

Chapter 3 LIFE IN THE TOWN

(Municipal History and Socio-economic Profile)

In 1952, migrants from Manamoc island in Cuyo, one of the oldest settlements in Palawan, arrived in what is now the present town site of Barangay Poblacion. At that time, the place was called *Malagnang* (muddy) and was part of the capital town of Puerto Princesa. The arrival of more settlers from Cuyo and its neighboring island, Agutaya, led to the creation of the municipality of San Vicente (after Saint Vincent Ferrer, the town's patron saint) in June 1969 by virtue of Republic Act 5821.

It took three years before San Vicente could function as a municipality carved out of two neighboring towns. In 1972, the municipal councils of Puerto Princesa and Taytay passed successive resolutions (in May and June, respectively) giving autonomy and some of their territories to San Vicente. That same year, the municipality of San Vicente held its first election. The mayors who have served the town since then are:

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1972 to 1979	Digno Pablico
1979 to 1986	Daniel Yayen
1986 to 1998	Antonio Alvarez

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This chapter contains information on San Vicente's economy and social structure, an important input to planning for coastal resource management. It includes consolidated data taken from results of group interviews conducted during the PCRA process in the coastal barangays (Table 3.1), as well as data from secondary sources. More specific details about the coastal barangays are presented in the next chapter.

The TAO of the municipal government provided the following information about San Vicente:

NUMBER OF BARANGAYS:	10
NUMBER OF SITIOS:	64 (coastal 38, inland 26)
POPULATION:	21,016 (1995 census)
POPULATION GROWTH RATE:	6.65%
PER CAPITA INCOME:	P5,252 (1986 data)
LAND TENURE:	80% of farmers own their land (1986 data)
TOP ETHNIC GROUPS:	Cebuano, Agutaynon, Tagalog, Cuyunon
LANGUAGES SPOKEN:	Tagalog, Cebuano, Cuyunon, Agutaynon, Ilonggo
RELIGION:	Roman Catholic, Iglesia ni Kristo, Pentecostal, Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist

The working age (15 to 64 years old) population in 1995 was 12,069 — more than half the total number of residents; less than 50% was economically active.

THE LOCAL ECONOMY

A fourth-class municipality, San Vicente derives much of its revenues from the fishing industry. Data from the municipal government show that fishing is considered as the main source of income by about 48% of families, followed by farming (33%) and employment in the public or private sector (9%). The peak months for fishing are May to July, while the lean season is from November to January. Fish production from August to December 1996 reached 150,000 kg. Beach tourism, especially in Port Barton, is another source of livelihood.

Interviews also revealed the following sources of livelihood:

