

From ideas to action: A review of implementing HELP principles in river basins with limited resources and capacity#

Declan Hearne^{1*}, Ruth Gamboa² and Verna Marie Monsanto²

¹ *HELP Davao, 248 Arayat St., Central Park Phase I, Bangkal, Davao City, Philippines*

² *The University of Philippines, Davao, Mindanao, Philippines*

Abstract

Davao City is overlapped by 8 watersheds all flowing into the Davao Gulf. These watersheds exemplify a range of cultural, environmental and economic stresses from the continual conversion of natural habitat for agricultural, urban, and industrial uses. These changes and their consequent pressures have not gone unnoticed and have surfaced through various channels into the political and public arenas. However, despite the awareness and actions from various sectoral initiatives, there is continual deterioration of trends across the ecosystems.

Hydrology for Environment, Life and Policy (HELP) is a global initiative which encourages policy makers, water managers, scientists, and end-users to work together within a field-oriented context to closely integrate science into government policies and management strategies. Through Davao City's participation in the HELP Network, the management of watersheds and water has improved not through the acquisition of additional external funds but by the increase in opportunity for dialogue between 'water-related' communities, which resulted to enhanced stakeholder understanding of issues and increased technical capacity of all involved.

This paper demonstrates how the HELP principles can be applied in basins with limited resources and how these can positively influence the attitudes and behaviour of stakeholders. It highlights how HELP can act as a catalyst to motivate learning, engage competing sectors, and build collaboration to create science-backed frameworks for good water governance.

Keywords: HELP, watershed, ecosystems, twinning, community management, empowerment, good governance, collaboration, conflict