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Our heartfelt gratitude to

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amidst pain, hunger and want.*

Kubkub Research Team

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Children of the Kubkub Fishery

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

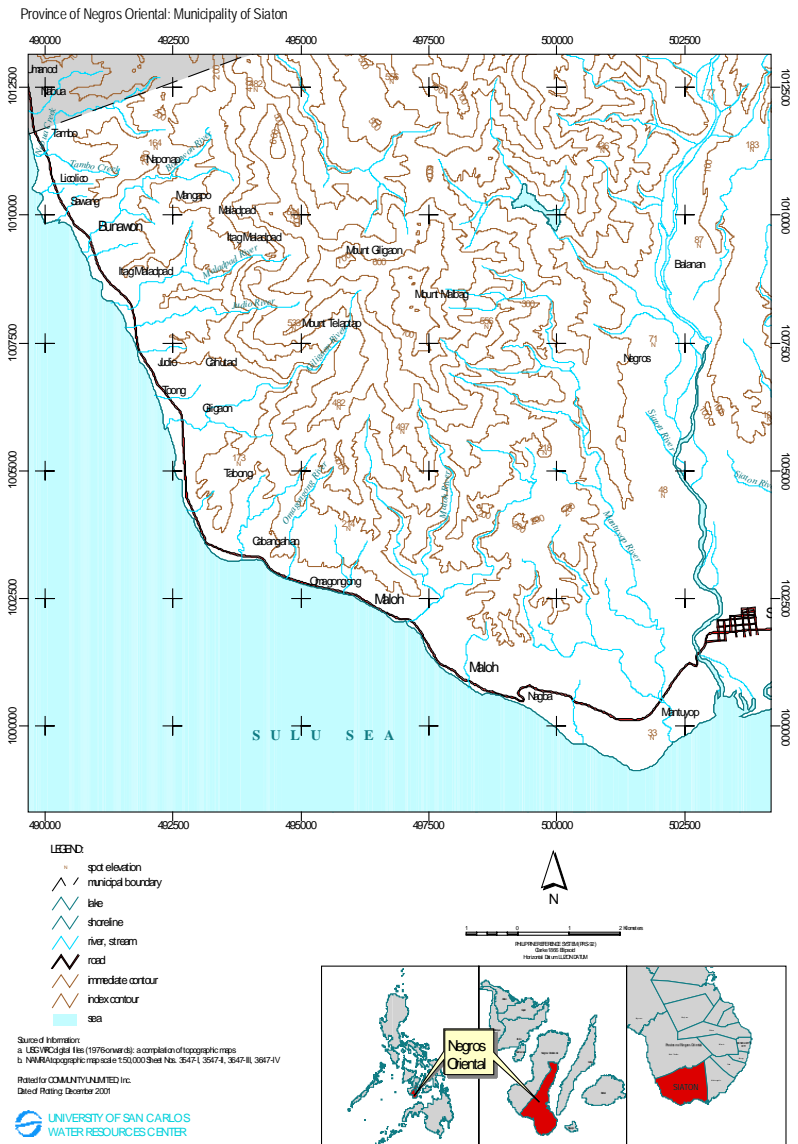
- ♥ Equality regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or nationality
- ♥ Healthy mind and physical development
- ♥ A name and a Nationality
- ♥ Sufficient Food, Housing and Medical Care
- ♥ Special Care if Handicapped
- ♥ Love, Understanding and Care
- ♥ Free Education, Play and Recreation
- ♥ Immediate aid in the event of disasters and emergencies
- ♥ Protection from Cruelty, Neglect and Exploitation
- ♥ Protection from persecution and to an upbringing in the spirit of worldwide brotherhood and peace

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The problem of child labor in the fishing sector has caught public attention for decades now. It was first highlighted in the mid-1980's with the national tri-media's exposure of *muro-ami* fishing, a form of commercial fishing which was heavily criticized for utilizing child labor and for causing destruction to the marine environment. Investigations resulted from the intense media attention, until finally the Philippine government in 1986 banned *muro-ami*.