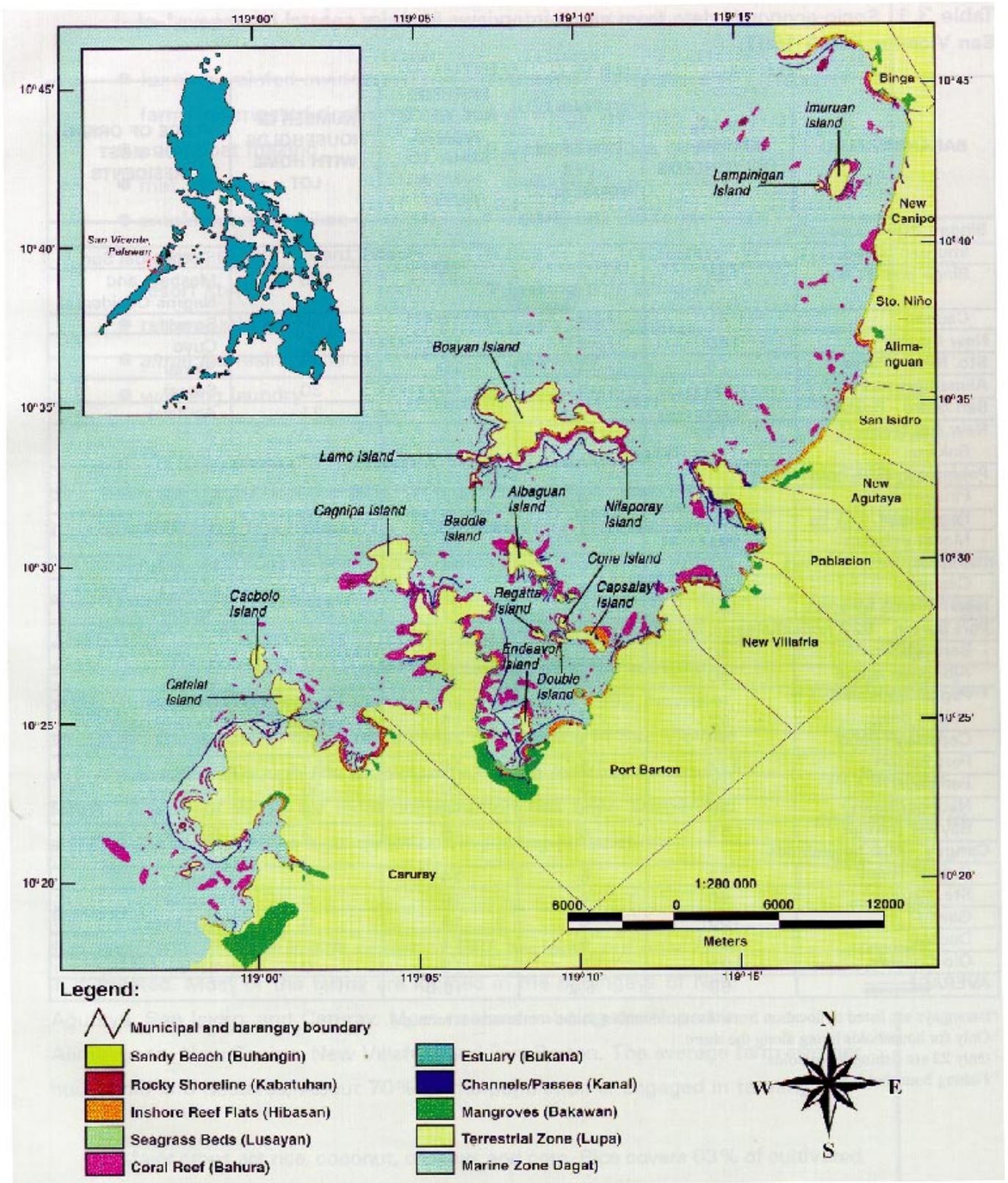


Figure 3.1. Coastal habitats and political boundaries of San Vicente, Palawan.

Table 3.1. Socio-economic data from group interviews in major coastal barangays* of San Vicente, PCRA 1997.

BARANGAY/ SITIO	TOTAL NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	AVERAGE NO. OF CHILDREN PER HOUSEHOLD	EARLIEST AGE WHEN WOMEN START TO HAVE A FAMILY	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH HOME LOT	PLACE OF ORIGIN OF MOST RESIDENTS
Binga - 305 households					
Imuruan Island	60	4	18	9	Surigao del Sur
Binga and Boding	148	6	17	76	Masbate and Negros Occidental
Cauban	97	4	16	3 ¹	Samar
New Canipo	140	5	19	all	Cuyo
Sto. Niño - Purok 1	26	5	20	0	Samar
Alimanguan - Purok 1	80	5	15	30	Samar
San Isidro - Bokbok	24	4	20	21	Agutaya
New Agutaya - Bukana	13	5	15	0	Bicol
Poblacion - 517 households					
Pinagmalucan	50	6	16	20	Mindoro
Panindigan	200	5	no data	10	Masbate
Macatumbalen	194 ²	7	16	19 ³	Agutaya
Daplac	36	6	14	5	Masbate
Casoyan	37	5	14	7	Cebu and Samar
New Villafria (proper)	300	5	17	240	Agutaya
Port Barton - 622 households					
Barongbong	40	7	15	29	Samar
Albague Island	60	6	14	0	Samar
Pagdanan (shore area only)	52	4	15	houses are on stilts	Cagayan de Oro
Capsalay Island	77	7	14	1	Masbate, Samar
Port Barton	273	5	18	253	Cuyo
Pamoayan	40	5	20	35	Agutaya
Naonao/Bigaho	25	4	16	18	Mindoro
Baybay Daraga	55	6	15	3	Samar
Caruray - 406 households					
Catalat Island	32	5	14	6	Samar
Sta. Cruz	46	4	16	6	Samar
Gawid	103	6	14	0	Masbate
Decala	120	6	14	almost all	Masbate
Old Caruray	105	5	18	0	Iloilo
AVERAGE	90	5.2	15.6		

*Barangays are listed by location from the northernmost to the southernmost barangay.

