

Calamianes Group of Islands, Palawan



Area:
194,700 hectares

Administrative units:
Coron, Busuanga,
Culion, and Linapacan

Background

The Calamianes Group of Islands (or Calamianes) is located in northern Palawan, comprising the municipalities of Busuanga, Coron, Linapacan, and Culion. It supports rich marine and coastal biodiversity, including extensive fringing reefs, seagrass beds, mangrove forests, and productive fishing grounds that sustain local fisheries and tourism. Its terrestrial ecosystems, including the limestone karst formations, support distinct flora and fauna found only in the area. It has been identified as a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), acknowledging its global biodiversity significance.

Conservation challenges within Calamianes include:

- **Overfishing and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing:** High fishing pressure has reduced fish biomass and altered reef fish communities. IUU fishing poses a significant threat, especially in areas where destructive fishing methods are used.
- **Tourism pressure and unregulated coastal development:** Rapid tourism growth (particularly around Coron) has placed increasing pressure on coastal and marine ecosystems through tourism-related pollution, infrastructure development, reclamation, and habitat disturbance.
- **Deforestation and land-use change:** Forest conversion associated with settlement expansion, infrastructure development, agricultural development, and localized extractive activities contributes to habitat loss and ecosystem degradation.

Ecosystem Functions & Services

Calamianes is a biologically rich landscape and seascape of interconnected forests, mangroves, seagrass beds, and coral reefs that support globally significant biodiversity, local livelihoods, and climate resilience.



Provisioning services

The forests in Calamianes provide timber and non-timber forest products, such as rattan, bamboo, honey, and medicinal plants. They also support food provision through agricultural production, wild fruits, and other forest resources utilized by local communities for subsistence and livelihood purposes. Mangrove ecosystems support fisheries by providing critical nursery habitats for commercially important fish and crustaceans.



Regulating services

The forests of Calamianes contribute to climate regulation, watershed protection, soil stabilization, and water regulation. By reducing soil erosion and surface runoff, they help mitigate flooding, maintain water quality, support groundwater recharge, and store carbon, contributing to climate change mitigation and overall ecosystem resilience.



Economic products

Forest and agricultural resources support local livelihoods and small-scale trade in Calamianes. These include timber and non-timber forest products, agricultural crops, and raw materials used for construction and handicrafts. Farming is an important source of income and food security for many communities, complementing fisheries and other natural resource-based livelihoods.



Supporting services

The interconnected coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangrove forests, and terrestrial habitats of Calamianes provide essential supporting services, including habitat provision for marine and terrestrial species, nutrient cycling, ecological connectivity, and the maintenance of biodiversity that underpins fisheries productivity and ecosystem resilience.



Cultural value

The Calamian Tagbanwa are among the first Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in the Philippines to secure legal recognition of ancestral waters, reinforcing the traditional stewardship of both terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

Key Projects Supported by Forest Foundation Philippines

Project 1:

ESTABLISHMENT AND COMMUNITY-LED MANAGEMENT OF THE DINUKSULAN LOCAL CONSERVATION AREA AS A NATURE-BASED SOLUTION FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE



Grantee:

Communities for Resilience (CFR)



Project Duration:

2025–2027 (2 years)



Project Amount:

Philippines-Canada Partnership on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for Climate Adaptation (PCP4NbS) Fund:
PHP 5,756,724

Counterpart Fund:

PHP 1,387,550

Project Summary:

In partnership with the local fisherfolk organization, Samahan ng mga Mangingisda sa Dinuksulan (SMD), the project aims to establish the community-led conservation and management of the Dinuksulan Mangrove Forest Local Conservation Area (LCA) as a Nature-based Solution (NbS) for climate resilience.

This project utilizes a gender-responsive, community-based approach to establish at least 100 hectares of mangrove forest as a legally recognized LCA, through a Local Government Unit (LGU) ordinance. The project is anchored on the principles of NbS, leveraging the restored ecosystem to provide coastal protection, enhance marine biodiversity, and build sustainable livelihoods.

Project 2:

KALIPUNAN NG MGA BABAE PARA SA NATURAL NA YAMAN NG BALDAT (KABAYAN)

**Grantee:**

Culion Foundation
(CFI)

**Project Duration:**

2025–2027 (2 years)

**Project Amount:**

Philippines-Canada
Partnership on
Nature-based
Solutions (NbS) for
Climate Adaptation
(PCP4NbS) Fund:
PHP 5,999,942.52

Counterpart Fund:

PHP 191,871.72

**Project Summary:**

Building on the strong environmental women's leadership in Calamianes, the project aims to establish the women-managed Baldat Marine Protected Area (MPA) in Culion, Palawan, and implement gender-responsive NbS for coastal and marine ecosystem conservation. The project strengthens the capacities of women-led organizations to co-design, implement, and monitor integrated NbS, such as mangrove restoration, seagrass conservation, and coral reef protection, that will serve as natural barriers to storm surge, and support biodiversity conservation and protection.