In 1994, an alternative form of *muro-ami* was introduced, the *paaling* fishing method. In July 1998, national attention was once again drawn to the involvement of child labor in *paaling* fishing with the news report of about 29 crewmen's escape from a fishing boat, among them minors.

The province of Negros Oriental in Central Visayas is a major sending province of fishermen to *paaling*



5. Work involving operation of transport vehicles or other electrical, power or explosion driven machineries/gadgets such as:
 - ♥ Operating agricultural machineries in mechanized farming, Metal work and welding, Driving or operating heavy equipment such as payloaders, backhoes, bulldozers, cranes, pile driving equipment, trailers, road rollers, tractor lifting appliances, scaffold winches, hoists, excavators, loading machines, etc., driving or operating trucks, buses, jeepneys, taxis, tricycles, single motorcycles and ferry boats, operating/setting motor-driven machines such as sawing and wood-working machine, press machine, etc, operating power-driven tools such as drills, jack hammers, etc.
6. Work involving exposure to ionizing and hazardous non-ionizing radiation such as:
 - ♥ Assisting in laboratories and x-ray work, welding, microwave frequencies and ultraviolet rays
7. Work involving particular physical strain and handling of heavy loads such as:
 - ♥ Stevedoring, working in airport hangars, working in warehouses
8. Work involving exposures to extreme levels of noise, vibration, heat, cold, high or low pressures such as:
 - ♥ Deep sea fishing/diving, working underground, working in furnaces or kilns, firefighting, working in discotheques, working in video arcades, operating power-driven tools such as drills, jack hammers, etc.
9. Work involving exposures to harmful biological agents (bacteria, virus, parasites, fungi, etc.) such as:
 - ♥ Working in abattoirs or slaughterhouses, garbage collecting, handling of animal manure in poultry houses or fertilizer (compost and other decaying matter included) in farming, working in docks, working in hospitals or other health care facilities, embalming and as undertakers
10. All work and activities which are conducted at night to early morning or undertakings which require a minor person to be on call anytime at night to perform services such as:
 - ♥ Working in restaurants at night

HAZARDOUS WORK and ACTIVITIES TO PERSONS
BELOW 18 YEARS OF AGE

Article 139 (c) of Book III of the Labor Code of the Philippines, as amended, prohibits the employment of a person below eighteen (18) years of age in an undertaking which is hazardous or deleterious in nature.

DOLE Department Order No. 04 Series of 1999 declares the following work and activities as hazardous to persons below eighteen (18) years of age:

1. Work and activities in the actual regular operation of the following are totally banned:
 - ♥ Mining (refers to mining activities involving exploration, feasibility development, utilization and processing), Quarrying, Logging, Construction, Manufacture or handling of pyrotechnics
2. Work and activities that may prejudice morals such as in:
 - ♥ Lewd shows (strip teasers, burlesque dancers, and the like), Cabarets, Bars (KTV, karaoke bars), Dance halls, Bath houses and massage clinics, Escort service, Gambling halls and places
3. Work involving exposures to substances or composites (including dusts and fibers at harmful level which are identified as: toxic, corrosive, poisonous, noxious, explosive, flammable and combustible liquids and other dangerous chemicals including pharmaceuticals such as in:
 - ♥ Tanning, Pesticide spraying, Blacksmithing, hammersmiths, forging, Extracting lard and oil, Tiling and greasing of heavy machinery, Fiber and plastic preparing, Bleaching, dyeing, and finishing of textiles using chemicals, Embalming and as undertakers, Painting or as finishers in metal craft industries, Applying of adhesive/solvent in footwear, handicraft and woodwork industries, Brewing and distilling of alcoholic beverages, Recycling of batteries and containers or materials used or contaminated with chemicals, Working as gasoline station attendant, Garbage collecting
4. Work on roofs or at exposed and unguarded heights of 2 meters and above, such as:
 - ♥ Installing and repairing of telephone, telegraph and electrical lines, cable filters, painting buildings, window cleaning, fruit picking involving climbing

expeditions. But in December 2000, another form of deep-sea fishing that also employs children was discovered through a rapid field appraisal that was conducted by ILO-IPEC. This one is called *kubkub* or ring-net fishery which comprise a big chunk of the small and medium scale industry in the province.

