



PHILIPPINES

IMPACT  
REPORT  
2022

A photograph of two dead fish floating on the surface of dark, rippling water. The fish are pale, almost white, and appear to be dead. One is larger than the other. The water is dark blue-grey with small ripples.

# Force For Nature



**25th ANNIVERSARY  
WWF-PHILIPPINES**

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

**W**icked problems require no less than wicked approaches to solve. The Philippines is at the crosshairs of the intersecting scope of the climate crisis and biodiversity loss – two of the most defining challenges in humanity’s history. They are “wicked” problems because: they are strongly interconnected and not just in one way, they are beset by “chicken and egg” questions and human activities drive them in scales that have never been seen before in natural history. That makes for complexity on maximum steroids. So an organization like WWF-Philippines, that vows in word and deed, to face these challenges, needs to be even more wicked than those challenges.

WWF-Philippines is wickedly determined to change the ending. To do this, we sharpened our focus on the main drivers of the twin crisis to deliver deeper and more lasting impact on projects that could help change the ending. We do this working with a wicked C-H-E-F.

We work on projects to pivot “C-onsumption” like for plastics and pushing for a circular economy and not only downstream solutions like recycling and reuse, as well as a devoted program stream to help corporate practices transform across their operations beyond “regulatory compliance” under our Corporates for a Better Planet Initiative (CBPI). We work to protect “H-abitats” as multi-splendored “life-giving spaces” and not simply as “locations” of charismatic flora and fauna or special tourist interests. For this,

we created and continue to strengthen ecotourism models like the Whale Shark ecotourism project in Donsol, expanding in to protect the Burias-Ticao entire seascape and communities that mutually depend on each other to sustain their lives. For “E-nergy”, we are committed to push for increasing proportions of renewable energy supply in the country with an actual solar-based ecotourism project in Siargao and Dinagat Islands as well as strong lobbying for renewable energy as national policy. And for “F-OOD” which is the biggest driver of the twin crisis which itself is a crisis in the form of “food security”, we are working for example, with the fisheries, as in our Sustainable Tuna project, to future-proof fishers and their fishing grounds for sustainability.

Those are just examples of some of WWF-Philippines’ counter-shifts toward a positive ending. We could not have done it without kindred “wickededs” of partners in the national government, in LGUs, in the civic community, in the professional fields of science, the social sciences and the arts. Thank you for the twenty-five years. It may just be silent stretch in a narra tree’s lifetime but for WWF, it can resoundingly define the worth of our work in changing the ending.

**Maria Isabel Garcia**

*Chairperson, Board of Trustees*

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**G**iven the current state of the environment and world affairs with a looming climate catastrophe before us, it may seem like we are facing a bleak future. The Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world and pollution, environmental degradation, habitat destruction, and nourishment of people and nature are just some of the many critical concerns of the country. Yet WWF-Philippines remains as committed as ever to its mission to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature. This commitment is underpinned by hope – hope that by working together with other individuals, organizations, groups, and government, we can turn the tide and change the ending for our planet and people.

The Corporates for a Better Planet Initiative (CBPI) is a remarkable program recently established by the WWF that helps drive firms to report and rethink their environmental impact and ESG strategies. In developing ESG reports with compliance to global standards and frameworks, companies are guided in improving their commitments, policies, and programs for the benefit of their stakeholders and the environment. Innovative initiatives like these show how WWF-Philippines is creatively and strategically planning for wider and deeper impact.

WWF-Philippines as an organization is also preparing itself for the future through robust investments in people, systems, and policies to ensure that every team member is empowered and supported to be their best in delivering their work and impact. This is a challenging effort but a necessary one given the scale and breadth of our aspiration amidst so many rising challenges. Committed, hard-working, and passionate people are core to the DNA of WWF and in the Philippines, we are blessed to have amazing people and leadership driving our aspiration and Mission.

With your continued help and support, we can not only protect and restore nature for the benefit of people and planet by 2030, but also have a sustainable and healthy planet and live within planetary boundaries by 2050! Believe – together it is possible.

**Raymond Rufino**

*President, Board of Trustees*

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# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**W**WF-Philippines' 25 years are the product of the vision and passion of its leaders, members, and partners. Like all WWF offices, WWF-Philippines is an expression of global and local thinking AND acting, with programs that evolve alongside our understanding of the issues.

In 1991, a program office was set up to supervise various field projects, which developed into an associate program known as Kabang Kalikasan ng Pilipinas. From a small office of eight running programs under WWF-US, the present WWF-Philippines has become a team of over 100 with a quarter-century track record as a fully-fledged NGO.

The growth of WWF-Philippines' programs has reflected the path of a movement that has now become mainstream. When WWF-International was founded in 1961, our leaders understood the need for an organization that would unite people and drive attention to biodiversity conservation. WWF launched a project to save rhinos from extinction in Africa. From there, the understanding of what it takes to 'save species' took root so the work evolved to protecting habitats, addressing habitat loss, and stopping climate change.

WWF-Philippines' journey mirrors that evolution but remains uniquely Filipino. First, the focus on marine programs is because the Philippines is at the apex of the Coral Triangle. Second, addressing the social justice aspects has always been a priority. The questions of "so what" and "why does it matter" drives the approach, with answers always being about PEOPLE: the community of 110 million Filipinos we serve.

Hard lessons were learned from underestimating the role of local communities and governments in enabling -or disabling- change. We also learned that success will be possible only if the root problem of poverty is

addressed, with solutions owned by the stakeholders. Our most impactful work has these elements and resulted in community transformation. Great examples are in Donsol, with whale shark ecotourism, Tubbataha, which is the gold standard in marine protected area management, and Bicol and Mindoro, where small-scale tuna fishers achieved the country's first MSC certification.

WWF-Philippines is also about reconnecting people to the natural world that sustains us. We are part of the living breathing biosphere, but that connection has become so remote to the point of separation. It was only within the last two or three decades that the world recognized that healthy ecosystems are the fundamental 'capital' and the basis of the global economy. Our contribution to that body of work is in pioneering models of payments for ecosystem services, shifting incentives to systems and behaviors that promote equity and uphold the common good.

WWF-Philippines is grateful for many enduring partnerships with the public and private sectors, fellow NGOs, youth volunteers, and supporters. Everyone who entered the orbit of our beloved organization played a part in fulfilling the mission of building a future in which people and nature thrive.

We celebrate all who have been part of the journey and have made the organization into what it is today.

Happy 25th Anniversary!

**Katherine Custodio**

*Executive Director*



# 25 stories of Inspiration, Impact, and Innovation

*The stories of the past are the fertile ground upon which the imagination of the future grows. WWF-Philippines' identity today is the result of all the people who contributed a part of their heart and soul to the organization. The story of WWF-Philippines is the story of every panda working together as a **Force for Nature**.*







# For A Living Planet

## CHAPTER 1

# Pandas At Home

**VICENTE "VINCE" PÉREZ, JR.**  
FOUNDING TRUSTEE AND FORMER CHAIRMAN

When I host Christmas parties at home, my nephews and nieces come over and one of our favorite games is for them to count how many pandas they can find in the entire home.

It could either be a little toy, a Christmas decor, a plaque, or on a book, and the one who could count the most number of panda logos they could find wins a Christmas gift. Ever since I joined the organization in 1996, the number of pandas that they have to count continues to grow higher and higher.

My first encounter with WWF was around 1990 during my time as a banker in New York dealing with emerging debt in countries in Latin America and Asia. I got a call from WWF in Washington, DC and they said they had an interesting project called 'debt for nature swap.' They were looking for Philippine debt that they could deliver to the central bank in order to make a case for creating the now named Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park. That got me interested and after I spoke to representatives from WWF, I learned more about the organization and how innovative they were. We pushed through with that first deal and it was publicized in the Wall Street Journal. I still have the news announcement framed at home to remind me how I first got involved with WWF. It didn't end there because WWF called me again and wanted to do another debt for nature swap. After we sealed another deal, I was asked to join

their National Advisory Council. I visited them and met like-minded individuals from various sectors like IT, finance, philanthropy, retirees who were all aligned in one common goal which is conservation. And that's how I slowly got involved with WWF.

A few years later in 1994 after I moved to Singapore and the idea for establishing a WWF presence in the Philippines had started to gain momentum, several groups

came together to jump start the WWF-Philippines office: the Ayala Corporation, the Soriano Corporation, and I was invited while I was still based in Singapore. The original founders of the WWF-Philippines Board of Trustees were Don Jaime Zobel de Ayala, Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, Carlos Soriano, Boy Morales, and myself. We established the organization together with Dr. Celso Roque who became the first executive director of WWF-Philippines.



*"I'm encouraged that, looking back more than a quarter of a century ago, we were just a small office and now we have grown to become an independent national organization." © WWF-Philippines / Matikas Santos*

We started as a small program office highly dependent on grant and support from WWF-US but we were already keen to become a fully-independent national organization. And so we said “can we become a national office organization in two years?” So we worked hard to set up all the management in place, set up the board and lo and behold, at the annual conference in Ecuador in 1997, we were announced to the entire WWF network to be an independent national organization.

I've been blessed that I've had the chance to visit multiple project sites of WWF. I've visited Norway and spent the whole night looking for orcas to no avail while we were drenched with cold freezing Arctic water. I've gone deep into the jungles of Amazon swimming while watching out for piranhas. I've visited a museum in Switzerland where WWF was first founded and saw the very first drawing of the panda logo. Why the panda? Because at the time there were no color printers, only black and white. So the panda was the easiest thing to replicate and print.

I am now a father and we call our daughter “little panda.” We know that we have to leave behind a planet for the next generation, ideally in a condition that they could still enjoy.

Vince and Leigh Perez with Wolcott Henry at the Wolcott Henry Photo Show 2014 © WWF-Philippines



It's becoming obvious that climate change is not a myth, not a fallacy, but a reality. We just saw a tropical cyclone, Carding, pass through and intensify in 12 hours from a category one to a category five. But I'm encouraged by the next generation. I have nephews and nieces, one joined the climate change commission, another one wants to major in sustainable finance. I have a lot of hope that the next generation understands what the planet Earth needs. My hope with WWF-Philippines is that we continue to

educate grade school pupils, high school students, engage with the college students through our National Youth Council and engage with young entrepreneurs through our Next Gen Council. I'm encouraged that, looking back more than a quarter of a century ago, we were just a small office and now we have grown to become an independent national organization, and I'm hopeful and optimistic for the future of WWF-Philippines.





# THE STORY OF THE TURTLE ISLANDS

At the southwestern corner of the Philippines within the Sulu Archipelago are the Turtle Islands which are made of different shapes and sizes. Boan, Lihiman, Langaan, Great Bakkungan, Taganak, and Baguan are the largest islands making up about 298.27 hectares of land area. The islands are famous as a nesting ground for green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) being the 11th major global nesting grounds which enable hatchings to saturate populations far beyond their natal grounds (UNESCO, 2015).

The threat of poaching has prompted conservation efforts due to the scale of biodiversity and abundance of marine life. The harvest of marine turtle eggs is widespread as eggs offer locals a source of protein and income. For example, residents on Lihiman island turn to illegally collecting turtle eggs due to poverty.

In an attempt to combat this socio-economic driven issue, a permit lottery-based system was drawn up among the islands to allow 60% of laid eggs to be harvested. This left another 10% to be harvested under the

condition that profit from eggs would go to a nominated conservation fund and the remaining 30% would be protected (Fischer et al., 2021).

Another approach which had great success was the establishment of the first transboundary protected area in the world, the Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area. Catalyzed by a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Philippines and Malaysia in 1996, it directly protects the thousands of nests laid each year and also preserves wildlife corridors (UNESCO, 2015). Enabling connectivity between regions and turtles to freely pass between habitats that promote their fitness is crucial since green sea turtles are classified as “Endangered” by the IUCN Red list (IUCN, 2004).

The Turtle Islands paved the way for the establishment of WWF-Philippines. As one of the first projects of WWF-Philippines, it was visited by the first members of the board of trustees who were then motivated to provide seed funding for the establishment of an independent national office. WWF-Philippines become instrumental in the negotiations of the MOA between Malaysia and Philippines which foreshadows the success WWF-Philippines have been able to inject into preserving biodiversity, culture, and future resources across the Philippines.





# It Started With Sea Turtles

**ROMY TRONO**  
FIRST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

One Sunday back in 1993, I was contacted by Dr. Celso Roque, who was then the WWF-US director for Southeast Asia, and he asked me to come to the office on a Sunday and deliver a presentation to the CEO of WWF-Japan about the Pawikan Conservation Program that I was Project Leader of in the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB now Biodiversity Management Bureau or BMB) Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

I prepared and presented a background on the program and the CEO got interested especially with the biology and ecology of the sea turtles after I told a lot of stories about our project in the Turtle Islands, Tawi-Tawi. It led to a commitment of funding from WWF-Japan for a project in the Philippines and after that Dr. Roque contacted me and asked me to prepare a proposal for a project and then he hired me. So I joined WWF-Philippines with the position as Marine Program Director for the Philippine Program and my first project was the Turtle Islands.

When we started, there were about 8 staff in the office which was in Annapolis St., Greenhills. My marching orders from Dr. Roque was to develop the marine program for WWF-US here in the Philippines and at the same time, he was pushing me to help fulfill the requirements to make WWF-Philippines into a National Organization (NO). There were many difficult requirements from WWF-International that had to be met and I was helping Dr. Roque to secure that NO status because I agreed that was the way to go. When we were starting out, one of the challenges was that

it was difficult to be accepted in the local community of Civil-Society Organizations because we were perceived as a foreign Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).

