



PaNaGaT

Promoting Sustainable Fisheries

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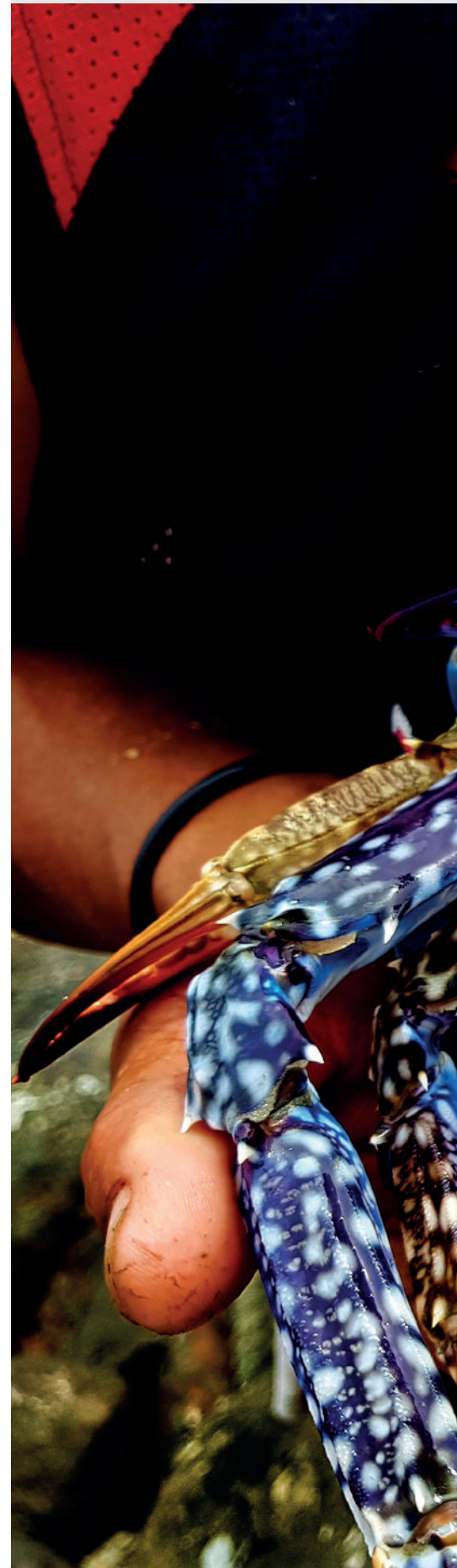
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Colorful blue crabs harvested in Negros. (Gregg Yan)

Introduction

Civil Society Organizations in the Philippines recognize the need to address the intertwined root causes of the perennially-dire situation of our fisheries sector, which is characterized by persistent poverty among fishers, resource degradation due to overcapacity and overfishing, plus the gender gap between men and women in fisheries.

This can be attributed and directly-linked to the 'triple whammy' confronting the fisheries sector, namely – unequal access and control over resources which can be seen in the distribution of land and water property rights severely affecting marginalized fishers and coastal communities, the under-development of the fishing industry, plus the country's current trade policies which do not recognize fish as finite but renewable natural resources. The vulnerable conditions of small fishers and poor coastal communities are further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, plus emerging natural and human-induced hazards.

As an economic sector, municipal fishers are generally described as fragmented, with little bargaining power in markets. This was affirmed with over 98% reporting in community surveys that they do not belong to a legal form of organization and operate mostly as individuals. The technology they employ, such as simple nets and hand lines, also reflects the fragmented nature

of municipal fishery production and the subsector as a whole.

NGOs work on various strategies based on the foregoing context and premise. It pursues its development agenda through direct support at the community level, coupled with advocacy both at the national and international levels. It employs an integrated, risk-sensitive and community-based approach to organizing, advocacy, capacity building, research, resource management, plus enterprise development in coastal communities. It also emphasizes that engendering the fishing industry will start from an articulated women fisheries agenda towards developing gender-responsive policies and programs for women in fisheries.

Community level initiatives have made inroads and achieved success in specific areas of the country. Changes in the policy framework with the enactment of the Local Government Code in 1991 and the Fisheries Code of 1998 have facilitated the emergence of local level management through FARMCs spearheaded by fisher organizations, with support from non-government organizations, national government agencies, plus academic and research institutions legitimized by local government jurisdiction and autonomy. Amendments introduced in RA-10654 aligned our national fisheries law with international instruments

promoting responsible fishing practices.


The wider awareness of local government executives on the tremendous value of our fishery resources and its contribution to food security has yielded some improvement in the management of fish stocks and fish habitats.

It is important for artisanal fisherfolk and other stakeholders to collectively and continuously engage the government and private sector in the implementation of RA-10654. There are still opportunities to be seized and spaces to be maximized to advance the agenda of artisanal fisherfolk as a marginalized sector within the fishing industry and Philippine society as a whole.

Much remains to be done in terms of enhancing the capacity of fisher organizations, especially to transform gains in resource management to increased household income and welfare.