Recognizing the need to verify and ascertain the extent of the involvement of children in *kubkub* fishing operations, ILO-IPEC commissioned Community Unlimited Inc. to document *kubkub* fishing and the involvement of children in this type of fishery.

In April to August 2001, researchers observed *kubkub* operations in barangays Bunawon and Maloh in Siaton, Negros Oriental. Some *kubkub* operators, boat crew, school teachers, parents, and children were interviewed. Some of them participated in the focus group discussions (FGD).

The highlights of the research are presented in this booklet so that the general public may be enlightened about child labor in *kubkub* fishing.

What is kubkub?

Kubkub is a fishing technique that employs the ring-net method for commercial fishing. "*Kubkub*" is a Cebuano term which has no literal meaning at all. It was coined by early *kubkub* fishers and has evolved into other terms.

If you hear the words "*sensord*", "*lantsd*" and "*baby purse seiners*", these are just other names for *kubkub* used in different fishing communities in the Philippines.

What is needed to have a Kubkub fishery?

Kubkub is a capital-intensive fishery that needs at least a one million-peso investment. It uses a mother boat, a light boat, a ring-net of 70-80 fathoms depth, a winch to close the net, strong, bright lights and "*payao*" or fish-aggregating device. This *payao* is made of buoys with rope anchored to the seabed and tied with coconut fronds to attract pelagic* species.

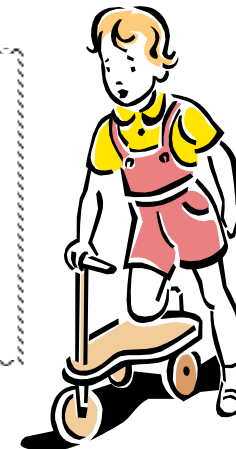
* Pelagic species refer to fish caught in the outer reef zone, oceanic area or commonly known as deep sea.

What else can be done in your community?

Create inter-agency local task forces which can monitor the participation of child laborers in *Kubkub* fishing operations in the area.

In your own small way, reach out to the children, encourage and motivate them to pursue their dreams in life.

Continuously campaign and educate the entire populace in your community about children's rights.



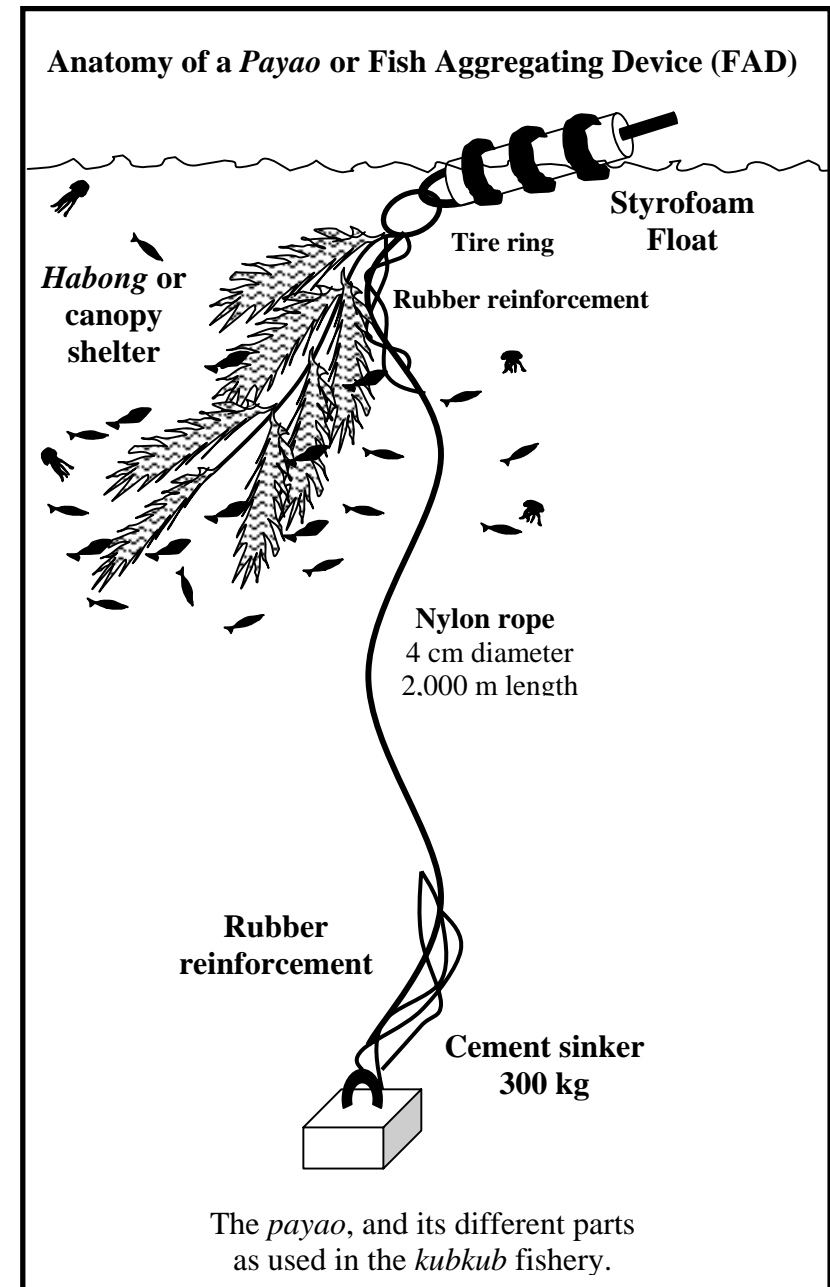
Seek the support of NGOs, LGUs and other private or government institutions to provide alternative non-hazardous livelihood and to support the poverty alleviation program.