One important event during that time we were trying to secure the NO status was when Dr. Roque asked me to organize a trip to the Baguan Island in the Turtle Islands, Tawi-Tawi for people we were planning to invite as board members and trustees including Don Jaime Zobel de Ayala, Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, Carlos Soriano, Boy Morales, and a couple of potential donors from WWF-US. I needed around 3 months to prepare the trip because at that time, Baguan Island didn't have any good facilities other than small shanties. I had to ask for additional budget so we could build proper toilets! Back then, our "toilets" were just holes dug in the sand. Sometimes the sea turtles digging for nests would dig up other stuff! It was a logistical nightmare to bring these high-ranking people to the Turtle Islands because it required flying to Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, then another short flight to Sandakan, then speedboats to reach the islands that sit adjacent to the

Philippines-Malaysia border. They needed to see the Turtle Islands because that was our first project when we were still a program office so it was appropriate to give birth to the National Organization on the Turtle Islands. They went and all agreed to become part of the organization and they committed annual funding for the next five years. So we got our NO status and SEC registration and WWF-International actually told us back then that we were probably one of the NOs that made very quick progress in securing a NO status because some would take almost a decade before they passed. After that, WWF-Philippines started to blossom as an organization. We became a major player in the Philippine marine conservation arena expanding our program into regional initiatives such as the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion which included Indonesia and Malaysia.

During the early days of WWF-Philippines, one challenge for me as the first Executive Director was hiring the right people. Some people had their hearts in the right place as conservationists but were lacking in social abilities when it came to dealing with





*"We knew that it would take them as long as 25 years before they would come back and lay their eggs on the same beach. I told him that we won't see them again. But we still did our work." © WWF-Philippines*

people within and outside the organization. I wanted to make sure that the team can work like family or friends. Back then, Dr. Roque and I would set up a bar to invite staff over for drinks. Our office was in UP Village and we would play badminton at the front of the office. When a fishball vendor was passing by we would buy all his food for the entire staff. Morale was great and the culture of the people really blended well which made work easy and fun and we were more effective in delivering our objectives.

I'll never forget the work we had to do to establish the Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area, which is recognized as the first and at that time, the only transboundary protected area for green turtles in the world. I was part of the

Philippine delegation that negotiated with Malaysia to establish that because over the past years, Filipinos were tagging turtles while the Malaysians were also tagging the turtles but the turtles were crossing the border and would sometimes be in the 6 islands on the Philippine side and sometimes in the 3 islands on the Malaysian side. We had one goal: to institutionalize a joint management regime because working separately just wasn't practical. Both countries agreed and we initiated negotiations and the members of the delegations for the two countries were created. It was a sensitive issue because of the Philippines' unresolved claims in Sabah. Every meeting, every session there are representatives from the Foreign Affairs office from both sides. While we were

crafting the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), the language and wordings were closely watched and negotiated. After one of the many joint meetings, we suggested for both country delegations to conduct a cross visit to the Sabah Turtle Islands to see the tourism and conservation activities. The following day, the delegation crossed the border to the Philippines island of Baguan. It was during those visits that both delegations realized that they had to make the agreement happen. It came down to one word suggested by a member of the delegation which was "designated" which suddenly made everything click and both the lawyers and foreign affairs officers agreed. The MOA was signed in May 1996 after a year of negotiations which was historic and unprecedented. Officials from our DFA told me that it was one of the fastest MOAs we were able to sign with Malaysia and what was more amazing was it was on the sensitive border with Sabah. In April 1997, the Philippines and Malaysia won the J. Paul Getty Wildlife Conservation Award for the Turtle Islands which was the first and only time the Philippines won. It included a \$50,000 prize for both countries. We used that prize money to construct a much bigger field station made of concrete on Baguan Island.



25 years from now, I hope to see WWF-Philippines continue growing as an effective conservation organization. I believe that leadership and staff of a conservation organization need to keep their heads up in the sky, but their feet should still be grounded. Always remember the mission of WWF-Philippines: "To stop and eventually reverse the accelerating degradation of the natural environment and to help build a future where Filipinos can live in harmony with nature." This should always be in the hearts and minds of every WWF-Philippines staff. Working in an NGO should not be just about the salary because you need passion, courage, and perseverance. The projects



WWF-Philippines researcher releasing hatchlings  
© Jurgen Freund / WWF

don't produce immediate results. Many projects take time to achieve long lasting success. Most conservation programs are intergenerational in nature, we cannot plan with timetables that are just 5 years, 10 years, 15 years, because it is bound to fail. You will hit some successes along the way but will it be sustained?

Back in the Turtle islands during the 1980's when Joel Palma and I with our team from PAWB DENR were releasing sometimes thousands of green turtle hatchlings every night to the sea, we knew that it would take them as long as 25 years before they would come back and lay their eggs on the same beach. I told him that we won't see them again. But we still did our work because then we knew that we were actually already contributing significantly to increase the sea turtle population into the distant future. Fortunately, I had an opportunity to visit Baguan Island again in 2012 and 2016. My heart overflowed with so much joy and gratitude when we observed more than 120 green turtle nesters laying eggs on the 1.2 km nesting beach of Bauan Island in one single night! That number went as high as 140 nesters per night! The recorded annual nestings are now showing an unprecedented 700% increase compared to the annual nestings during the 1980s!  
A true living legacy!

*"Our office was in UP Village and we would play badminton at the front of the office. When a fishball vendor was passing by we would buy all his food for the entire staff. Morale was great and the culture of the people really blended well which made work easy and fun and we were more effective in delivering our objectives."*

# There's Something Wrong Here

**JOEL PALMA**

THIRD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND FORMER PROJECT MANAGER

In February 1997, I became the 17th employee of WWF-Philippines less than a year after it was incorporated. I was not Number 1 or 2— that's Luz and Chrisma and the others. It was really a very small organization.

I was hired to do turtle conservation work because I came from the same office of Romy Trono's who used to be my project director in the DENR for the Pawikan Conservation Project. I would stay 3 to 5 months a year in the Turtle Islands which were nearer to Malaysia than any Philippine province. It was fun being in the field because it also involved working with communities and different people.

WWF-Philippines staff during that time were mostly trained to do conservation work. The major challenge was integrating this with community and development work. We went through headwinds, because we had to learn while doing things. In the first place, our orientation was more on the biological science side, although I'm not saying that social and community part doesn't involve science. We had to learn

it the hard way, so to speak. There was even a point where our team in the Turtle Islands were "excommunicated" by the mayor because there were perceptions that "you love the animals and the species that you're protecting more than the people." The mayor sent us a letter after a while that we were trying to organize the community to introduce new fishing technologies that were different from how they traditionally fished. We were trying to veer them away from cyanide fishing and towards net fishing. It failed, but I guess that failure was one step backwards, two steps forward. We learned to conduct more consultations to focus more on what the community needs rather than coming in and saying we already know the solutions. These are great learnings that we were able to not just experience, but learn from. We were trying to organize people, but in those types of communities in the south, they're not used to being organized. From then on, we started to consult. We started to make plans based on what they need. We started to implement programs and activities based on what they can do and what they have. That's among our greatest learnings and from then on we hired staff members



Earth Hour 2019 © WWF-Philippines / Josh Alibcag





who knew how to conserve species and how to work with communities, and that really made a lot of difference.

Another unforgettable experience in the Turtle Islands was when the mayor detained an international delegation of turtle experts that I brought there from Malaysia. We were at an International Symposium on Sea Turtle Conservation in Malaysia after which I invited all the experts to cross the border from Sandakan, Malaysia to the Philippine Turtle Islands. At that time we had already established the Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area and the mayor used to be a former colleague in government with the Pawikan Conservation Project. When we got there, I introduced the sea turtle experts from different parts of the globe and said that they were there to see how we were working together. But the mayor was shocked to see us and ordered everyone to be detained and took all their passports. He told us “You cannot leave. You just stay here with the police” Even as the project manager, I was unable to do anything. I called Romy Trono and told him “There’s something wrong here” and then there were some negotiations and eventually after about 3 to 4 hours in custody, we were released. One

of the sea turtle experts from Australia, Dr. Colin Limpus, whom I continued to see many years after, still says to me “Joel, you are the person that I will never forget,” because of that incident. It was fun to talk about but at the same time during those times doing conservation work also had a lot of hazards and challenges.

I always say that the greatest strength of the organization is as good as our partners. It’s always collective. It’s in how we process things, how we are able to connect to the community, how we put science into sustainability, conservation, and livelihood so that the people themselves will be able to decide on how to do it better and more sustainably. What I’m really proud of about WWF-Philippines is that it’s an organization that really has an impact on the ground. It’s not just advocacy. It’s not just always in the papers, pushing things, although that’s part of it. But you know, you go to a fisherman, you go to a forest ranger, you go to a waste collector, WWF-Philippines makes an impact on the ordinary Filipino. Look at Donsol and Tubbataha. It shows that our strength is on the ground, and we can show something solid that impacts the ordinary person and the community.

Over the past 25 years I think we are evolving because of the signs of the times. When I started with WWF-Philippines I never would have imagined that plastics will become an issue. Before, we were focused on marine but we expanded to watersheds, like in Ipo, and there are more watershed programs now in the Visayas.

For the next coming years, I hope WWF-Philippines will get even deeper in our work on the ground with communities and local governments. I see now it’s even getting deeper, so that’s good. I hope that we can capacitate other organizations so that we can collaborate and work together and have greater impact. We all know 2030 is just around the corner, and we’re sort of feeling it. But there’s still hope. For me, if we work together, especially with our approach, that we only facilitate things, not just provide money or support but provide initiatives that will be sustained and continued by our partners. That, I’m sure, will be carried on by WWF-Philippines.





*"I always say that the greatest strength of the organization is as good as our partners. It's always collective." © Lory Tan / WWF-Philippines*







# THE STORY OF THE TUBBATAHA REEFS

A beacon of marine biodiversity, the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion borders both Indonesian and West Philippine Seas (DeVantier, Alcala, and Wilkinson, 2004). These waters are further encompassed by the Coral Triangle which contributes to 76% of the world's total coral species richness including 15 regional endemics (Veron et al., 2010).

In the heart of these seas, the Tubbataha is the Philippine's most biologically diverse and productive reef complexes. Hosts of marine life can be found in the UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site making it unmatched in its global-significance for biodiversity with few other reefs able to boast equivalent arrays of flora and fauna (UNESCO, 2022). This is especially given that the Tubbataha reef is 5 times more productive than other 'healthy reefs' and alone holds an impressive 448 recorded fish species and 337 coral species which allow the reef to thrive with life (White et al., 2003).

The pristine state of Tubbataha hides the threats it has faced in recent years and instead reflects an excellent example of how communities can cohesively come together with managing organizations for the common cause of ecological preservation.

In the late 1980's, dynamite fishing became a common practice on the reef along with sodium cyanide being dropped directly onto the reef matrix to harvest fish. Both local and migratory fishermen all the way from the corners of the southern Philippines and China were involved in the fishing activity due to the plentiful catch in Tubbataha. The threat of over exploitation did not end with fish as sea turtles and clams were also taken from the waters to be sold in markets at both national and international levels (White and Ovenden, 2003).

The condition of the reef regressed as the natural resources in Tubbataha kept being harvested. In 1989, seaweed farming began further disrupting the ecosystem and altering the benthic community. These were such prominent activities that 63% of the population in communities close to the reef were involved in seaweed farming while 67% relied on fishing (White and Ovenden, 2003).

The catalyst for change to restore the reefs came in 1988 when, by Presidential Decree, Tubbataha became a marine park and later a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site in 1994. WWF-Philippines joined the force alongside the existing management office to

work on the front lines to establish practical systems for ecotourism, conservation and mariculture. At every stage, WWF-Philippines took an effort to make a conscious understanding of who would be affected and who would be helped with the park's zonation. By communicating scientific reasoning to local communities, 'no-take' zones were assembled and park boundaries were pushed further to 1,013,340 hectares so marine life could rebound to its original plentiful abundance (WWF, 2018).

WWF-Philippines, with the power of the community behind them, helped establish a Marine Protected Area that's the pillar of protection in the Philippine Sea. Within a year of protection, live coral cover increased 3.3% and within 2 years there was a 530% increase in mean total fish biomass (Ledesma and Mejia, 2000).

# We Are Ready, Ready To Die!

**RONALD DE ROA**  
M/Y NAVORCA BOAT CAPTAIN

I first worked with WWF-Philippines in October of 1999 as crew of the research boats, the Minerva and Vasco da Gama.

Back then it was sir Dindo who assigned us to Tubbataha. After my duty, I became part of the crew. I would transfer between the boats depending on which one had to sail and I was always involved in navigation, engine, operating the speedboat, and other aspects. The work made me even more happy when I realized that it involved protecting nature and I thought "Wow we are guarding against illegal activities that would affect the reefs" so from then on, I loved my job and up to now I am still here.

One of the changes I have seen in Tubbataha over the years was the improvements of the infrastructure for park rangers. The station used to be just a house on the sandbar and water could get inside. It would really make you think twice because you are in the middle of the sea and you will have to live there. For entertainment, we used an old SSB radio where you would tune in to a particular frequency called "The Plaza" and find people on board fishing or cargo ships to talk to. Patrolling was also difficult back then because there was only one speed boat that was dilapidated and had a recycled wooden handle attached to the motor. Now we have



*"For me, there have been so many voyages and it always makes me happy when the visitors and passengers are thankful and grateful." © WWF-Philippines / Monci Hinay*

better infrastructure and better facilities such as satellite TV and internet. We now also have karaoke there for entertainment.

My most unforgettable experience was the scare we had following the kidnapping in Dos Palmas resort in Puerto Princesa by the Abu Sayyaf bandits. We were contacted via radio about the kidnapping and told the fleeing Abu Sayyaf might pass by Tubbataha where

we were on duty. There were concerns that they might try to take more hostages from us if they saw us. The security personnel with us from the Navy issued me a rusty handgun that was hard to load. We had to repeatedly hit it because it would get stuck and the magazine wouldn't go in. We had to keep a lookout for 24 hours just in case. The project manager at that time, Marivel Dygico, called us over the radio and asked if

# Kinship In The Sulu Sea

**MARIVEL DYGICO**

FORMER PROJECT MANAGER OF TUBBATAHA

we were prepared for the situation. I replied “Ma’am, we are ready, ready to die!” she replied a bit confused: “Ready to die?” She realized it was a joke but with some truth in it.

Confronted with difficulties at sea where one can hardly do anything, we cope by remaining calm and just doing our best. Fortunately, the Abu Sayyaf never passed by our area. But that experience of having to cock an old and rusted handgun was really unforgettable.