¹ Only for households living along the shore.

² Only 22 are fishing households.

³ Fishing households only.

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|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ● farming (rainfed swidden | farms or irrigated ricefields) |
| ● pumpboat making | ● trade in various goods |
| ● mat weaving | including fish |
| ● employment as silica mine | ● selling cooked food |
| worker, security guard, beach | ● hog or poultry production |
| resort staff | ● making nipa shingles |
| ● rattan gathering | ● copra production |
| ● <i>almaciga</i> resin gathering | ● carpentry |
| ● washing laundry | ● cashew nut gathering |
| ● seaweed farming | |
| ● charcoal making | |

In the past, town residents also engaged in commercial logging, their main source of income after fishing. The earliest accounts of logging in this town date back to the 1930s, when foreigners discovered the rich timber resources of San Vicente. Since then, the primary forests of the municipality had attracted loggers like a magnet. In fact, until recently, San Vicente was known as a logging town, primarily because of the operation of Pagdanan Timber Products. Following the acceptance of the Strategic Environmental Plan for the province in 1992, however, a total logging ban took effect in Palawan, and logging in San Vicente virtually stopped. Though the municipality has an existing communal forest, cutting of wood for local consumption has been suspended pending the resolution of legal questions regarding jurisdiction.

Agriculture

San Vicente's agricultural land covers 12,685 hectares, but only 27% is cultivated. Most of the farms are located in the barangays of New Agutaya, San Isidro, and Caruray. More riceland is being developed in Alimanguan, New Canipo, New Villafria, and Port Barton. The average farm size per household is 3 hectares. About 70% of the population is engaged in farming.

Major crops are rice, coconut, cashew, and corn. Rice covers 63% of cultivated land, but only 35% of the area planted to rice is irrigated. In 1996, after years of shortage of this staple, the town achieved self-sufficiency in rice.

The average annual yields of selected crops (in kilos per hectare) are:

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Rice - 1,050

Coffee - 625

Coconut - 621

Corn - 2,450

Cashew - 3,132

Legumes - 459

San Vicente has a Rural Agricultural Center built under the Second Palawan Integrated Area Development Project (SPIADP); the municipal agriculturist holds office in the Center with two other staff. The SPIADP, which ended in 1997, also operated a Carabao Breeding Center in the municipality. In addition, the town operates hillside farms, rice technology demonstration projects, and irrigation projects. A vaccination program has kept livestock relatively safe from infectious diseases. Moreover, unlike other municipalities, which have become infested with the mango pulp weevil, San Vicente has been declared free of the pest and has strictly enforced quarantine laws.

Cottage Industries

Mat weaving is a popular economic activity, especially for the womenfolk. Local residents also make ropes, furniture, charcoal, baskets, boats, metal craft, hammocks, and candy to augment their families' income. In the town center, there is enough business going for skilled tailors and seamstresses, and food preservation is gaining popularity. Still, fish and squid drying remains the primary source of income for most fishing communities.

Tourism

San Vicente has some noteworthy attractions — white sand beaches, coral reefs, and waterfalls, to name a few — but the tourism industry in the municipality remains largely undeveloped. In 1996, only 734 tourists visited the town, according to a municipal survey of lodging houses. Most of them stayed in Port Barton, where most tourist facilities are located. Port Barton is a popular destination for “backpackers” from Europe.

A potential tourist attraction, which the municipal government is eyeing for development, is Long Beach, a 14-kilometer stretch from New Agutaya to Alimanguan. Waterfalls are found in Pamoayan, Matalangao, and Little Baguio which are ideal for nature hikes and bird-watching treks. In addition, scuba divers have identified 17 dive sites in Boayan island, around Port Barton, and near the Capari Dive Camp in the Poblacion where coral reefs form colorful underwater gardens. Wreck diving in Albaguen island is another potential attraction.