The project leverages existing enforcement mechanisms and participatory monitoring protocols of the women patrollers, along with their deep knowledge of marine resource protection. Complementing women-led ecosystem restoration and protection, the project develops women-managed, biodiversity-friendly enterprises, such as sea grape cultivation, to strengthen economic resilience and ensure equitable benefit-sharing, while reducing pressure on marine resources. The project also involves integration with municipal planning processes to ensure sustainability. This NbS approach ensures co-benefits for biodiversity and communities, building climate resilience while ensuring natural resource benefits for communities, particularly rural and Indigenous women.

Project 3:

INCREASING CALAMIANES' RESILIENCE THROUGH IMPROVED ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD ENHANCEMENT - PHASE 3

**Grantee:**

Calamianes
Resilience Network
(CRN)

**Project Duration:**

2025–2027 (1 year
and 9 months)

**Project Amount:**

Forest Foundation
Fund:
PHP 15,780,790

Counterpart Fund:

PHP 5,395,175

Project Summary:

Building on the gains and insights from previous grants—Increasing Resilience through Watershed Mapping and Management Planning (I-C Resilience) in 2020 and Increasing Capacity of Calamianes Watershed Towards Resilience II (IC-Resilience II) implemented from 2021 to 2025 across four watershed sites in Calamianes—this project will further strengthen watershed governance while addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by local communities.

These earlier efforts improved watershed governance mechanisms, institutional structures, and community capacities for watershed protection and management. Recognizing the strong link between local livelihoods and the health of watersheds, this project now addresses the persistent poverty among communities dependent on natural resources, as well as limited production capacity, capital, and market access.

It scales up existing livelihood initiatives into sustainable social enterprises, while maintaining and enhancing watershed protection and management. The project aims to sustain and expand conservation efforts across at least 1,400 hectares of declared watershed areas in four municipalities, including remote and island communities, while strengthening the organizational and business capacities of community livelihood groups through improved production planning, consolidation, value addition, and market access.

Project 4:

EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR MANGROVE FOREST CONSERVATION AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY PROJECT

**Grantee:**

Shalom Women's Biodiversity Conservation Association (SWBCA)

**Project Duration:**

2024–2025
(6 months)

**Project Amount:**

Forest Foundation Fund:
PHP 499,900

Counterpart Fund:
PHP 165,000

Project Summary:

The project focused on strengthening the Women-Managed Area (WMA) within the Balisungan MPA in Barangay Tagumpay, Coron, Palawan, where women are given preferential rights to sustainably manage mangrove and seagrass ecosystems.

Building on earlier work on assessments, planning, and capacity building, the project empowered women and strengthened community-based coastal resource management through protection, conservation, reforestation, governance, and sustainable livelihood development. Key project activities included improving mangrove governance and adaptive management through MPA Committee meetings and the integration of Disaster Risk Reduction-Climate Change Adaptation (DRR-CCA) assessments into local planning, expanding reforestation efforts by planting 10,000 mangrove and beach forest trees, strengthening enforcement through patrolling and infrastructure support, and developing ecotourism and livelihood opportunities by training 30 eco-guides and establishing a one-stop ecotourism hub.

The project also promoted stakeholder collaboration and advocacy through Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns, school and community outreach, knowledge products, and multi-stakeholder coordination with partner agencies and the Coron MPA Network.

Project 5:

STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION EFFORTS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT (CBFM) AREA IN CORON FOR CONTINUED WATERSHED SERVICES

**Grantee:**

Coron Watershed Beneficiaries Association Multi-Purpose Cooperative (CWBA-AMPC)

**Project Duration:**

2024–2026 (1 year and 9 months)

**Project Amount:**

Forest Foundation Fund:
PHP 3,243,060

Counterpart Fund:
PHP 405,000

**Project Summary:**

The project contributed to the protection and conservation of the Community-based Forest Management (CBFM) area by training and deputizing 20 Bantay Gubat for forest patrolling, establishing firelines, and improving enforcement systems. It rehabilitated about 50 hectares of forestland through a satellite nursery that produced 30,000 native seedlings and Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) activities.

To enhance livelihoods, the project supported the development of a rattan-based enterprise by assessing existing resources, training members on sustainable harvesting, and building skills in product development, marketing, and enterprise management with support from a social enterprise partner. This was complemented by financial management training and seed funding that can further strengthen their capacity.

