering Women Fisherfolk through Participatory Communication  
Among the Subanens in Miagao, Iloilo, Philippines**

Thesis Adviser:  
**DR. BENJAMINA PAULA G. FLOR**  
Faculty of Information and Communication Studies

23 August 2024

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**Acceptance Page:**

This paper prepared by **ROEYNA MAY F. TOSINO** with the title: **Empowering Women Fisherfolk through Participatory Communication Among the Subanens in Miagao, Iloilo, Philippines** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Program.

**DR. BENJAMINA G. PAULA FLOR**

Chair, Thesis Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**DR. ALEXANDER G. FLOR**

Member, Thesis Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**DR. JOANE V. SERRANO**

Member, Thesis Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**DR. DIEGO S. MARANAN**

Dean

Faculty of Information and Communication Studies

23 August 2024

## **Biographical Sketch**

The researcher, Roeyna May Famisaran Tosino, was born on 16 May 1992 in Sigma, Capiz. She grew up in Brgy. Baybay Norte, Miagao in the province of Iloilo where she spent her elementary years. After graduating high school from Ateneo de Iloilo-Sta. Maria Catholic School where she served as associate editor for its official school publication, she enrolled at the University of the Philippines Visayas under the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Media Studies program. She graduated in 2013.

She worked as a desk editor for Panay News, the biggest newspaper in Western Visayas with circulation in Manila and Mindanao. Her stint in the journalism industry made her realize that she can create change with her writing. Currently, she serves as University Extension Associate at the University of the Philippines Visayas, handling the technical and administrative tasks for the institution's quality assurance endeavors.

Tosino continues to write even after her stint in the newspaper industry. Aside from Panay News, her essays have been published on the Philippine Daily Inquirer and Rappler. Her essay, "Friends and Holidays", is part of the Christmas anthology entitled "Silent Nights: Finding Hope in the Horrible" published by The Independent Collective.

She currently lives in Iloilo with her son, Manu.

## **Acknowledgment**

To my family, thank you for your never-ending support in my journey.

To Dr. Liberty Espectato and Ms. Ruby Napata, thank you for sharing your fisheries and research expertise in this study.

To Dr. Philip Ian Padilla, thank you for your advice on conducting my first focus group discussion.

To Ms. Efrely Balsicas, thank you for helping me during my interviews.

To my adviser, Dr. Benjamina Paula Flor, thank you for being the teacher that we needed — responsive, patient, and genuine.

To the members of my thesis panel, Dr. Alexander Flor and Dr. Joane Serrano, thank you for all the suggestions in the creation of this thesis.

Lastly, to Manu, my forever light and love, thank you for being Mommy's inspiration to do better things.

## **Dedication**

This research is dedicated to the women fisherfolk who have been sailing through life's biggest currents with resilience and courage. You take care of the household on top of earning money for the family. Your hands may be weathered, bodies tired, and hearts sometimes broken, but you continue to journey amid the tides of change.

You are the heart of the fishing community. Your smiles and words of encouragement serve as inspiration for fishers. You nurture families and communities. You shape your own destinies. You are the silent heroes in fisheries, whose legacy will continue to live on to the next generation.

I hope that this research will pave the way for your continued success and empowerment. Thank you for inspiring me to do more for my community, to help women through my writing, and to support causes that matter to you. I hope that your buckets are always full and your voices are heard across oceans.

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## **Abstract**

This research explores how participatory communication fosters the empowerment of women fisherfolk in Miagao, Iloilo. Data were gathered from focus group discussion, in-depth interviews and key informant interview. Through a thematic analysis, the study identified four major themes: Dialogues and Interactions, Economic Outcomes, Recognition and Importance, and Decision-making.

Dialogues and Interactions reiterated the role of dialogue in assessing the needs of the women fisherfolk. Through community dialogues with the barangay and interactions with the University of the Philippines Visayas, capacity-building programs were implemented. These programs led to better economic outcomes for women fisherfolk because of income diversification, access to credit and market opportunities, and product reputation. Women fisherfolk also experienced recognition from the community, which further strengthened their roles in the fisheries sector. Their decision-making capacity and involvement in ordinance formulations at the barangay level contributed to their empowerment as women fisherfolk.

Findings revealed that participatory communication fosters empowerment among women fisherfolk in Miagao, Iloilo through giving them an inclusive communication platform in dialogues, addressing their needs and supporting their capacity-building that will facilitate better economic outcomes and strengthened role and independence in the community. It is recommended that there should be continuous implementation of inclusive community dialogues and facilitate participatory decision-making among women fisherfolk.

Keywords: Fisheries, Women Fisherfolk, Participatory Communication, Empowerment

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background and Rationale of the Study**

Fishing is one of the major sources of livelihood in the municipality of Miagao, Iloilo. The second to the last barangay in the southern part of Iloilo before Antique province, Miagao has a 16-kilometer coastline, spanning a total of 22 barangays. Data from the Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) showed that in 2023, there are 2,379 registered fisherfolk in the municipality. Out of that number, 575 are women. These women are engaged in capture fishing, gleaning, and fish vending and processing. Miagao is also home to the University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV), the national university for fisheries and the Center of Excellence in Fisheries Education as acknowledged by the Commission on Higher Education. UPV has been doing technical training, seminars, fora and public service programs for the benefit of the fisherfolk community in Miagao.

In fact, a public service activity of BS Fisheries students in 2011 resulted in the establishment of the Subana Women's Organization in the municipality. A university researcher, who was the resource speaker for the activity, pushed for the organization of the women. The group is composed of female informal settlers in what used to be a riverbed in Brgy. Baybay Norte, a coastal village in the town proper. The riverbed is now famously called "Subana Village" from the Kinaray-a word "suba" which means "river."

Residents of Subana Village originally came from Negros Occidental and migrated to Miagao, Iloilo, for fishing purposes. Through the years, their community grew bigger, prompting townspeople to call their place “Subana Village.”

Subana became a recipient of the GREAT (Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of) Women Project, a capacity development initiative to promote and encourage a gender-oriented environment for the empowerment of women delivered through national and local government agencies. Subana is also registered with the Department of Labor and Employment. Since their organization, they have been involved in various activities conducted by the municipality including trade fairs and farmers’ and fishers’ week, among others.

The municipality of Miagao and UPV, together with other government agencies, have been doing public service programs to help the local fishing community. This includes participatory communication initiatives where women fisherfolk are being involved in community dialogues, information sharing, and participatory decision-making. Paulo Freire’s Participatory Communication Theory reiterates the importance of dialogue between people within a community, along with the stakeholders involved, decision makers or even researchers. One of the ultimate goals of participatory communication is to mobilize the community and involve them in activities that will improve their lives. Other key elements of participatory communication include identification of needs and goals, focus on interactions with the community, reiteration of collaborative processes, identification of positive models of change from within the community, integration of empowerment and capacity-building, and sustained action and reflection.

Despite the social and cultural norms that hinder women's participation in fisheries, women's roles in the industry are considered pivotal. Aside from fishing itself, women are heavily involved in pre-harvest activities like mending of nets and preparation of food for fishing trips, and post-harvest processes like sorting and cleaning fish, smoking, drying, and fermenting, among others. In small-scale fisheries, women oversee the management of household finances and aquatic resources in their community. Further, women in indigenous and local coastal areas have substantial and traditional knowledge in terms of the conservation of their coastal ecosystems (UN Women, 2015).

There are several challenges faced by women fisherfolk. Mutia et. al (2020) said that aside from the difference in physical strength, women also need to be in their homes to take care of the household. The domestic responsibilities of women hinder them from learning and receiving the necessary training to improve their fishing skills. Further, women who are involved in the fisheries value chain do not consider themselves as practicing fisheries. Women who take the roles of bookkeepers, crew cooks, community organizers, and fish traders seem unaware of their contribution to the value chain (Zhao et. al, 2013).

The women of Subana acknowledge their role in the fisheries value chain. As wives of fishermen, they recognize their contributions in the fisheries sector, may it be preparing food for fishing trips, managing the household's finances, and vending fish, among others. Their organization was established on the belief that women need to have equal access to resources to be able to continue their roles in the fishing community.

Their belief aligns with one of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is gender equality. Gender equality seeks to stop the discrimination against women and girls, give them equal rights and access to sexual and reproductive health and technology, and promote their empowerment to build a sustainable future. Without the involvement of women, economic development is “unthinkable” (OECD, 2008). Hence, it is imperative to value women's work to reduce poverty and eventually contribute to the growth of the economy. A significant factor in reducing poverty rates and promoting economic development is appreciating the work of women (OECD, 2008). Women must be empowered to utilize their full potential and opportunities to help contribute to the development of the economy.

While there have been various studies on gender and fisheries in Miagao, the role of participatory communication in the empowerment of women fisherfolk has never been explored in the locality. Through engaging with an organized women fisherfolk' group and asking them about their experiences and perceptions, this study specifically aims to answer how participatory communication fosters empowerment for women fisherfolk in Miagao, Iloilo. Results of this research will benefit the economic and social development of women fisherfolk in the municipality.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Women fisherfolk fill many roles in the fisheries value chain. They are heavily involved in pre-harvest and post-harvest activities. It is essential that women fisherfolk are given equal opportunities and access to technology and other services for them to improve their livelihood and be empowered individuals. The Subana Women's

Organization in Miagao, Iloilo was established on this belief—that women in the fishing industry should be empowered for them to continue their roles in the value chain. UPV, the LGU, and other government agencies have been doing participatory communication initiatives to help these women become empowered through enhanced economic outcomes, better access to opportunities, and more representation in decision-making processes. This study aimed to answer the question: How does participatory communication foster empowerment for women fisherfolk in Miagao, Iloilo?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study aimed to:

1. Describe the roles women played in the fisheries sector in Miagao, Iloilo;
2. Explain the process of participatory communication that led to the empowerment of women fisherfolk in Miagao, Iloilo; and
3. Develop a model of women empowerment through participatory communication.

### **Significance of the Study**

Women are essential in the social development of communities and nations. The inequality of men and women can hinder economic growth and global development. Women empowerment is the process by which women know their self-worth, their ability to make their own choices and rely on themselves, and influence social change for themselves and the rest of the community. When men and women have equal opportunities and rights, this contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. When women have access to education and gain relevant skills, they will have more

opportunities, therefore increasing their income and self-fulfillment. This eventually leads to higher family income and healthier and happier children, breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Further, it is significant to assess the impact of participatory communication to the livelihood of women fisherfolk to enhance the current communication landscape that will translate to improved livelihood outcomes. The focus on Subana Women's Organization can provide insights on how communities can be strengthened through participatory communication.

The results of this study will guide lawmakers and organization leaders craft sustainable capacity-building initiatives and policies to promote women empowerment. While organizations can work to achieve women empowerment through capacity-building initiatives, these initiatives should be sustainable. Gender mainstreaming, which is a transformative approach to bring about women empowerment and gender equality, is needed to slowly unmute the participation of women in the fisheries industry.

Lastly, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on participatory communication and how it can impact marginalized communities like women and fisherfolks, among others. This study may serve as reference to further research on gender and development in the fisheries sector and women in marginalized communities.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This study covers the participatory communication interventions directed to Subana Women's Organization in the municipality of Miagao, Iloilo. The participatory

initiatives studied were facilitated and implemented by the local government unit and the University of the Philippines Visayas.

While it was also considered to gather data in the whole province of Iloilo, time constraints, manpower, and financial resources were an issue. The study ran for one year that covered the formulation of the research title up to the eventual defense of the whole study. Research resources included books, research papers, and electronic publications. The secondary data was reflected in the study's review of related literature and studies.

This study only focused on the women fisherfolk in the municipality and did not extend to neighboring municipalities which may have the same economic and geographical conditions. It was also considered to utilize participant observation or longitudinal fieldwork. However, they were not feasible in terms of the study's timeframe.

Due to the timeframe allocated for the study, the long-term effects of the participatory communication interventions were not captured. It was also considered to utilize participant observation or longitudinal fieldwork and include comparative analysis with similar initiatives in other municipalities in Iloilo. However, they were not feasible in terms of the study's timeframe.

### **Definition of Terms**

1. Women Fisherfolk - Women fisherfolk refer to individuals who are actively engaged in the fishing industry of Miagao, Iloilo. They are involved in pre-harvest (mending of nets, preparation of food for fishing trips) and post-harvest activities (sorting, cleaning, drying). They are also engaged in fish vending.

2. Participatory Communication - Participatory Communication in the context of Miagao, Iloilo refers to the process of involving women fisherfolk in community dialogues, information-sharing, and participatory decision-making activities.
3. Livelihood - Livelihood refers to income-generating activities of women fisherfolk that they use to sustain themselves and their families.
4. Income Diversification - Income diversification in this context refers to the women fisherfolk' strategies to engage in additional income-generating activities and not just rely on a single source of income.
5. Agency - This refers to the capacity of women fisherfolk to make decisions and act on goals on their own.
6. Empowerment - Empowerment in this context refers to the improvement of capabilities and confidence of women through involving them in capacity-building initiatives that will boost their economic and social status.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Across all industries and different sectors, the variations between men and women are an important factor in determining inequality and biases in the workplace. In the fisheries sector such biases are also present. Most often, the participation of women in fisheries are often overlooked as they mostly perform the tasks in fisheries mainly in support functions.

