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Building Capacities in the Coral Triangle

A people-centered approach to biodiversity conservation, and the engagement of stakeholders—from national governments to coastal communities—are among the core principles of the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI). Thus, capacity building at various levels of governance is an essential part of the implementation of the Philippine National Plan of Action (NPOA) under the CTI.

In building local capacities, the Coral Triangle Support Partnership (CTSP) uses science-based information to enhance stakeholders' appreciation and understanding of their environment. This prepares them for subsequent technology transfer and skills-building programs and allows them to perform their roles effectively in managing their marine and coastal resources.

CTSP engages stakeholders at various levels of governance in its priority geographies, working with national agencies as well as with local communities. Complementary capacity building activities are directed to provincial governments and national agencies, which provide the enabling conditions for site-based NPOA implementation.

A Suite of Approaches for Capacity Building

CTSP supports a range of capacity-building activities.

- ▶ **Training based on local needs.** CTSP provides training to empower community organizations managing mangrove rehabilitation projects. In Calatagan, Batangas in the Verde Island Passage, training programs provided include: 1) value formation, which examines Filipino values and how they can govern human interaction and promote community development; 2) financial management, to allow communities to monitor economic gains from ecotourism and the sale of seedlings from their mangrove protected areas; and 3) organizational leadership.
- ▶ **Community-based planning and plan implementation.** CTSP supports participatory business plan preparation for two mangrove sites in Calatagan, Batangas: the *Ang Pulo* (The Island) mangrove park of Quilitisan village, and the mangrove nursery of Balibago village. CTSP and the municipal government of Calatagan jointly invest in assisting community implementation of the business plan, including providing support for infrastructure development.
- ▶ **Research and information-sharing.** Results of studies are immediately shared with stakeholders to enhance awareness, understanding, and appreciation of conservation issues and to ensure consequent delivery of actions.
- ▶ **Tool development, technology transfer and application.** CTSP works with partners in academe, expert groups, and other organizations in developing coastal resource management tools that can be used by local governments and communities. These tools are also being tested and refined according to feedback from their prospective users.



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- **Management Effectiveness Assessment Tool (MEAT).** Developed with the MPA Support Network (MSN) to be used for benchmarking and monitoring the performance of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Philippines.
- **MPA Database.** Used for monitoring MPA management effectiveness and also promotes access to information and link to decision support systems.
- **Vulnerability assessment toolkit.** Allows local governments to evaluate their communities' sensitivity and adaptive capacity to climate change impacts. The results of the vulnerability assessment can directly be used to generate adaptation options that communities can consider in drafting their climate change adaptation plans.
- **Fishery monitoring tool.** Allows local governments to do community-based monitoring of fish catches, effort and catch composition information that can be used for refining and improving fishery management interventions.
- **Mangrove rehabilitation monitoring and evaluation tool.** Measures the survival rate of planted mangroves and the overall success of communities' mangrove rehabilitation efforts. Results can also guide future rehabilitation efforts on planting practices that should be replicated or avoided.



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► **Establishment of learning networks.** CTSP's mentoring program aims to maximize the reach of higher education institutions identified as centers of excellence on marine science and other related disciplines. Under this program, the centers of excellence serve as mentors to education institutions in the CTSP project sites, enabling them to assist local governments on the technical aspects of coastal resource management. Likewise, CTSP supports learning exchange trips of local executives and resource managers so they can learn about ecotourism development in marine protected areas and options for income diversification.

Towards a Long-term Vision

CTSP's capacity building activities seek to enhance stakeholder participation in promoting biodiversity conservation, coastal ecosystems health, and food security. By building capacities at the site level where it matters most, CTSP hopes to foster capable and responsible resource management practices that will continue to deliver conservation benefits to Coral Triangle communities long after the conclusion of the project.

This factsheet is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Conservation International and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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