Protecting Coastal Communities from the Impacts of Climate Change through Mangrove Rehabilitation

A VARBA volunteer prepares mangrove shoots for planting in Capopocanan, General MacArthur, Eastern Samar

Sibuguey Bay Sustainable and Resilient Fisherfolk Development (SURF) Project

Project Overview

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) considers the protection and restoration of mangrove forests as an effective Nature-based Solution to combat climate change, given their ability to provide food, shelter, and livelihoods, while harboring incredible biodiversity, building coastal resilience, and acting as immense carbon sinks.
The mangrove ecosystems in the Philippines, however, remain under constant threat and decline because of disasters heightened by the climate crisis and local anthropogenic pressures.

The Forest Foundation Philippines has supported several mangrove conservation projects that were implemented in various places in the country. These include the “Sibuguey Bay Sustainable and Resilient Fisherfolk Development (SURF) Project,” implemented by the Coalition of Municipal Fisherfolk Associations of Zamboanga Sibugay (COMFAZS), and the “Capopocanan Island Mangrove Rehabilitation Project,” spearheaded by the Vigan Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association (VARBA).

NbS-inspired Interventions

Societal challenges. By rehabilitating the mangrove forests in the areas identified by the projects supported by the Forest Foundation Philippines, the mangrove conservation initiatives were able to respond to the most pressing societal challenges in the target communities. These include climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, economic and social development, food security, and environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.

Biodiversity benefits. Through the "Sibuguey Bay Sustainable and Resilient Fisherfolk Development (SURF) Project," a total of 6,000 hectares of mangrove forests have been protected, while 247 ha of degraded mangrove areas were restored and rehabilitated. Meanwhile, the "Capopocanan Island Mangrove Rehabilitation Project" rehabilitated and restored the 27.87 hectares of mangrove forests on Capopocanan Island. These rehabilitation and conservation efforts resulted in biodiversity gains and the restoration of critical mangrove ecosystems in the project areas.

Participatory governance. Both projects also had mechanisms that involved and responded to the concerns of a variety of stakeholders. The members of the Vigan Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association (VARBA) were trained in Coastal Resource Management to increase their knowledge of coastal management, while the members of the Coalition of Municipal Fisherfolk Associations of Zamboanga Sibugay (COMFAZS) were trained in community organizing and community development, with an additional 102 fisherfolks trained in leadership management.

Sustainable development integration. To ensure that the interventions are sustainable and mainstreamed within their respective jurisdictional contexts, both projects developed local policies for the protection of the mangrove areas in their project sites—a coastal resource management ordinance for the Sibuguey Bay in Zamboanga Sibugay and a local mangrove management agreement with the Local Government of Gen. Macarthur, Eastern Samar for Capopocanan Island.

VARBA volunteers on site a mangrove rehabilitation area in Capopocanan, General MacArthur, Eastern Samar

Ways Forward

Knowing and understanding the areas of rehabilitation is crucial as the survival rate of the seedlings planted could be unpredictable. For instance, some areas have been planted several times but had very low survival rates. Meanwhile, potted seedlings that survived in some areas, failed to thrive in other areas. It is also important to implement a monitoring and evaluation plan for these sites to ensure the sustainability of these rehabilitation projects.

Get involved in forest conservation and restoration efforts in the Philippines! For inquiries and partnerships, contact us at info@forestfoundation.ph or through Facebook or Instagram (@forestfoundationph).

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