Fishing is one of the fundamental professions in the food industry in modern times. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recorded that in 2018, an estimated 59.51 million people are employed or are practicing under the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Globally, the percentage of women in the same year comprised 14 percent of the entire total working force.

#### **Women in Fisheries**

Women play diverse roles in the fisheries value chain. The fisheries value chain is defined as “all activities and services from input supply to production (capture fisheries and aquaculture farming), processing, wholesale, and retail.” The roles of men and women are all considered important where both are generally involved and help one another (Sornkaliang, et.al, 2018). Findings of FAO (2020) revealed that women provide skilled labor in both commercial fisheries and artisanal fisheries and are commonly responsible for selling the fish that were caught in a household level fishing operation.

In the Philippines, over 1.5 million women are estimated to depend on small-scale fisheries (FAO, 2023). While women are not considered the “main actors” of harvest fisheries, their roles in pre-harvest and post-harvest fisheries are considered crucial in their households. Most small-scale women fisherfolk engage in post-harvest fisheries like fish processing and fish trading or vending for additional income (FAO, 2023). Their pre-harvest activities include preparing meals for fishing trips and cleaning fishing equipment (Torrell et al., 2021; Ocampo and Binondo, 2022).

Women’s roles in fisheries also include food and nutrition security through the preparation of food in their households (FAO, 2023). Since most women are confined in their domestic responsibilities while their husbands are away for fishing excursions, they contribute to food and nutrition security by ensuring that healthy meals are provided for the rest of the family members.

Women are also tasked to take care of the children and manage the family’s finances while their husbands are on fishing trips. Managing the household income may give them a sense of economic independence but it also adds to their burden during days of low catch and low prices (Ocampo and Binondo, 2022).

Oftentimes, commercial facilities prefer women employees than men since they are more detail-oriented and patient. It was also revealed that women are considered better in fish trading and vending since “they have stronger negotiating skills” (USAID, 2018).

Women are more inclined to take roles that are rather not physically strenuous and are less visible in the fishing industry (Torrell et. al, 2020; Sornkliang et. al, 2018). Nevertheless, their contributions are imperatively crucial in the fisheries sector.

Women fisherfolk face a variety of challenges which hinders their participation and contributions in the fisheries sector. The World-Wide Fund-UK (2012) used gender analysis in developing natural resource management programs and have generally categorized the problems of women in fisheries as follows:

1. *Women are more confined in less visible roles in fisheries.* Despite their presence throughout the fisheries sector, their participation is often overlooked due to the fact that it is not visible to the community. Further, their participation is not socially acknowledged.
2. *Women often have no control over their fishing income from their fisheries activities.* There are various factors that limit women's control of their earnings from fishing activities.
3. *Women lack the opportunities to hold managerial and decision-making posts.* Apparently, women do not have enough access to opportunities that will help them hold managerial and leadership roles in the fishing industry. There are usually hindered by their lack of knowledge, self-confidence, and other domestic responsibilities.
4. *There is a sudden influx of men fishers migrating to the local fishing grounds that threaten the livelihood of women fisherfolk.* There is increased competition in the local fishing grounds that may affect the income of women fisherfolk.

Szymkowiak (2020) described that the role of women in the context of fishing families in Alaska was mainly involved in nearshore fishing and are less involved in “offshore” and “long-distance” capture fishing. Szymkowiak added that the role of women in fisheries is influenced and even hindered by physical conditions, family conditions, gender stereotypes, taboos, norms and harassment.

Furthermore, the role of women and their engagement in fishing operations were found to be “adaptive.” It is very responsive to the present family conditions like having to take care of children and the onset of parenthood in general. It was also observed that participants tried to connect the roles in fishing to the “traditional” gender norms, in which women would support the male partners or fishers if onboard the fishing vessels rather than taking the command of the fishing operation themselves (Szymkowiak, 2020).

In the study of Nunan and Cepic (2020), they have identified several constraints that hinder the participation of women in fisheries co-management under Beach Management Units (BMUs) located in Lake Victoria, bordering Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. Based on the responses of participants, the effective participation of women is constrained by several factors. This includes domestic responsibilities which basically limit the amount of time affecting their availability and involvement in the co-management. Another factor is that many women have husbands who either prohibit their involvement or dominate their involvement in the fisheries co-management. For instance, “their husbands do not allow them to make night operations” or do dangerous things like patrolling out in the lake in search for illegal gear and fish dealers.

Nunan and Cepic (2020) also enumerated the existence of certain supernatural beliefs or taboos that are related to women engaging in fishing activities. Such taboos present were: “Women should not go near a fishing boat, or else it will not catch fish”, “Women are not allowed to go fishing or go directly in the boat to take fish”, and “women are not allowed to enter into a boat because it is believed that if women are in their monthly period, it might cause misfortune.” Such beliefs highly affect the people’s attitudes towards women and their status in the fishing communities.

In their study of women fisherfolk in England, Zhao et. al (2013) have found the same cultural taboos and supernatural beliefs hindering women participation as to the study of Nunan and Cepic (2020). Zhao et. al (2013) also recorded that one of the main obstacles which barred the women from participating in capture fisheries was that it was bad luck to have women onboard fishing vessels. Families of the women fisherfolk who believe in superstitious beliefs became a hindrance for women fisherfolk to get onboard a fishing vessel.

According to Zhao et. al (2013), another obstacle to the participation of women in fisheries was the “inconvenience” of fishing vessels in the sense that they lack “women-friendly” accommodations. This can be attributed to the fact that the fishing industry workforce caters to most of the male population.

Further, women who are engaged in the practice of fisheries do not equate themselves to practicing fisheries (Zhao et. al, 2013). In their interviews, the women participants who take on many roles as bookkeepers, accountants, crew cooks, and

community organizers, have no formal employment status as fishers. Most of them also seem unaware or even dismiss their contribution to the totality of the fishing sector.

Comparably, Siason et. al (2001) also emphasized in their study that the activities of women in fisheries like net repair, sorting of fish after catching them, and trading/selling of the fish, are crucial to the fishing sector. However, the activities are often overlooked and given little importance thus creating the notion of “invisibility” of women as contributors in the sector.

This complements a study by Monfort (2015) which emphasized the lack of consideration for women's roles and work in the seafood industry, resulting in less data and information recorded. Hence, policy-makers are not able to make programs which effectively cover the problems of women in the seafood sector.

Yodanis (2000) have identified several reasons why women are hindered or discouraged in fishing. She enumerated that the difference in “biology” served as a big impediment to women as they are less physically stronger compared to men. Another was gender role socialization which is defined as how men and women are oriented on how they view fishing in general. Under the concept of gender role socialization, it perceives that fishing itself is a man’s job, and such preconceived belief creates a boundary for women to describe their activities as “non-fishing.”

Similar to Zhao et. al (2013) and Nunan and Cepic (2020), Yodanis (2000) also emphasized the role of tradition in the manner of supernatural beliefs or superstition serving as an obstacle for women.

Kusakabe (2003) complements the study of Nunan and Cepic (2020) wherein women who are involved in fisheries have less time in their hands because of their household responsibilities. Women's time is generally more divided and confined due to their reproductive responsibilities (Elson 1992 in Kusakabe 2003). Mutia et. al (2020) defined reproductive responsibilities as the activities which are necessary for the maintenance and survival of human life. The need for the women to be in their homes to take care of their families and children limits their activities on the shore. They also have less time and opportunities to learn and receive the necessary training to improve their fishing skills.

### **Participatory Communication for Development**

Experiences with participatory communication first appeared during the 1950s when Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator, led literacy campaigns for poor peasants in the north-eastern region of Brazil. His work encouraged landless peasants to demand for their rights for freedom from oppressive conditions. Freire's work influenced participatory practices and became one of the most important proponents of participatory communication theory. Participatory communication theory emphasizes the role of audience engagement in discourse and active involvement in public life to improve the current standards of living and the quality of life in general (Ibuot, et. al.,2021). Central to this theory is the two-way communication in trying to reach concurrence of the majority in the matters of development activities (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008 in Ibuot et. al., 2021).

Mefalopulos and Tufte (2009) explored how participation can be used in development programs. These include provision of effective services on education, health, sanitation, and agriculture, among others; data collection from citizens for policy-making; evaluation of progress; and initiating reflection and learning where opportunities for dialogue and feedback are considered pivotal.

The principles of participatory communication have influenced the work of development organizations and even government agencies (Yoon, 1996). Participatory Development Communication was developed to include the inputs of all stakeholders in the development process. Ibuot et. al (2021) described the three main methodology phases involved in the Participatory Development Communication process. First is to approach the local community and understand the local setting. Second is to bring the people in order to pinpoint the common development problems that need to be addressed. Third is to prepare and implement a communication plan, which needs to support the actions of the stakeholders and acquire the necessary information for the application and utilization of the activities.

Ibuot et. al (2021) complements the study of Besette (2004), which describes that Participatory Development Communication as a powerful tool which can be used to encourage the participation of the people within their community by taking into consideration local development dynamics which ultimately paves the way for community self-organization.

Bessette (2004) also defined Participatory Communication as the active engagement between people within a community, along with the stakeholders involved,

decision makers or even researchers, allowing for dialogue to address needs, objectives and actions and reach solutions. In addition, Bessette said that Participatory Communication is based on participatory processes which facilitate dialogue between stakeholders about a shared development problem to accomplish the goal of creating and executing a series of activities that will contribute to the solution. The definition aligns with the study of Singhal (2001) which described participatory communication as a “dynamic, interactional, and transformative process of dialogue between people, groups and institutions that would allow people to actively play a role in reaching their potential both individually and collectively.”

Besett (2004) elaborated Freire’s theory by identifying specific processes and principles. Besett noted that communication can bring about community participation for a development activity. He introduced participatory development communication which he defined as a linkage of participatory processes and media and interpersonal communication that facilitates “dialogue among different stakeholders, around a common development problem or goal with the objective of developing and implementing a set of activities to contribute to its solution.”

**Figure 1.**

*Participatory Development Communication (PDC) Model Integrated with the Research for Development Process, Guy Besett (2004)*

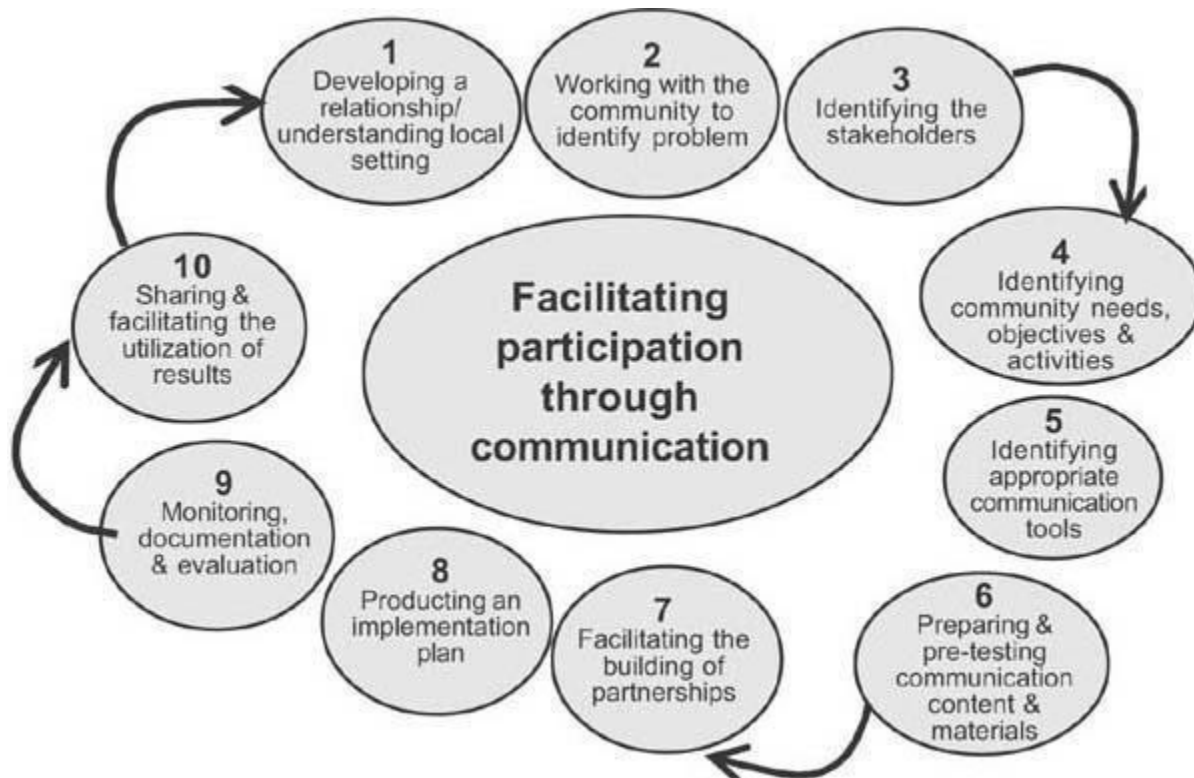


Figure 1 describes the Participatory Development Communication Model introduced by Guy Besett in 2004. It shows that to facilitate participation through communication, the researcher should study the local setting and develop a partnership with beneficiaries, work with the community to identify the problems and identify the stakeholders involved. It is important to note that the concept of participation involves a “community.” By definition, a community is a group of people. This group includes individuals with different personalities and interests. Hence, the researchers must identify community groups who are experiencing the same development problem. This

community group should also be willing to deal with the problem. Researchers should then identify the specific needs of the community and prepare communication materials or tools to help address their needs. The next process will be the establishment of relationships, implementation of plans, and evaluation and documentation. All processes and results should be shared with the rest of the community and among all stakeholders for transparency.

