



Animal Town



Project Summary

Play your way to a greener and bluer planet!

Objective: Animal Town: Cute City Builder is a free-to-play, idle casual city builder mobile game application that raises awareness and funds for Philippine biodiversity. It uses revenue generated from ad views and in-app purchases to support projects that conserve the Philippines' biodiversity, ecosystems, and natural resources.

Approach: The game (available on Google Play for Android users and App Store for iOS users) is free-to-play for accessibility, but generates revenue from optional in-app purchases (IAP) and game advertisements. Profits earned through the app help fund publicly available grants for projects that support the priority biodiversity conservation targets of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB).

Impact: Animal Town increases public awareness of the Philippines' rich biodiversity, engaging new audiences, including youth and other tech-savvy demographics. At the same time, the profits earned through the app support conservation efforts through its grant program.

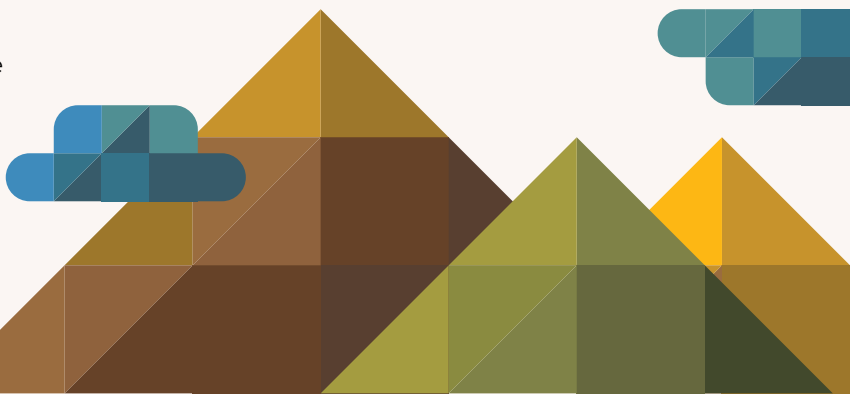
The Need for Biodiversity Financing in the Philippines

The Philippines is listed among the 17 megadiverse countries worldwide, which are nations that together host around 70–80% of the planet's biodiversity. It also qualifies as a global biodiversity hotspot, meaning it has exceptionally high species richness and a high number of threatened species.

Because of this, biodiversity conservation projects are crucial to ensuring these flora and fauna continue to thrive, with the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (PBSAP) in place to facilitate these initiatives.

Implementing these projects can be costly, and studies by the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) show a massive gap between what's needed and what's available.

Results of these assessments show that to implement the PBSAP, PHP 24 billion (USD 530 million) is required annually. However, the current level of spending on biodiversity is only at PHP 5 billion (USD 100 million) per year, which leaves a considerable financing gap of 80%, emphasizing the need to mobilize additional financing to support the biodiversity agenda of the Philippines.



Games as a Fundraising Mechanism

A financing solution proposed by BIOFIN was to raise additional resources for the DENR-BMB's priority projects by tapping the gaming population in the Philippines. With about 30 million gamers in the country (roughly 12 million of whom spend around PHP 700 (USD 13) each on game downloads and in-app purchases annually), there is promising potential for mobile gaming apps to generate revenue for conservation.

BIOFIN engaged Forest Foundation Philippines as their non-governmental organization (NGO) partner to manage the revenue generated by the app, document the revenue generation and grantmaking processes of Animal Town, and promote the game application for the project's pilot run.



Animal Town Grant Program

The primary interventions to be considered for Animal Town grants are those that involve:



LOW- AND NON-EARNING PROTECTED AREAS (PA) THAT ARE KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS (KBA)

PAs and KBAs are recognized as the most important places in the Philippines for species and their habitats. But these critical havens, although shielded by legislation, often lack resources. Animal Town grants can support projects that safeguard these ecosystems and empower local communities in these sites.



LESSER-KNOWN THREATENED SPECIES

Many lesser-known threatened species struggle without the spotlight. Animal Town may enable projects focused on their recognition, protection, and recovery.



OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA-BASED CONSERVATION MEASURES (OECM)

Game app revenue may be channeled to innovative approaches that leverage effective, community-driven solutions for biodiversity.



Promising First Steps: Abaca and Agroforestry Project in Mt. Balatukan Range Natural Park

The first Animal Town grant, supported by Forest Foundation Philippines' Second Tropical Forest Conservation Fund (TFCF II), was awarded to Balatahan Higaonon Tribal Council Inc., an Indigenous Peoples' Organization (IPO), for their Abaca and Agroforestry Project in Mt. Balatukan Range Natural Park (MBRNP).

Located in the province of Misamis Oriental, MBRNP is a PA, KBA, and Important Bird Area (IBA), which is the home of many highly threatened species of plants and animal life within the Mindanao biogeographic zone of the country. Mt. Balatukan is also a watershed and an ancestral abode of the Higaonon tribe and surrounding communities.

Despite this, MBRNP continues to face threats, primarily driven by excessive pressure to extract forest

resources due to the lack of economic opportunities for the Indigenous Peoples and community members. Although many community-based IPOs engage in farming, the income generated is currently insufficient to meet basic household needs.

The Abaca and Agroforestry Project contributes to the conservation and protection of MBRNP, a low-earning PA, through the promotion of Biodiversity-Friendly Enterprises (BDFE) on agroforestry and sustainable abaca harvesting and production of the Higaonon tribe IPO in Sitio Anahaw. The expansion of their abaca production capacity has been identified by the group to have the highest potential to significantly improve member incomes. The project is enhancing the IPO's techniques, scaling up their production capacity, and increasing the value of their harvested abaca.

Implementing Partners:

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Philippines and the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN)

UNDP, through BIOFIN, is responsible for game development, assisting with promotion, and facilitating coordination among partners.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB)

DENR-BMB provides guidance and technical inputs to support game development and maintenance, leads promotion of the game, and works with partners on game-revenue-funded projects anchored on the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (PBSAP) priorities and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (The Biodiversity Plan).

Forest Foundation Philippines

As Animal Town's first NGO partner, Forest Foundation Philippines supported the game's promotional, monetization, and grantmaking efforts. The Foundation led the awarding of the initial grant, and created an operations manual documenting the ideal processes and guidelines followed for revenue and grants management during the pilot test.

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#PlayAnimalTown #GamingForGood #Finance4Nature


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