Encourage local government officials who are also *Kubkub* operators or who are working in *Kubkub* to be trendsetters and role models.

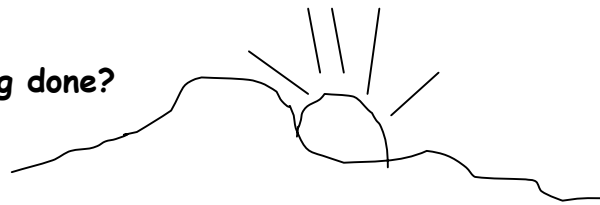
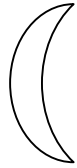
Assess the needs and interests of the child laborers. While it is ideal that these children go back to school, alternative activities and skill development and enhancement programs must be provided to children who may not be interested to go back to school anymore.

What has been done to address the needs of children?

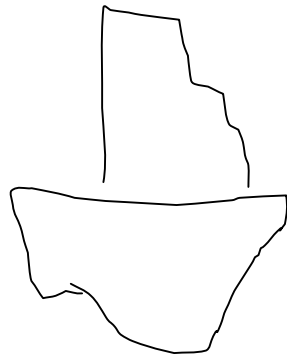
- In April 8, 2001, NOFBOC (Negros Oriental Fishing Boat Operators Cooperative) signed a letter of agreement with concerned parties including DOLE, BFAR, and ILO-IPEC to eliminate child labor in *kubkub* fishing. In this agreement, specific modalities for cooperation and collaboration are well defined and articulated.
- An inter-agency monitoring team composed of DOLE, BFAR, Local PNP and ILO-IPEC was established and operationalized. This team is tasked to conduct announced or unannounced monitoring in areas where the participation of child laborers in *kubkub* persists.
- A social protection intervention programme is being implemented in Siaton, where child labor in *kubkub* fishing is rampant.
- Alternative forms of advocacy through folk theater is being organized and implemented. The group of performers is composed of former *kubkub* child laborers.



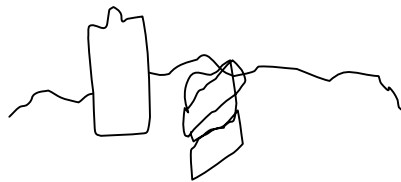
How is kubkub fishing done?