BASIC SERVICES

Education

There are 23 elementary schools spread over the municipality and four secondary schools in Poblacion, Port Barton, Caruray, and Alimanguan. Municipal records showed that, in 1996, a total of 4,245 pupils were enrolled in elementary schools while 1,314 students attended high school.

In many coastal areas, primary school (Grade 1- 4) is the only educational service available. This is because there are not enough teachers, and these areas are not easily accessible. In the sitios of Daplac and Casoyan in Boayan island, which is part of Barangay Poblacion, many school-age children have yet to start formal education because the schools are too far from their homes. Since most parents cannot afford to send their children to high school, many people start having families at a young age, some as early as 14 years old.

Health

The Rural Health Unit in the Poblacion has a 3-bed facility that can handle minor surgery. Personnel include one municipal health officer/doctor, 4 nurses, 6 midwives, a rural sanitary inspector, a microscopist, and 2 dentists. There are also 3 barangay health stations with nurses and barangay nutrition scholars in Alimanguan, Port Barton, and Caruray. The staff of Alayka-San Vicente, a special project of the Provincial Health Office, has organized Barangay Health Committees and conducted training for health workers. The town has one ambulance.

The most common illnesses are malaria, respiratory diseases, and diarrhea. In 1996, the three leading causes of death were pneumonia, tuberculosis, and measles. There is no central waste disposal system, so most residents burn or bury their garbage. About 43% of the population have closed pit toilets (known as Antipolo type), 12% have open pit toilets, 22.45% have water-sealed toilets, and the rest have no toilets at all.

Many women have expressed interest in family planning, but pertinent health services and medical supplies are not always available.

Welfare

The local government has implemented a Self-Employment Assistance Program that

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provides capital for livelihood projects; a total of 55 families used the program in 1996. There are also programs for women, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens. Day care centers have been established in all barangays for pre-school children, who are provided supplemental feeding in addition to educational services by teachers.

Security

The San Vicente police force is composed of 12 people, including the station commander. The municipality has a relatively low crime rate (only 10 cases were reported in 1996). The local police has organized Barangay Intelligence Networks for support in fighting crime and monitoring illegal possession of firearms.

Transportation

Because of the poor condition of the dirt roads linking the municipality to the rest of the province, very few buses and jeepneys ply the route on a daily basis. The service is not very reliable. Former logging roads provide a link between the barangays, but these are seldom used.

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Northern barangays rely on sea transport as there are no roads. Three vessels (locally called *bati*) ply the Manila route; another goes to Iloilo. Two seaports in the Poblacion and Pagdanan are used as docking areas by most boats.

A private airstrip, with a length of 900 meters and a width of 100 meters, is found near the Poblacion. It is suitable for light aircraft only.

Water

Most households get their water from open shallow wells, hand pumps, and deep wells. The rest are dependent on rivers, springs, and rainwater. Level II and Level III waterworks projects in some barangays provide potable water supply to residents.

Electricity

Private generating sets and the Palawan Electric Cooperative (PALECO) power plant serve some 10% of all households. Electric power for the 195 registered members of PALECO is usually available from 6 to 10 in the evening only. The majority of residents (85%) use kerosene lamps.

In almost all the coastal communities we visited, we noted the presence of a “beta house” (a place where videos are shown). For a minimal fee of P5 or even a can of cashew nuts for those who have no money, residents can watch mostly action movies. Often, the owner of the “beta house” also owns the generator which supplies electricity to barangay residents for a monthly fee ranging from P50 to P70 for a 20-watt fluorescent lamp.

Communication

There is a post office located in the Poblacion but there are not enough letter carriers and transportation facilities serving the area, so service is very slow. A solar-powered telephone system provides direct dial service to residents. The provincial government-owned Palawan Radio Communications System and a municipal two-way radio system connect the town with other barangays and Puerto Princesa. Television is used mostly for videotaped movies as San Vicente is not yet served by any TV station. Most households own a radio, which receives clear broadcast signals from Puerto Princesa and some Manila radio stations.

FINANCE

The municipality’s sources of income include the annual internal revenue allotment (IRA) from the national government, licenses and business taxes, operating and miscellaneous fees, and grants from various agencies. The total income of the municipality for 1996 was P20,721,742. Personnel services, operating expenses, and special projects of the municipality take up most of the expenditures and amounted to P20,711,504 in 1996.

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