Servaes and Malikhao (2005) emphasized that under the Participatory Communication Theory, the point of departure is in the community. They have argued that it is on the community level that the problems of living conditions are discussed in full and that it helps in facilitating the involvement of other communities. They have highlighted that one of the hindrances about participation theory is that it is a threat to the current state of hierarchies present in the community.

Cadiz (2005) explained the characteristics of Paulo Freire's Communication Participation Theory. First is "communication between equals" which refers to the equality among all stakeholders. Here, the roles of the sender and receiver in a two-way interaction can be interchanged. Second is the "problem-posing" which refers to developers, experts and facilitators acting as facilitators of members for them to discuss the subjects but not to provide a solution. Third is called "praxis," which is a cycle of action and reflection. This refers to the conversion process of information that would be used for developments related to communication. The next is "conscientizing," the process where stakeholders try to reach an understanding of the human, social and development processes. Fifth is called the "five values" referring to love, humility, hope, and faith in the development partners' capabilities and critical thinking.

## **Participatory Approaches in Fisheries Management**

In his study, Diamond et. al (2003) gave emphasis on the lack of recognition of the international community regarding the importance of gender issues and how it can affect integrated coastal management. Further, there was no recognition on designing programs and policies that address the differences between genders and who will be able to help in accomplishing this goal.

Based on several global commitments and summits, Diamond et. al (2003) have provided several recommendations for different sectors about integrated coastal management. For national governments, they have recommended that they should expand their legal literacy programs for both women and men to ensure that there is extensive participation when it comes to policy making. They also recommended the use of quotas, capacity-building activities and educational reforms to make sure that the female population has a role in the leadership of coastal decision-making policies at the local and national level. Civil society organizations (CSOs) should also encourage the efforts of universities and other research institutions to improve upon documentation of gender and population linkages with regard to integrated coastal management. Another recommendation is for donors to give more support for gender-based programs in integrated coastal management.

Galappathi et. al (2022) were able to analyze the different “typologies” concerning governance tasks performed by women in small-scale fisheries (SSF) through analysis of the currently available empirical literature based on 54 cases. It appeared in their analysis of 54 cases and articles that the most discussed roles were leadership roles,

active participation in decision-making, relational networking and collective action at the community level. They also added that such typologies were linked to the present arrangements of the governance of the fisheries sector and the institutions by which the women can participate. In their study, the leadership roles and resource monitoring were found mostly in the context of participatory arrangements or traditional leadership arrangements.

Maravanyika et. al (2017) identified two key lessons which could enhance the overall participation of women in the fisheries sector. They mentioned that the existing “power symmetries” must be dealt with early. This means that the marginalized should first be empowered and trained on their respective capacities to develop them and “level the playing field” for them to compete with people who tend to dominate the interactions between stakeholders. By “quietly” working with the women groups in the early stages of the project, it showed a clearer picture of the power distribution and inequities within the local fishing sector. Another lesson identified was to “nurture latent leadership” which is about being able to provide an avenue and chance for women to discuss issues and opportunities, encourage independent organization and awaken their latent leadership skills. Because of this method, women were able to develop a self-identity that separated them from the rest of the groups and encouraged them to participate better and develop their leadership skills during the research.

The study of Maravanyika (2017) resonates with the study of Neilson (2019) in Arezos Islands, Portugal exploring the effects of multiple gender-related projects and participatory action research in the local fisheries sector. Their studies have shown that fisherwomen’s self-organization into independent and legitimate groups and associations

has allowed women in the local fisheries sector to be more “visible” within the community and even gained the attention of the local policy-makers in their government. Neilson et. al (2019) highlighted the important role of the participatory approach which focused on the context of social change and democracy and challenging the existing inequalities within the community, allowing women to be more proactive and participate better in the local fisheries sector.

The results of Neilson et. al (2019) are comparable to the study of Freitas et. al (2020) which explored the effect of having a co-management scheme participated by groups of men and women fisherfolk. In their study of Brazilian Amazonia women fisherfolk in co-management, they found that female participation in the “Aripaima co-management scheme” allowed the women fisherfolk to have more representation and more financial recognition which later helped them close the gap between the genders. They have pointed out that by providing women fisherfolk with more income in the co-management scheme, they gained more autonomy and power. They no longer must always ask their husbands for money. In turn, this income opportunity also helped women to be less vulnerable to the possibility of oppression and coercion. Freitas et. al (2020) also identified that social acceptability was an important factor in the participation of women in the co-management scheme. According to the surveys they conducted, women fisherfolk were more likely to participate if they felt like they were supported by their respective communities in participating in the Aripaima co-management scheme.

### **Communication Interventions in the Context of Fisheries**

Viswanathan et.al (2004) have described communication as a process that involves many different actors in a management scheme and potent tool for resolving conflicts. It can also be used to establish an agreement or consensus between parties. Additionally, Viswanathan et. al (2004) have highlighted the crucial role of the participation of local people when it comes to the formation of effective communication strategies and the identification of problem areas and conflict.

Through the participatory approach, Viswanathan et.al (2004) developed various “country-specific” communication planning matrices that they applied in fisheries management during their country workshops. These workshops were attended by the different stakeholders of their fisheries sector including fishermen, fishing group leaders, government officials or policy-makers, and the academe.

Salayo et. al (2005) developed a communication process that is specifically made to tackle conflicts and problems in the fisheries sector which they call the Fisheries Conflict Communication Framework (FishCom). This was created from testing a series of communication steps and other necessary components in various case study sites located in Bangladesh, Cambodia, and India. It is described as a structured participatory process that is intended for use by government policy-makers for the management of conflict in the fisheries sector.

The FishCom has four major parts. Information gathering is understanding the key issues that are present and are connected to the whole conflict. Communication planning and strategy seek to organize better methods to be used in the communication process during conflicts between stakeholders and parties of interest. Third is the implementation

of the communication interventions which is the comprehensive step-by-step guide of conducting the communication that was designed in the second part. The interventions are evaluated, and the pre-evaluation activities are arranged and implemented based on the formulated plan. In this stage, the most crucial factors involved in the communication interventions are the physical and human resources of the project. The fourth step is the attitude change measurement which is used to measure any form of change that has occurred in the attitudes of the people in their manner of resolving conflicts and if they can reach consensus on their own (Salayo et. al, 2005).

In relation to Salayo et. al (2005), Murshed-e-Jahan et. al (2014) applied the FishCom method in their study of coastal fisheries conflicts in Bangladesh. The study revealed that there is an exceptional change in the attitudes of both the fishers and the conflict managers using the FishCom framework. It has shown in their results that both parties have reached a consensus that they need to have greater cooperation between the government and the communities in the management of their natural resources, particularly their marine resources. With a better understanding between parties, it even inspired them to raise initiatives to act against illegal gear operators.

During their study, Murshed-e-Jahan et. al (2014) stated that conflicts related to fisheries management can be solved with the correct use of communication strategies. They have stated that a well-thought communication system and a clear advocacy program along with a comprehensive array of information, education, and communication materials may improve relationships between stakeholders and resolve conflicts in the fisheries management sector.

In the study of Soomai (2017), the role of communication is highlighted in the science-policy interface in bridging scientific information production and information use of policy-makers. They have identified several factors which may hinder the communication of important scientific information to policy-makers. The government's use of information is often based upon a wide range of internal and external factors like things at stake in policy processes or the nature of the information itself (Head 2016, Likens, 2010, Mitchell et. al., 2006, Mol, 2008 in Soomai, 2017). Another factor is that the uptake or consumption of scientific information by the government is largely influenced by governance models, current political regimes, geographic region, cultures in information management, and personal or institutional interests of stakeholders (Cochrane, 2002, Cossarini et al., 2014, Delaney and Hastie, 2007, Hastie, 2008, Soomai et al., 2011, Wilson, 2009 in Soomai, 2017). Further, the government feels that the complexity of scientific information may be too hard to understand (Clark et al., 2011, Hartley and Glass, 2010, Irvine, 2009, Soomai et al., 2013 in Sommai, 2017). The local knowledge and other knowledge from other branches of sciences may get mixed in the process, making the information more complex, thus influencing the decision-making process. Political interests and any attempt to control sciences can also affect the flow of information communication (Guston, 2001, Koetz et al., 2011, Pielke, 2007, Sarewitz, 2014 in Soomai, 2017).

### **Women Fisherfolk in the Locality**

Iloilo has a substantial number of fisheries and local coastal resources. Based on statistics released by the Iloilo Provincial Statistics Office (2021), fish production in the province during the first quarter of 2021 was at 13,454 metric tons. A total of 5, 616.26

metric tons of which was from commercial fishing, while 6, 507.9 metric tons were from municipal fishing.

There have been some studies that tackle women and fisheries in Iloilo province. In the study of Yap et. al, (2017) developments made socially and economically in coastal villages are particularly dependent on the supply and the current state of coastal resources within the territory of such communities. In their study, they have formed a holistic approach to gender-based post-harvest fisheries technology transfer that would assess resources and needs quickly to train women on alternative livelihood projects in Carles, Iloilo. It has been emphasized that one of the constraints faced by women in introducing livelihood activities in the community was that most livelihood projects are catered for men. This comes from the perception of the roles of men and women. As noted in their survey, only 3% of their respondents said that both men and women should be processing fish.

During the training for alternative livelihood activities for the coastal communities, 77.5% of the participants were women. After the training, it was shown that women had increased awareness of the commercialization of their products and that they would regularly impart the skills they had learned to other women in the locality. This influenced community structures and networks, increased the time spent by the women on fisheries activities, and affected the women's attitudes toward gender roles (Yap et. al, 2017).

In the context of Miagao, Iloilo, Badayos-Jover (2018) studied the current gender equity situation in the fisheries sector in Miagao. In terms of fisheries, Miagao ranks third among the towns in Iloilo with the highest number of registered small-scale fishers with

2,316 registered fishers. The municipality also has 22 coastal barangays in total. However, even with the current size of the fishermen population, there are only two women fisherfolk organizations in the municipality. These are the Subana Women's Organization and Miagao Talipapa Fish Vendor's Association. However, Miagao Talipapa Fish Vendor's Association now has men members Subana Women's Organization became a recipient of the Gender Responsive Economic Action for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women), a national project to promote and support a gender-responsive environment for women's economic development, especially for those in microenterprises.

Badayos-Jover (2018) described the role of women fisherfolk in Miagao similar to the previously mentioned literature. In her case study, it was revealed that women tend to perform rather clerical tasks and that household maintenance hinders their participation efforts in fisheries (Sornkliang et. al, 2018, Siason et. al, 2021, Torell et. al, 2020, Szymkowiak, 2020, Kusakabe, 2003, Nunan & Epic, 2020).

Tietze (2002) gave an overview of the entire socioeconomic characteristics of the municipality. It appeared that the fishers have viewed the fisheries resources of Miagao as over-exploited and that the catch has been decreasing both in quality and quantity which they attribute to the use of illegal fishing methods, dynamite fishing, and water pollution. Fisherfolk in Miagao were financially better compared to the local farmers. A total of 53% of fisherfolk households considered their financial situation as adequate compared to the 33% of the farmers. The most common annual income bracket assessed was between 20,000 to 30,000 pesos, followed by 10,000 to 20,000 pesos. Only about 10% of the fisherfolk made it to the upper-income bracket of 30,000 to 40,000 pesos.

According to Tietze (2002), rates of enrollment are very high in the coastal barangays. Around 98 and 99 percent of males and females of reproductive age are said to have attended school. Women have been shown to have attained a higher level of education than men, In the fishing villages, 11% of women achieved a college degree and 47% had completed secondary education. Meanwhile, 11% of men completed college and 31% completed secondary education.

Despite the higher number of educated women, it was identified that very few women of reproductive age were involved in income-earning activities, both in fishing and farming. Only 9% were involved in fishing and fishing markets while another 5% were involved in retail businesses, cattle herding, and other services.