For me, there have been so many voyages and it always makes me happy when the visitors and passengers are thankful and grateful, and also when we receive constructive comments. I’ve been with WWF-Philippines for 23 years and as for the next 25 years, let’s just wait for the next chapters. If I continue to be happy here, then I will stay and keep doing what I’m doing.

I was looking forward to retirement after I resigned from a special government project in Palawan in 2000. But then a friend who was with WWF-Philippines told me that the Tubbataha project manager was resigning and they were looking for a replacement. At first I was reluctant.

There were several invitations but I was not mindful until I could no longer ignore it. During the interview, I was shown underwater pictures of Tubbataha and I was immediately hooked. It's been two decades. Until now I'm with WWF-Philippines with a next generation team. I consider my work as a semi-retirement plan. Because I love what I do that it's no longer work. It has become part of my personal passion for sea and marine life.

Early in the days of the Tubbataha project, we had two service boats. A small one, Vasco da Gama and the bigger one was Minerva, a traditional fishing boat with outriggers. We considered Minerva as our home in the Sulu Sea until she was decommissioned in 2010 and we acquired M/Y Navorca. On board these boats, we were able to mingle with leading scientists, prominent conservationists, influential bureaucrats and politicians, and people in the communities where we have projects. We seriously talked about and did conservation work but the most exciting of all, we shared good food. We experimented with the traditional dishes of

the crew and passengers and tweaked them to our hearts content. That was fun! Each trip was unique and colorful. We were like a family and through the years that family has grown.

One of the most difficult times in life is when someone eventually leaves the nest to make their own family. This happened when the Tubbataha Management Office, which was previously a unit under WWF-Philippines, became an autonomous office in 2003. Tears rolled because even though we'll still be working together for the conservation of Tubbataha, it's still different that they won't be a part of WWF-Philippines anymore.

On the other hand, it was also one of the most fulfilling. I saw first hand how the team started, became deeply involved and matured towards the common objective of putting together effective management systems and protective measures for the conservation of Tubbataha. In the same way, Tubbataha and its denizens of marine life flourished; its partners grew in numbers and influence.



# The Tiger Shark Behind Me

**JOAN PECSON**

M/Y NAVORCA PROJECT MANAGER

The longest-lasting impact of WWF-Philippines on Tubbataha is that there are people there who were organized from the beginning to sustain its management. Projects are time-bounded, but we were able to surpass that constraint because a permanent office has been established. We learned to nurture people for them to take root and bear fruit because the impact of conservation can take such a long time.

I first heard about WWF-Philippines during my internship at the Tubbataha Management Office (TMO) where I also volunteered as Youth Ambassador for six months.

I heard about the Navorca and WWF-Philippines from the researchers who would always disappear from the office during the summer and would come back tanned. One time they came back with Dr. Wilfredo “Al” Licuanan who is a marine scientist and coral expert in the Philippines. I became interested in the research they were conducting in Tubbataha. I was told

that WWF-Philippines was hiring so after volunteering for Tubbataha, I applied and it became my first job.

I’ve been with WWF-Philippines for a few years but every year I gain a deeper understanding of why Tubbataha is known for its management. The people and those they work with have true dedication. They put their heart and soul into the work and for me who was just starting my career path, it is inspiring to witness they have dedicated their life to conservation.

My most unforgettable experience with WWF-Philippines was when a Tiger shark about 3 meters long passed behind me while I was doing a seagrass survey in Tubbataha. I didn’t see it but another researcher facing me saw it and signaled to me “Tiger shark!” We quickly went back up to the patrol boat. Tiger sharks are said to be aggressive but there are no records of attacks on divers in the park and we keep our distance once we encounter them. I also cannot forget my first time seeing a whale shark while snorkeling in Cawili, Cagayancillo. It was one small whale shark but I was still so happy because it was the first time I saw this gentle giant. Some say it’s better to



Summer Research Trip Team 2008 of M/Y Minerva © WWF-Philippines / Gregg Yan





encounter while scuba diving but it was still an awesome experience.

I feel inspired that most of the people of Cagayancillo understand why there are regulations in place that prohibit illegal activities in the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park. They know their activities have an effect on the environment and on the reefs. They are proud that they have beautiful coral reefs and they know it provides livelihood and food security. It's easy for us in WWF-Philippines to talk to them and share knowledge.

Tubbataha Reefs is one of the longest running and also among the most successful projects of WWF-Philippines.

I really feel pressured in taking over projects for Tubbataha from Marivel Dygico and to move it forward knowing the successful foundations laid by the management through the leadership of Park Superintendent, Angelique Songco. I think the future challenges will involve how to make the younger generations appreciate the value of Tubbataha. It's hard to relate to the general public what they do not see and what is far from them. The continuous work with the community at Cagayancillo also needs to be sustained so that the younger generations will understand that they are the frontliners in taking care of Tubbataha which is part of the identity of their community.

Sadly, there is a possibility that the Tubbataha Reefs would be damaged from natural disasters like super typhoons if it were to directly pass over the park. During the onslaught of Typhoon Odette, the coral reefs in Cagayancillo were "washed out", as the locals would describe it. It is frustrating because we can't do anything when nature does its thing. One of the environmental principles is "Nature knows best" so in working with the TMO and WWF-Philippines, I've learned that when nature brings a typhoon, you just have to put your hands up and let it be. There is nothing we can do when nature takes its course. We'll just have to plan for the best and figure out how we can help nature recover naturally.









# THE STORY OF WHALE SHARKS IN DONSOLO

Donsol, nicknamed the whale shark capital of the world, is nestled in the province of Sorsogon. Small fishing towns line Donsol Bay which draws in whale sharks from their annual migrations as the bay's waters are continuously flooded with plankton and krill (Lapitan-Tandang, 2010). This allows the largest known aggregations of whale sharks to commence during the Philippines' rainy season.

Whale sharks have a lengthy history within the Philippines that has been intertwined with traditional fisheries due to their sought-after meat and fins (Rowat et al., 2021). Prior to the 1980s, the species were rarely fished or harvested by fishermen which changed in the 1990s as demand for whale protein grew, particularly in the Asian markets. Commercial fisheries established whale sharks as both a target and a source of valuable bycatch for economic gain (Pine et al., 2005).

Over time, more threats to whale sharks increased. Commercial fishing introduced the use of purse-seine, coastal nets, and gillnets into the paths of these animals as well as increased vessel activity in order to deploy and maintain the nets (Escalle et al., 2018). Ship strikes have been thought to be an additional significant source of mortality as increased commercial fishing increases

activity and, therefore, collisions.

Whale sharks, due to their signature silhouette, have also risen to fame as a charismatic species drawing in international visitors across all stages of their migrations through the Philippines. This is a mixed blessing, although it has created conservation awareness for the species. The Indo-Pacific subpopulation of these large fish have been under serious pressure with the number of individuals declining across the region. Specifically in the Philippines, local populations have decreased by as much as 60% within 1993 – 1997 leading to an IUCN classification of 'largely depleted' (Alava et al., 2000; IUCN, 2022).

When contextualizing this globally, these subpopulations comprise a bigger 'endangered' population since due to their migratory nature they are difficult to conserve across our vast oceans (IUCN, 2022). This makes it important to conserve areas where they congregate and haven't been heavily fished, like the Municipality of Donsol.

Modern threats require modern solutions, with current research only just starting to uncover the secret lives of these giant individuals. WWF-Philippines has been tackling this mystery and created conservation solutions to address the

wellbeing of these animals and to conserve multiple generations of whale shark lineages through scientific research. WWF-Philippines experts have been identifying individuals by using satellite tags, sonar devices, and digital cameras across the Indo-Pacific region as each whale shark has a unique pattern of markings just like a human fingerprint. Since 2007, WWF-Philippines has been able to identify 458 individual whale sharks through a digitalized photographic computer database which contributes to conservation management and gaps in scientific literature (WWF, 2022).

Since 1998, WWF-Philippines has been monitoring tourism within Donsol to minimize further exploitation of these gentle ocean giants. Rules have been implemented to ensure only one boat encroaches on one individual at a time and that touching a Whale Shark is prohibited as the oils on human skin are harmful (WWF, 2022). WWF-Philippines has been a major player in solving the double-edged sword of tourism in Donsol which could otherwise alter natural behaviors and see the demise of nature's most graceful swimmer.

# Aligned In Advocacy

**RAUL BURCE**

WHALE SHARK CONSERVATION AND ECOTOURISM FORMER PROJECT MANAGER

I was one of the earliest staff members, joining the Donsol team in 2005 and even becoming project manager before I left WWF-Philippines in 2018. When I joined the team, the staff only had five members.

Apart from the small workforce, we had to learn to reach out to the community and build a relationship with them.

Donsol is known internationally as a tourist spot due to its whale shark aggregation during peak seasons. Among the first projects I worked on was a community-based coastal resource management initiative from 2005 to 2010 covering the Burias and Ticao Pass. We worked with the town's tourism sector and the local government since the organization's beginning, to build up the ecotourism, conservation and coastal

resource management efforts of the area. We were able to convince the residents to collaborate with us by providing science-backed data for our ideas. There were a lot of consultations, research, policy formulation and workshops.

Through our projects, we were able to transform Donsol into a busy town. It is now a first class municipality with 230 tourist rooms available during the high season. From a few hundred curious backpackers, Donsol's seasonal visitors now exceed 25,000 or more than 130 tourists per day.

Aside from both operators and Butanding Interaction Officers (BIO), Donsol now boasts a full complement of tourist personnel and services that include paddle boatmen, resorts, lodging houses and home spaces, restaurants, caterers, and souvenir shops. Donsol's whale shark program is also served by off-site providers that include hotels, travel agencies and tour operators, airlines, buslines, and jeepney transport services.

Working with people for a common cause and elevating their living conditions while learning from them, is one of my unforgettable experiences in Donsol with WWF. Allan, one of the original Donsol Butanding Interaction Officers or guides said he was able to send his four children to college. Lambert, the head of the Butanding Interaction Officers Association, said that when this started, he owned one small fishing boat, and today, he owns three tourism and fishing boats and even paid for the newest one with his own money. We were able to achieve this much because of our competent staff and the support of private organizations aligned with our advocacy.

In the future, I wish for Donsol to become self-reliant – that it can manage its ecotourism industry. For WWF-Philippines, I hope it continues to start more projects with more collaborators.



Donsol Mangrove Reforestation activity (April 2011), Raul Burce (second from left) © WWF-Philippines



# Continuity And Expansions

**MANUEL NARVADEZ JR.**

DONSOL INTEGRATED CONSERVATION PROJECTS MANAGER

Even before when I was with other conservation NGOs, it's been my aspiration to become part of WWF-Philippines as it is one of the prestigious conservation NGOs in the Philippines.

I knew people from WWF-Philippines because some of them were partners of my previous NGO and they inspired me and strengthened my belief in conservation work.

I applied for the job in 2018 and upon getting the job, I felt both excitement and fear. Excitement because I will be handling one of the longest running projects of WWF-Philippines and fear because it's a challenge for me to continue the work of the previous project managers. This has been ongoing for two decades already so the worry that I constantly had in mind was 'Can I sustain this project?' The Donsol project has already evolved over the years because it used to be one project but now we are implementing four different projects. We've branched out to tackle plastic pollution to prevent it going to the seas and affecting our beloved whale sharks. Another project is the Ticao-Burias Pass marine conservation project which has the goal of protecting the larger habitat not only for whale sharks but also for other marine animals like manta rays, sea turtles, dolphins, and different kinds of sharks. Some of these marine animals are considered endangered.

Expanding our projects also poses bigger challenges especially when it comes to local partners. Before, we only had to deal with the Donsol local government, but now we have to work with 12 municipalities of the Ticao-Burias Pass Protected Seascape and that means 12 mayors and 12 municipal councils too. What we are doing is what we have been doing in Donsol for a long time, which is to protect the reputation of WWF-Philippines and establish good working relationships with the new partners, specifically the local government units.

For me, the measure of success is that we should have an empowered community and that the projects that we are implementing should be sustained by our partners, particularly the local government units. The beneficiaries of the project must see an improvement in their day-to-day livelihood by earning profits from ecotourism for the community. That's one of the impacts that we should see as a result of this project.

I wish for WWF to be the leading conservation NGO in the country and also a self-sustaining NGO. That's my aspiration, that's my dream for WWF-Philippines for 25 years.



WWF-Philippines meeting with stakeholders of Ligao City, Albay in September 2022.  
© WWF-Philippines / Manuel Narvadez Jr.





# Together Possible

## CHAPTER 2



# Making A Difference

**JOSE MA. LORENZO TAN**  
TRUSTEE AND SECOND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I have already spent many years as a wildlife and nature photographer and writer before I got involved with WWF-Philippines.

It was on a trip to the Turtle Islands, one of WWF-Philippines' first conservation projects, where I was invited to join the Board of Trustees of WWF-Philippines in 1996. That was how I was first involved in what was then a small NGO in a small house in QC. Later on in 2001, I remember having a breakfast meeting with Jaime Augusto Zobel

*"I have seen many people who have made a difference from Batanes all the way down to Tawi-Tawi. They made personal changes in terms of how they use land, how they use their food, how they live in their city, and that's an indication that many people are making a difference and that's a chance."*

de Ayala and also Vince Perez and they asked if I would be interested in taking on the role of Executive Director. That was a time when we realized we wanted to take WWF-Philippines to a much higher level.

At the start, most of the projects of WWF-Philippines were focused on wildlife and nature conservation primarily in the sea ecosystems such as the coral reefs of Tubbataha, Apo reefs, Palawan, and the Verde Island Passage. And that's when we realized that we needed to go beyond the sea and the wildlife and that we have to

extend our range to include forests, rivers, mangroves, wetlands, and even cities. We realized that we are not simply an environmental NGO and not just a nature NGO. WWF-Philippines is a national organization that looks at a range of things and its impacts on animals, people, and places like towns, cities, farms, and fishponds. We have to look at all these linked ecosystems.

