



PHILIPPINES

and the Coral Triangle Support Partnership

The Coral Triangle

The Coral Triangle holds the highest diversity of marine life in the world. Spanning 648 million hectares off the coasts of Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste, the ecosystems in the region support the livelihoods of over 340 million people spread across the six countries.

Yet this abundant marine ecosystem is now at risk. Unsustainable fishing, rapid population growth, and the effects of climate change are not only damaging the environment, but also threatening the food security of those who depend on the valuable natural resources in the region.

The waters of Philippines boast some of the most dense marine life in the world and support an enormous fishing trade. As a critical and influential part of the Coral Triangle Initiative, CTSP supports the governments of Philippines to grow in a way that does not threaten ecosystems like turtle nesting beaches, extensive seagrasses meadows, and mangroves.

The Coral Triangle Support Partnership

In 2009, the six nations of the Coral Triangle came together to form the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security (CTI-CFF).

As part of its support to the CTI-CFF, USAID funds the Coral Triangle Support Partnership (CTSP) to ensure that the expertise, traditional knowledge, and history held by each country is well-utilized and shared across the region.

CTSP is unique five-year project which brings together the work of WWF, Conservation International, and The Nature Conservancy.

CTSP matches science with traditional knowledge to provide realistic, practical solutions for conservation and resource management – empowering local people to protect their ecosystems and their livelihoods.



© Jun Lao / CTSP



© Jun Lao / CTSP

The Philippines is the Coral Triangle country at most risk of severe storms as a result of climate change



! COUNTRY FACTFILE

Philippines territory is mainly made up of ocean, so millions of people depend on marine resources to make a living. However, climate change, damaging storms, and depleted fish stocks now threaten people's livelihoods.



© JM Basa

- Around 26 per cent of people currently live below the poverty line in Philippines.
- Poverty in Philippines has been increasing since 2003.
- Low-lying islands are being hit by more frequent and intense storms.
- Numbers of fish caught have plummeted over the last 10 years.
- Decades of dynamite fishing have wiped out many of the reefs and fish populations.
- Only 5% of reefs in Philippines remain in an excellent condition and less than 30% are in good condition.
- Over 75% of mangroves in Philippines have disappeared since 1920.

Working together to help communities adapt to climate change

With so many people making modest livings which rely on the ongoing health of the sea, coastal communities in Philippines are some of the world's most vulnerable when it comes to the impacts climate change.

Supported by CTSP, Conservation International and WWF work with the governments, communities, and NGOs of Philippines to implement a National Plan of Action to address the greatest threats to coastal and marine areas and help communities adapt to climate change.

CTSP supports cooperative work with the governments and people of the Philippines to expand marine protected areas, helping fishermen adopt sustainable fishing methods and support climate change adaptation plans in three key areas: Verde Island Passage, Palawan province, and Tawi-Tawi province.

The lessons learned from these three sites are used to develop models which will be replicated throughout the country. CTSP also supports a national university mentoring network which connects academic experts with community leaders to develop policies and conservation approaches that work.

“Our community is very proud to have managed this MPA. Fish species diversity was observed to have increased and fishermen report increases in their fish catch.”

Mr Domingo Cristobel
President, Acting Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council



Protecting the seas

CTSP supported the creation of a number of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Taytay Bay, amounting to some 20,000 hectares. These areas are set aside to prevent fishing in where fish spawn, allowing fish populations to recover. CTSP also works with the municipal government to monitor and manage the MPAs throughout the bay as a network of connected sites.



Sustainable livelihoods

In Sitangkai in Tawi-Tawi, 40,000 seaweed farmers live in stilt houses 10km off shore. CTSP assists local partners, and national and local governments to protect and sustain the livelihoods of the people living in these vulnerable areas.



Tackling climate change

The people of Looc and Lubang are some of the most vulnerable communities to climate change in the world so they have made tackling climate change their top priority. CTSP contributes to the strengthening of a 1,150 ha, locally-established marine protected area, which focuses specifically on resilience and adaptation to climate change.



Mapping the future

CTSP supports local and national governments to manage their fisheries more efficiently and plan ways to increase numbers of fish in the future. In Palawan and Tawi-Tawi, CTSP helped the provincial government update their maps and protect sites for fish spawning.



SUCCESS STORY: SOWING THE SEEDS OF CHANGE

Two CTSP-funded mangrove reforestation projects bring environmental, social, and economic benefits to communities of Calatagan, in Verde Island Passage.

Mangroves are extremely important in maintaining coastal integrity.

In 2010, CTSP funded mangrove planting in two areas in Batangas Province, which are in Quilitisan Ang Pulo nature reserve and Balibago proposed protected area.

In mangrove replanting areas the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) recently confirmed the presence of juvenile fish and mature crabs, marine life not previously found in the area.

Mangrove cover is now more dense and trees are taller, meaning protection for bird populations, improved water quality, and numbers of shellfish which support the

livelihoods of the local people have significantly increased.

Both sites are now managed by the local communities who have taken advantage of the improved conditions – generating revenue from ecotourism activities, selling mangrove seedlings raised in the nursery, and entrance fees from visitors who come to Calatagan to experience mangrove planting.

The project has inspired various other mangrove planting projects in the Verde Island Passage, including two more assisted by CTSP in Lubang and Looc in Occidental Mindoro Province.

Top : Mayor Sophie Palacio plants a mangrove in Calatagan Municipality in Philippines. CTSP supports Conservation International work in the area, which uses mangroves to protect against climate change impacts.

Credit : © Cheryl Ventura / CTSP