We CSOs applaud and celebrate these gains through our concerted efforts under PaNaGaT. We commit ourselves to the continued provision of relevant support services to fisher organizations and coastal communities. They need to bolster their technical capacity not just in fields such as fisheries management, policy advocacy and enterprise development, but in their analysis and response to emerging issues such as

disasters and climate change impacts, public health risks, plus the bio-economics of fisheries under the current situation we now call the 'new normal'.



The colorful banca connects islands and allows people to harvest the sea's bounty. (Gregg Yan)

Key Message



I congratulate the *Pangingisda Natin Gawing Tama* (PaNaGaT) Network for the launching of this Milestone Book in commemoration of the fifth-year implementation of RA 10654.

The PaNaGaT Network has been a constant partner of the government in its drive to promote sustainable fisheries in the country. As we know, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUUF), together with the huge environmental, economic, and social damage it causes to our country, is one of the biggest challenges that besets the fisheries sector. Republic Act 10654, which amends the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, was enacted to be more responsive to the present challenges in our sector. Primarily, the law aims to prevent, deter, and ultimately eliminate IUUF from our waters and run after anyone who undermines the sustainability of our resources.

Five years since we have taken on this challenge, we in the Department of

Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources have only become more resolute in our goal. In the last half-decade, we have supported our vision of an IUUF-free country through increased fisheries regulatory and law enforcement capacity, filing of administrative and criminal cases against violators of the Amended Fisheries Code, and implementation of various conservation and management measures.

Key to the success of all these measures are the partnerships we have built with our stakeholders. Our shared resources are in peril and we are called to act united as a nation to prevent further loss to our rich marine life. As such, we have institutionalized platforms that encourage participatory governance to enrich and solidify our efforts, such as the newly-created Fisheries Management Areas which bring together the government, private sector, civil society, and other fisheries stakeholders in effectively




PaNaGaT works closely with BFAR to secure the livelihoods of tomorrow's fishers. (Gregg Yan)

managing the country's fishing grounds.

As we sail ahead with the implementation of RA 10654, we in the DA-BFAR, look forward to more collaborative opportunities with our stakeholders so that we may implement the law to its fullest extent and guarantee food and livelihood for the Filipino people.

Maraming salamat at Mabuhay ang Sektor ng Pangisdaan!


COMMODORE EDUARDO B GONGONA PCG (Ret)
BFAR National Director

Protecting Productivity

How sustainable fisheries and marine conservation translates to far more than fresh seafood.

Panagat is Visayan for ‘fishing’ or ‘fisherfolk’.

It is a term often heard in coastal communities around the Visayas and parts of Mindanao, where fisherfolks ply islands for seafood.

The Philippines lies at the apex of the Coral Triangle, renowned for hosting Earth’s most dazzling array of marine life.

A vibrant archipelago of 7641 islands teeming with diversity, Philippine seas directly provide food and livelihood for millions of people. Renowned scientist Dr. Kent Carpenter refers to it as the ‘center of the center’ of marine biodiversity, hosting 3053 species of fish of which 2724¹ are marine, ranging from tiny gobies to gigantic whale sharks.

Famed as a top dive destination, Philippine seas nonetheless provide one service above all else – they generate food. *Vast* amounts of food, ranging from colourful red groupers to export-quality yellowfin tuna.

The Philippines ranks as the world’s 14th top seafood producer, exporting shellfish, seaweed and a plethora of marine finfish.

¹ Aliño, PM, Batino, LB, Tiquio, MGJP (eds.) 2019. *Philippine Coral Reefs, Our National Treasure and Global Heritage*. University of the Philippines Diliman: Quezon City, Philippines.

In 2018, commercial and municipal fisheries production breached two million metric tonnes, providing millions of Filipinos with easily-accessible, inexpensive and delectable protein.

Wild capture fisheries may still be the world’s most cost-efficient way of feeding people – renewable, low-carbon and much more economical than farming chickens, pigs and cattle. The planet’s oceans generated over 90 million tonnes² of seafood in 2016, but yields have been steadily shrinking, with decades of intensive and poorly-managed fisheries taking a drastic toll on wild fish stocks.

The country’s once-healthy coral reef systems, estimated to cover 26,000 square kilometers and representing 4.3% of global coral reef cover, have been dealt a bloody nose by destructive fishing, pollution and coastal development. Less than 1% are estimated to remain in excellent condition. Both mangrove forests and seagrass meadows have been reduced by 50% and according to the Bureau of Fisheries, 10 of our 13 major fishing grounds are overfished.

The challenges are numerous, ranging from commercial fishers illegally entering

² FAO, 2018. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018*.



Seafood market in Bicol. (Gregg Yan)

15-kilometer municipal water zones, to destructive fishing practices like cyanide and blast fishing. Fishing gear such as *hulbot-hulbot* nets scar the seabed, while longlines brimming with thousands of baited hooks unintentionally catch and drown thousands of sharks, sea turtles, cetaceans and other protected species.

The Philippines is also among the most vulnerable nations to climate change, battered by an estimated 20 typhoons yearly. The nation's 37,008 kilometers of coastline are vulnerable to sea level rise and vicious storm surges, while warming seas and oceanic acidification threaten to wipe out many shallow water coral reefs.