Kubkub fishing starts in the evening and involves 20-25 crewmembers on board a 15-tonner boat. Preparation includes bringing fuel, food, water and other supplies in the mother boat. It then sails out 15 km* offshore of Siaton, while the light boat or *manunuga* has already positioned itself in one of the *payaos*.



fishing starts in the evening involving 20-25 crew including some children on board



The mother boat moves from *payao* to *payao* searching for good fish volume determined by either the use

not in school and have to work at night, they are deprived of their right to a full education, a healthy mind and physical development, sufficient food, housing and medical care, immediate aid in times of disaster and emergency, protection from cruelty, neglect and exploitation and most of all of love, understanding and care.

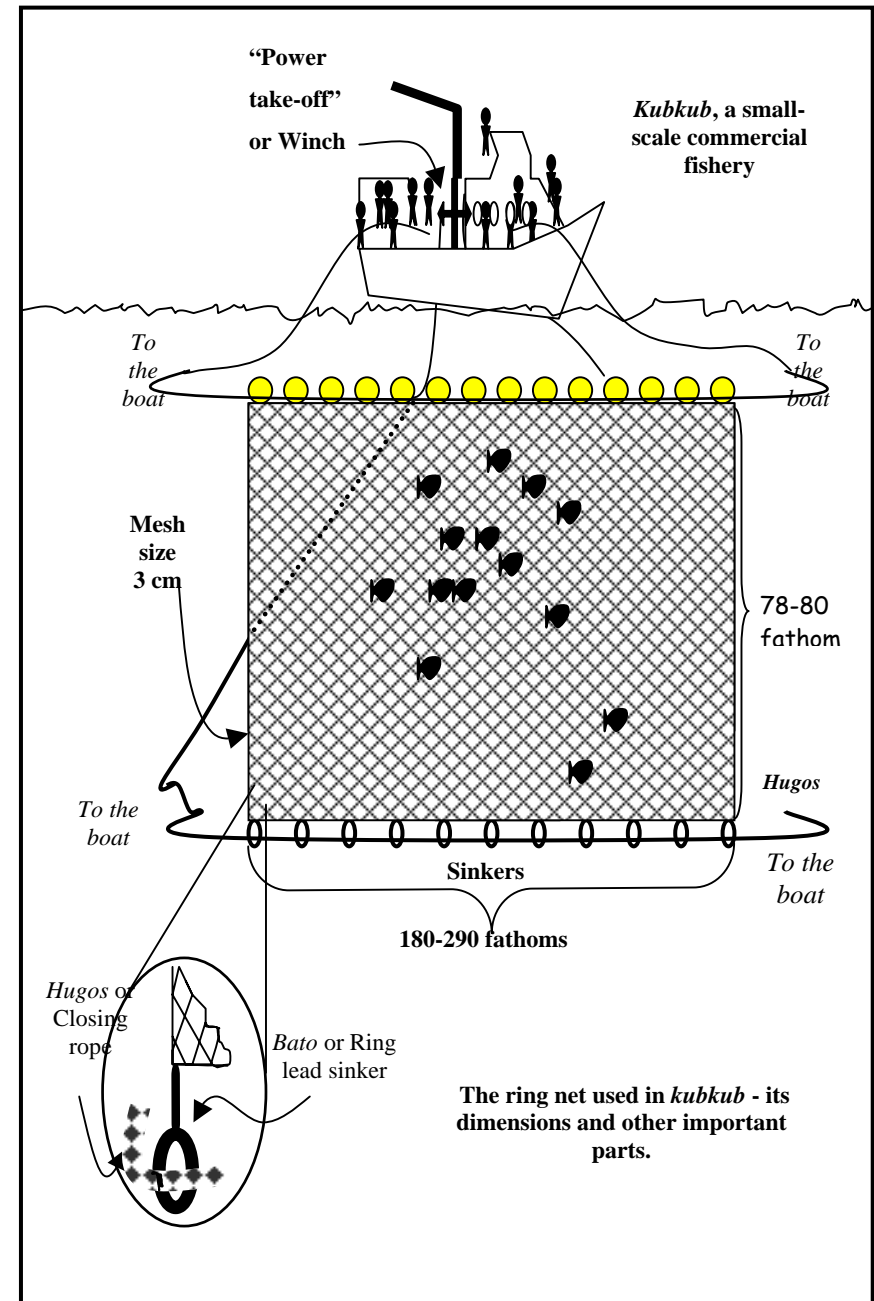


* The law prohibits commercial fishing within 15 kms from the shoreline of municipal waters. However, this is not followed by all commercial boat owners/operators.

