



Victoria-Anepahan Mountain Range (VAMR)



Area:
164,789 hectares

Administrative units:
Puerto Princesa City,
Aborlan, Narra, and Quezon

Background

The Victoria-Anepahan Mountain Range (VAMR) is a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) in southern Palawan, with many endemic and globally threatened fauna and flora species, such as the Philippine pangolin and *Nepenthes palawanensis*. It also serves as a crucial watershed for local communities, and is home to the Pala'wan and Tagbanua communities.

Conservation challenges within the VAMR include:

- Large-scale extractive activities: Mining and quarrying lead to deforestation, habitat loss, and alteration of natural landscapes, among others, affecting the health and livelihood of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and local communities.
- Illegal timber harvesting and charcoal production: Deforestation leads to habitat fragmentation and directly threatens wildlife.
- Non-traditional or altered swidden (shifting cultivation) practices: These may contribute to land degradation, habitat loss, and reduced forest regeneration when there is excessive clearing, shortened fallow periods, expansion into sensitive areas, permanent land conversion, and uncontrolled burning.

Ecosystem Functions & Services

The VAMR is the largest terrestrial KBA in Palawan, covering several forest ecosystems that provide essential ecosystem services.



Provisioning services

The VAMR encompasses about 34 watersheds that supply water for residential, agricultural, and other uses in surrounding municipalities, including Narra, Quezon, Aborlan, and Puerto Princesa City. The forests in the area are an important source of food, raw materials, and traditional medicines, especially for the Indigenous communities.



Regulating services

The mountain range's intact forests help regulate water flow, maintain water quality, and reduce soil erosion, sustaining water availability for downstream communities.



Economic products

The VAMR also provides livelihood opportunities for Indigenous communities through the sale of non-timber forest products such as almaciga and honey; handicrafts made from pandan, rattan, and bamboo; and various other agroforestry products.



Supporting services

As one of Palawan's largest KBAs, the VAMR encompasses extensive contiguous forest ecosystems that are important for maintaining landscape connectivity and supporting biodiversity conservation.



Cultural value

The VAMR lies within the ancestral lands of the Tagbanua and Pala'wan Indigenous communities, whose cultural identity, traditional knowledge, and spiritual practices are deeply tied to the mountain. Its high biodiversity (including rare and endemic species) also draws scientific interest, and can support ecotourism, guided treks, or conservation education initiatives.

Key Projects Supported by Forest Foundation Philippines

Project 1:

ECOTOURISM-DRIVEN LOCAL EMPOWERMENT TOWARDS A VIBRANT, ADAPTIVE, AND THRIVING ENVIRONMENT



Grantee:

Ekomunikatib
Multimedia
Consultancy Services



Project Duration:

2025 (3 months)



Project Amount:

Forest Foundation
Fund:
PHP 500,000

Counterpart Fund:

PHP 40,895

Project Summary:

The project was implemented to support science-based ecotourism development, environmental management, and the socioeconomic well-being of communities in the VAMR, under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Narra. The project responded to the rapid growth of tourism in the area, which increased by approximately 1,578% from 2013 to 2019, as well as to ongoing environmental threats, such as deforestation from upland farming, charcoal production, illegal timber harvesting, and potential mining activities.

Local households, particularly among the Tagbanua and non-Indigenous residents, expressed willingness to transition to alternative livelihoods such as community-based ecotourism and ecolodge operations, provided they received organized support, training, and access to infrastructure and market linkages.

The project addressed these needs through foundational studies that estimated the carrying capacity of existing tourist attractions, assessed host community training and facility requirements, and evaluated tourist interest and willingness-to-pay, generating critical data to guide sustainable ecotourism initiatives. Ultimately, the project supported the long-term sustainability of ecotourism development and forest conservation in the area, contributing to Narra's Sustainable Tourism Development Plan, 2019–2028.



Project 2: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY POSITION AND STAKEHOLDERS SUPPORT IN VAMR CONSERVATION - PHASE 2



Grantee:

Institute for the
Development of
Educational and
Ecological
Alternatives (IDEAS)



Project Duration:

2023–2026 (3 years)



Project Amount:

Forest Foundation
Fund:

PHP 19,068,250

Counterpart Fund:

PHP 1,118,000



Project Summary:

This project builds on the achievements of Phase 1, aiming to strengthen the foundation of communities and other stakeholders to meet the conservation imperatives of the VAMR.

Phase 1 (implemented from late 2021 to early 2023) organized 10 Indigenous People's Organizations (IPOs), facilitated the formulation of five Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plans (ADSDPPs), identified areas for forest protection and restoration, and assessed community livelihoods for potential piloting.

Phase 2 focuses on implementing community-based forest conservation actions, continuing to strengthen networks among IPOs and ensuring the sustained provision of forest ecosystem services for communities. It also promotes sustainable income for at least 200 families through non-timber forest products and agroforestry-based livelihoods.

By translating planning into conservation actions, the project fosters collaboration among stakeholders, and advances the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of the forests in the VAMR. This also contributes to both ecological resilience and long-term socio-economic benefits for the local communities.

Project 3:

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY POSITION AND STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT IN VAMR CONSERVATION - PHASE 1



Grantee:

Institute for the Development of Educational and Ecological Alternatives (IDEAS)



Project Duration:

2021–2023 (2 years)



Project Amount:

Forest Foundation Fund:

PHP 6,964,000

Counterpart Fund:

PHP 493,000

Project Summary:

The project strengthened the foundation of communities and other stakeholders to meet the conservation imperatives of the VAMR. Building on the VAMR Conservation Framework, the project addressed capacity gaps among communities in managing their Ancestral Domain (AD) and effectively engaging other stakeholders at the landscape level.

The initiative organized and capacitated community-based constituencies in governance, negotiation, AD management planning, conservation, and livelihood development. Ten priority communities were trained in evidence-based negotiation and governance, while five ADSDPPs were supported. Priority livelihood and enterprise needs were also assessed in the 10 communities through socio-economic and market studies, with initial training provided in farm, agroforestry, and forest-based livelihoods. Moreover, plans for the potable water system were prepared for three priority sites.

The project leveraged partnerships with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), government agencies (Local Government Units, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and Palawan Council For Sustainable Development), and the academe to provide a support system for the communities' landscape-level engagement. These interventions built the capacity of communities to assert their rights and participate in conservation planning, laying the groundwork for the sustainable management of ADs and more equitable participation in the governance of the VAMR.

Project 4:

CONSERVATION PLANNING FOR VICTORIA-ANEPAHAN MOUNTAIN RANGE



Grantee:

Institute for the Development of Educational and Ecological Alternatives (IDEAS)



Project Duration:

2019–2020 (1 year)



Project Amount:

Forest Foundation Fund:

PHP 1,835,164



Project Summary:

The project addressed gaps in forest governance by integrating existing programs and plans from local and national agencies, and incorporating the perspectives of tenure-holding communities. It established a stronger foundation for conservation, enabling communities to support environmental protection without compromising their socio-economic and cultural integrity, while fostering cooperation among local governments, national agencies, the private sector, and civil society.

The project resulted in the formulation of the VAMR Conservation Framework, which described the area's biophysical and social setting, mapped ongoing conservation programs and projects, and implemented a multistakeholder approach that harmonized differing perspectives, claims, and uses of natural resources.

For more information:



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