Yet, there is hope – for there are many who work tirelessly to protect the productivity of Philippine seas. One of these groups is **PaNaGaT** (*Pangingisda Natin Gawing Tama*), a network which works closely

with the government and other allies to promote science-based management for fisheries, tighter enforcement of fisheries laws, community-based conservation and a consensus among fisherfolk organizations to finally stamp out illegal fishing in a bid to reclaim our once vibrant seas.

The network's vision is in line with the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 or *Life Below Water*, pushing for the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources.

The lives and livelihoods of millions of people depend on our oceans. By championing sustainable fisheries, PaNaGaT helps feed the growing Filipino population, spurring economic development to build a stronger nation. Read on to learn more about this dynamic and growing network.

The Birth of PaNaGaT

In its fifth year, the network is proud to work with the government and fisherfolk to help facilitate the country's transition to sustainable fisheries.

In June 2014, the European Union (EU) issued the Philippines a *yellow card* for failing to control illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing – a precursor to a *red card*, equivalent to an eventual importation ban for all Philippine seafood products.

The EU is the world's largest seafood importer, importing PHP 9.4 billion worth of seafood from the Philippines in 2013. Vowing to source seafood only from sustainable sources, the EU has been sanctioning nations which ignore international fishing standards since 2010.

The Bureau of Fisheries (BFAR), the agency under the Department of Agriculture (DA) responsible for managing the country's aquatic resources, was tasked with amending the country's fisheries code, unchanged since 1998.

Recognizing an excellent opportunity to work more closely with the government while promoting sustainable fisheries, a coalition of Nongovernment Organizations (NGOs) took on the challenge of reviewing and proposing amendments to the then 16-year old Republic Act (RA) 8550.

Lively and progressive dialogues were held with BFAR Director Asis Perez and Senator Cynthia Villar, creating RA 10654 on 27 February 2015 to finally amend the Fisheries Code of 1998. The *yellow card* was lifted two months later, proving the value of stakeholder dialogue.

Still, heated debates raged among various stakeholders until the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC) finally approved the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) for RA 10654 on 16 September 2015, signed by then DA Secretary Proceso Alcala into law as Department Administrative Order (DAO) 10, series of 2015.

A month later, over 100 delegates from BFAR, LGUs, NGOs, fisherfolk organizations and the academe signed the historic *Katipunan Declaration* to fully enforce RA 10654. It became both a celebration and rallying cry for sustainable fisheries advocates and small-scale fishers, who truly believed that at long last, the country was transitioning to sustainable fisheries.



Signing of the 2015 Katipunan Declaration. (PaNaGaT)

The Birth of PaNaGaT

The amended law imposes much stricter penalties against IUUF, ensures that science is the basis for policy and decision-making, enhances mechanisms for speedy trials involving IUUF through an adjudication committee, mandates technological solutions like Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMM) for commercial fishing boats, while promoting many other solutions.

Initially known as the *Save Fisheries Network* and composed of groups working to promote sustainable fisheries, conserve marine resources and support marginalized fisherfolk, the consortium was reborn on 20 October 2015 as **PaNaGaT** or *Pangingisda Natin Gawing Tama*, Tagalog for “Ensuring we fish the right way.”

Brimming with ideas on sustainable fishing earned from a long and rich history of working with coastal communities and LGUs, PaNaGaT has come a long way. Since the passage of RA 10654, the network helped formulate DAO 10 or the IRR of RA 10654, where the concepts of harvest control rules, reference points and harvest management measures were first introduced.

The network participated both in the formulation of the Comprehensive National Fisheries Industry Development Plan (CNFIDP, 2016-2020) and the Comprehensive Post Harvest, Marketing and Ancillaries Industry Plan (CPHMAIP, 2018 - 2022).

It has been instrumental in the passage of Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) 246-1, which amended the guidelines on the prohibition of destructive Danish Seines and Modified Danish Seines or *hulbot-hulbot*. By participating actively in consultations with BFAR, the network also provided substantial inputs which led to the issuance in 2018 of FAO 263 for the establishment of 12 Philippine Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs), plus the creation of a science advisory group.

Together with the Philippine Council on Agriculture and Fisheries-Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (PCAF-CFA) under the leadership of the late Isagani Serrano of the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM), the network facilitated the formation of the Philippine Alliance of Tuna Handliners for Sustainability (PATHS) in 2018 as a grassroots organization pushing for the approval of a National Tuna Management Plan.

Collaborative work with BFAR to formulate guidelines on municipal catch documentation and traceability systems (MCDTS) produced plans which are now undergoing the NFARMC process. Lastly, the network strongly advocates for the establishment of a Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR).

Five years after the passage of RA 10654,



Tambuyog
Development Center



OCEANA

GREENPEACE

PaNaGaT is proud to facilitate the country's historic and much-needed transition to sustainable fisheries, not just to ensure better lives for the country's two million fisherfolk, but to provide for the 50 million people who rely on Philippine seas for food.

PaNaGaT Member Organizations:

- Environmental Defense Fund
- Greenpeace Southeast Asia
- Haribon Foundation
- Integrated Rural Development Foundation
- Institute of Social Order
- NGOs for Fisheries Reform
- Oceana Philippines
- Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka
- Philippine Alliance of Tuna Handliners for Sustainability
- Progresibong Alyansa ng mga Mangingisda sa Pilipinas
- Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Samahan sa Kanayunan
- RARE Philippines
- Tambuyog Development Center
- World Wide Fund for Nature

What is Republic Act (RA) 10654?