What are the other negative effects on children?

Children are deprived of school because they are too tired to attend school after fishing the whole night. They are attracted to the idea that money is easy to come by although they are very much under paid in terms of the share of the income. Some children are also influenced at an early age to drink, smoke, or gamble since they have the money.

Working in *kubkub* may be considered by some people as child's play but the truth is, because these children are



of a fish scanner or based on the catch volume (using hook and line) of the light boat from that payao. When satisfied with the volume, the mother boat makes a circling path around the payao and a diver jumps bringing a flashlight which serves as marker for the starting point.

Immediately after, the net is released around the light boat and payao, which serves as the center point.

After the mother boat makes a complete circle, a lead weight is released to close the bottom of the net. This mechanism is similar to a rope closing a sling bag. Once the net is secured, the net is pulled manually into the boat

and the netful of fish caught are placed in coolers or styroboxes with ice.

the mother boat sails out to distant fishing grounds searching for a good fish volume from one payao to another



get used to the work they start to feel stronger and more capable of performing their tasks. They consider this also as a training ground for their future.

Apart from these tremors of a neophyte, children are also exposed to risks and dangers. The most common accidents include (1) falling off the boat, (2) drowning, (3) getting burned due to skin-machine contact, (4) getting a foot or leg caught in the winch, and (5) getting entangled with the ropes. Some of these accidents could be fatal such as drowning.

Sleepwalking or getting thrown out of the boat and into the sea sometimes happen to children who fall asleep. Those whose extremities get caught in the winch may also lose part of or their entire limb. These accidents leave scars in the memories of the parents and the children. Those who lose one of their limbs have to live with this impairment for the rest of their lives.



Risks and Dangers of *Kubkub* Fishing

Like paaling or muro-ami, children are also exposed to work hazards in *kubkub* fishing. Most of the time, their first experience in this work is very tough especially for children who get seasick. Sometimes, they just vomit the whole night and get dizzy all the time. Initially they are afraid of falling from the boat and that a storm might suddenly come. Most children say they are not up to the tasks and find their work difficult at the start. As they

Who are members of the crew?

The crew of the *kubkub* is organized into a hierarchy of positions with varied functions. This structure is used as the bases for the sharing system.