Miagao also houses the University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV) College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, with Bachelor of Science in Fisheries considered as the flagship course. UPV has established some programs to help the fisheries sector in Miagao, Iloilo.

Based on an article in the UPV website, the college has created connections to foster the development of the local fisheries sector in Miagao. In 2019, about 48 coastal barangay officials, the local Bantay Dagat, and representatives of local commercial fisheries sectors, attended the presentation of Mr. Joshua Regalado on marine ecology and their research on using Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) which is used to examine activities of commercial vessels entering municipal waters in the municipalities of Oton, Tigbauan, Guimbal, Miagao and San Joaquin. The university also hosts talks and information drives. Talks on marine conservation called the ISDA Talk

which was hosted by three experts on the field of fisheries gathered a crowd of 300 people from various fields of study, including fisherfolks in the municipality of Miagao and local government leaders (Gallos, 2019). Further, UPV offered training courses on catfishing breeding for the fisherfolk.

### **Communication to Improve Livelihood**

In the study of Odoom et. al (2022), communication is considered imperative in the policies and interventions to improve livelihood and promote sustainable livelihood. The study said that access to information and better communication strategies are essential for improved livelihood options. Farmers, for example, need to know market dynamics and price mechanisms for them to have sustainable livelihood.

Odoom et. al (2022) reiterated that sustainable livelihood can only be achieved if there are “adequate information and better communication strategies.” The same study said that the flow of communication from the different stakeholders is critical in developing policies to improve the livelihood conditions of farmers.

In their study on communication interventions to improve the livelihood of the agriculture sector in Ethiopia, Gebeyehu & Jira (2023) emphasized that the role of communication in enhancing agricultural production is very crucial. They mentioned that development agents, who are considered representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, have the crucial role of communicating with farmers. This includes informing them of the availability of resources including options on technology and technical trainings. With this information flow, they will gain more knowledge and opportunities that will in turn result in increased agricultural production.

Gebeyehu & Jira (2023) said that communicating agriculture includes knowledge- and capacity-building on farming systems, enhancement of communication skills and confidence, and provision of technical advice. It also adopts the participatory approach where knowledge and ideas flow from farmers to the Ministry of Agriculture and vice versa.

The study concluded that specific and appropriate communication interventions for farmers are vital in improving their agricultural production which will eventually improve their livelihood. Communication interventions should be well-planned where local and cultural contexts are considered.

In the study of Ismail and Khalid (2015), they explored the role of social media as a tool to help the fishing industry improve their market. Findings from the study revealed that many consumers go to social media to browse for customer reviews and recommendations to encourage their purchasing behaviors. Clients also prefer to see photos of fishermen's markets before they go there to purchase. Hence, there is a positive relationship between content shared on social media and the purchasing decisions of clients. Social media as a communication tool will help the fishermen sell their products more as well-crafted content can persuade people to buy.

In Miagao, there have been several capacity-building initiatives to help local fisherfolk gain new knowledge and technical skills, manage coastal resources, and improve their production. However, the lens on how communication can improve the livelihoods of women fisherfolk has never been explored in the locality. This research

aims to study the communication landscape to identify the communication interventions intended for women fisherfolk and how these affect their livelihood.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research is anchored on the theoretical framework of the Participatory Communication Theory. Developed by Paulo Freire in 1970, the theory reiterates two-way communication as a medium in providing a general set of agreements for sustainable action in development activities. It emphasizes the active involvement of community members and the shared decision-making process. In this theory, the concept of dialogue is considered essential in promoting collective action in the community. For Freire, dialogue is not only about relaying information but more on the process of reflection and knowledge creation.

Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) identified the guiding principles of participatory communication: These are dialogue, voice, liberating pedagogy, and action-reflection-action.

- Dialogue. Described by Freire as the “encounter between men in order to name the world,” dialogue is considered the central principle of participatory communication. In other terms, “naming the world” is called problem identification or needs assessment.
- Voice. Freire reiterated the importance of giving voice to marginalized communities, where there should be a shift in power so that people in dialogue can identify problems and create solutions that can address those problems.

- Liberating Pedagogy. Tufte and Mefalopoulos (2009) described that for dialogic communication to take place, someone or something must outline the process. Liberating pedagogy can only happen if there is love, humility, faith and hope. Moreover, liberating pedagogy results in “action-oriented awareness raising.”
- Action-Reflection-Action. The empowerment process in participatory communication should include reflecting on social realities and acting on them. Communities should be involved in their own development process, with awareness of their own realities.

According to Freire, marginalized individuals are in the “culture of silence” because they do not have the confidence to be critical of their realities. His concept of praxis is the integration of action and reflection, highlighting the interaction between theory and practice. In the process of praxis, individuals critically reflect on their social realities that push them to act on it, facilitating their own transformative change.

Gumucio-Dagron (2001) created a table to distinguish participatory communication strategies from other communication strategies. The central characteristics of participatory communication strategies according to Gumucio-Dagron’s typology are the horizontal communication among participants, presence of dialogue, focus on the needs of the people, and being owned by the community. All these reflect the concept of Freire’s participatory communication.

**Table 1.**

*Participatory vs Non-participatory Communication Strategies<sup>1</sup>*

Participatory Communication Strategies	Versus	Non-Participatory Communication Strategies
<u>Horizontal</u> lateral communication between participants	Versus	<u>Vertical</u> top-down communication from senders to receivers
<u>Process</u> of dialogue and democratic participation	Versus	<u>Campaign</u> to mobilize in a short-term without building capacity
<u>Long-term</u> process of sustainable change	Versus	<u>Short-term</u> planning and quick fix solutions
<u>Collective</u> empowerment and decision-making	Versus	<u>Individual</u> behavior change
<u>With</u> community's involvement	Versus	<u>For</u> the community
<u>Specific</u> in content, language, and culture	Versus	<u>Massive</u> and broad-based
<u>People's needs</u> are the focus	Versus	<u>Donors' musts</u> are the focus
<u>Owned</u> by the community	Versus	<u>Access</u> determined by social political and economic factors
<u>Consciousness</u> raising	Versus	<u>Persuasion</u> for short-term

<sup>1</sup>Gumucio, A. (2001). *Making Waves, Stories of Participatory Communication for Social Change*

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

This research utilized a qualitative case study design to explore the role of participatory communication in fostering the empowerment of women fisherfolk in Miagao, Iloilo. A case study is an in-depth study of a particular phenomenon or real-life scenario (Yin, 2009). This type of research design is also significant in testing if a specific scientific or communication theory works in the real world. Its usual “unit of analysis” can be a person, a family, a community, an organization, or a decision (De Vaus, 2001).

#### **Locale of the Study**

The study was conducted in the municipality of Miagao in Iloilo province. The second to the last barangay in the southern part of Iloilo before Antique province, Miagao has a 16-kilometer coastline, spanning a total of 22 barangays. According to the Philippine Statistics Association, Miagao has a total population of 68,115 people in 2020. The municipality also has the largest number of barangays in the whole Iloilo province, totaling 119.

Data from the Municipal Agriculture Office showed that in 2023, there are 2,379 registered fisherfolk in the municipality. Out of that number, 575 are women. These women are engaged in capture fishing, gleaning, and fish vending and processing.

Miagao is also home to the University of the Philippines Visayas, the national university for fisheries and the Center of Excellence in Fisheries Education as acknowledged by the Commission on Higher Education.

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants of this study were the members of the Subana Women's Organization in Brgy. Baybay Norte, Miagao, Iloilo. These members are women fisherfolk who provided firsthand information and experience on the participatory communication initiatives where they were involved in and its role in their empowerment.

### **Selection of Participants**

Purposeful selection of women fisherfolk from the Subana Women's Organization was done. The participants were considered the most active members of the organization. The participants included the current president, past president and current officers and members of the organization. Four out of eight participants have been members of the organization since its inception, while the other four became members in 2015. All of the participants have participated in communication initiatives organized by the local government of Miagao, other government agencies, and the University of the Philippines Visayas.

### **Research Instrument**

Focus group discussion was done with members of the Subana Women's Organization to assess collective experiences and insights on their engagement in participatory communication initiatives implemented for them. In-depth interviews were

then utilized to explore the individual participant's perspective on questions that arose during the focus group discussion. Aside from the in-depth interviews as a triangulation method, the researcher also conducted a key informant interview with the person in charge for fisheries from the Municipal Agriculture Office to further gather data on the participatory communication initiatives involving the women fisherfolk.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

Subana Women's Organization was identified as the subject of the case study. The group is composed of women, mostly wives of fishermen, who reside in Brgy. Baybay Norte, the barangay with the largest number of small-scale fishers in Miagao, Iloilo. Literature review was utilized to further understand the roles of women in the fisheries sector. Research and global reports on women's contributions in the fisheries sector were analyzed to provide insights on the various dimensions of women's participation in fisheries.

A letter request was submitted to the Miagao mayor's office to conduct the study in the barangay and ask for pertinent data regarding the study. The request was referred to the Municipal Agriculture Office for the data collection. Information like the number of women fisherfolk in the municipality and their corresponding fishing activities were retrieved from the office.

An interview guide was developed based on the research question and the study's objectives. Before the data collection, the members were informed about the research, its purpose, and its methods, assuring them of the confidentiality of data recorded. A focus group discussion was conducted among the participants to gain collective insights on

their experiences with participatory communication. In-depth interviews were employed among the participants to gain individual perspectives and further understand the topic on both collective and personal insights. As a triangulation method, a key informant interview was conducted with Ms. Eden Nequia, the person in charge for fisheries in the municipal level to validate information that was provided from the focus group discussion and interviews. The recordings were then transcribed and translated to English. Transcription from the focus group discussion was organized to facilitate coding and thematic analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data from the focus group discussion was analyzed through thematic analysis to identify themes and patterns on the role of participatory communication in the empowerment of women fisherfolk. This type of data analysis includes coding the gathered data, identifying patterns and themes, and developing a narrative that answers the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

After the interviews, the recordings were transcribed verbatim. The responses were reviewed to identify important parts related to the significance of participatory communication in the empowerment of women fisherfolk. Initial coding was then utilized, assigning codes to specific transcripts that reflected key concepts. Inductive coding was used rather than employing predetermined codes. Inductive coding is a kind of ground-up approach, allowing the emergence of new themes and patterns that may answer the research questions.

The data were then organized by grouping similar codes. This way, patterns and relationships can be recognized. Through the grouping of codes, themes were developed from the categories. The themes are related to the research questions of this study.

To interpret the themes in relation to the role of participatory communication in the empowerment of women fisherfolk, a narrative was developed to answer the research questions and show how the themes are related.

To enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings from the focus group discussion, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews among the participants and a key informant interview with the person in charge of fisheries from the Municipal Agriculture Office as a triangulation method.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The consent of the participants was considered in the focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and key informant interview. Participants were fully informed about the research, its purpose, and the methods to be used. Their participation was completely voluntary.

Another ethical consideration was the confidentiality and privacy of the data given by the participants. Additionally, potential risks of the study were considered such as emotional distress from the part of the participants.

The study aimed to test the following propositions:

Proposition 1: Participatory communication initiatives lead to an increase in the income of women fisherfolk in Miagao, Iloilo.

Proposition 2: Participatory communication initiatives foster the empowerment of women fisherfolk through better economic outcomes, enhanced self-esteem, community involvement and engagement in decision-making processes.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The participants for this study were members of the Subana Women's Organization located in Brgy. Baybay Norte, Miagao, Iloilo, Philippines. The following table shows the characteristics of the participants who participated in the focus group discussion and in-depth interviews:

**Table 2.**

*Profile of participants*

	Age	Civil Status	Fishing Activities
Participant 1	62	Widowed	Fish Vending & Fish Processing
Participant 2	39	Married	Fish Vending & Fish Processing
Participant 3	49	Married	Fish Vending & Fish Processing
Participant 4	59	Married	Fish Vending & Fish Processing
Participant 5	34	Widowed	Fish Vending & Fish Processing
Participant 6	47	Married	Fish Vending & Fish Processing
Participant 7	42	Married	Fish Vending & Fish Processing
Participant 8	50	Married	Fish Vending & Fish Processing

Based on Table 2, the ages of participants ranged from 32 to 62 years old. Majority of the participants are married, while two participants are widowed. All participants are wives of fishermen and have multiple children. All participants are also involved in fish vending and fish processing.

Members of the Subana Women's Organization all reside in what used to be a riverbed in the barangay. The term Subana came from the Karay-a word "suba" which means river. Residents from Brgy. Baybay Norte informally call the riverbed Subana village.

The participants are actively involved in community initiatives. They have also participated in dialogues within the barangay and attended training sessions conducted by UPV. The participants included the past president, current president and officers, and active members in the organization.

### **Roles of Women in Fisheries in Miagao, Iloilo**

Subana women acknowledge that they play crucial roles in the fisheries sector. Drawing from their responses during the focus group discussion and in-depth interviews, here are some of their key roles:

#### **1. Boat Cleaner**

Women fisherfolk ensure the maintenance and cleanliness of fishing boats. This also includes cleaning the fishing equipment that their husbands use. According to the participants, cleaning the boat contributes to the quality of their catch, which may also affect their income.