Second Regular Session

Begun and held in Metro Manila, on Monday, the twenty-eighth day of July, two thousand fourteen.

[REPUBLIC ACT No. **10654**]

AN ACT TO PREVENT, DETER AND ELIMINATE ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING, AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8550, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE PHILIPPINE FISHERIES CODE OF 1998," AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Section 2 of Republic Act No. 8550, otherwise known as "The Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998", is hereby amended, as follows:

"SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* -- It is hereby declared the policy of the State:

(a) x x x

x x x

RA 10654. (Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Facebook)

THE AMENDED PHILIPPINE FISHERIES CODE

RA 8550 AS AMENDED BY RA 10654

The amended Fisheries Code of the Philippines is meant to help the industry grow even further in a sustainable manner. By deterring and eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUUF) practices, the government is securing livelihood for all fisheries stakeholders as well as adequate food supply and continuous economic growth for the entire nation and future generations.

The law is after the protection of the marine resource that provides livelihood and food for millions of Filipinos.

The law provides for penalties enough to deter IUUF activities and prevent offenders from repeating the same violation.

The sanctions as stated in the amendments aim to hit only those who are willingly, intentionally and wilfully violating the law and never those who abide by it.



Lapsing into law on 27 February 2015, Republic Act (RA) 10654 amended the older Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998 (RA 8550) by providing stiffer penalties and stricter monitoring systems to stop illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

The revisions raise sanctions by as much as PHP45 million for commercial fishers and PHP120 million for wildlife and seafood poachers. Among other changes, it mandated the creation of an adjudication committee to fast-track prosecutions and further dissuade fishers from engaging in destructive fishing.

“The amendments to the Philippine Fisheries Code fortify our stand in eradicating all forms of unsustainable fishing which compromise both the environment and the livelihood of our fisherfolk. RA 10654 was established through decisive collaboration and strong efforts from different sectors, which we are thankful for,” says Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Director Eduardo Gongona.

Why We Need a Department of Fisheries

A separate department translates to more resources and greater authority to respond to various needs. President Duterte clearly promised in his election campaign that he would establish DFAR.

The PaNaGaT (*Pangingisda Natin Gawing Tama*) network strongly advocates for the establishment of a Department of Fisheries (DFAR), strengthening the nation's compliance to Sustainable Development Goal 14 (*Life Below Water*) which looks at the conservation and sustainable usage of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The network cites the contribution of the country's fisheries to food security and economic development, while stressing the need for sustainable practices to conserve dwindling marine resources. Despite providing the seafood eaten by an estimated 75% of the country's 109 million people, fisherfolk still rank as the second-poorest sector of Filipino society.

Adding insult to injury is the fact that some illegal fishers, including large commercial vessel operators, cost the country an estimated PHP68.5 billion yearly. The lack of effective fisheries enforcement has already pushed 10 of the country's 13 major fisheries to the brink.

"The proposal to establish DFAR is not just urgent but long overdue," explains PaNaGaT founding member Vince Cinches. "The dramatic degradation of our rich marine and fisheries resources is attributable to the overwhelmingly limited capacity of a *Bureau*. A separate *Department* translates to more resources and greater authority to respond to various needs – ranging from governance, expertise, personnel and institutional resources."

PaNaGaT believes there is a need to enhance funding, institutional capacity, plus research and development to effectively manage Philippine fisheries. BFAR admits that though about PHP60 billion is needed to properly manage the country's fisheries, just PHP5 billion has been allocated.

"This should not be perceived as an expense, but an investment which will pay off in the future," adds National Alliance of Fisheries Producers Incorporated (NAFPI) President Joseph Borrromeo. Under the blue economy and with institutional support, Borrromeo says the net annual benefit from Philippine

Fresh sardines at a fish landing site in Bicol. (Gregg Yan)



marine resources is estimated at PHP317 billion. With DFAR emplaced, local fishers and aquaculture operators alike will flourish, employing and feeding even more Filipinos. PaNaGaT is lobbying in both the upper and lower houses to push for the department's establishment. While not a priority bill of the current administration, President Rodrigo Duterte promised during his election campaign that he would establish DFAR.

Halting *Hulbot-Hulbot*

Hulbot-hulbot vessels are now shifting to less-destructive fishing methods with BFAR's issuance of FAO 246-1, which considers the mere possession of hulbot-hulbot paraphernalia grounds for apprehension.

It's 3AM. Though most people are still in bed, Ka Rody and his boys are preparing to fish in the once-bountiful waters of Manila Bay. Like thousands of fishers living along its coast, they're prepared to go as far as Bataan to fill their traditional gillnets with fish.

After eight hours battling the ocean and its elements, his three-man boat pulls back to port, PHP4300 richer. Shaving off the cost of fuel and supplies, each man gets PHP630, a good PHP50 above minimum wage.

Things weren't always so. Once, Manila Bay was dominated by *hulbot-hulbot*, vessels equipped with enormous conical nets designed to capture whole schools of fish.