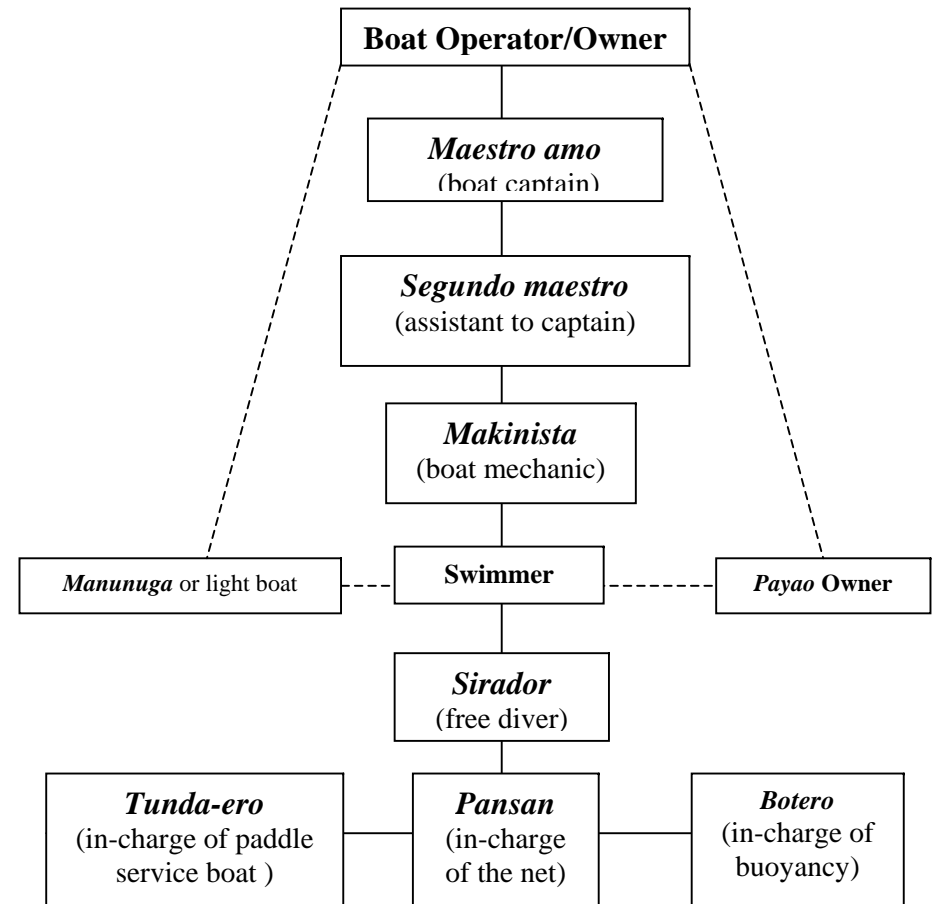


Figure 2. Organizational structure of the kubkub

Sharing System

There are two sharing schemes in *kubkub* namely, half-sharing (50:50) and *dies por uno* (10;1). Of these two, the *dies por uno* is more commonly practiced. In this scheme, fishermen get one (1) box for every ten (10) boxes of fish caught. The *Maestro amo* then sells their share to fish traders and divides the income equally among the crew. The crew are also given fish for consumption. The operator shoulders all the expenses incurred in the operation.

In half-sharing, the net income (gross proceeds minus all expenses), is equally divided into two shares. One share is for the operator and the other share is equally divided among the crew including the officials. However, the owner gives additional incentives from his share to the officials.

The crew get paid on a daily, weekly or monthly basis depending on the operator's practice.

engage in these maintenance activities during the rest periods.

Tambobo is a place where you can mix business with pleasure. There are restaurants, billiards, videoke-karaoke joints where *kubkub* child and adult laborers frequent to release their stress and have some fun.



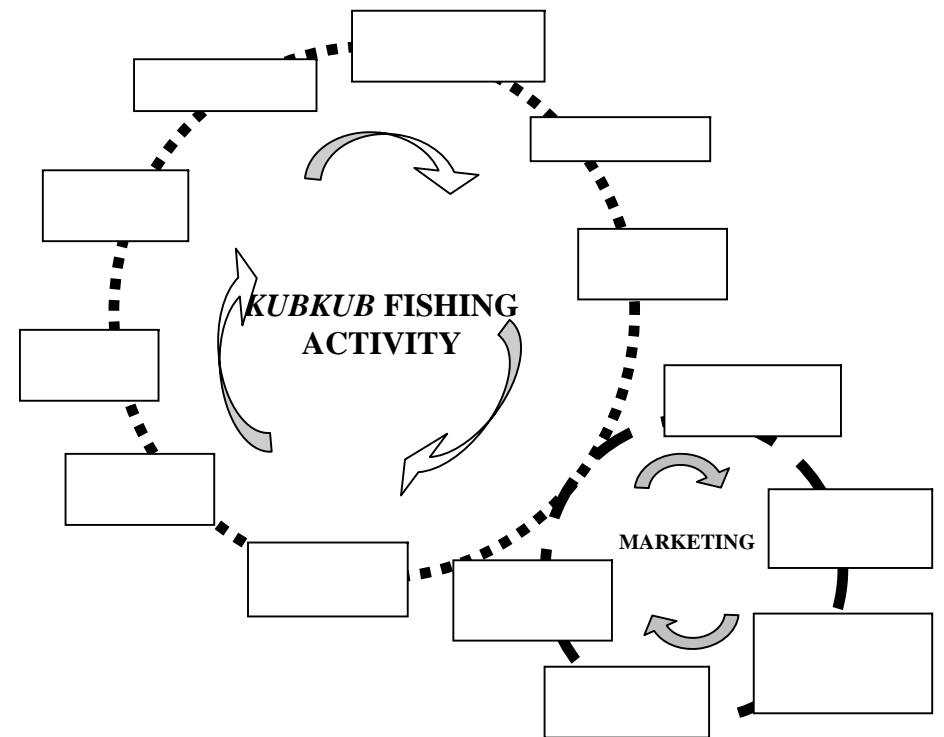


When their tasks are done for the day, they go home and sleep the whole morning. Sometimes, they extend their sleeping hours until after lunch.