With the idea to expand our range also came the need to expand our funding sources. We cannot simply get funding



Partners' Night 2013 © WWF-Philippines

from international sources like the USAID or the EU, we needed local funding sources from parties who are interested in projects related to water or food in addition to the turtles, dolphins, and dugongs, so that we can start addressing the ecosystems. So we decided to invest in a marketing team and started looking for people who can raise money. Before that team started, around 90% of our funding came from international sources and only 10% locally. But in 3 years time, around 45% was international and the 50% was from Filipinos. That was a big difference and a major change that elevated the WWF-Philippines from other small WWF country offices. Many WWF offices were being funded by bigger ones like the US, Switzerland, or France. But for small WWF offices, they could not raise any money locally. The Philippines has a big population base and a large corporate base so it was a chance for the Philippines to focus on Filipino individuals and corporations.

Aside from the base, we also had good teams. A lot of young Filipinos are smart and have backgrounds in advertising or corporate setups so when we put together a marketing team, WWF-Philippines had the opportunity to create a good marketing team. We didn't have to bring in people from Europe because Filipinos could do it.



*"There will be people all over the Philippines who can make a difference and I think that will be good, I think that is possible." © WWF-Philippines*

I've seen the WWF-Philippines staff change over the years. There are some people who are still with the organization for the last 20 to 25 years but there are also some who are project-based staff who only worked for certain jobs then moved on. And throughout the country, I have seen many people who have made a difference from Batanes all the way down to Tawi-Tawi. They made personal changes in terms of how they use land, how

they use their food, how they live in their city, and that's an indication that many people are making a difference and that's a chance. That's something to look forward to. There will always be problems in food, water, diseases, but there will also be people all over the Philippines who can make a difference and I think that will be good, I think that is possible.





# The Boat Captain Seemed To Be Panicking

**ALFREDO GUAB III**

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND REMOTE SENSING (GIS-RS) SPECIALIST

While I was working in DENR's Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), I was looking for additional part-time work to augment my income since I already had a family back then. That was way back in 2006.

I just looked for work online and found that WWF-Philippines was looking for a Geographic Information System (GIS) specialist, which was also what my work was in DENR-EMB. I just tried it and when Abby interviewed me, I told her honestly that I was already working full-time and that I would only be able to work after office hours at DENR. Luckily, I got hired and made special arrangements so that I worked in DENR 7am to 4pm and then work in WWF-Philippines from 5pm to 7pm. My first

job as a GIS Specialist consultant was the Equitable Payment for Watershed Services project (EPWS) in Sibuyan island which was a 6-month project.

Even though I worked 2 jobs during that time, I immediately liked working in WWF-Philippines. My contract with DENR-EMB at that time was also project-based and when my contract was about to expire, they gave me a new offer, but I didn't accept it because I chose to go full-time with WWF-

Philippines. I was hired as a GIS and Remote Sensing (RS) Specialist 1 for the Davao Gulf Environmental Sensitivity Index Mapping Projects. I provided technical GIS support and application for many different projects, including those involving watershed management, hydrology, climate change adaptation, plastics programs, and reforestation projects, to name a few.

The experience I had with WWF-Philippines that changed my life the most was being given the opportunity to perform the research/study and analyses of the situation on the ground and also be the one who will implement any potential solutions. It is either a major or minor solution to the environmental problem, and it can also address other attached issues like socio-economic issues, livelihood, or disaster preparedness among others. The community was able to immediately feel the project's impact.

There is no shortage of unforgettable experiences during field work. In Mati, Davao, I was on a big boat with a diving crew to conduct a site validation survey and we would set sail in very sunny weather.



Alfredo Guab III on the M/Y Navorca in 2011 © Alfredo Guab III





*"No matter how big or small my contributions are to the organization, they build up towards solving environmental issues which is why I enjoy what I do." © WWF-Philippines*

Just as we arrived at the site, there were large and strong waves. I could hear the boat crew shouting orders and grasping at the ropes. I have traveled on boats amid large waves before and have also experienced being on a sinking speed boat, but what made me nervous was when the boat captain himself seemed to be panicking. While we were caught in the large waves, a small boat with one person came and I thought "What is this small boat doing when we are already having trouble?" It turned out that it would

pull us to calmer waters. Eventually, we were rescued and got back to the pier. I sat under a coconut tree and breathed a sigh of relief. As I was resting there, a large bunch of coconuts fell just beside me under that tree! I thought to myself this must really be my day.

No matter how big or small my contributions are to the organization, they build up towards solving environmental issues which is why I enjoy what I do. I know that I am doing this for the future and for my children.

New environmental issues will always arise, but there will always be a solution within our grasp. We simply need to get moving, get organized, come up with a science-based approach, and always keep the needs of the community in mind. I have also developed professionally. I transitioned to overseeing several projects with varied geospatial applications and I use web mapping tools and online mapping platforms to share this geographical research to the general audience. Just before the pandemic, I took over leadership of the GIS unit and I currently represent the organization's focal point for mangroves.

I'm hoping that in the future, the GIS unit of WWF-Philippines will be the leading geospatial solution in the country. I hope that WWF-Philippines will continue to address environmental problems that we are facing and find scientific-based solutions. I know that WWF-Philippines will continue to act as a bridge between our corporate partners and the communities in remote areas to implement solutions while always taking into account the welfare of the community because together, we are responsible for this.



# THE STORY OF FISHERS AND TUNA

Surrounded by abundant marine waters, tuna is a hot commodity among Filipinos, with the country being labeled a top producer. At a commercial scale, 6 of 21 tuna species are caught and managed through municipal, commercial, and aquaculture capacities (Llanto et al., 2018). Skipjack and Yellowfin tuna are the most sought-after species by fishermen due to their economic significance as commercially, they fetch a high price and populate the vast ocean seascape. However, despite the great abundance of tuna resources, fishing pressure is reaching new heights in the archipelago and placing environmental concerns up and down the coastline.

Foreign investment and interest had helped progress the fishing industry in the Philippines with key players like Japan and America showing an interest in capitalizing on the Philippines' resources during the 1900's. As small-scale fisheries grew, so did the value of both the export and domestic markets with fish being taken as part of the regional stocks of the Western Central Pacific Ocean. Here, tuna has little restrictions on their abundance due to spawning on massive scales which prompted bilateral fishing agreements across the oceans (Hipolito and Vera, 2006).

This idea that tuna are forever replenishing their own stocks and 'will not run out' has facilitated their overexploitation. As fishery stocks decline due to a lack of fish and terminations of bilateral fishing agreements, coastal communities face the loss of their livelihood, with 1 out of 5 fishers below the poverty line. During the low seasons, due to a drop off in tuna harvesting, fishers have to take out loans, making them financially dependent on "casas" during these slow months, removing their freedom to negotiate better margins for their fish.

WWF-Philippines has been championing the voices of the fishers since 2011 through their Partnership Program Towards Sustainable Tuna (PPTST). One aspect of the PPTST scheme has been to increase the financial stability of fishers by giving them access to financial management workshops. By saving their income in the high season, they can

supplement their income in the low season, removing the need for loans from "casas" with high interest rates. Therefore, fishers can then negotiate for better fish prices, strengthening their position and power in the supply chain by ultimately giving them a voice. WWF-Philippines' help in improving the fishing practices empowered the local industries and strengthened the backbone of the tuna supply chain (WWF-Philippines, 2022).







# From Poverty To Prosperity

**JOANN BINONDO**

SUSTAINABLE TUNA PROGRAM PROJECT MANAGER

I have always loved community development work. I'm a people-oriented person and when I was a teenager, serving as a youth leader, my energy and passion was fueled when I was working with the marginalized sectors.

As a graduate, I worked for a local NGO on coastal resource management. The provincial government reached out to me at the time and asked me if I wanted to work with WWF. I thought: "WWF? What am I going to do at the World Wrestling Federation?" Back then, I had no idea what WWF was, but the invitation from the provincial government said the project was community-based coastal resource management for the sake of cetacean conservation and the restoration of mangroves along Tanon Strait. I told them I was up to the challenge.

And that's how my life at WWF-Philippines began.

I didn't expect that I'd be hired. I was interviewed by Lory Tan, the executive director at the time, and I felt that I was underqualified. And yet they hired me and I stayed with the organization until I was tasked with overseeing our tuna project in 2011. Truly incredible challenges awaited me there. There was an environment of little trust, between fishers and traders, traders and processors, between stakeholders and us NGOs. That, coupled with the complexity

of the tuna supply chain, made me realize the true scale of the challenge in front of me. WWF-Philippines believed I had what it took to surmount these challenges and so we began our push for sustainable tuna.

Our tuna program has come a long way since. What started as a simple Fisheries Improvement Program has become the Sustainable Tuna Partnership 2 project. We've helped build that trust that was once

lacking. Tuna traders and processors now sit at the same table as part of the same Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) client group, while our partner fishers, once too shy to speak for themselves, have organized themselves and can speak in front of events like the National Tuna Congress. The scope of our work has also changed: at one point we realized the economic gains of sustainable seafood never reached the fishers themselves. In 2017, we pivoted our work with the start of the STP program and since then we've engaged our fishers and their wives in a bid to support their livelihoods as we strive for equitable tuna for all.



PPTST Tuna Congress 2018 © WWF-Philippines / Alo Lantín



STP MSC Client Group --- The Philippine Tuna Handline Partnership (PTHP) is the client group unto which the MSC certification was awarded, making them the first group of small-scale fishers in the Philippine history to earn the ecolabel. © WWF-Philippines

*"The small actions that we have been doing out in the field have led to impacts on a national scale. These are things that we have been recognized for."*

We can chalk up a lot of big wins to the work that we've been doing. In 2014, when the European Union issued a yellow card warning for our yellowfin tuna for our non-compliance with fisheries regulations to deter illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, we were able to help the government come up with both a national tuna management plan and subsequent local tuna management plans. My team and I, together with the Pangingsda Nating Gawing Tama (PaNaGaT) Network, lent a hand to BFAR in the amending of the Philippines' fisheries code and in monitoring its implementation, while in 2021, we helped our partner fishers achieve an MSC certification which is the first of its kind for small-scale fishers in the world.

The small actions that we have been doing in the field have led to impacts on a national scale. These are things that we have been recognized for. But the impact that I am most proud of is the ways in which we have been there to support our partner fishers, for whom all this work is for.

Perhaps my most unforgettable experience with WWF-Philippines was during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. I was stranded in Bicol for more than nine months! In that time, my team and I were able to do wonderful things for our partner fishers. We put up a fundraiser and in time, we were able to provide aid for over a thousand families on donations alone, leveraging the friends we had made throughout the years to support

our fishers in their time of need. When the super typhoons struck in late 2020 we were able to leverage once more that same support to bring aid to over a thousand families. That was one of the best things to come out of our work because when our fishers needed us most, we were ready to help them.

We still have a long way to go in our journey toward sustainable fisheries. What matters to me is that our fishers, who come from poverty, can one day experience prosperity. What matters most to me and my team is that our fishers are happy and I am grateful to WWF-Philippines for giving me the opportunity to help them.



# Not Built For Office Work

**DAVID DAVID**

SUSTAINABLE TUNA PARTNERSHIP PROJECT SITE MANAGER FOR MINDORO STRAIT

Since I was a kid, I already had an interest in nature and I loved watching the National Geographic Channel.

After I graduated with a degree in B.S. Biology from Bicol University, I worked as a research assistant for my thesis adviser in coastal resource management. I learned there was a WWF-Philippines and that they were working in Donsol, Sorsogon. I aspired to get into WWF-Philippines and in 2007 I saw they were hiring a whale shark research coordinator.

Although the whale shark ecotourism project was ongoing in Donsol, it was the first time they conducted research on whale sharks using photo identification of their spots which are unique to each individual the same way fingerprints are unique to humans. This project to identify and document them aims to protect big migrating sea animals in the Coral Triangle, and to monitor the whale shark population that comes to Donsol and to look at their migration routes. The research results helped guide the local government for the management of whale shark ecotourism in Donsol.

In 2014, there was a need for a fishery technical officer in the Partnership Program Towards Sustainable Tuna and I was asked

if I can work on that project. My main work there was on traceability which was an important factor in creating “sustainable fisheries.” Because tuna has a wide range in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, the Philippines is a member of a commission that manages and ensures that fishing is sustainable. These include the registration and licensing of fishing vessels, ensuring that there are no by-catch of endangered, threatened, or protected species.

The work that I am most proud of is the group savings and loan for the fishing community. It’s common knowledge that fishing communities tend to be impoverished. Many of them were not able to complete their studies so they don’t have the background that would allow them to get loans from banks. Because they manage the group savings and loan, it is easily accessible for when they have needs for fishing operations or household needs. This directly addresses their needs on the ground level. Many fishing communities are asking to also organize a group savings and loan for them because they can see how beneficial it is.

My approach now is that conservation work won’t be successful if you don’t include the stakeholders, especially the members of the community. They need to understand the importance of conservation work for the community, the environment, their livelihood, and the overall improvement of their quality of life. We are doing this for the sustainability of resources so that they will have more resources for years to come. Before, conservation work used to be piecemeal and just focused on one thing. Now we use an ecosystem approach, which refers to the habitat as well as the community.

For me, every day of field work is a happy memory. Back in Donsol, my daily routine was to get up early to try to catch a boat that had space for me since I was a researcher. Sometimes during weekends or long holidays, I could do 2 to 4 trips. I would do that daily and I didn’t care how tanned I would get. Aside from doing the research, I would help the guides in teaching the tourists about whale sharks. I always preferred being in the field, I don’t think I’m the type of



person who is built for office work. I tried being a medical transcriptionist because of my biology background. Compare working in front of a computer all day to swimming with whale sharks, of course I would choose being in the field.

*"My approach now is that conservation work won't be successful if you don't include the stakeholders, especially the members of the community. They need to understand the importance of conservation work."*



David dives in Donsol to identify whale sharks using their unique markings. © WWF-Philippines



## THE STORY OF

# FARMERS AND FOOD

The Philippines is rich in agriculture which is the backbone of the economy as its operations provide almost half of the total national income (Cutshall, 2010). Characterized by a variety of crops like rice, corn, coconut, and sugarcane, most Filipinos' daily needs are supplied through this industrial stream especially considering the industry is one of the largest employment sectors.

Agricultural employment represents 29% of the workforce but productivity per worker is low which is reflected in low wages that are typically half that of an everyday worker (Briones, 2017). Across the entire region, farmers contribute to the national food demand and export industry, despite production not being at maximum efficiency.