Known globally as Danish Seines or Modified Danish Seines³ (DS or MDS), these nets have been proven to destroy marine habitats and were banned by the government via Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) 246 in 2013. The Supreme Court issued an order to fully support the ban a year later.

³ Modified Danish seines or *hulbot-hulbot* are also locally-known as zipper, hula-hoop, *palusot*, *bira-bira*, *liba-liba* and *buli-buli*.

Five years after being outlawed however, BFAR still recorded 177 *hulbot-hulbot* vessels operating illegally across the country. Clearly there was a need to revise the law, for only vessels caught *using* their *hulbot-hulbot* nets could be apprehended by authorities. More realistic provisions were needed.

A series of consultations led by PaNaGaT and the Philippine Council on Agriculture and Fisheries - Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (PCAF-CFA) finally succeeded in strengthening the capacity of enforcers.

Today, *hulbot-hulbot* vessels are shifting to less-destructive fishing methods with BFAR's issuance of FAO 246-1, which considers the mere possession of *hulbot-hulbot* paraphernalia as sufficient grounds for apprehension.

Ka Rody and thousands of artisanal fishers are now enjoying higher fish yields and better incomes. Unloading his catch, the bronzed fisher beams. "*Mula nung mawala ang mga hulbot-hulbot, gumanda na ang huli at kita naming mga maliliit na mangingisda.*"



A small bangka sails back to land in Batangas. (Gregg Yan)

Reaping the Rewards of Saving

How saving both money and fish is paying dividends for the people of Ayoke, Surigao del Sur.



Fishers unload an evening's seafood harvest in Ayoke. (Wizbren Ang / RARE)

Fireflies twinkled in the trees as two teenage boys unloaded the day's catch, plucking fish from a gill net under the light of a half moon. It's nearly midnight and they have just returned to shore in Ayoke, a small island of about 100 families in the town of Cantilan, Surigao del Sur, a project site of Rare Philippines. After five hours, they had caught five kilos of fish, many of them commercially-valuable species such as *kitong* (rabbitfish)

and *apahap* (sea bass) worth PHP200 per kilo.

"They have problems with overfishing in other places, but we still get plenty of big fish in Ayoke," says former barangay councilor Analou Lumaguid. "We only get what we need for the day, enough to eat and buy necessities, so there's still lots of fish left for the following day."



(Wizbren Ang / RARE)

In 2015, the municipal government declared all waters within a kilometer of the island as an exclusive fishing zone for Ayoke's residents. Another kilometer around the zone is reserved for registered fishers of nearby Cantilan. These special fishing grounds complement a marine sanctuary which is completely off-limits to fishers, protecting the spawning area of marine life and allowing them to grow to maturity.

Cantilan's former coastal resource management officer Cherry Ravelo-Salazar led the campaign to revitalize the town's fisheries. Even on weekends, she would go to Ayoke to monitor the progress of

conservation efforts and seek solutions to fresh challenges like plastic trash washing up on the island's shores.

Together with Analou, she also kept track of community savings clubs which encourage families to become more financially-savvy in making budget decisions, ensuring that money earned after a bountiful catch goes to household needs.

Every week, each fisher deposits up to PHP500 and uses the funds for loans and emergencies. Pooled funds – from their savings and income from loans – are shared after eight months.



(Wizbren Ang / RARE)

Reaping the Rewards of Saving



These waters provide both bounty and beauty. (Wizbren Ang / RARE)



(Wizbren Ang / RARE)

From her latest savings of PHP23,000, Gerlita Bucalon bought new gillnets for her husband, a fisher in Ayoke.



(Wizbren Ang / RARE)

After getting her share, 74-year old Purificacion Vistal paid back PHP10,000 she owed to a money lender to regain possession of her coconut farm.



(Wizbren Ang / RARE)

63-year old Rosalita Bucalon used her savings to renovate her house, transforming it from a makeshift hut to a semi-concrete structure.

Reaping the Rewards of Saving



Flying fish. (Wizbren Ang / RARE)

Higher incomes from improved fisheries is a primary goal in Cantilan, where the thriving Ayoke Conservation Enterprise is giving women more opportunities to support their families. Inside a makeshift shed, two women are cleaning a tub of *bangsi* (flying fish) before laying them out in the sun to dry.

“Before, we just ignored this type of fish, but we are now getting premium prices for them,” shares Analou. Packaged neatly in small batches, dried *bangsi* have made their way into posh health food stores in Manila and Cebu, adding value to the humble fish.



Seaweed. (Gregg Yan)

The islanders’ efforts have drawn the attention of outsiders. After hearing Analou talk about their project in a Surigao forum, one couple offered their own land for the Ayoke Conservation Enterprise. A fish processing facility was built on the lot, which stretches out to a surfing beach which attracts tourists from nearby Siargao. The women of Ayoke are now planning to put up cottages on the plot of land to augment their income from fisheries. Wisely saving both money and their fish stocks, the people of Ayoke have set sail towards a bountiful future.



Surfers hang ten in Surigao. (Wizbren Ang / RARE)

Catch Traceability for Small-scale Fisheries

RA 10654 calls for catch traceability measures, but implementation guidelines are still lacking.