*“Gapaninlo kang baroto kag kung ano pa nga kagamitan pangisda kay ti kinanglan nga tinlo man imo baroto kay siyempre, naga-apekto ra sa isda mo. Para mas preska ang imo isda kag magnami imo income kung preska ang isda na nadakop niyo.”* (Participant 3, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** [I] clean the fishing boat and other equipment used for fishing since the cleanliness of the boat should be ensured because of course, it affects your fish. This is so your fish remains fresh and your income will be better.

## 2. Cook

Women are also engaged in preparing and cooking meals for their husbands when they go on fishing trips. Since women should also take care of the household while their husbands are away for fishing, they need to ensure that their husbands eat nutritious meals to sustain them during the trips.

*“Nagaluto [ako] pagkaon para sa bana ko nga gapangisda. Indi man kami kasunod sa pangisda kay kinanglan bantayan ang panimalay kundi ginapabalunan na lang sanda pagkaon kay budlay man mangisda.”* (Participant 7, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** [I] cook meals for my husband who is a fisherman. We cannot go on fishing trips since we have to take care of the household so we just provide them food because we know how hard fishing is.

### 3. Vendor

All the participants serve as vendors and consider fish vending their main income source. They get their fish directly from the fishermen or the local market. The participants also call themselves “small-time vendors” as they do not have stalls in the municipal market. They usually bring buckets of fish and sell them along the streets or to households.

*“Tanan kami nagalibod isda. Mga ultimo nga manug-isda ah...Ubra namon kara mabitbit kang amon mga balde kag kilohan kag mamaligya dyan sa dalan ukon mamalay-malay.”* (Participant 6, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English translation:** We all vend fish. [We are] small-time fish vendors...We usually bring our buckets and weighing scale then sell fish along the streets and in households.

### 4. Fish Processor

According to the women fishers, they engage in post-harvest fish processing when they have time and money. Fish processing refers to all the processes associated with fish and its products, including during the time it was harvested until the final product is done. Fish processing allows fisherfolk to add value to fish, opening opportunities for more income. Through their training from the LGU and UPV, they can make their own shrimp paste and fish tocino. They are also knowledgeable on deboning, drying, and smoking fish.

*“Kung may kwarta kag may tyempo, gaubra kami ginamos ukon ano pa dyan nga naman-an namon halin sa amon training para maka-dugang-dugang sa income namon.”* (Participant 5, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** If we have money and time, we make shrimp paste or anything that we know from our training so that we can have more income.

#### 5. Household Caretaker

Women fisherfolk fulfill their domestic roles including household maintenance, caring for the children and the elderly, and cooking food for the rest of the family members.

*“Part gid ra ka amon responsibilidad bilang mga babayi ang magbantay bata kag panimalay, magbantay ka mga mal-am, kag magluto kag magdigamo.”* (Participant 7, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** It is part of our responsibilities as women to take care of the children and our households, watch the elderly, cook and do household chores.

#### 6. Financial Manager

Women fisherfolk acknowledge their role in managing the finances of the household. They usually allocate their income to the immediate needs of the family and plan their budget accordingly.

*“Ikaw budget kang kwarta nga nabuol sa paglibod kag sa pangisda kay mayad gid nga ikaw gakapot kwarta...Unahon ang mga kinanglan kapin pa kang ana ka mga bata.”* (Participant 7, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** You need to budget the income from fishing and fish vending since it is good that you should handle the money...You have to prioritize the needs of the family, especially that of the children.

## 7. Community Organizer

Subana Women’s Organization was established on the belief that women should be empowered to continue their roles in the fisheries community. Through community organization, Subana was able to engage with stakeholders including researchers and government agencies, among others. They were the recipients of the Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women Project, a capacity development initiative to promote and encourage a gender-oriented environment for the empowerment of women delivered through national and local government agencies.

According to Ms. Eden Nequia, Municipal Agriculturist-Fisheries, Subana women are the priority beneficiaries of the MAO in terms of training, projects from

other government agencies and livelihood assistance since they are the only women's group registered with DOLE.

*“Sanda gid priority namon kung may trainings ukon projects haling sa iban nga agency, ukon livelihood assistance kay naka-register sanda kara sa DOLE. Kilala man dayon namon sanda kay ti active sanda sa mga activities.”* (Ms. Nequia, Personal communication, Key informant interview, June 24, 2023)

**English Translation:** They are our priority if there are trainings, projects from other government agencies since they are registered with DOLE. We also know them since they are active in our activities.

As community organizers, the women of Subana organize meetings, network with other agencies, and address collective issues in the local fishing community.

### **Process of Participatory Communication that Led to the Empowerment of Subanens**

***Experience with Participatory Communication.*** Asked about their experiences in participatory communication initiatives, the women fisherfolk said that they usually engage in community dialogues or talks in the barangay. The initiatives served as a platform for the participants to voice out their concerns as women fisherfolk. They also mentioned participating in interviews conducted by UPV faculty members and students for research purposes. Participant 4 mentioned that she engaged in community

dialogues with the barangay and UPV where they were given an opportunity to relay their concerns related to their livelihood.

*“Naga-intra kami sa mga talk imaw ang barangay kag iban nga grupo parehas kang UP kay ti ang hambal makabenepisyo gid kami sa mga amo kara. Ginatugruan man kami dayun oportunidad nga makahambal kang mga baratyagon namon bilang mga babayi nga gabulig sa pangisda ukon pagbaligya ka isda.”*  
(Participant 4, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** We participated in talks with the barangay and other agencies like UPV because we were told we would benefit from them. They also give us opportunities to speak about our struggles as women fisherfolk who help in the fishing activities or who sell fish.

Participant 1 noted that they usually join talks at the barangay level and participate in research conducted by UPV faculty members and students.

*“Sa barangay lang kami pirme gaistoryahanay. Rako man mga maestro kg estudyante kang UP nga naga-interview kanamon parte sa anda research.”*  
(Participant 1, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** We usually just talk in the barangay level. So many professors and students from UPV have been interviewing us regarding a lot of things for their research.

Ms. Nequia said community dialogues and interactions with the women fisherfolk served as a tool to know the needs of the community.

*“May mga istoryahanay kis-a nga maka-identify ka mga kinanglan da. Parehas last time, nakaistoryahanay kami kag nakita namon nga indi sanda kamaan mag-ice kang isda da. Naka-istoryahanay kami ka UP, hambal da, daw karaw-ay man ra nga dya ang UP tapos ang mga gabaligya isda dya sa Miagao indi kamaan mag-ice ka isda da. Maski basic lang nga icing importante gid ra. Amo to, nag-conduct ang UP kang training for basic icing kang isda na ginabaligya da. Mga simple lang man nga bagay nga makabulig man kananda.”* (Ms. Nequia, Personal communication, Key informant interview, June 24, 2023)

**English Translation:** Sometimes, there are talks that can identify what they need. Like for example last time, we were talking and we saw that they do not know how to ice their fish. We talked with UP and they told us that it does not give a good impression that UP exists in Miagao yet the fish vendors do not know how to ice their fish. Basic icing is very important. Hence, UPV conducted a training on basic icing of fish that they sell. These are simple things that will help them.

Further, Ms. Nequia mentioned that through dialogues and interactions with women fisherfolk, their office, in partnership with UPV, was able to assess the needs of the women and deliver programs for the enhancement of their skills and knowledge on fisheries. The sharing of information during dialogues fostered co-creation of knowledge and built trust and collaboration among the stakeholders. The participants' involvement

in research and dialogues with the academic institution led to the implementation of public service activities and extension programs for the benefit of the local fishing community.

*“Kay man-an namon kinanglan da kang additional income kay indi enough ang income sa pangisda lang, gina-lobby namon anda mga kinanglan sa iban na agencies or gina-recommend namon sanda nga sanda maging beneficiary kang amo kadya nga training or livelihood assistance. (Ms. Nequia, Personal communication, Key informant interview, June 24, 2023)*

**English Translation:** Because we know that they need additional income because the income from fishing is not enough, we lobby their needs to other agencies and we recommend them to be the beneficiaries of a certain training or livelihood assistance.

According to the participants, information on community dialogues were often disseminated through word of mouth.

*“Ginahambalan lang kami nanda. Hambal lang eh, pasa-pasa bala haw.”*  
(Participant 3, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** They just tell us. Disseminating information through word of mouth.

In in-depth interviews, the participants mentioned that dialogues with UPV were “comfortable,” noting the academic institution’s assurance to help them with their needs.

*“Sa mga istoryahanay sa UP, kumportable kami maghambal kang amon kinanglan pag-abot sa mga kulang pa gid namon nga naman-an kay ginahambalan kami pirme nga dyan sanda para magbulig. Ang iban man dya, indi lang kami, kundi iban nga gapangisda sa Miagao gapasalamat man sa UP kay gina-imaw gid kami nanda prime sa anda activities kag ginatugruan kami bulig.”* (Participant 5, Personal communication, In-depth interview, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** In dialogues with UPV, we were comfortable to express our concerns and needs in terms of skills because they assured us that they will do something to address them. Other fisherfolk aside from us are also thankful to UPV for making sure that we are involved in their activities, and they also provide help.

*“Nami nga maka-istorya gid nga imaw kami, kung nami bala ang palibot, kag wara tensyon. Daw ma-inchindihanay gid kami.”* (Participant 7, Personal communication, In-depth interview, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** It’s nice if we talk together, if the atmosphere is good and there is no tension. We can understand each other better.

**Effects on Income and Opportunities.** Asked about the effects of their engagement in participatory communication initiatives, the participants noted an increase in income from their fish-processing activities. After gaining knowledge and skills in training sessions brought about by community dialogues and information sharing, they were able to produce their own products and sell them, leading to additional income. Participant 1 noted that she was able to utilize her learning from the training in her own household. She

also mentioned that she earned additional income after making and selling her own product (shrimp paste).

*"Ang mga natun-an namon sa training nga ginpang-ubra pagkatapos makipag-istorya sanda kanamon, nagamit namon sa amon panimalay, maski sa amon lang pagkaon. Kang nag-umpisa kami ubra kang amon produkto, may dyan kami dugang nga gamay nga income nga ginagamit man namon sa pang-adlaw-adlaw."*  
(Participant 1, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** The learning we got from the trainings that were implemented through community dialogues, we used them in our own households, even just in our own meals. When we started making our products, we gained a small amount of additional income that we use for our daily needs.

For participant 8, a simple skill such as proper icing of fish can already lead to more customers:

*"Gintudluan man kami paano mag-ice ka isda. Te nag mayad gid kay nag-preska amon isda nga maka-attract pa kang mabugbakal."* (Participant 8, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** We were also taught how to ice our fish when we sell them. This contributes to the freshness of our fish that may attract more customers.

After they were trained on shrimp paste production by UPV, the barangay lent them capital worth Php10,000. The participants displayed their shrimp paste in the Miagao Tourism Office. They noted an increase in income after their production, which made

them able to pay back the barangay. Participant 1 shared that there were market opportunities for their product since they were able to display it in the tourism office:

*"May diyan mga oportunidad kapin pa sa amon ginamos. Gin-display to namon sa tourism office kag ginabakal kang mga tawo. Nakalab-ot to ginamos namon sa America." (Participant 1, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)*

**English Translation:** We had opportunities especially with our shrimp paste. We displayed it in the tourism office and people would usually buy them. Our shrimp paste even reached America.

In an in-depth interview, Participant 1 mentioned that it was the former barangay captain's initiative to lend them capital since he saw the potential of their product:

*"Ana tana to ni Kap Leo [referring to the former barangay captain] nga tugro kanamon nga capital. Wara man kami nangayo. Gintugruan na lang gid kami. Nabaydan man to namon balik ang barangay. (Participant 1, Personal communication, In-depth interview, June 17, 2023)*

**English Translation:** It was Kap Leo's (referring to the former barangay captain) initiative to give us capital. We did not ask for it. He just gave it to us. We were able to pay the barangay back.

**Empowerment of Women Fisherfolk.** Asked about how they felt after engaging in the initiatives, the participants expressed that they gained confidence. After acquiring technical knowledge and skills from capacity-building programs, participant 5 shared her

newfound confidence, mentioning that she feels like she can do beyond taking care of the children and doing household chores:

*"Kumpiyansa ron kami mag-ubra kang mga kung ano pa dyan kay ti rako ron naman-an halin sa mga training. Daw indi lang bantay bata kag digamo sa balay kundi rako ron gid naman-an kay ginpang-train kami kang UP."* (Participant 5, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** We're now confident to do things since we already know a lot from our trainings. It's not just looking after the kids and doing household chores but I already know a lot since we were trained by UP.

Because of their confidence in applying their knowledge and skills on their post-harvest fisheries activities which led them to generate more income, they are now being recognized and given respect by the fishing community. For participant 1, she mentioned that people listen to them more.