Despite the labor force, creating food for every Filipino is not currently possible. Agricultural production cannot keep up with population growth and rapid

urbanization in the Philippines, leaving many in food poverty. The food-population imbalance has been highlighted in recent years with the gap growing larger and larger every year. In 2019, the population growth rate was 1.4% according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), while the agriculture sector grew by a measly 0.5% in late 2020 (DA Communications Group, 2022). This instability fuels the agricultural crisis and keeps people into food poverty.

This imbalance has been recognised by WWF-Philippines, which is why we established the “Sustainable Farm To Table Program” aimed at addressing the issue by bringing food security to rural communities across the country. By empowering over 20 communities through workshops on agriculture, sustainable enterprise, and financial literacy, locals are reclaiming food stability in their own farms and lives (WWF-Philippines, 2022).

This agricultural liberation is further aided by “Scaling-Up Agro-Enterprise Development” which extends from the initial program. This aims to empower self sufficiency one household at a time by providing locals with seeds and technical know-how. By setting up grassroots agriculture in each region, these small-scale efforts have the capacity to become large-scale and spread to markets. Modern vegetable cultivation methods reduce the reliance on commercial agriculture which relieves pressure on national producers that are trying to keep pace with urbanization. Agriculture has the power to revolutionize the quality of life of local people if it has managed sustainability and responsibility (WWF-Philippines).







# Not For Me, But For My Kids

**MONCI HINAY**

FOOD SHED FARMING ENTERPRISE PROJECT MANAGER

As an undergraduate, I already worked in the development sector in Mindanao with small farmers and fisherfolk, helping them create small enterprises. That brought me to where I am now because I immersed myself in the issues of those communities.

I first started in WWF-Philippines in 2010 as a Research Assistant for a partnership project between BPI Foundation and WWF-Philippines on the Business Risk Assessment and Management of Climate Change Impacts. During that time, we told cities that they should be climate-proofing their cities and ensure the economic sector can adapt to climate change impacts. It was challenging and an important learning process for me. WWF-Philippines became a trailblazer in this issue since this study was considered a “rock star” study and it showed that a lot of cities in the Philippines are not self-sufficient. Even water management and energy plans were not sustainable.

That study led to AgriClima which focused on climate-proofing agricultural landscapes. In the sugarcane landscape of Negros, we learned that we had to build greenhouses to climate-proof their farms. So we had to integrate easy and doable farming technologies similar to urban farming with small spaces. Farmers can do this while waiting for the sugarcane harvest, providing them with additional income. We piloted the idea of food sheds and we started with 8 food sheds in 2018 and now we have 60 units

covering 1,600 partner-farmers. A lot of the established food sheds have either expanded or became an enterprise of the communities.

With food sheds, we teach communities to be self-sufficient and self-reliant because in the development work, you wouldn't want to stay in a certain area for too long. Success is when we empower the community to stand on their own. The sooner we can be irrelevant to the community, the better, so that we can move on to other communities that need us. I realized what I do is not for me. It's for other people and for the future of my kids.

When my daughter was just 3 years old, we went to Surigao and she saw mining areas and called it “a sad place.” Her perception of a mountain is filled with trees and greenery. When you hear a kid say that, it's coming from somewhere. I don't want to hear another kid call a mountain a “sad place.”

I'm an optimist. I always find the silver lining and focus on the positive. There are certain things and problems that I cannot solve. But for those problems which I have the power to provide a solution, I will not stop until I find the right solution.



Working farm home. Monci does a zoom call with a foodshed as background © WWF-Philippines / Monci Hinay

# Because The World Needs It

**MELODY MELO-RIJK**

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION FORMER PROJECT MANAGER

I was actively looking for a job in 2017 where my skills and expertise will be of most use when I came across a posting of WWF-Philippines seeking a project manager for the Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) project focused on the hospitality sector in 2017.

I applied in May and by June, I was already onboard and the rest is history. In my 6 six years of stay in WWF-Philippines, I have handled three projects under SCP.

I would say the greatest impact I have made is being the catalyst for people in the food sector to be aware of the issues that revolve around SCP. In our country, SCP is a relatively new topic and having this opportunity to open Filipinos' minds to how we can make a difference by understanding the situations and challenges is a big accomplishment for me. With awareness comes a realization that change is needed and with constant knowledge sharing and exchange, this can spark behavior change.

Since I joined, I've seen the organization grow in terms of the projects we implement and the challenges we want to solve. A lot of Pandas were added and I saw our collective power that steer our organization towards our goal of changing the ending.

As a person and as a professional, I found my calling because of my exposure in WWF-Philippines. The space for learning is vast and I love how it has worked for me. My



*"One thing that I always remember is when people tell us to continue doing our work because the world needs it."*  
© WWF-Philippines

servant-leadership skills were strengthened. I see the world now in a different and deeper perspective. I experienced an immense amount of self-fulfillment and personal growth. I continue to experience things which are difficult to find elsewhere. I am inspired to work for the cause I am most passionate about.

Working with my colleagues and stakeholders is always a unique and an

unforgettable experience for me but one thing that I always remember is when people tell us to continue doing our work because the world needs it. For the next 25 years, I hope that WWF-Philippines will continue to be at the forefront of making a positive contribution to our world and to the Filipino people.





# THE STORY OF FRESHWATER AND RIVERS

Freshwater availability is changing worldwide especially as it makes up only a fraction of the Earth's surface. As the foundation of human life, water is essential, yet 1 in 10 people lack basic access to drinking water (WHO, 2019). A mismatch is growing between the natural abundance of freshwater and human demands (Gleick and Cooley, 2021).

As a recurring symptom of urbanization, deforestation has been a catalyst for freshwater scarcity particularly in regions abundant in flora and fauna as watersheds can no longer aggregate among valleys. The depletion of naturally occurring vegetation directly causes disruptions and shortages in the supply and storage of water as less water is absorbed from rains. Without trees, rainwater is also harder to filter due to more frequently occurring soil run-off which mixes with the freshwater (Estoque et al., 2018).

Forests provide a vital role in the state of watersheds and how much water can be stored. Community cohesion catalyzed by WWF-Philippines through the Forests for Water program has empowered the communities to conserve our most crucial

watershed. With the help of indigenous tribes, willing local volunteers, and corporate partners, the rainforest is gradually being restored to its original state.

The Ipo Watershed is a vital link in the Angat-Umiray-Ipo watersheds system, which is a critical foundation for water security in Metro Manila. Covering 7,236 hectares in the Rodriguez and Bulacan municipalities, it provides 98% of the National Capital Region's water source (WWF-Philippines, 2015). But with the onset of rapid urbanization in the Philippines due to rising human populations, the demand for water-intensive products has also rapidly escalated while forest cover fell from a healthy 85% to 30% in recent years (Bravo and Castaño, 2019).

The community is an essential part in preserving the watershed with each member contributing a different line of defense for its restoration and preservation. The indigenous Dumagat Tribe are a major pillar of the watershed community, with their impact on the Ipo Watershed extending over 15.8% of the area they inhabit. The power of the local community massively

contributes to both the monitoring of the Ipo Watershed and its restoration. Local patrols help protect the forest from illegal activities, like logging, as well as initiate replanting activities in the Ipo Watershed. This community involvement succeeded due to the collaboration of corporate partners like Coca-Cola Philippines who kick-started the first major replantation project which is on track to replenish approximately 400 million liters of water each year.





# True Success Is When We Are No Longer Needed

**PAOLO PAGADUAN**

FOREST FOR WATER PROJECT MANAGER

As my previous work in another NGO was about to end, a friend of mine, Ate Leah, sent me an email about a job opening for a Coastal Resources Management (CRM) Coordinator for a project in Batangas. She was part of a network of community development practitioners.

Fortunately, Ate Leah was conducting some research work in my project site then and when we met, she told me about the opening and sent the details via email. The position looked like a good fit for me given my experience in my previous job - and more importantly, I needed to find a new job soon. I came in for an interview in April 2007 and started working with the Panda 2 weeks later. Social media wasn't a thing then (Friendster and Myspace were there but they don't count) and we had very limited access to the internet. Finding information about job openings was a lot harder back then. You could say I got in because my friend heard about this job from her friend who worked for the Panda. *Parang Maritess lang.*

My previous work experience was limited to working in small NGOs. The corporate setup of WWF-Philippines was very new to me. I came in at the time of the great retrenchment and I was wondering why I was coming in as many of the other Pandas were leaving. Also, I was hired as a CRM coordinator because the project structure then was that my Project in Hamilo was under the supervision of the Batangas project based in Anilao. Little did I know that that project was

about to end so I was essentially 'promoted' (given additional responsibilities) to Project Manager in just a couple of months. One-man teams were quite common then at the Panda.

In 2007 the total workforce was almost halved as I came in. Since then, we have grown as an organization, particularly on how we raise funds. We used to be almost entirely funded by grants from funding agencies. But in 2007, I think this was when we started engaging corporations as partners. Now our sources of funds are mainly divided almost equally between Project Development partners and Corporate partners. We also have a lot more Pandas now that I barely know the new ones. I believe there are no more one-man teams. Management then were also mostly male. Now we have a better balance of male and female leaders.

Personally, one thing I developed further as a Panda is my flexibility or adaptability (if not preference) to go out of my comfort zones and tackle challenges that are new to me. Fortunately, we have a lot of resources within the network to learn as we go. I

started with Coastal Resources Management. Then eventually, ridge-to-reef and now, I am somehow stuck in the ridges and no more reefs. I guess my experience in small NGOs and as a one-man team helped as I brought in and developed a lot of different skill sets. In smaller units, we tend to work on several things outside of our official job description and that came in handy as I started handling very different projects and tasks.

Professionally, I think I have transitioned to a (fresh)water (and sometimes forest) guy from a CRM guy. As part of the plan we developed with our former VP for Sustainable Partnerships and Market Engagements Unit, Ria Lambino, we were supposed to bring WWF-Philippines to the table when it comes to discussions on water and (land-based) food, similar to how we were already at the table when it came to climate and energy and marine ecosystems. We are not always there, but at least now we do get invited to the discussions.

I remember the old adage from a class lecture on community organizing in the mid-90s: "The role of the community organizer is to become obsolete." I can no





*"We work for the Panda because we believe in what the Panda stands for. We stay because of the Pandas we work with."*  
 © WWF-Philippines / Josh Alibcag

longer remember who said it. Empowerment for sustainability are the best measures of success for our project and our lasting impacts. Every external intervention like ours should have an exit plan in mind. The true measure of success is when we are no longer needed as we have helped empower the major stakeholders to do their roles better towards sustainability. Then we

continue to evolve into something that is still needed, more relevant. Maybe in some other location or capacity, but still continuing towards our goals. As sustainability is not an end in itself as the standards may also evolve. Rather, it is a matter of doing, of being and continuing to strive for. We have to continue evolving and continue doing what is right.

We work for the Panda because we believe in what the Panda stands for. We stay because of the Pandas we work with. I often refer to myself as a *Dayo* (a traveler; a transient; a newcomer). Whether it be in the physical or digital/virtual world, I like to explore. This is why I am not afraid to leave my comfort zones. Because of the opportunity to learn new things. But, more importantly, to meet new people. I will never forget the sites I've seen because of my work as a Panda. Apo Reef, Kyoto and Osaka, Japan, but of course Tubbataha takes the cake. But what made these trips truly memorable were the Pandas and Panda friends who were part of these trips. This pandemic has severely hampered our ability to be with each other physically and it may be exacting a greater toll on us than we realize. I look forward to the time when we do get to work more closely together again. As we work towards building the new normal, I hope face-to-face interactions will remain to be a big part of the plans so we can all be together again. As we move forward in the next 25 years, I would like to see a bolder Philippine Panda led by a younger generation with fresh ideas, while keeping council with those who came before them. Looking forward to our next evolution.







# Action For Nature

## CHAPTER 3

# Nature Work Is About Being Alive And Feeling Alive

**MARIA ISABEL GARCIA**

TRUSTEE AND FIRST FEMALE CHAIRPERSON

When I get excited about something, I don't just get excited on one level. I get excited about my work in WWF-Philippines in at least three levels.

One is that it is work that matters. It is about the spaces that give us life and that will sustain our lives. The second level is that we work with people who are so talented, so kind and generous. And most of them devoted their entire lives to this cause and there's nothing more gratifying and more generative than working with those kinds of people. On the third level, it's more inward - I can gaze at my inner life. I'm really grateful to work in this kind of space and with people like those because it buoys and enriches my own inner life, affording me a gaze inward

where I can say that I can both learn and unlearn - and because of that, I'm hopefully better today than I was yesterday, even just a little bit.

I've had a very strange journey coming to WWF-Philippines. My husband was the founding President of WWF-Philippines. We were very close, and in one of his interviews, he even referred to me as his "co-conspirator", whatever that meant. When WWF-Philippines started as a program office of WWF US, he was determined to make it

a national organization that he himself will found as a Filipino and form a Filipino team to work on the spaces that makes us Filipinos who we are, in terms of our homegrown ethic and culture, and our physical connections with spaces. I think we are in an even better space, that we know who we are, we know what to do, but backed up by a universal culture of science, strengthened by the expertise of the network.

I helped him as much as I could and I got paid in intellectual and emotional currency which was enough for me. When he passed on in 2002, I moved on and started to do things that were not at all associated with WWF-Philippines. It was around seven years ago that I was asked to be a Trustee for WWF-Philippines that led up to this point where I became the Chairperson.

One of the greatest lessons we learned in WWF is that no work could have been done without the partners, the local government units (LGUs), the corporations, and the individuals. Another lesson is that targets are arbitrary but impact is not. So we should focus on impact instead of arbitrary targets. They hold views and approaches we probably do not see as clearly but are essential to working in the spaces where we do. Also, we recognize that science alone



*"The job of WWF-Philippines as a nature organization will always be to clarify in word and deed, that nature is us and we are nature." © WWF-Philippines*



will not solve our problems. We have to be transdisciplinary because human brains and actions are. So if the problems we create are tangled that way (we call them "wicked problems"), so should our solutions be.