Fisheries across the Philippines have started to collapse – but many groups are pushing for sensible solutions.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), together with representatives from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines and RARE Philippines, lobbied to the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Council (NFARMC) to develop guidelines for the Municipal Fisheries Catch Documentation and Traceability System.

Studies suggest that the country loses about PHP 68.5 billion to illegal fishing activities yearly. Poor enforcement has allowed illegal fishing outfits to operate almost unchecked, leaving much of the country overfished and robbing small-scale fishers of the yields they rightfully deserve.

WWF is now working with the Oceans and Fisheries Partnership Activity funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID Oceans) and BFAR to develop an effective electronic catch documentation and traceability system to provide a simple and comprehensive means to monitor fish catches around the country.

“Local government units have expressed their willingness to follow traceability measures. Their problem stems from a lack of guidelines on what they should be following,” explains WWF’s Dave David.

RA 10654 calls for traceability measures to help enforce fisheries laws. The guidelines to implement these measures are however still lacking, making it hard to actually enforce the law.

“It’s high time that we have these guidelines emplaced. The question that arises the most in our municipality is *how are we supposed to trace fish catches?* There are currently no guidelines for us to follow,” laments Luzon Fisherfolk Representative Romeo Gupong.

WWF and the PaNaGaT network are working with local governments and coastal communities to promote not just catch traceability, but sustainable and equitable fisheries for all.

Fishers install a FAME transponder for fish catch monitoring and traceability. (Ana Chavez / WWF)



Community-led Coastal Assessments

Sound environmental strategies can be created by listening to the people who rely most on nature.

“By being part of the research team, we’ve seen firsthand the types of problems our coasts are facing and what we can do to address them,” shares Ate Pong Rosello, who joined a Participatory Coastal Resource and Ecological Assessment (PCREA) covering six coastal barangays in Culion, Palawan. The assessment was organized by the Institute of Social Order (ISO) of the Ateneo de Manila.

Ate Pong and 25 other people were trained to assess coastal communities, mangrove forests and coral reefs, while learning to conduct household surveys.

“Now we can map out the natural resources of various barangays, determine the average catch of local fishers, analyse each area’s history with aid institutions and chart the daily routines of residents.”

Before being used to develop coastal and environmental protection programmes, the collected data must always be vetted and validated by community members.

Through strong community inputs, the

programme has created a sustainable development plan for Culion, established locally-managed mangrove nurseries, planted 62 hectares of mangrove forest and validated 856 hectares of potential Marine Protected Areas. Small-scale fishers were finally given a voice in the governance of their local areas through the establishment of Culion’s first Municipal Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Council (MFARMC).

The initiative is one of the many components of ISO’s Social Transformation and Grassroots Empowerment (STAGE) Program, which helps local communities generate their own strategies for sustainable development and livelihood generation. ISO now works in Palawan, Quezon, Bicol and La Union. Sound environmental strategies can be created simply by listening to the people who rely most on nature.



Researchers study mangroves, which are important ecosystems. (ISO Photo Archives)

Managing Tuna Fisheries

This management plan sets the foundations for sustainable tuna fisheries in the Mindoro Strait and shall serve as a compass to guide fishers for years to come.

The waters of the Philippine archipelago are the waters of life, supporting fisheries which fuel the livelihoods of millions of people, while feeding millions more. Tuna are among the country's most important fish. Served fresh as sashimi, seared, grilled or packed in ubiquitous tin cans, these fish are loved both locally and in the export markets the world over.

The Philippines is the world's third largest tuna producer. Almost half the country's seafood exports come from yellowfin, skipjack and frigate tuna.

But local tuna stocks are collapsing because of climate change, overfishing and illegal fishing. This is a problem not just for everyday Pinoys, but a significant threat to the livelihoods of fishers and coastal communities which have long relied on tuna for income and food. The Philippine economy continues to grow, but our fisherfolk are trailing behind, with 40% living below the poverty line. As our fishery stocks continue to dwindle, almost 1.9 million fishers in coastal communities face the loss of their livelihoods.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Philippines) has been working on the Partnership Program Towards Sustainable Tuna (PPTST) since 2011. This project focuses on two areas – the Lagonoy Gulf in Bicol, plus the Mindoro Strait in Mindoro Occidental. These two sites altogether comprise 21 cities and municipalities.

To improve governance and protect fisheries resources, WWF helped establish local fishing regulations and management plans. WWF has been working to achieve Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification, a seafood certification scheme which can help tuna fishers sell their products internationally at more competitive prices.

WWF helped organize 21 municipal Tuna Fishers Associations and two Tuna Fishers Federations. By organizing tuna fishers, WWF has amplified their voices at the local, regional and national levels, while helping craft Local Tuna Management Plans specific to their areas. At the national level, WWF pushed the updating and passage of the National Tuna Management Plan.

While the PPTST project ended in 2017,



A proud fisher shows the catch of the day, a 42-kilogramme yellowfin tuna. (Gregg Yan)

WWF has continued its interventions through the Sustainable Tuna Partnership (STP). STP builds on the achievements of PPTST by helping fishers develop financial management and business skills, while augmenting their income through social enterprises. This will give fishers greater power to negotiate for fairer tuna prices. It also aims to reach out to traders, exporters and retailers by empowering tuna fishers and giving them greater influence in the supply chain.

