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USAID Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans and Landscapes

Newsletter #5 (October-December 2022)

SIBOL secures DENR support in proper accounting of country's natural resources



The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) last November reiterated its support to develop and implement a toolkit to properly measure and account for the benefits derived from the country's ecosystems, leading toward the production of statistics that accurately reflect the value of the Philippines' natural resources.

"I assure everyone, as far as DENR is concerned, that we will put 100% effort to support the completion of the toolkit including the rollout... It is also a high priority of the [DENR] secretary so I am optimistic of this endeavor," DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau Director Natividad Y. Bernardino said during the Sukat ng Kalikasan: High Conservation Value Area-Natural Capital Accounting Framework Toolkit workshop held in Quezon City. The United States Agency for International Development's Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans and Landscapes project organized the event.

Around 120 participants from government agencies, academia and non-government organizations joined the workshop which focused on gathering feedback and recommendations from environmental experts. Their inputs will be used in the development of a toolkit that will serve as a practical guide in effectively managing the country's natural resources—from planning, assessment, monitoring and addressing of threats. Once the draft toolkit is finalized, government partners can adapt it in their assessment tools and make it part of policy guidelines to craft evidence- and science-based management plans and decision-making tools for biodiversity conservation areas in the country.





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Typhoon survivors benefit from cash-for-work programs



SIBOL, through a cash-for-work program in October, helped indigenous groups from Barangay Marufinas and Tagabinet in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan in clearing logs from trees knocked down by Super Typhoon Odette. The fallen trees were blocking the trails leading up to the almaciga trees which have been supporting the livelihood of locals in the area.

Almaciga, an abundant resource in Palawan, is a timber species known for resin — a synthetic material used as adhesive, plastic, coating, or varnish. When Super Typhoon Odette hit the province in 2021, uprooted and defoliated trees obstructed the trails and prevented locals from harvesting resins. Through the clearing activity, each member of the local community was paid Php300 a day for 20 days to remove obstructions along the trails.

Meanwhile, in Siargao, SIBOL mobilized the Department of Labor and Employment's (DOLE's) Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD)' program last October.

TUPAD employed 212 beneficiaries from municipalities of Sta. Monica, San Isidro and Pilar, Surigao del Norte to collect seedlings/wildlings of native trees, fruit trees and mangroves. It was a 10-day engagement with a daily wage amounting to Php 340.

The program resulted in the collection of an estimated 30,000 seedlings/wildlings. SIBOL will turnover the seedlings to local government units for planting in rehabilitation/reforestation sites in Siargao Island. This will help in the restoration efforts in the disaster-stricken island.





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AUUF reversion workshop held in Iloilo



SIBOL in October conducted the Abandoned, Undeveloped and Underutilized Fishponds 101 Training and Workshop in Iloilo City. Around 60 representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) offices across all regions in the Philippines and from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) participated to discuss concerns on AUUFs.

Some fishponds in the country remain in their poor state mainly because although there is a legal basis for AUUFs to be reverted to DENR's jurisdiction for rehabilitation as mangroves, there is no defined process for how this transition should occur. At present, the majority of AUUFs are still under BFAR's jurisdiction.

In response, the DENR offices, with insights from BFAR, drafted a Department Administrative Order to craft a clear, detailed process of reverting AUUFs as mangrove areas or forestlands under DENR.

SIBOL joins biodiversity symposium



SIBOL in December delivered presentations on ecosystem services valuation and the state of biodiversity in the Philippines during the 30th Philippine Biodiversity Symposium last December 6-9 in Butuan City, organized by the Biodiversity Conservation Society of the Philippines.

The project discussed among 150 attendees from civil society organizations, academia, non-governmental organizations, government agencies, and the private sector the crucial role of ecosystem services and the dire threats to biodiversity in the Philippines.

SIBOL emphasized the declining state of Philippine biodiversity in the past decades, and called for a proper accounting of ecosystem services and biodiversity and its integration in management plans to arrest environmental decline and improve human well-being.





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Palawan LGUs recognize SIBOL



Local government units (LGUs) in Palawan recognized SIBOL and other organizations for their contribution to environmental protection. SIBOL received the Gawad Kalikasan Award from the City Government of Puerto Princesa last November 11; and the Gawad Parangal Para sa Kalikasan 2022 from Quezon LGU last December 14.