Environmental work is not simply about having the sciences meet all other kinds of human endeavors and getting organized as "work". It is about making them all rally in the service of life - all life. Nature includes us. We are not observers of nature. But we are in a unique position because we managed to drive nature to a point that it has endangered lives - human and other forms of life including those of entire ecosystems. We managed to be a singular sweeping force against nature. Does nature care? Nature will not have a problem if we all go away. But we want to stay. The job of WWF-Philippines as a nature organization will always be to clarify in word and deed, that nature is us and we are nature. Whatever we do, it is not a choice between humans and nature, because we're protecting spaces that not only keep us alive but also make us feel alive. No human wakes up not connected to air, water, and land. No human story is detached from nature.

I think our organization itself should mimic how nature works, the dynamics, dependencies on each other, and keenly

aware of roles instead of ranks. We should really take time out to see how this kind of work transforms our own selves because if we don't reflect, we will just do the same things over and over again, including the mistakes. There are established scientific measures to measure the success of the work we do. But I think in essence, all those measures would have to be very clear that they are positive changes to the life-giving spaces on which we thrive. If it's not that, then it's not working.

For me, hope is like imagining a clock with two hands, sweeping the face of the clock. You have one hand fixed and the other moving. Think about the fixed hand as the hand that holds whatever you hold dear in your life and the other one as "moving time". Hope for me is to hold on to whatever is in the former, even as time moves. What is it that we absolutely cannot do without? Undoubtedly, it is nature, right? We are all embodied beings. Our work sits at that core. How do we hold on to the thing we hold most dear which is life? That even when we're gone, we want to pass it on. That for me is hope.

*"Whatever we do, it is not a choice between humans and nature, because we're protecting spaces that not only keep us alive but also make us feel alive. No human wakes up not connected to air, water, and land. No human story is detached from nature."*



# The Power To Convene

**KATHERINE CUSTODIO**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2008, the Philippines held its first Earth Hour event. I remember going from one establishment to another along Roxas Boulevard, explaining what Earth Hour was all about, and eventually seeing this big switch-off happen at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP).

I found that very compelling. I saw the power of the organization to convene, to communicate, to highlight the power of the individual—which to this day is what Earth Hour is about.

I joined WWF-Philippines in 2008. My job then was to set up an individual fundraising program. One of our biggest programs ended unexpectedly, and we needed to build other sources of support that were local and more diverse. We were out to prove that regular Filipinos would contribute to our cause because what we are doing is compelling and relevant. This was a whole new channel of public engagement that meant establishing new functions and systems and an external orientation which is one of the important shifts in the evolution of WWF-Philippines. A few years after that, I joined a regional WWF Asia-Pacific Growth Program that aimed to drive investment and increase the base of support for WWF from Asia-Pacific sources. That's where I spent more than 8 years. The opportunity of the regional role was to facilitate similar shifts in other WWF offices for greater impact. There were things we learned we could do better together

across countries. One of the lessons is about telling the story of our work, our impact, what we still need to achieve and how we're doing it in our WWF way.

One of my unforgettable experiences with WWF was in the steppes of Mongolia, with its vast grassland. I was there with the group of CEOs of Snow Leopard range countries. The job was to discuss how we would work together to contribute more to the global snow leopard conservation effort. Snow leopards are not just 'big cats'. They are a flagship species, an indicator of the

health of Asia's high mountain ecosystem that provides water to a third of the human population. Not enough people know about that, and we needed to tell the story going beyond species conservation. We were supposed to stay in a hotel for the meeting, but the WWF-Mongolia CEO offered to take us out and see their country. The group enthusiastically agreed, and within 15 minutes over dinner, we were all set for an expedition! The next day we were out there in the field with our tents pitched. None of us were ready for camping as we had packed for attending a conference.



*"Working in WWF has given me the ability to connect more deeply with myself and with other people, having some insight into what connects us all." © WWF-Philippines / Matikas Santos*

That experience was memorable because it was so unexpected, and we embraced it all. The landscape was huge and foreign from what we are used to seeing in the Philippines. In the end, it was the key to getting the group to think creatively, in the place where our work happens. That bond translated into how the program evolved. The experience taught me that wonderful things can come from a last-minute change of plans. And that no meeting room can top the fellowship around a campfire with a billion stars overhead.

Working in WWF has given me the ability to connect more deeply with myself and with other people, having some insight into what connects us all. Working in this organization helped me better understand what makes a fulfilling life, having work that is aligned with one's advocacy, and everyone I work with as friends on the same journey.

I took my time before applying for the role of Executive Director. I was happy in my regional WWF role and it was also the pandemic. There were so many revolutions happening at all levels of society. I knew what the challenges of the role would be and I wondered if those were really for me to take on. What gave me the courage and conviction was knowing that leadership is ultimately shared and that I would bring into



Trin Custodio addresses the residents of Anajawan Island, Surigao del Norte on August 2022.  
© WWF-Philippines / Matikas Santos

it what I learned from leaders of other WWF offices. I knew that my approach would be to enable and empower – to remove barriers that prevent the team from achieving their potential. What excites me most about my role as the Executive Director for WWF-Philippines is the chance to make an impact and to work with passionate people on our shared mission.

It gives me hope knowing that it is not all doom and gloom despite the data showing this. We have a window of time to make these changes and the urgency is truly there. I'm one of those people who think that when

a mission is accomplished, one should move on. When WWF-Philippines can say that it has accomplished its mission, we can be obsolete. That's a stage I hope we can get to, being obsolete for the right reasons.

I would like to see WWF in the Philippines truly delivering the impact that it needs to deliver, where each member of the team is truly empowered and making the difference they want for our country. The mission we have is bigger than all of us and it needs everyone. I am grateful to have a part.





# I Felt Nobody Would Listen

**XIA VIGOR**  
YOUTH AMBASSADOR

If I could have one superpower, I would want to talk to animals. I've always felt a strong connection to them and it breaks my heart when I hear the things that hurt them, like the Amazon wildfires or the palm oil industry.

At nine years old, I remember asking my mom if there was something we could do to help and from our search we found WWF-Philippines. It was so nice to know that I wasn't alone in wanting animals everywhere to have a better life, because when we're united by a common goal, anything is possible.

It has been four years since, but I am still very grateful to be a Child Ambassador of the Panda Family. Here, I'm in a safe space where everyone has such passion for the environment and where I'm never made to feel like I can't do something just because I'm a child. During Earth Hour 2019, I had the opportunity to give a speech. It felt

good to finally have a voice on the issues I cared about and seeing a lot of people participating in the event made it one of the best memories I have with the organization.

Even if I still have lots to learn, I'm trying my best to use my social media platforms to educate the youth on environmental preservation and encourage them to get involved with advocacies they feel connected to. One of my greatest fears is that future generations won't be able to experience the things we did, and that one day, my grandchildren might ask me, "What's the color of a tiger?" or "What did the oceans look like when they were healthy?" So to me, it's really okay if I need to sacrifice time and travel to a lot of places for my speeches— as long as I can raise awareness about how we can save the Earth.

In the future, I dream of starting my own foundation that focuses on empowering children to have the confidence to speak up and do something. There was a time when I felt that, as a child, I couldn't do anything significant, and even if I wanted to, nobody would listen. I never want anyone else to feel that way again.



Earth Hour 2020 Media Launch @ Summit Hotel © WWF-Philippines





can still #C TheEnding





# THE STORY OF CLIMATE AND ENERGY

From droughts to extreme storms and floods, climate change is happening and it's here to stay. The symptoms of climate change either directly or indirectly affect every sector (Erb et al., 2008).

The Philippines is one of many countries which has felt the force of Mother Nature because its geographic location puts it in the path of typhoons. Climate change is accelerating the intensity of typhoons because it warms up both the trade winds and oceans. This allows them to rip through the country with previously undocumented frequency and force uprooting both thousands of Filipinos and their livelihoods. As it stands, these calamities from Mother Nature are projected to affect 14% of the total population in the Philippines and a further 42% of coastal populations, which is devastating to a country that is agriculturally influenced by their oceans (The World Bank, 2022).

When considering these climatic symptoms through an agricultural perspective, the productivity of coastal regions is seen to plummet. Warming oceans are documented to affect migratory fish stocks, like tuna, and also kill off coral reefs which provide nurseries and spawning grounds for reef-dwelling fish.

Recognizing all of this, WWF-Philippines has tackled the roots of climate change in order to provide long-lasting solutions for the country. Climate change is underpinned by fossil fuels, which has driven WWF-Philippines to advocate for more investment and use of renewable energy sources. Stakeholders have been engaged through public awareness campaigns like “Seize the Sun” and “Seize the Wind” in order to show there are viable energy solutions. This has led to energy partners, power producers, and communities across the Philippines to provide up to 171,491.68 kW of much-needed energy to drive growth and development of communities and livelihoods (WWF, 2022a).

WWF-Philippines has participated in the “One Planet City Challenge” which recognizes cities that are leading the transition towards a climate-resilient future. Initially, this challenge took the form of the Earth Hour Challenge but has since grown due to its positive reception which is creating meaningful climate mitigation. This challenge ultimately motivates cities like Batangas and Santa Rosa to echo the national message of using sustainable and efficient renewable energy solutions and incorporate them into public facilities and transportation systems (WWF, 2022b).







# Beyond Comfort Zones

**YEB SAÑO**

CLIMATE AND ENERGY PROGRAM FORMER HEAD

I joined WWF at a time when the digital era was just starting. During that time, the internet was very new. We only shared one email address and my job was to print out emails and distribute them to the recipients.

I joined WWF-Philippines in 1996 as a Program Assistant for a very small initiative called the Marine and Small Islands Ecosystem Program. And it was a very small office. It was a very intimate team with very few people.

I happen to be fortunate to be one of the first people to have seen the whale sharks in Donsol, Sorsogon and during that time you didn't have all the infrastructure that came with Butanding Ecotourism. I spent a lot of time in Donsol setting up the Donsol Ecotourism package and coordinating with the local communities, working with scientists and bringing in the community-organizing approach that was necessary for the success of the program. When I joined this team that discovered the whale sharks in Donsol, it was really groundbreaking in the context of the work of WWF in the Philippines but also for me personally because I had the opportunity to witness how to design an entire project which involved local communities.

It was also around that year that the Kyoto protocol was being negotiated and it was a very important agreement identifying



*"The most important lesson I learned in WWF-Philippines is we cannot do it alone." © WWF-Philippines*

all of the important commitments that the developed world needed to make in order to confront what was then called climate change, which we now call a climate emergency.

Setting up the Climate and Energy program of the office was life-changing for me. At that time, climate was very nascent. Not a lot of organizations worked on climate. I felt that it was part of future-proofing WWF-Philippines. We needed to work on climate and make sure that we were ready to take on this very vital issue.

Together with my boss then, Dr. Celso Roque, we sat down and thought about how WWF-Philippines should engage on the climate issue and we found so many entry points, including energy, the Philippines being one of the countries with the highest electricity rates in the world. There was also a lot of potential for pushing for clean energy in our country and the fact that the Philippines was very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. At that time, my first foray into the climate issue was a project which downscaled the climate modeling from a much larger model that dealt with Asia, to a model that explained how it will affect the Philippines. We developed a map that showed how temperatures would rise

in the country. We also did a special project, a computer modeling on how Tubbataha Reef would be affected by increasing temperatures.

It was outside the comfort zone of WWF-Philippines that time, but the hook was we studied how it would affect turtle breeding, coral reefs, and so we still had that niche on marine conservation and then bringing in the context of the climate angle.

The most important lesson I learned in WWF-Philippines is we cannot do it alone. No single organization can do it on its own. Building alliances, being consensus builders, working with many different stakeholders is key to succeeding not just in conservation work but in a broader big picture work to

leave our children a living planet. For me, it's important to acknowledge the role of local communities in defining their future and expressing their aspirations for a better life. In that way, we can have a meaningful manner of conserving nature by making sure it benefits people. What we do to save nature is for people and communities.

The hope is always that the message of WWF-Philippines, which is to live in harmony with nature and to leave our children a living planet, will be embraced by hundred of millions in the Philippines so that in the near future, we can truly say that the mission of WWF-Philippines has been fulfilled or at least has reached the consciousness of most Filipinos. It is then we can say that we can really have hope.

*"No single organization can do it on its own. Building alliances, being consensus builders, working with many different stakeholders is key to succeeding not just in conservation work but in a broader big picture work to leave our children a living planet."*





# Tinakluban

**ANGELA IBAY**  
CLIMATE AND ENERGY PROGRAM HEAD

Before I joined WWF-Philippines in 2010, I worked in the Manila Observatory for six years and then I was with the British Embassy as their first Climate Change Attache.

I was supposed to be with them for 3 years but I didn't finish my 2 years because I was contacted by a friend from WWF-Philippines who said they're looking for someone to lead the climate change program and thought I was a good fit. I took the role in WWF-Philippines from my predecessor Yeb Saño who went on to become one of the first members of the Climate Change Commission.

First, it was a challenge for me coming from working in a foreign embassy then transitioning to learn how to work in an NGO even if part of an international network. Second, the projects that we had at the time were like one-off things and it wasn't really as programmatic as we wanted it to be. I essentially inherited projects that we just tried to finish and I learned a lot from those because some of them weren't as successful as we wanted them to be. We were one of the first convenors of the electric vehicle (EV) summit back in 2011. But we realized that the market isn't ready and we still have to get the renewable energy sector scaled up so we can maximize the opportunities from EVs. EV technology was still evolving so we left it to the industry and we decided to focus more

on the renewable energy space. This shows that when we started, there were projects that seemed like we didn't know their place yet. But as we progress the program, we might find them useful so it's a good thing to look back on our previous accomplished projects or learn from failed ones.

One of the key strengths of WWF-Philippines was really the advocacy and campaigning because we went beyond street protests and mobilizations. We looked at what other avenues we can use in the campaign such as lobbying with key stakeholders and key decision makers as well as using the media. One example was the Seize the Wind campaign where we were trying to push for a higher installation target for renewable wind energy. We were pushing for 500MW and they eventually approved 400MW so we almost got it. We've been active in galvanizing the other stakeholders and joining campaigns of other organizations that were doing similar goals and campaigns. We are now in the steering committees of Power for People Coalition, Withdraw from Coal, Aksyon Klima, and also the Green Thumb Coalition, which works in the electoral space because to influence leaders, you need to

*"How do I keep myself motivated? I just think that who else would do this if we don't do more? We're all in the same boat so we just really need to ensure that we're steering the boat in the right direction."*

influence the next set. Part of developing the program was also looking at where we can have an influence, where we can put our stamp, and where we can implement projects on the ground. These different levels showed that we're not just one-off projects.