Together with Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils (FARMCs), Tuna Fishers Associations, local government units, national government agencies, WWF-Germany, the Tambuyog Development Center and various supply chain actors, WWF tirelessly continues nearly a decade of work in the hopes of leaving a positive and lasting legacy for tuna fisheries across the Philippines.

Conserving Sharks and Rays in the Philippines

Sharks and rays are charismatic denizens of Philippine seas. Philippine waters are home to around 200 shark, ray and chimaera species, ranging from giant whale sharks to graceful manta rays.

Globally valued at USD1 billion, the trade in sharks and rays has severely depleted the numbers of these enigmatic creatures. An estimated 73 to 100 million sharks are killed yearly for their fins alone. Millions of rays are slaughtered for their tails and gill rakers.

However, only a few species – including whale sharks, thresher sharks, hammerhead sharks and mobula rays – are nationally-protected. The rest are still caught for meat, fins, nutritional supplements, and the pet and curio trades. Live sharks are still sold with impunity in some restaurants in Metro Manila and many major Philippine cities.

The amendment to Section 102 of RA 10654 strengthened and complemented both global and national efforts to balance the conservation and sustainable use of these threatened species. As a result, the sharks and rays listed in the CITES Appendices are now fully-protected in the country.

Save Sharks Network Philippines (SSNP), an allied network of PaNaGaT, is currently

taking the lead for the passage of the *Shark, Ray and Chimaera Act*, a comprehensive national law to conserve all sharks, rays and chimaeras.

Resources such as identification posters on protected species, a legislative toolkit, a policy brief, the Philippine Shark and Ray Conservation Roadmap, plus updates on national legislations can be read online at: <http://mwwphilippines.org/conservesharks>.





Researchers studying a whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) in the waters of Donsol, Sorsogon. (Topp2 / WWF-Philippines)



The 'Sharkada' of Save Sharks Network Philippines delivering a message of conservation to the Philippine government. (Gregg Yan)

Solutions for Municipal Fishers

Tambuyog believes that social protection should be transformative – addressing not just short-term needs but providing sustainable livelihoods with steady incomes.

Community Landing Fish Centers

CFLCs were originally envisioned as fisherfolk-managed facilities which can reduce post-harvest losses. Acting as training venues to check fish yields, assess fish stocks and conduct other post-harvest activities, they add great value to the livelihoods of small-scale fishers.

The monitoring of these centers should be conducted by the Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Council (FARMC) while Nongovernment Organizations (NGOs) can assist in capacity-building on coastal resource management and social enterprise development.

Social Insurance for Fishers

Sadly, government-run social protection programs aren't always accessible or appropriate for the needs of small-scale fishing households, forcing many to choose market-based social protection mechanisms like micro-finance loans.

The terms and procedures of many market-based social protection sources are often complicated and skewed in favour of

lenders. Many fishers who borrow money to start businesses merely end up having to continuously pay off interest or take more loans just to stay afloat.

On the other hand, the capacity of households to set aside money to repay loans is a good indicator that fishers, when given sustainable livelihoods with stable incomes, can save good money.

Tambuyog believes that social protection should be transformative – addressing not just short-term needs but providing sustainable livelihoods with steady incomes. Truly sustainable livelihoods give fishers access and a degree of control over the waters that sustain their lives and livelihoods. Many coastal municipalities are already practicing Community-based Coastal Resource Management (CBCRM). Addressing fishers' basic rights and needs will further reduce poverty and address social inequity.

Permanent Homes Needed

Most fisherfolk families residing along the foreshore and easement zones of coasts



A suno or leopard coral trout is inspected in Palawan. (Gregg Yan)

have no legal ownership over the very land their houses are built on. They're not the only ones facing the threat of displacement and relocation. Even those settling beyond easement zones are worried.

Despite residing in their communities for decades, sometimes even paying taxes for their land, these fishers don't have security of tenure. Private claimants on the other hand, can often secure titles over coastal lands occupied by fishers for generations

Archipelagic Principles for Offshore Islands

The delineation and delimitation of municipal waters for municipalities and cities with offshore islands is long overdue.

For consistency with national and international legal frameworks, the archipelagic principle must be used to define

municipal waters with offshore islands.

The archipelagic principle is governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) uniting land, water and people as a single entity.

An archipelagic state has component islands and other natural features which form an intrinsic geographical, economic and political entity.

The indiscriminate application of the mainland principle to municipalities and cities with offshore islands leaves many islands outside of the 15 kilometer range for municipal waters. This will deprive many Local Government Units (LGUs) with offshore islands across the archipelago.

The technical determination, delineation and delimitation of municipal waters falls

Solutions for Municipal Fishers

within the expertise of the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA). Under RA 10654, NAMRIA can chart navigational lanes in fishing areas and delineate municipal waters.

NAMRIA has already recommended the application of municipal archipelagic baselines in issuing guidelines to delineate municipalities and cities with offshore islands.