Stormy days and full moons are off-fishing periods. *Kubkub* vessels are brought to Tambobo, a small but well secured cove in Siaton where boat repairs, repainting, dry-docking, net repairs are done. Children also earn when they

The diagram below shows the activities in *kubkub* fishery from fishing to marketing. While most children are involved in the fishing activities, there are some boys and girls who also sell fish within the local communities. Sometimes, children peddle fish and vegetables early in the morning.

Flow diagram of the *Kubkub* fishery, from fishing to marketing.



What are the laws that govern Kubkub fishing?

- The Bureau of fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) requires *kubkub* operators to register to monitor the operations and analyze fish catch. However, in April 2001 only 56 operators have registered so far and BFAR expects more *kubkub* operators to register.
- BFAR also requires operators to submit a list of crew who join in their regular fishing trips. Although in the master list no minor is registered, in actuality minors are employed; there are three to four of them in an operation.
- The National Law prohibiting commercial fishing within the 15-km municipal waters is not strictly followed by *kubkub* operators. The operators' main reason is that beyond the 15-km zone limit, their boat is not that capable of facing big waves in the open sea.
- Even if hiring of children below 18 is prohibited, operators are inclined to hire kids on board because they are easy to deal with and are paid less than adults as they



Between 5:00 to 6:00 pm, the preparatory work begins. Children help in carrying ice, coolers, rice, gasoline and other stuff needed in the boat. The cycle of going around the *payao* to scan the sea for fishes, setting the nets, pulling the nets, storing the fish catch in coolers, and fixing the nets for the next round is repeated twice or thrice in a night. In between these cycles, the children get their opportunities to rest. They spend most of their rest period sleeping along the alleys, the pilothouse and anywhere they can lay their heads on.

weights or sinkers (*bira sa batuan*), harvesting or gathering the fish using large scoop nets (*sikpaw*), and arranging the ropes (*likaw sa hugos*).

Usually, the tasks of a *makinista* (boat mechanic), swimmer and *sirador* (free divers) are not assigned to minors.



only do light work and are not married yet. Besides these children come from poor families and therefore need to earn to be able to help their families.

Why are children involved?

Children in *kubkub* ranges from 10-17 years of age. Most of them do not attend school anymore for reasons as varied as too lazy to study, too tired after fishing all night and some say "it will not make any good with my present situation, I rather join fishing to help my parents". Some children join their fathers who are working in *kubkub* while others are independently trying their luck.

There are four types of *kubkub* child laborers, namely:

- (1) full-time child fishers, who fish seven days a week,
- (2) week-end child fishers, who attend school during week-days and join *kubkub* from Friday night until Sunday,
- (3) holiday child fishers, who choose to attend school and join *kubkub* only during the long summer breaks or the shorter holidays within the school year, and
- (4) occasional child fishers, who work when they want to.

FULL TIME KUB-KUB CHILD LABORERS

Tsk, tsk...I don't get paid when I go to school, so I better work in *Kubkub*....

Hmmm...I need money so I will go to school on weekdays and fish during weekends...

WEEK-END KUB-KUB CHILD LABORERS

I am not so keen about working in *Kubkub*, so I will only work there whenever I want to...

I think it's best to join *Kubkub* during summer vacation only....I'll wait

OCCASIONAL KUBKUB CHILD LABORERS

HOLIDAY KUBKUB CHILD LABORERS



What are the tasks of the children?

The children perform varied tasks in kubkub fishing including working as maestro pansan (over-all in-charge of the nets), pansan (net setters and pullers), tundaero (in-charge of service boat) , waterboy, and other errands. They consider the following as their most difficult tasks: pulling the nets (pagbira sa pukot), carrying and lifting the coolers (pag-alsa sa cooler), pulling up the anchor (pagpasaka sa angkla o pundo), carrying ice to the boat, operating the winch (pakaon ug hugos), pulling up the