In 2013, we did a study of business risk assessment and the management of climate change impacts. This study with BPI involved sixteen different cities and one of the cities was Tacloban. In the process of the study, we went to the city and met the stakeholders to do a scenario-building exercise. I was assigned to the worst case scenario which the stakeholders identified as being hit with a super typhoon. Only a month after that, Super Typhoon Haiyan came. It gives me goosebumps because the title of their scenario is "Tinakluban," meaning covered like putting a lid over the city and everything would be totally destroyed, which actually happened in Haiyan. At the time, we all knew that this would happen, it's just a matter of when. I think that still affects me up to now. That really shows why our work is important because we want to ensure that lives are not lost and that our planet is sustainable for generations to come.

I've been doing work on climate change for many years and I definitely am not immune



Angela Ibay (third from right) with the climate team during preparations for Earth Hour in 2016. © WWF-Philippines

to how gloomy it is: the state we are in, how disappointing it is that we have not been able to do more. How do I keep myself motivated? I just think that who else would do this if we don't do more? We're all in the same boat so we just really need to ensure that we're steering the boat in the right direction. I look at my nephews and nieces and think: what world will they grow up to have? I want to make sure that it's at least livable, sustainable, and hopefully it gets better.

I hope WWF-Philippines continues to be a strong organization that relies on science as a basis for the work that we do

as well as ensuring advocacy and good communications with people. I think part of being strong is ensuring the operations run well, that it's well funded, and the staff are capacitated. Personally, I think I'll still be working on climate change and the environment. Maybe in a different capacity with more responsibilities, but I think I'll still be in this space because these are things that are very important. I'm proud of my team both current and past. They've given me the trust and confidence to lead them in this program. I'm also grateful for the management for these past 12 years.









# THE STORY OF PLASTIC WASTE

Plastic is suffocating the planet one product at a time and is bleeding into the oceans and soils. A symptom of inappropriate waste management, single-use plastics indiscriminately spread across the land into rivers and oceans which is predicted to dramatically increase by an order of magnitude by 2025 (Jambeck et al., 2015.) causing the crisis to further creep into all the corners of the globe.

Single-use plastics have a long lifespan which extends through its degradation into microplastics (Singh and Devi, 2019). Particles as small as five millimeters can transfer between environments and living organisms, enabling their detection in organisms at all levels of the marine food chain (Lassen et al., 2015; Ragusa et al., 2021.)

When focusing on the primary sources of inflowing marine plastics, countries in Southeast Asia claim the spotlight for their major pollutive contributions to their coastal

landscapes (Fredrik Veiteberg Braaten et al., 2021). The Philippines in particular has been labeled as the highest contributor, with a massive 0.28-0.75 million metric tons being added to the ocean each year (Jambeck et al. 2015; Lebreton et al. 2017; Abreo, 2018).

The backbone of the waste problem in the Philippines comes from single-use plastics in the form of sachets and shopping bags which are purchased daily due to their economic accessibility. These single-use items laden shelves and local stores across the country amounting to huge usage outputs particularly concerning plastic bags. It has been predicted that as many as 94 billion bags are used per year in the Philippines which is equivalent to roughly to 12 bags for every person on Earth (Fredrik Veiteberg Braaten et al., 2021).

In order to combat this, the Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022 has been enacted to make large companies recover the plastic they produce and disperse. This gives corporations legal responsibilities to

minimize their plastic footprints and be held accountable for the single-use plastic that is littering the Philippines as more environmentally-friendly recyclable packaging should be promoted.

WWF-Philippines has championed “Plastic Smart Cities” to support a circular economy where the lifespan of products is maximized through reusing and recycling plastic to their full potential. This would dramatically reduce the Philippines' part in being a primary plastic producer and allow the country to become a role model in sustainability. Prevention of plastics will always be the goal and in a rapidly urbanizing world, disposal should be a last resort in wasting precious resources and further polluting a suffocating planet.

# Tailor-Fit Solutions

**CZARINA CONSTANTINO-PANOPIO**  
NO PLASTICS IN NATURE INITIATIVE NATIONAL LEAD

Before joining the organization, I initially took a break from environmental work, but after a year of working somewhere else, I realized that I couldn't completely let it go.

It seems that it was also meant to be because I got the call for an interview a day before my graduation from my masters degree in Environmental and Natural Resources Management and I got the news of my acceptance after my graduation.

I joined WWF Philippines as a project coordinator in 2018 when we adopted the international WWF community's ambitious global initiative, No Plastics in Nature (NPIN) – with the goal of eliminating all plastic waste in the environment by 2030. I was promoted to national lead a year after.

As national lead of the NPIN team, I have seen projects set in motion across the country. NPIN started as a public-centered campaign called Ayoko ng Plastik, before it evolved into a systems-based approach that involved working with businesses, local government units and the waste management sector, to push for solutions to the plastic pollution crisis. The solutions should be closing the loop, and stopping plastics from ending up in nature.

Whenever I go on field, it's always great to see the partners, talking with them, sharing ideas and implementing them

together. Watching their journey unfold has been rewarding. I saw their commitment especially during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when we were forced to hold our meetings and projects virtually despite the challenge of limited movement and internet access.

We worked with many communities, local government units, policymakers and social enterprises, and our efforts resulted in a new law on solid waste management and projects that would create solutions to the plastic

pollution crisis that are tailor-fitted to the different landscape archetypes in the country.

WWF Philippines has come far from educating people on waste management, to actually developing a widespread campaign on reducing plastic use.

I hope that in the next 25 years, WWF-Philippines continues to thrive as a resource for technical assistance on environmental issues for many relevant stakeholders.



A supporter shares her insights with the room as WWF-Philippines Plastics Program Manager Czarina Constantino presides.  
© WWF-Philippines

# Adjusting, Studying, And Learning

**LUIS CARAAN**

PROJECT MANAGER FOR PLASTIC SMART CITIES PROJECT IN MANILA CITY

My background when I joined WWF-Philippines in 1996 was in organizational development and my first role was an institutional consultant for the Sibuyan Island Conservation Project.

I was there to handle the organization of local groups and to enhance their capacity. That was where I met Chrisma Salao for the first time along with the late Dr. Celso Roque.

I had to do a lot of big adjustments since I was not an environmental science graduate and I was more into social science. Back then we were like a large family in a small house in UP Village that was our headquarters. We were working with marine biologists, foresters, veterinarians and they were crucial in crafting our science-based solutions. We have not let go of that ever since.

Projects come and go and I left for a few years but I came back as project manager in the Northern Sierra Madre Protected Area, which was my first time to lead a team. I also handled a project focused on watershed conservation with Ed Tongson before moving to species conservation for the tamaraws in Mindoro. Each new project I moved to required a lot of adjustments, studying and learning because they are all different fields. Thankfully, I've always had the guidance of project staff as well as Chrisma Salao who was the VP for Field Operations at that time. Currently, I am handling a project site for the

Plastic Smart City initiative which is another set of adjustments and studying for me because this is focused on solid waste.

Early on, I wondered whether we were a development or an environmental organization because we were doing so many things: social enterprises, community development, etc. There are many issues in the communities like land tenure, food security, social services, education, etc. We know we can't ignore those issues, but we can't solve them either so we focused on where we can have an impact. We started to develop a strong emphasis on partnerships with other institutions and stakeholders. We cannot do it alone even if we have millions in funding. Conservation is not only the business of WWF-Philippines, of NGOs, of the local government, but this is everyone's business and concern.

I've been to many places, but a close encounter with a tamaraw is an unforgettable experience. We were in a forest ranger station one night and I needed to go to the bathroom. When I opened the door, there was one tamaraw standing there in front of me. It looked up and our eyes met. We stared at each other both surprised. It wasn't scared



*"Whether big or small, I know the projects have an impact on the community, the country, and on conservation."* © WWF-Philippines / Ysa Calinawan

or agitated. After a few seconds of silence, it walked away, and even looked back at me. Maybe it felt that I didn't mean any harm. Seeing wild tamaraws raises my spirit because that means they are thriving and growing in numbers.

My journey with WWF-Philippines was not all smooth sailing. I have evolved a lot with each project and I choose to stay because I am happy. Whether big or small, I know the projects have an impact on the community, the country, and on conservation. I have decided that I will retire here. Problems will always be there because that's a part of development. We won't improve if we don't encounter problems.





## THE STORY OF

# YOUTH AND EDUCATION

The Philippines today has the largest generation of young people in its entire history. Despite the population surpassing 100 million, approximately 30% are between 15 – 30 years of age. The Philippines is facing huge demographic shifts in its population at unprecedented rates. Having a youthful population offers opportunities for innovation, politics, and cultural growth as well as the promise of new leaders, but this wave of youth does not come without its challenges.

The Philippines has been coined to be in ‘education poverty’ as resources can’t stretch to support all the young population. In 2016, it was reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority that 3.8 million Filipinos are not attending school when they should be. With further studies finding that out of 79 countries, Filipino students ranked last in reading comprehension and 78th in both science and math (OECD, 2018). This statistic is made even more concerning with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, where learning went online. Therefore, challenges like equity gaps, poor learning foundations, and inaccessibility to resources are likely to be accelerated, which is a major concern WWF-Philippines shares with local governments.

In line with WWF-Philippines’ philosophy of being with the people and for the people, a strong environmental education program was established and has been running for a number of years. The program is science-based and specifically aims to motivate the next generation to be climate champions with an excellent foundation in environmental issues.

This education initiative by WWF-Philippines has over a million students being impacted by the environmental education team in 2020. This major milestone has been supported by additional programs run by WWF-Philippines that allows high school and college students to be more proactive in safeguarding our planet. The establishment of the National Youth Council in 2016 provides even more opportunities for young people to take action for the environment.

The enthusiasm WWF-Philippines has for climate-based advocacy and education is shared with the Department of Education. Young people will live through and observe the degradation of our green planet through climates becoming more volatile and unpredictable. Even within a small 8-year window, 43,810 of the almost 47,000 public schools experienced a natural hazard like a

flood or tropical storm at least once. This has driven the introduction of climate change into the curriculum with the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 strengthening these core environmental concepts across multiple grade levels (Department of Education, 2021).

Education is vital in creating success for the next generation and the Philippines is a clear case study where rising populations and environmental extremes are becoming the new normal. How governments and organizations respond makes a clear difference in shaping our future especially, when resources are significantly less abundant.







# Listen And Learn From The Youth

**ISOBEL RESURRECCION**  
NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL COORDINATOR

I was 21 years old when I joined WWF-Philippines as a Human Resources Assistant in 2001, over two decades ago.

In 2003, I was given the opportunity to join the WWF-Conservation Projects and work on various sites, and travel all over the country to see places like the Tubbataha Reef; Tawi-Tawi; Sibuyan, Romblon; Donsol, Sorsogon, and many more. I was able to meet people from all walks of life and see amazing places in the Philippines that made me love nature more.

My first fieldwork was in Sibuyan, Romblon where I was amazed by Mount Guiting-Guiting and its surroundings. Tubbataha Reef and Apo Reef are among my unforgettable experiences because of their beauty and my admiration for those who guard the Natural Marine Parks. Tawi-Tawi and Oriental and Occidental Mindoro are memorable as well because of the culture I was exposed to while working with indigenous groups. In Bohol; Morong, Bataan; and Donsol, Sorsogon, I saw up-close the flagship species of WWF-Philippines—the dolphin, the sea turtle, and the whale shark, respectively.

These travels have taught me to fall in love with teaching children about the importance of these endangered species. I found my calling in educating children and community

members about the environment, and I eventually led the Environmental Education (EE) team for 10 years. The EE team created thematic programs, developed teaching modules, and taught more than 700,000 people through school and community visits, youth camps, seminars, interactive exhibits, and more.

It has been 21 years since I joined WWF-Philippines and another significant highlight in my work is the formation of the WWF-Philippines National Youth Council (NYC) in 2016. I manage the NYC by aligning the advocacies of the members and providing them with a platform to implement projects advocating for environmental protection. Within 6 years and over three batches, the NYC has successfully engaged 30,000 youths through face-to-face programs and more



*“By giving the youth voices and being heard, it creates a rippling effect, and hopefully, more young people will follow and be the next champions for the environment.” © WWF-Philippines*



# Teaching The Kids Saved My Life

**DINO CALDERON**  
EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT HEAD

than 6 million through social media posts, broadcasts, and publications. I am grateful for these young people and proud that they are being recognized for their work in the field of conservation locally and globally.

It always feels exciting working with young people because you gain their youthful energy and endless passion. I believe the role of the youth in environmental action is important. The youth can provide us with fresh insights into relevant environmental issues and creative ways to solve problems. I have learned through the years that we should listen and learn from the youth and involve them in decision-making processes.

By giving them voices and being heard, it creates a rippling effect, and hopefully, more young people will follow and be the next champions for the environment. I hope that as they grow older, they do not lose their voice, they continue to fight for their future and work towards a more liveable and sustainable planet for all of us.

When I was in college in 1998, I first experienced a whale shark interaction in Donsol. I geeked out because I was taking up marine biology and studying these marine creatures.

I had a primeval reaction to an animal that was known and yet still had a lot of mysteries around it. Since then my trajectory was towards conservation and the environment.

In 2002, I volunteered for the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion, under Romy Trono. I was doing research like going to the UP library to photocopy research papers. I remember a time when a water bottle in my backpack leaked and drenched all the research papers. One of the early projects I got involved in was on coastal resources management. I volunteered as admin assistant at the Puerto Galera, Mindoro site which meant I had to relocate. I was still a bachelor so I was willing to live there for 10 months using my own expenses. Part of the project was to go to public schools and give lectures using VHS tapes and an old projector. The first time I heard a classroom full of children and teachers give out a collective gasp as they watched the video of a humpback whale breaching, I realized that this is what I wanted to do.