The awards recognized SIBOL’s contribution to the conduct of green assessment as part of post-Odette response, mobilization of cash-for-work for the local communities, recognition of indigenous people’s rights, livelihood assistance through savings and credit associations and capacity building through trainings. The awards validate SIBOL’s commitment in protecting biodiversity conservation areas in Palawan through enhancing science-based decision-making, promoting economic incentives, and strengthening law enforcement initiatives.

Siargao MPA established



SIBOL on October 5, 2022 joined the local government unit (LGU) of Burgos and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in launching the Baybay marine protected area (MPA) in Burgos, Siargao Island. The 40-hectare MPA was officially declared as a no-take zone, which means fishing activities are not allowed. SIBOL conducted the marine habitat assessment of Baybay last March to recommend it as an MPA which Burgos LGU adopted in their Ordinance 1 series of 2022. During the launch, USAID donated buoys and four bundles of rope that will serve as boundary delineation for the new MPA.





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Biophysical assessment conducted in Masinloc



Last November 8-12, SIBOL held a training on biophysical assessment and monitoring of coastal and marine habitats in Masinloc, Zambales. Twenty-nine representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, local government units, academia, and people's organizations joined the activity.

The participants joined lectures and conducted actual biophysical assessments—identifying fish and coral species on a reef area off the shore of San Salvador Island and surveying seagrass species in Barangay Bani. Representatives from people's organizations in Masinloc also trained on mangrove rehabilitation area monitoring. At the end of the workshop, they drafted a monitoring plan to be approved by the Protected Area Management Board.

The activity trained the local community in conducting their own assessments and monitoring, so that they can conduct conservation initiatives on their own, protecting marine resources within the marine protected areas of the Masinloc-Oyon Bay Protected Landscape and Seascape.





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Gov't agencies join SIBOL's first project steering committee meeting



On October 26, the Project Steering Committee (PSC) of SIBOL held its first meeting in Quezon City to provide overall guidance to the project's implementation.

DENR Undersecretary Jonas Leones chaired the meeting, also joined by representatives from DENR, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and Palawan Council for Sustainable Development. The committee approved SIBOL's Year 3 work plan and endorsed it to USAID. Aside from the work plan endorsement, the PSC also agreed to include the Department of the Interior and Local Government in SIBOL's Interagency Technical Working Group; determine the carbon capture capacities of protected areas; provide technical assistance to post-typhoon rehabilitation in northern Palawan; create a master list of all information needs for natural capital accounting (NCA); capacitate field offices on NCA; harmonize DENR and BFAR policies on abandoned, undeveloped and underutilized fishponds; and ensure participation of indigenous communities in activities, among others.

SIBOL discusses sustainable financing, NCA in SFFI nat'l conference



On November 18, SIBOL delivered presentations on sustainable financing and natural capital accounting during the annual National Conference of the Society of Filipino Foresters, Inc. last November 17-19, with the theme "Philippine Sustainable Forest Management Roadmap: Key to National Recovery."

USAID discussed among 2,800 attendees the crucial role of the environment in Philippine investments and economic activities through carbon financing and natural capital accounts. Carbon financing is a tool that assigns financial value to carbon emissions, which companies can offset through the purchase of carbon credits from environmentally friendly projects. Natural capital accounting, on the other hand, is a tool to measure the extent of a country's natural assets and integrate the value of ecosystem services into official accounting and reporting.





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KEY EVENTS FOR NEXT QUARTER

- World Wetlands Day - February 2
- CoMSCA Masinloc General Assembly - February 17
- World Pangolin Day - February 18
- Mt. Mantalingahan Protected Landscape High Conservation Value Area field assessments - February-May
- CSO Summit for the Conservation of the West Philippine Seascape - March 1-3
- World Wildlife Day - March 3
- Youth Leadership and Talent Camp (Palawan) - March 8-11
- Career Day with Women in Conservation - March 17

ABOUT SIBOL

Launched in 2020, the Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans, and Landscapes (SIBOL) is a P1.35-billion natural resources management and biodiversity conservation project of the United States Agency for International Development in partnership with RTI International. SIBOL works closely with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development. The Center for Conservation Innovations, Forest Foundation Philippines, Zoological Society of London, and the Resources, Environment and Economics Center for Studies, comprise the consortium partnering with RTI.

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