The project also supported the conduct of educational campaigns on watershed management, reaching at least 50 individuals, alongside IEC campaigns and capacity building for its members. Overall, it integrated forest protection and restoration, livelihood development, and community education to ensure long-term conservation and sustained ecosystem services in the CBFM area.



Project 6:

INCREASING CAPACITY OF CALAMIANES WATERSHED TOWARDS RESILIENCE - PHASE 2 (IC-RESILIENCE II)



Grantee:
Calamianes
Resilience Network
(CRN)



Project Duration:
2023–2025 (2 years)



Project Amount:
**Forest Foundation
Fund:**
PHP 15,492,700
Counterpart Fund:
PHP 1,033,100



Project Summary:

Building on the gains and insights from previous initiatives—particularly the Increasing Resilience through Watershed Mapping and Management Planning (I-C Resilience) implemented in 2020 and the Increasing Capacity of Calamianes Watershed Towards Resilience (IC-Resilience I) implemented in the Pula watershed of Linapacan from 2021 to 2022—the project expanded watershed governance and management mechanisms to three additional major watersheds in Calamianes.

Recognizing the critical role of watersheds in sustaining biodiversity, water resources, and community livelihoods, the project strengthened participatory watershed governance by establishing watershed boundaries, organizing and building the capacity of the Watershed Management Committees (WMCs), and supporting the implementation of watershed management and environmental protection plans.

The project promoted biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration through law enforcement, reforestation, and the application of 3R (Recharge, Retention, and Reuse) water technologies. It also enhanced community resilience by promoting sustainable livelihoods, strengthening disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies, and developing mechanisms such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES). Through strengthened collaboration among communities, Local Government Units (LGUs), and partner institutions, the project expanded and institutionalized watershed governance mechanisms, contributing to ecologically balanced landscapes, biodiversity-rich forests, and improved water resources that support resilient communities across Calamianes.

Project 7:

INCREASING CAPACITY OF CALAMIANES WATERSHED TOWARDS RESILIENCE – PHASE 1 (IC-RESILIENCE I)



Grantee:
Calamianes
Resilience Network
(CRN)



Project Duration:
2021–2022 (1.5 years)



Project Amount:
**Forest Foundation
Fund:**
PHP 3,733,850

Counterpart Fund:
PHP 479,550

Project Summary:

Communities and LGUs have become increasingly aware of the role of watersheds in building resilience, particularly after a series of destructive typhoons in 2020 highlighted the urgent need for watershed-focused disaster prevention, mitigation, and adaptation measures. The Increasing Resilience through Watershed Mapping and Management Planning (I-C Resilience I) project in 2020, implemented in Barangay San Miguel, Linapacan, along with three other communities in Busuanga, Coron, and Culion, demonstrated the effectiveness of participatory watershed governance.

Building on these successes, CRN piloted the WMC model in the Sitio Pula Watershed, Linapacan, setting the stage for replication in other municipalities, drawing on lessons learned from the earlier Integrated Watershed Management Project in Coron (2018–2020).

The project strengthened watershed management and environmental protection by establishing functional WMCs, implementing conservation and rehabilitation measures, and applying low-cost 3R technologies. It also addressed environmental threats such as deforestation, poaching, kaingin farming, quarrying, pollution, soil erosion, landslides, and flooding, while promoting sustainable and eco-friendly livelihoods.

Through multi-sectoral collaboration with communities, LGUs, and partner agencies, the project enhanced biodiversity, restored ecosystem functions, improved water resources, and strengthened climate resilience. The initiative also fostered partnerships and networking for long-term governance, ensuring that watershed management became a community-driven mechanism for environmental protection and resilient development in Calamianes.

Project 8:

INCREASING CALAMIANES RESILIENCE THROUGH WATERSHED MAPPING AND MANAGEMENT PLANNING



Grantee:
Catholic Organisation
For Relief and
Development Aid
(CordAid)



Project Duration:
2020 (9 months)



Project Amount:
**Forest Foundation
Fund:**
PHP 5,998,100

Counterpart Fund:
PHP 1,573,200

Project Summary:

The project contributed to the strengthening of climate resilience by supporting multi-stakeholder collaboration and community-led action across Calamianes, a highly vulnerable “hotspot within a hotspot.” Early efforts with CordAid had enabled watershed characterization and vulnerability assessment of four major Calamian watersheds and supported the development of a community-based resilience model in Ancestral Domains (ADs).

This work contributed to strengthening the CRN into a locally-based Civil Society Organization (CSO). With continued support, CRN expanded and replicated watershed resilience efforts across additional sites, including Pula in Linapacan, Sinibayan in Busuanga, Mabentangen in Coron, and Dita in Culion, reinforcing ecosystem protection and community resilience across multiple watersheds in Calamianes.

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