*"Matyag ko daw ginapamatian gid kami kag gina-tugruan importansya. Ginakilala man kami nanda nga parte kang pangisda."* (Participant 1, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** I feel like people listen to us more and give us importance. They also recognize us as part of the whole fishing process.

Participant 7 noted that after participating in these initiatives, she gained respect from the community as a member of Subana and after acquiring technical skills from capacity-building programs.

*"Sadya ako kay gakita ako kwarta maski gamay lang. Gina-respeto man kami kang mga tawo sa barangay kay parte kami kang Subana kag may naman-an kami."*

(Participant 7, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** I am happy that I am earning money even in small amounts. People in the barangay respect us because of our organization and our skills.

In participatory communication, community members are being involved in decision-making processes, including policy-making either in the barangay or municipal level. When asked about their ability to make decisions after their engagement in participatory communication initiatives, participant 2 expressed that she can make decisions inside the household because of her economic independence, while participant 1 noted her satisfaction in her ability to make decisions for her family, recognizing her contributions in the fishing community.

*"Maka-desisyon ko sa sulod balay kay daw importante man ako sa balay kay nagakita ako kang kwarta."* (Participant 2, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** I can decide inside the household since I feel important that I earn money.

*“Manami man nga makadesisyon ikaw para sa kaugalingon mo kag para sa pamilya kay daw may kontribusyon man ikaw dya sa barangay. (Participant 1, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)*

**English Translation:** It’s good that you are able to decide for yourself and your family since it feels like you are also contributing to the barangay.

Meanwhile, Participant 6 mentioned that there were ordinances in the barangay that they were consulted about.

*“May mga ordinansya sa barangay nga ginapamangkot man kami. Parehas kang budget sa livelihood assistance. (Participant 6, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)*

**English Translation:** There are ordinances in the barangay that we were consulted about like the budget on livelihood assistance.

Participant 6, a barangay kagawad already in her last term, was appreciative of the open communication within Subana where they relay their struggles as women fisherfolk. She shared that she is proposing for a higher livelihood budget in the barangay.

*“Kay man-an ko ano kabudlay [ang kabuhi], plano ko ipadugangan ang livelihood assistance halin sa Php10,000.” (Participant 6, Personal communication, In-depth interview, June 17, 2023)*

**English Translation:** Because I know how hard (life is), I am planning to increase our livelihood budget from 10,000 to more.

Further, Ms. Nequia noted that Subana does not depend on the projects of the government for the organization to function.

*“Kang post-pandemic daw wara pa gid kami ti natugro kananda. But they can work independently. Indi parehas ka iban nga organized group nga gadepend sa bulig ka gobyerno.”* (Ms. Nequia, Personal communication, Key informant interview, June 24, 2023)

**English Translation:** During the post-pandemic, I think we have not given them any assistance. But they can work independently, unlike other organized groups that are dependent on the government.

She also lauded the attendance and participation of the members of Subana during meetings with the MAO and activities facilitated by the LGU.

*“Member sanda ka federation, ga-participate sa meetings and trainings...Kung ginapatawag sanda sa meetings, alert man sanda. Dyan man sanda kung farmers and fishers week.”* (Ms. Nequia, Personal communication, Key informant interview, June 24, 2023)

**English Translation:** They are members of the federation; they participate in meetings and trainings...If we call them for a meeting, they are alert to attend...They also participate in the Farmers’ and Fishers’ Week.

In an in-depth interview, Participant 1 mentioned that they also have networks with Gabriela Women’s Party, a progressive Filipino group committed to represent Filipino

women in the House of Representatives. When they were having issues with local authorities due to policies that hinder them from selling fish any time of the day, Gabriela lobbied their concerns to the municipal mayor.

*“Nag-istoryahanay ron ang abogado kang Gabriela kag ang dati nga mayor parte sa amon reklamo nga gina-dakop kami pero wara ron kami balita ano to natabo.”*

(Participant 1, Personal communication, In-depth interview, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** The lawyer of Gabriela and the former mayor already talked about our complaint that we were being fined, but we have no news about it now.

Despite the uncertainty if there will be changes in municipal policies regarding fining small-time fish vendors outside the municipal market, the group was appreciative of Gabriela’s legal help. Further, Gabriela recommended them to trainings outside the province.

*“Ginbuligan man kami kang Gabriela sa amon trainings. May mga miyembro kami gaagto sa Baguio kag sa Aklan para mag-training sa livelihood. Libre ra tanan.”*

(Participant 1, Personal communication, In-depth interview, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** Gabriela also helped us with our trainings. We have members who go to Baguio and Aklan to attend trainings on livelihood. These were all free.

## Emerging Themes

To explain the process of participatory communication that led to the empowerment of Subana women fisherfolk, Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis was deployed. This includes (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) identifying themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining themes, (6) writing the narrative.

Subsequently, four themes were identified: Dialogues and Interactions, Economic Outcomes, Recognition and Importance, and Decision-making.

**Table 3.**

### *Themes and Codes*

Themes	Codes
Dialogues and Interactions	Community Dialogues
	Information-sharing
	Information Dissemination
	Participation in Training
Economic Outcomes	Application of Learning
	Income Generation
	Market Opportunities
	Product Reputation
	Access to Credit

	Skills Development
Recognition and Importance	Community Recognition
	Sense of Importance
	Opportunities
	Confidence
Decision-making	Consultation in Policy-making
	Household Decision-making

### Dialogues and Interactions

The first theme, Dialogues and Interactions, refers to the two-way communication between individuals or groups. It described how the participants engaged in community dialogues and information-sharing with the barangay and UPV. All the participants mentioned that they were often involved in talks with the barangay and the academic institution.

**Table 4.**

#### *Dialogues and Interactions*

Responses	Code	Theme
<i>"Sa barangay lang kami pirme gaistoryahanay. Rako man mga maestro kg estudyante kang UP nga naga-interview kanamon parte sa anda research." (We usually just talk in the barangay level. So many professors and students from UPV have been interviewing us regarding a lot of things for their research.)</i>	Community Dialogues; Information-sharing	Dialogues and Interaction
<i>"Gaistoryahanay kami kang barangay kag pirme man diya gaparapit kanamon ang UP." (We talk with the barangay and UPV always comes to us.)</i>	Community Dialogues	

<i>"Gapamangkot sanda kung ano kinanglan namon mag-istoryahanay kami. Ang UP ga mangkot-mangkot." (They ask us what we need when we talk. UPV asks us questions.)</i>	Community Dialogues; Needs assessment
<i>"Naga-intra kami sa mga talk imaw ang barangay kag iban nga grupo parehas kang UP kay ti ang hambal makabenepisyo gid kami sa mga amo kara. Ginatugruan man kami dayun oportunidad nga makahambal kang mga baratyagon namon bilang mga babayi nga gabulig sa pangisda ukon pagbaligya ka isda." (We participated in talks with the barangay and other agencies like UPV because we were told we would benefit from them. They also give us opportunities to speak about our struggles as women fisherfolk.)</i>	Community Dialogues
<i>"Gamangkot ang LGU ano kinanglan." (The LGU asks us what we need.)</i>	Needs Assessment
<i>"Ga-istorya kami sa barangay kag ginahambal namon ano amon problema. Gina-hambal man namon amon mga problema parte sa pangisda ukon sa paglibod isda." (We do talks in the barangay where we sometimes say our concerns. We also voice out our problems especially in the fishing aspect and in our fish selling activity.)</i>	Community Dialogues
<i>"Gaagto lang kami kag ga-intra. Kung kis-a may mga training, ginahambalan kami. Kung sin-o pwede te sanda maagto." (We usually just go and participate. They just tell us when there are trainings, so those who are available to participate will go.)</i>	Information Dissemination; Participation in Training
<i>"Ginatawag lang kami kag ginhambalan. Kung sa UP, ginapaagi sa barangay kag i-inform kami." (They call us and inform us. If it's from UPV, they tell the barangay first and then they disseminate it to us.)</i>	Information Dissemination
<i>"Ginahambalan lang kami nanda. Hambal lang eh, pasa-pasa bala haw." (They just tell us. Disseminate information through word of mouth.)</i>	Information Dissemination
<i>"Kilala man kang barangay kung sin-o mga miyembro kang Subana. Kilala man kami ka DA ti ginahambalan lang kami kung may mga istoryahanay ukon meeting." (The barangay knows who the members of Subana are. The Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) also knows us so they just tell us if there are community dialogues or meetings.)</i>	Information Dissemination

Table 4 highlighted the participants' experiences with participatory communication initiatives. Through dialogues in the community and interactions with other stakeholders, the sharing of information and assessment of needs are facilitated.

*"Gapamangkot sanda kung ano kinanglan namon mag-istoryahanay kami. Ang UPV mangkot-mangkot."* (Participant 3, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** They ask us what we need when we talk. UPV asks us questions.

The participants also mentioned that participatory communication initiatives are usually disseminated through word of mouth. The dissemination of information through word of mouth is aligned to the principles of participatory communication theory. One of the key elements of participatory communication is horizontal communication where the flow of communication is among community members and not from authorities (Altafin, 1991). Horizontal communication also promotes community engagement where women fisherfolk are actively involved in the flow of information rather than passive recipients of information.

Further, in-depth interviews revealed that the women fisherfolk felt comfortable when they did dialogues with UPV because they felt assured that UPV would respond to their needs. Freire's concept of conscientization involves individuals and communities critically analyzing their realities through reflection and action. For this to happen, dialogue in a trusting and safe environment should thrive so that individuals can express themselves without fear of judgment.

According to Ibuot (2021), the first main methodology in the Participatory Development Communication process is to approach the community and understand the local setting. Besett's Participatory Development Communication Model describes the

methods of facilitating participation through communication; the first step of which is developing a relationship with the local community. This highlights the significance of a safe environment to facilitate genuine participation. The experience of the participants in participatory communication interventions conducted by UPV, where they felt “comfortable” and “assured”, highlights the role of inclusive and trustworthy spaces where each individual has the right to speak and participate without fear of reprisal. Since women fisherfolk are part of the communication process, they are not anymore passive recipients of information but active agents of the whole development process. Through effective communication with the community, needs can be assessed and the stakeholders, in return, can implement necessary and specific programs to address those needs.

## Economic Outcomes

The second theme, Economic Outcomes, refers to the tangible outputs in their financial well-being after and while engaging in participatory communication initiatives. This may include their increase in income, opportunities and economic networks.

**Table 5.**

### *Effects of Participatory Communication on Economic Outcomes*

Responses	Code	Theme
<i>"Ang mga natun-an namon sa training nga ginpang-ubra pagkatapos makipag-istorya sanda kanamon, nagamit namon sa amon panimalay, maski sa amon lang pagkaon. Kang nag-umpisa kami ubra kang amon produkto, may dyan kami dugang nga gamay nga income nga ginagamit man namon sa pang-adlaw-adlaw." (The learning we got from the trainings that were implemented through community dialogues, we used them in our own households, even just in our own meals. When we started making our products, we gained a small amount of additional income that we use for our daily needs.)</i>	Application of Learning; Income-Generation	Economic Outcomes

<i>"May additional income kay may dyan ron kami kang amon produkto." (There was additional income because we were producing our own products.)</i>	Application of Learning; Income-Generation
<i>"Nakabulig gid ang additional nga income sa amon pang-adlaw-adlaw." (The additional income really helped us with our daily needs.)</i>	Income-generation
<i>"Mayad to amon income kang gabaligya kami kang amon produkto." (We had a good income during that time when we were selling our product.)</i>	Application of Learning; Income-Generation
<i>"Bahol to nga bulig sa mga kinanglan namon sa balay. May extra ako indi lang sa pagbaligya ka isda." (It was a big help when it comes to the financial needs of my household. I was able to earn extra aside from selling fish.)</i>	Income-generation
<i>"Gintudluan man kami paano mag-ice ka isda. Nakabulig gid dya sa pagiging preska kang kundi daw ma-imbatar man mga tawo nga magbakal." (We were also taught how to ice our fish when we sell them. This contributes to the freshness of our fish that may attract more customers.)</i>	Application of Learning; Income-Generation
<i>"May diyan mga oportunidad kapin pa sa amon ginamos. Gin-display to namon sa tourism office kag ginabakal kang mga tawo. Nakalab-ot to ginamos namon sa America." (We had opportunities especially with our shrimp paste. We displayed it in the tourism office and people would usually buy them. Our shrimp paste even reached America.)</i>	Market Opportunities; Product Reputation
<i>"May mga oportunidad. Parehas kang pwede namon mabaligya ang amon ginamos sa tourism office pero indi namon mapadayon." (There were opportunities. Like we can sell our shrimp paste to the tourism office but we could not sustain it.)</i>	Market Opportunities
<i>"Nakabaligya kami kang amon ginamos sa tourism office para madugangan amon income. Ang capital bay kato ginpahuram lang to kang barangay." (We were able to sell our shrimp paste to the tourism office to add more to our income. The capital was lent to us by the barangay)</i>	Market Opportunities; Access to Credit

<p><i>"Sikat to amon ginamos kay ginabakal kang mga turista sa tourism office." (Our shrimp paste was famous because tourists can buy them in the tourism office.)</i></p>	<p>Product Reputation</p>	
<p><i>"May mga oportunidad nga mag-intra sa mga trainings kay registered kami ti kami gid gina-una." (We had opportunities to be in more trainings because we are a registered group of women fisherfolk so we are prioritized.)</i></p>	<p>Skills Development</p>	

Table 5 highlights how participatory communication initiatives led to better economic outcomes and opportunities for women fisherfolk. Participant 3 expressed how their learning from making shrimp paste gave them an opportunity to display their product in the municipal tourism office which led to additional income.