Promoting Coastal Resiliency

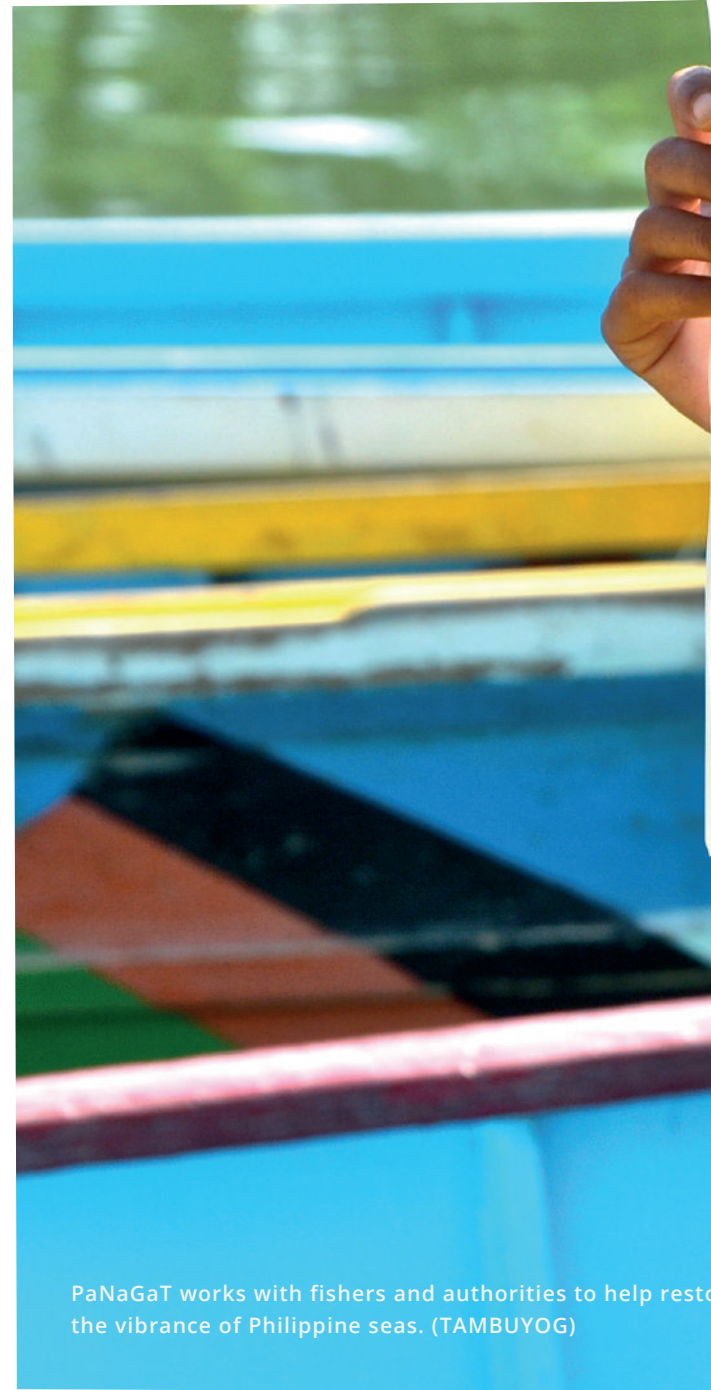
Coastal areas, fishing communities, plus the fisheries sector as a whole are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Rising sea levels and warming seas will damage coastal ecosystems and displace fishing communities.

Coastal flooding threatens the stability of wetlands, mangrove forests and coral reefs, reducing the viability of aquaculture. Updated information for coastal managers to address the risks brought about by climate change and other disasters is sorely needed to craft sensible policies and response strategies.

An assessment of the risks and impacts of climate change specific to coastal areas and communities with appropriate mitigating and adaptive measures, has yet to be adopted by government policies and programmes.

Finally, fisheries and coastal resource

management is necessary for a holistic approach in managing climate change impacts, because maintaining healthy seas and coasts is one of the best ways for coastal residents to adapt to the worsening effects of climate change.



PaNaGaT works with fishers and authorities to help restore the vibrance of Philippine seas. (TAMBUYOG)

**GUMAWA AT MAGPATUPAD
NG PLANO TUNGO SA
PAGPAPANUMBALIK NG
SIGLA NG KARAGATAN.**

Tambuyog Development Center



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A colorful tuna lure from Mindoro. (Gregg Yan)

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A fisherfolk holds up his catch - *banak* and *lapu-lapu*. (Gregg Yan)

PaNaGaT

Promoting Sustainable Fisheries

Philippine seas are renowned for vibrant coral reefs, labyrinthine mangrove forests and sprawling meadows of seagrass. They provide one service above all else.

They generate food, ranging from colourful *lapu-lapu* to export-quality yellowfin tuna.

But the Pearl of the Orient faces rough waters, with 10 of its 13 major fishing grounds overfished, less than 1% of its coral reefs in excellent condition and the loss of half of all mangrove forests and seagrass meadows in the past century alone.

To protect the livelihoods and uplift the lives of the country's two million fisherfolk, the PaNaGaT (*Pangingisda Natin Gawing Tama*) network has been working with the government to stamp out illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing to push for a transition to sustainable fisheries.

This book chronicles the first five years of the network as it strengthens ties with allies in a bid to help reclaim the vibrance and productivity of Philippine seas.