*"Nakabaligya kami kang amon ginamos sa tourism office para madugangan amon income. Ang capital bay kato ginpahuram lang to kang barangay."* - (Participant 3, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** We were able to sell our shrimp paste to the tourism office to add more to our income. The capital was lent to us by the barangay

As seen on Table 5, participatory communication activities facilitated the access of women fisherfolk to market opportunities (tourism office) and credit (capital from the barangay). The organization, with the help of the MAO, partnered with the tourism office to display their products. The financial capital lent to them by the barangay showed community support for them to expand their entrepreneurial venture. The initiative facilitated by a community leader contributed to the economic empowerment of women fisherfolk, where they gained a support network from their own barangay. Moreover, the exposure of their product did not only increase their sales but also improved their product

reputation, even reaching an international market. This posits that women fisherfolk were able to apply their learning on product development effectively. Generally, these insights highlight the transformative role of participatory communication in the economic conditions of marginalized groups. Through dialogues and information-sharing, women fisherfolk were connected to opportunities and resources which made them experience better economic outcomes.

### Recognition and Importance

The third theme, Recognition and Importance, explored how community recognition and respect contributed to the empowerment of women fisherfolk from Subana. This theme refers to the actual acknowledgment of the contributions of women in the fisheries value chain, including validating their expertise and valuing their roles and efforts. Women fisherfolk now see themselves creating their own space in the society, where they are heard and given value for all their contributions in their households and the fishing community.

**Table 6.**

#### *Recognition and Importance*

Responses	Code	Theme
<p><i>"Mayad man. Kilala kami kang mga tawo sa barangay kag kang DA [Municipal Agriculture Office]. Gaagto sanda kanamon kung may kinanglan. Gina-recommend man kami sa mga trainings. Tapos garing kang training, mangkot-mangkot lang sanda kung kumusta kami tapos wara ron." (It's good. People from the barangay and Municipal Agriculture Office know us. They go to us when they need anything. They also recommend us for trainings. After the trainings however, they will just ask us how we are and then no more.)</i></p>	<p>Community Recognition; Opportunities</p>	<p>Recognition and Importance</p>

<p><i>"Kay mga sawa kang kang nagapangisda sa barangay, kilala man kami ka mga tawo sa barangay eh. Man-an da na taga Subana kami." (Since we are wives of fishermen in the barangay, people from the barangay know us well. They know that we are members of Subana.)</i></p>	<p>Community Recognition</p>
<p><i>"Ginapa-intra man kami nanda sa mga activities." (They also involve us in activities.)</i></p>	<p>Community Recognition</p>
<p><i>"Kung trade fair, ginakilala kami kang DA [Municipal Agriculture Office] nga members kang Subana. Matyag namon importante man kami sa Miagao." (During trade fairs, the Municipal Agriculture Office recognizes us as part of the organization. So we feel important as part of the Miagao.)</i></p>	<p>Community Recognition; Sense of Importance</p>
<p><i>"Matyag ko daw ginapamatian gid kami kag gina-tugruan importantsya. Ginakilala man kami nanda nga parte kang pangisda." (I feel like people listen to us more and give us importance. They also recognize us as part of the the whole fishing process.)</i></p>	<p>Community Recognition; Sense of Importance</p>
<p><i>"Sadya ako nga naka-intra ako sa mga trainings kang UP. Sadya man ako kay mga bag-o ako nga naman-an nga ubrahon nga pwede gid sa sulod balay. Confident man ako eh nga magbaligya kang isda ko kay preska kay gintudluan kami ka UP paano mag-ice." (I am happy that I was able to participate in the trainings by UPV. I am also happy that I have gained skills that I can apply in our household. I'm also confident to sell my fish since they look fresh after UPV taught us how to properly ice them.)</i></p>	<p>Confidence</p>
<p><i>"Matyag ko importante ako sa balay kay naga-kita ako." (I feel like I am important in the household since I earn money.)</i></p>	<p>Sense of Importance</p>

<p><i>"Kumpiyansa ron kami mag-ubra kang mga kung ano pa dyan kay ti rako ron naman-an halin sa mga training. Daw indi lang bantay bata kag digamo sa balay kundi rako ron gid naman-an kay ginpang-train kami kang UP." (We're now confident to do things since we already know a lot from our trainings. It's not just looking after the kids and doing household chores but I already know a lot since we were trained by UP.)</i></p>	<p>Confidence; Sense of Importance</p>	
<p><i>"Sadya ako kay gakita ako kwarta maski gamay lang. Gina-respeto man kami kang mga tawo sa barangay ky parte kami kang Subana kag may naman-an kami." (I am happy that I am earning money even in small amounts. People in the barangay respect us because of our organization and our skills.)</i></p>	<p>Community Recognition; Sense of Importance</p>	

In Table 6, participants described how they gained confidence and sense of importance after they acquired skills and knowledge from capacity-building programs brought about by dialogues and interactions. Participant 4 shared that they are being recognized by the municipality during trade fairs.

*"Kung trade fair, ginakilala kami kang DA [Municipal Agriculture Office] nga members kang Subana. Matyag namon importante man kami sa Miagao."*  
(Participant 5, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** During trade fairs, the Municipal Agriculture Office recognizes us as part of the organization. So we feel important as part of the Miagao.

Meanwhile, participant 8 expressed her happiness after participating in trainings conducted by UP where she learned new things that she can apply inside her household. This made her confident to engage in her income-generating activities.

*"Sadya ako nga naka-intra ako sa mga trainings kang UP. Sadya man ako kay mga bag-o ako nga naman-an nga ubrahon nga pwede gid sa sulod balay. Confident man ako eh nga magbaligya kang isda ko kay preska kay gintudluan kami ka UP paano mag-ice."* (Participant 5, Personal communication, Focus group discussion, June 17, 2023)

**English Translation:** I am happy that I was able to participate in the trainings by UPV. I am also happy that I have gained skills that I can apply in our household. I'm also confident to sell my fish since they look fresh after UPV taught us how to properly ice them.

Yoon (1996) mentioned that women need to "raise their self-esteem and self-confidence" to change their representation in society. Participatory communication played an important role in amplifying the voices of the women fisherfolk through community dialogues, hence, the shift in social dynamics where they are now heard and given value. Their confidence and the respect and recognition they gained where they felt important as part of the fishing community all contribute to their empowerment as women fisherfolk.

## **Decision-making**

The fourth theme, Decision-making, refers to the process where participants make choices concerning their lives. This also involves being actively engaged in the formulation of policies, programs, and actions either in the community or in society. This theme reflects a high level of empowerment where diverse voices from marginalized communities, especially women, are now being included in decision-making process.

Further, the last theme reflects how the participants' decision-making ability was influenced after engaging in participatory communication activities.

**Table 7.**

*Decision-making Capabilities*

Responses	Code	Theme
<i>"May mga ordinansya sa barangay nga ginapamangkot man kami. Parehas kang budget sa livelihood assistance. (There are ordinances in the barangay that we were consulted about like the budget on livelihood assistance.)"</i>	Consultation in Policy-making	Decision-making
<i>"Maka-desisyon ko sa sulod balay kay daw importante man ako sa balay kay nagakita ako kang kwarta." (I can decide inside the household since I feel important that I earn money.)"</i>	Household decision-making	Decision-making
<i>"Kung sa balay lang nga desisyon, huod eh. Ginapamatian gid ako kang pamilya ko." (If it's decision-making inside the household, yes. My family listens to me.)"</i>	Household decision-making	Decision-making
<i>Manami man nga makadesisyon ikaw para sa kaugalingon mo kag para sa pamilya kay daw may kontribusyon man ikaw dya sa barangay. (It's good that you are able to decide for yourself and your family since it feels like you are also contributing to the barangay.)"</i>	Household decision-making	Decision-making

Table 7 highlights how women fisherfolk can now decide on matters inside the household, noting that they felt listened to by their family members. Involvement in decision-making is one of the many facets of empowerment among women. Based on their responses, women in Subana now have decision-making capacities even just inside their households.

Further, the organization of a women's group like Subana can be supported by the studies of Maravanyika et. al (2017) and Neilson (2019) where women should be encouraged to have an independent organization to develop self-identity and leadership. Neilson (2019) also showed that the self-organization of fisherwomen into legitimate and independent groups paved the way for their "visibility" within the community. Through organization, they gained the attention of local policy-makers. The study of Neilson reiterated the importance of participatory approaches focused on social change in facilitating the engagement and proactiveness of women in the fisheries community.

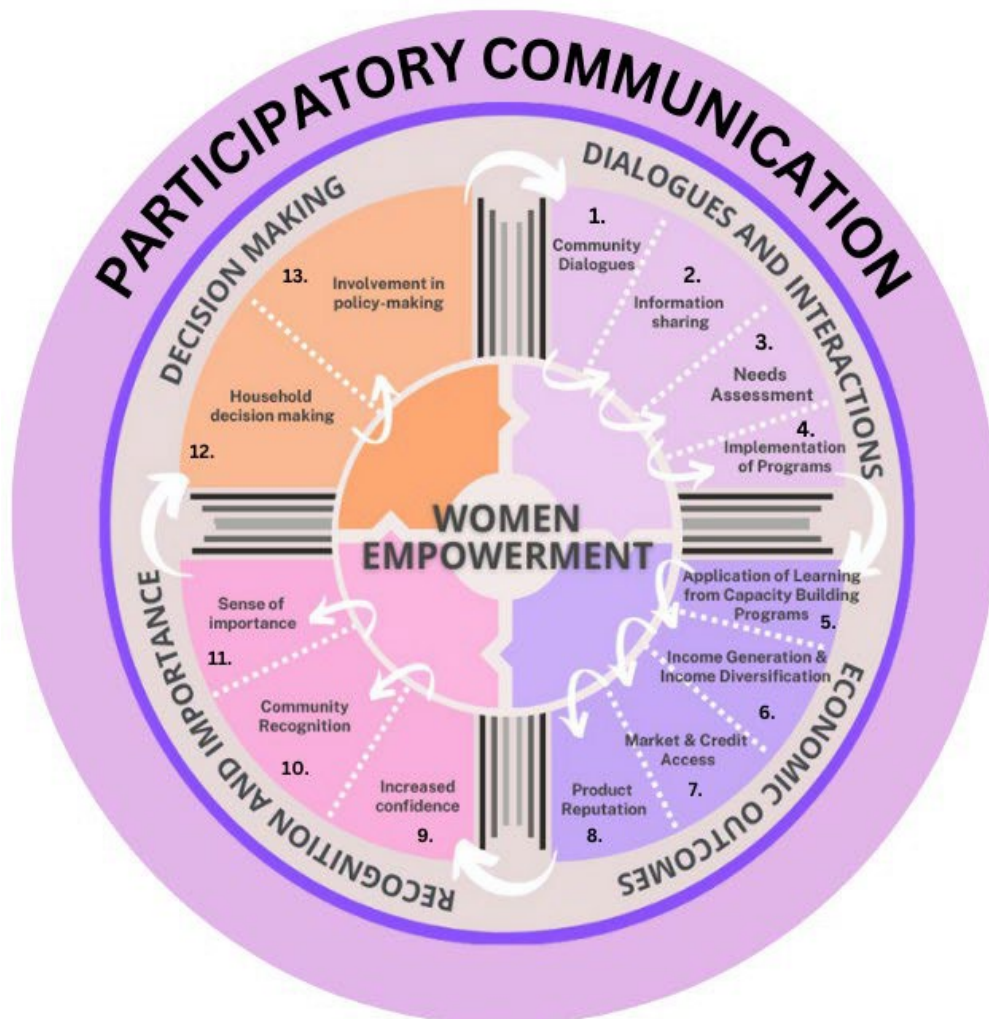
Because of their independence as mentioned by Ms. Nequia, Subana can drive the members' empowerment through collective action. Figueroa et. al (2002) defines collective action as a form of effective dialogue in groups. They can assert their autonomy in their operations by not fully depending on the government's help and build networks on their own through connecting with a progressive women's group like Gabriela. Their collective action also emerges as a catalyst to social change, where women actually contribute to policy reform.

The experiences shared by the participants further affirm the critical role of participatory communication in their empowerment through developing their decision-making capacities and fostering organizational resilience. The efforts of Subana women fisherfolk to establish an independent organization show their sense of agency where they own their development process.

## Model of Women Empowerment through Participatory Communication

Figure 2.

*Model of Empowering Women Through Participatory Communication*



After analyzing the four emerging themes, namely: Dialogues and Interactions, Economic Outcomes, Recognition and Importance, and Decision-making, a model on women empowerment through participatory communication was developed. The model

includes various elements that contribute to the empowerment of women especially in marginalized communities.

The model is ruled by participatory communication as the main tool in achieving women empowerment. Freire's participatory communication theory reiterates the importance of involving people in the process of communication and development. The following are the processes in the model:

### **1. Dialogues and Interactions**

*Community Dialogues.* Community dialogues and interactions create a democratic and inclusive communication platform where all those involved are considered equal. The dialogues provide a venue for women to voice out their insights and concerns, which gives them a sense of belongingness and power in the community. Further, community dialogues and interactions foster trust within the community, especially in dealing in dealing with challenges that women fisherfolk face.

*Information Sharing.* Through safe and honest dialogues and interactions, women fisherfolk can share their experiences and insights without fear of judgment. When women openly communicate with each other and toward other stakeholders, there is a transparent exchange of information on economic conditions and social issues. This step is critical in assessing the needs of women.

*Needs Assessment.* After information sharing, stakeholders can now identify the challenges and barriers that women fisherfolk face. This process involves

understanding the concerns and priorities of women. Through identifying the most pressing concerns, stakeholders can develop programs and policies specific to the needs of women fisherfolk. This ensures that the voices of women fisherfolk are integrated in programs tailored for them.

*Implementation of Programs.* Needs assessment is crucial in the implementation of programs to address specific issues. With participatory communication as the main tool in empowerment, the implementation should ensure that women are not just passive participants but also active agents of their own empowerment process. Insights from the participants during the programs can aid stakeholders in enhancing their interventions, making them more sustainable for long-term empowerment.

## **2. Economic Outcomes**

*Application of Learning.* Through participatory communication, women fisherfolk now have access to knowledge and skills related to fisheries. Utilizing their learning from the programs is essential in empowering them, since it fosters a sense of self-fulfillment, further strengthening their role in the fisheries sector.

*Income Generation and Diversification.* When women apply their knowledge, they get to see tangible outcomes including income generation and diversification. This process involves women fisherfolk engaging in economic activities such as entrepreneurship and post-harvest processing. The model of empowerment through participatory communication encourages women fisherfolk to network with

other organizations, collaborate with other individuals, and give feedback among its members, all for economic independence.

*Market and Credit Access.* Through participatory communication, women fisherfolk can now have access to market and credit resources. Knowing the needs of women fisherfolk, the local government unit and other stakeholders can facilitate their connections to broader markets. Because of their economic independence from income generation and diversification engagements, women fisherfolk now have more opportunities to enter more markets and have access to credit.

*Product Reputation.* The quality of products can create a loyal customer base, hence, the opportunity to earn more. Participatory communication fosters honest feedback and community support to further enhance the reputation of women fisherfolks' products. Product reputation improves women's position in markets that may lead to economic empowerment.

### **3. Recognition and Importance**

*Increased Confidence.* Because of better economic outcomes for women fisherfolk, their confidence has increased. This kind of confidence is essential for women fisherfolk to continue their roles in the fisheries value chain. Further, this opens more opportunities for women to participate in social and political spheres. Because of participatory approaches, they see themselves as active participants in their own development process where they are given platforms to be heard.

*Community Recognition.* Women fisherfolk garner community recognition since they are now more confident, economically independent and socially active.

Recognizing women fisherfolk is crucial in shifting gender dynamics in fisheries. Because of participatory communication, women are more visible and participative, further reinforcing their empowerment process.

*Sense of Importance.* Acknowledging the contributions of women in the household and community can boost their self-esteem and self-worth. Their heightened sense of importance contributes to their own empowerment. Through participatory communication, they are able to know their value not just inside the household but in the fisheries community and national development.

#### **4. Decision-making**

*Household decision-making.* When women feel important and recognized, they develop their decision-making capacity. This is driven by their self-worth brought about by economic independence and community recognition. Participatory communication is essential in women empowerment because it provides them with opportunities where they are heard and given space. The capacity to decide gives women power over their own lives, at home, and in the community.

*Involvement in Policy-Making.* The highest part of empowerment is when women fisherfolk are given opportunities to engage in policy-making. Women fisherfolk can now influence laws, regulations, and ordinances specific to their needs. In this process, women fisherfolk become active champions of change, participating in governance and advocacy which will eventually influence gender norms and social progress.

The model underscores that participatory communication serves as a tool for transformative change. The cyclical process explains that each process reinforces the next one, which will eventually lead to women empowerment and sustainable development. The Participatory Communication Theory underscores the importance of dialogue in creating change within the community. As demonstrated in Figure 2, participatory communication serves as a strong foundation in shaping the empowerment of women. True to Freire's philosophy, empowerment can be achieved if marginalized communities become engaged in dialogue and critical action.

Based on the results of the study, the following propositions are evaluated:

Proposition 1: Participatory communication initiatives lead to an increase in the income of women fisherfolk in Miagao, Iloilo.

The study revealed that participatory communication initiatives contributed to increase in income of women fisherfolk through improving their economic activities. Since women fisherfolk now have knowledge and skills on post-harvest fisheries, they were able to diversify their income which led to more income. Further, the initiatives opened opportunities for women to access market, credit and opportunities which further supported their income generation.

Proposition 2: Participatory communication initiatives foster the empowerment of women fisherfolk through better economic outcomes, enhanced self-esteem, community involvement, and engagement in decision-making processes.

Results from this study showed that through participatory communication, women were provided platforms to speak without fear of reprisal and judgment. Similar to Freire's notion, dialogue should make marginalized communities feel included. Because of their inclusion, women fisherfolk were comfortable to verbalize their concerns and share their experiences. Through effective and open communication in dialogues, needs and problems were identified and assessed. Stakeholders, in return, provided them with capacity-building programs to address those needs. Participatory communication contributed to tangible economic outcomes for women fisherfolk, including income diversification, better access to markets, credit, and opportunities, and improved product reputation. Through these economic benefits, women fisherfolk experienced economic independence that gave them more confidence and sense of importance in the community. Their strengthened visibility and role in the fisheries sector allowed them to have the capacity to decide for themselves and the household and be involved in ordinance-making even just in their own community.

In summary, both propositions are supported by the findings of the study that highlights the transformative potential of participatory communication in empowering women from the fishing community.

Further, findings of this study showed that women's roles are both essential in the economic and social development of the fishing community. Their contributions are not just on fishing and income-generating activities but also on sustaining the household and community. Hence, it is essential to facilitate their empowerment since they are key role players in the fisheries sector.

The process that led to the empowerment of women fisherfolk complements Freire's concept of dialogue as an essential part of promoting collective action from the community. women fisherfolk from Subana are no longer in their "culture of silence"—as Freire described the marginalized—because they are critically conscious of their realities, having the capacity to voice out their opinions and experiences. Similar to Freire's praxis, Subana fishers know how to reflect and act on their reality to transform it.

*If there is only one thing that we can all learn from participatory communication experiences and their mixed results, it is that dialogue is the key for development. - (Gumucio-Dagron, 2008, p. 81)*

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary**

The research question for this study was: How does participatory communication foster empowerment for women fisherfolk in Miagao, Iloilo? The objectives of the study were to (1) describe the roles women played in the fishing sector; (2) explain the process of participatory communication that led to the empowerment of women fisherfolk in Miagao, Iloilo; and (3) develop a model of women empowerment through participatory communication.

The study highlights the crucial role of women in the fisheries value chain, contributing to the economic and social development of the community. Subana women acknowledge that their roles go beyond their household responsibilities, making their empowerment even more essential for the local fisheries sector. Key findings from the study include the importance of participatory communication in facilitating dialogues for women fisherfolk to share their concerns and experiences. Participatory efforts led to the implementation of capacity-building programs. These programs resulted in tangible economic benefits for women that contributed to their confidence, economic independence, and visibility in the community. Their strengthened role in the community enabled them to make decisions for their households and engage in ordinance-making in the barangay.

Generally, this study underscores the role of participatory communication in empowering fishers through facilitating their active participation in their own development

process that will lead to better economic outcomes, community recognition, and involvement in decision-making processes.

## **Conclusion**

Findings revealed that participatory communication fosters empowerment among women fisherfolk in Miagao, Iloilo through giving them an inclusive communication platform in dialogues, addressing their needs and supporting their capacity-building that will facilitate better economic outcomes and strengthened role and independence in the community.

The outcome of participatory efforts opened empowerment pathways among women fisherfolk. Their income-generating and income-diversification activities from the knowledge and skills they learned from participatory initiatives gave them economic empowerment. Their self-confidence, increased visibility, capacity to decide for themselves and the family, and strengthened roles in the fishing community made them achieve psychological and social empowerment. The election of one Subana member as a barangay kagawad and their involvement in ordinance-making gave them more representation in the community, contributing to their political empowerment.

Since women's roles in fisheries are considered essential in the value chain, there should be a continuous implementation of participatory communication interventions. All processes in the model of empowerment should be implemented with participatory communication as its foundation. The findings of the study further strengthened the role of participatory communication in ensuring that women, who are often not recognized for their contributions in fisheries, are heard and included in decisions that concern their lives.

Further research can conduct assessment on the long-term impacts of participatory communication in community empowerment. The locale of the study can also be broadened and comparative analysis of cases in the province of Iloilo can be explored. Addressing these implications can help women fisherfolk and other marginalized communities experience sustainable development.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher has the following recommendations:

- To implement the model of women empowerment through participatory communication at the municipal level. Collect feedback from stakeholders in the pilot implementation of the model to make necessary adjustments in the programs.
- Using the model, to further investigate the long-term impacts of participatory communication on the empowerment of women fisherfolk including their socio-economic status and community development. Since this research was constrained with time and financial resources, it is also recommended to broaden the locale of the study to conduct comparative analysis of cases in the province of Iloilo.
- To provide sustained support on the resources of women fisherfolk for them to continue and expand their income-generating activities. The local government unit should regularly implement dialogues with women and create a community where women are safe and heard, where they feel support and oneness, and where they are recognized as an essential part of this society

- To explore other forms of communication strategies, including but not limited to participatory videos, community radios, and social media, to further amplify the voices of women fisherfolk and widen their reach and visibility. Diverse communication tools can serve as advocacy tools to raise awareness on the challenges faced by women in marginalized communities and showcase their crucial roles in the fisheries sector.
- To advocate for policies supporting gender equality, empowerment, sustainable development, and community participation in the fishing industry. Local authorities should promote inclusive decision-making especially on policies that concern women.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Letter of Request

13 February 2024

ENGR. RICHARD S. GARIN  
Municipal Mayor  
Miagao, Iloilo

Dear Mayor Garin,

I am Roeyna May Famisaran Tosino, a University Extension Associate of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs of the University of the Philippines Visayas. I am currently a third-year student at the University of the Philippines Open University taking up Master in Development Communication.

For my thesis entitled, "Exploring the Role of Participatory Communication on the Livelihood and Empowerment of Women Fishers in Miagao, Iloilo," I am planning to conduct a case study on the participatory communication interventions and its role on the livelihood and empowerment of women fishers in the municipality. The subject of my research will be the Subana Women's Organization in Brgy. Baybay Norte.

In line with this, I am requesting for your permission to conduct the study in the barangay. Further, I would also like to request for the following data from the Municipal Agriculture Office:

1. Total number of fisherfolk in Miagao categorized per barangay (2023)
2. Total number of women fisherfolk in Miagao, corresponding their respective fishing activities (2023)
3. Participatory communication interventions implemented for women fishers for the past five (5) years

As a Miagaowanon, I believe that this research will be beneficial for the development of women fishers in the municipality. The results of this study will also help the local government unit craft inclusive policies for the betterment of women in Miagao.

I have attached the background of my study for your reference. Thank you very much.

Truly yours,

ROEYNA MAY FAMISARAN TOSINO

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussion

1. What are the participatory communication initiatives you have been involved in?  
Can you describe them?
2. How are you informed about these initiatives?
3. What do you think of these participatory initiatives when it comes to your income? What was its effect on your income?
4. Can you describe what you felt when you were engaging in these initiatives?
5. What do you think were the elements of these participatory initiatives that improved your livelihood?
6. What opportunities did you experience after engaging in these initiatives?
7. How is your income from selling fish?
8. How is your reputation as members of Subana Women's Organization?
9. Did participatory communication initiatives help you in terms of decision-making?  
In what way?
10. As a member of Subana and after participating in these initiatives, how do you feel as a woman?
11. What are the reasons that you do not attend participatory communication initiatives?
12. What do you think the barangay and LGU can do to improve your livelihood and increase your participation in these initiatives?
13. What can you suggest to make these participatory initiatives more impactful in your lives?

*\*Some questions not included here were raised during the focus group discussion for clarification.*