I also did a session in an indigenous peoples' school in the highlands. They're not familiar with marine environments so we



ESD team during their *Turo* sessions © WWF-Philippines





*"I hope that through ESD, we give students, teachers, and community members that same kind of experience and spark that same fiery passion inside of them." © WWF-Philippines*

made a game where they had to identify an animal's habitat. They were amazed with the cardboard cutouts of fishes, corals, jellyfish, etc. and they were holding and touching them like they were real. It really hit me that participatory teaching is a big part of learning. There was one time when I was coming to a community to conduct a survey and I was greeted by the children calling me "Kuya Dino! Kuya Dino!" Later, some locals told us they had a bad experience with another NGO and when they heard WWF-Philippines was coming, they were angry and were planning to throw rocks at us and call the police. They stopped when the kids ran to

happily greet us. Literally, teaching the kids saved my life or at least saved me from grave physical injury. That's what pushed me to do this.

The project ended in 2003 and I left WWF-Philippines to work elsewhere. In 2009, I was contacted by Obel Resurreccion who asked "Dino, would you like to—" I didn't let her finish and said "Yes! Whatever it is, I'm in!" That was the first time I got into environmental education. We had Project EcoKids and were in public schools almost every day. That was my baptism of fire. When that project ended around 2013,

I left again to find other work. In 2015, I got a call from Roel Bate who was heading environmental education then. He asked "Dino, are you free—" and I cut him off "Yes! I'm filing my resignation now!" Ever since I started as a volunteer, my mindset has always been "I'll work in WWF-Philippines." It's unavoidable that projects end but every time I get asked "Do you want to work on a project?" I would resign and come back to WWF-Philippines.

For me, every moment that a student awakens their sense of awe and wonder when I show them photos of corals, dugong, or mangroves is a moment that renews and revitalizes me. I see the work I do as something new again. I go back to my experience of hearing an entire class gasp in awe upon seeing a whale breaching. The enthusiasm of these kids is infectious. Some kids ask what they can do at home and what they can tell their parents or siblings. I believe that is a big multiplier effect because they've started influencing their family to be more environmentally conscious. That's transferring the power of education from me to them so they can educate other people.

Over the past 20 years of teaching kids, I heard some kids have already grown up. I was told that a newly-hired Panda previously



attended an ESD session in Palawan. Some members of our ESD team also get recognized by the kids who are now young adults. One time we had a meeting with a company and I recognized one student that I taught back when he was 11 years old. I greeted him and he said “I work here now!” so there are those times when our paths cross after years.

That connection I had with the whale shark in 1998 is still with me. Whenever I get tired of working, I go back to that feeling of seeing the whale shark silhouette for the first time. My snorkel was dislodged because I shouted “Wow!” and accidentally drank some water. That experience propelled me to where I am now and I hope that through Education Sustainable Development, we give other people, students, teachers, community members that same kind of experience and spark that same fiery passion inside of them.



Dino Calderon discusses climate change and biodiversity in Gubat, Sorsogon in 2019. © WWF-Philippines

*"...every moment that a student awakens their sense of awe and wonder when I show them photos of corals, dugong, or mangroves is a moment that renews and revitalizes me. I see the work I do as something new again."*



# Our Shared Vision

**GAB MEJIA**

TRUSTEE AND NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER

I've been a freelance conservation and documentary photographer for a few years and around 2018 I felt like I needed to pursue something on environmental activism and environmental work.

Knowing WWF-Philippines' lineage and legacy of work through conservation projects and wildlife, I became more passionate about the environment and pushed myself to apply for the National Youth Council (NYC). I am lucky and grateful to be part of it for four years since 2018 because it's been a real learning experience.

NYC is composed of youth leaders from across the country and they all have different advocacies and initiatives. Some are storytellers, some are writers, some are journalists, some are fashion designers,

and some work with food. Each of us has an advocacy. We work together to collaborate for projects for the youth especially for public school students. One of my most unforgettable experiences with NYC is going to San Vicente, Palawan where we went to local schools and worked with the Sangguniang Kabataan of Palawan to hold workshops about marine conservation and terrestrial wildlife. It was an inspiring moment for me because it made me realize that us young people have a shared vision to protect our mountains, oceans, and different ecosystems in the Philippines. Even though

we are coming from different islands we can all work together and be inspired to protect our Earth.

Over the years, I've seen the growth of NYC and how it evolved from just working with the youth, to working with multi-level stakeholders, such as government leaders, other youth organizations, and even international organizations like the United Nations. This made me realize how the work that we've been doing with the youth was amplified throughout the years. It reached students, their parents, business partners, CEOs, and donors. We're transcending different disciplines from storytelling, research, science, engineering, and culminating it into projects that eventually grew into a national movement. I think that was the growth that I've seen with NYC and also with our personal development as youth leaders. It helped us embody the lessons that we've learned throughout the years from working with different people to amplifying the work that we're doing in our own advocacies.

I was working in storytelling and in photography and working with the NYC connected me to conservation organizations



*"The most powerful impact of the NYC is to make the youth realize that anyone can be a leader." © WWF-Philippines*



that are working on projects in the forests, in the oceans and in the wetlands. That immersion led to this global thinking that we can work together and put the knowledge that we're gaining from our partners into concrete actions through projects like the YES for Oceans workshops and Kagubatan digital exhibits.

The most powerful impact of the NYC is to make the youth realize that anyone can be a leader. The inspiration that we get from NYC has molded us to realize that other youth can also work for the environment and conservation, that they can build their own projects, and push for their own advocacies. I think that we're trailblazing future and current leaders to push for their work no matter how hard or difficult it may be.

The reality is that the youth is sometimes disempowered and not capacitated to push for their work because of the lack of resources and opportunities. But through NYC, we are providing these opportunities for youth to take on their own advocacy.

What I really want to see in the future is for NYC to go beyond the organization and become a model or inspiration for other youth. There may still be some gaps with the advocacies that we're pushing for but I think we can bridge these gaps and culminate our



"NYC members conduct a learning activity for kids from five barangays in Donsol in 2017." © WWF-Philippines

different advocacies into one shared vision for our country and planet. I'm hopeful because NYC is already leading this path. We have leaders from Mindanao, Visayas, and Luzon with different advocacies but one shared vision.

For the next 25 years, I want WWF-Philippines to be more inclusive in terms of people in the organization. When it comes to science and the facts, we already have that. But the indigenous communities and leaders are the true environmental leaders at the

forefront of protecting nature. Empowering these leaders and bringing them into the table of decision-making processes, of national movements, of governments—this is what I feel WWF-Philippines should really work on for the next 25 years. Imagine having leaders from indigenous communities, imagine having leaders from underserved regions to be on the seat with everybody in the organization and having their own contribution and work for environmental and conservation issues.





# COMMUNITY VOICES



## Planting Trees Is Like Raising A Child

**BALDOMERO DIESTA**  
BARANGAY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE MANDATORY REPRESENTATIVE

Before WWF-Philippines came to the Ipo Watershed, the mountains were almost barren and red. Now you can see there are a lot more green forested areas. Planting trees in the forest is like raising a child, you give birth and take care of them until they grow up. It's the same with tree planting. If you plant but won't take care of it, it will succumb because of weeds.

My wish is that the natural environment here will be restored. I was away from here for 35 years because I wanted to provide for my children's education. When I came back, we slowly restored the situation of the forest. If you look at it now, you can already see green. With more projects and maintenance from WWF-Philippines and everyone's help, the forest started to thrive again.

## From A Nuisance To An Opportunity

**ELMER QUIZON**  
BUTANDING INTERACTION OFFICER OF DONSOLO

I started as a Butanding Interaction Officer around 2005 so I have been a guide or BIO for 17 years. When I first came here, the whale sharks were actually a nuisance. The fishermen were angry because when they went out to sea, their boats would collide with the whale sharks and damage the boat. But now they are no longer a nuisance but a source of livelihood. In the early days of Donsol, no one could have ever imagined that Donsol could become a tourist destination.

At first I didn't really want to become a BIO but when I experienced it, I felt good but at the same time it was difficult because of seasonality. WWF-Philippines was the first to train and equip us for this kind of job. They continue to give us help and support through yearly training. They have provided us with aid during the pandemic when lockdowns stopped the arrival of tourists, so we are truly grateful to WWF-Philippines.

## It Was Not Perfect Right Away

**WILMA AREVALO**  
KALIPI PRESIDENT

Kalipunan ng Liping Pilipina is a women's organization in Donsol and our objective is to empower women to play a role in the community. We are organized in 28 barangays and we have around 2,600 members from the entire municipality. We have various enterprises such as farming, food processing, crafts, and others. We teach women to take care of their finances and by establishing their own businesses to generate income.

We launched our partnership with WWF-Philippines in October 2020 and it was not perfect right away because we had product failures. It took a lot of trial and error before we perfected the product. I became an advocate of products made from waste materials because I saw it as a good business. I want this to become international, but for now we are taking it one step at a time. Through WWF-Philippines, we were able to improve the quality of our work which in turn improved the reputation of Donsol as an environment-friendly town. A million thanks is not enough to express our gratitude for WWF-Philippines.

## We Are Fully Awake

**JOSEPHINE CRUZ**  
FORMER MUNICIPAL MAYOR OF DONSOLO

I started my term as mayor of Donsol in 2013. I was mayor for 3 terms for a total of 9 years until 2022. Donsol used to be a sleepy fishing town. My father was the mayor before me and I knew he had a good working relationship with WWF-Philippines. Our tourism industry in the late 1990s was so crude: fishing boats were used for whale shark interaction and fees were not regulated. WWF-Philippines educated the community about taking care of the whale sharks and widened the people's understanding so they can appreciate its value for their livelihood.

In 2016, Donsol ecotourism contributed half a billion pesos to the national economy. During summer, 80% of arrivals in Legazpi airport go to Donsol. We are not a sleepy town anymore. We are fully awake. Being WWF-Philippines' partner continues even when your role in life changes. I still carry the lessons I learned in thoughts and in deed wherever I go. The people of Donsol know that WWF-Philippines is there to last because WWF-Philippines is more than just the environment; WWF-Philippines is life.

## Shaping Sustainability

**FRANKLIN MONTE BOLALIN**  
AVP – HEAD, COSTA DEL HAMILO INC. SITE OPERATIONS

Hamilo & WWF-Philippines' partnership started back in 2007 during the infancy stage of the development. WWF-Philippines played a role in shaping the sustainability projects of Hamilo. Over the years, the partnership has evolved with the establishment of 3 Marine Protected Areas (MPA's) that boost the tourism sector of Hamilo and the nearby Barangays.

The most memorable experience I had with WWF-Philippines was during the Sustainable Framework Plan Workshop in 2019. We were able to identify issues like solid waste management and find solutions in achieving our goal of zero waste disposal. This helped me gain a better understanding of the importance of sustainability programs that Hamilo Coast has created over the years through our partnership. The impact of these sustainable practices strengthened Hamilo Coast's drive in ecotourism. WWF-Philippines helped Hamilo shape our own sustainability programs and helped us be a "responsible real estate developer" making sure that communities and nature can thrive with new developments.





# Change The Ending

## CHAPTER 4

## Our City 2030, Phase 2 (Our City 2.0)

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2022

<b>LOCATION</b>	Philippines
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Local Government Units, Schools Division Office-Department of Education
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Scale-up the urban-youth engagement and strengthen local integration of the learning concept called “Education for Sustainable Development or ESD”
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trained 120 public school teachers on local integration of “Education for Sustainable Development or ESD”</li> <li>• Engaged around 50 community members in Quezon City on the establishment of urban community “foodshed” in schools</li> <li>• Engaged 3 new cities (Baguio City, San Fernando City, La Union and Vigan City) to adopt learnings from the Phase 1 implementation in Quezon City</li> </ul>

## One Planet Cities

JANUARY 2021 - DECEMBER 2022

<b>LOCATION</b>	Philippines
<b>PARTNERS</b>	WWF-International
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Capacitate Philippine cities to implement inclusive climate actions and enhanced adaptive & resilient recovery plans, in line with the limiting to 1.5°C global warming target
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacitated 150 city staff from the 16 partner cities on climate data reporting, climate financing, climate action planning and localizing sustainable urban food systems</li> <li>• Raised profile of 3 Philippine cities by being selected as National Winner (Dipolog City) and National Finalists (Quezon City and Davao City) in “One Planet City Challenge”</li> <li>• Enabled 75 urban youth to visualize and develop their vision statements on what kind of city they want to have by 2030</li> </ul>

## Monitoring Renewable Energy Implementation in the Philippines

SEPTEMBER 2021 TO NOVEMBER 2022

<b>LOCATION</b>	Philippines
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Tara Climate Foundation
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Contribute to the acceleration of renewable energy (RE) implementation in the Philippines particularly through policy and advocacy for the integration of the National Renewable Energy Program (NREP) into the Philippine Energy Plan (PEP) and through the creation of a monitoring tool to track the NREP’s progress
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased policy engagement and advocacy with the Philippine Government and other critical stakeholders on RE and energy transition.</li> <li>• Development of the monitoring tool to track the NREP progress.</li> <li>• Engagement and participation in events to push for increased RE and energy efficiency uptake in the Philippines.</li> </ul>

## Financing and Integrating Renewable Energy (FIInRE) in Butuan City

MAY 2018 - DECEMBER 2023

<b>LOCATION</b>	Butuan City, Agusan del Norte
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, and International Climate Initiative (BMU IKI)
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Capacitate local key stakeholders in understanding the technical and economic aspects of renewable energy technologies and enable multi-stakeholder participation in sustainable power development. The Philippine government is seeking to increase the proportion of renewable energies and use them to reduce energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions. The project supports these goals by further developing the financing and integration of renewable energies in the city of Butuan.
<b>SUMMARY OF RESULTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From development of the Butuan City Power Development Plan, it has now become the 2040 Butuan City Energy Development Plan through a participative approach by enabling and building the capacity of its local stakeholders.</li> <li>• At least 20 members of the CPDC's Technical Working Group (TWG) were mentored in local energy planning to understand the technical and economic aspects of renewable energy technologies. The TWG accomplished harmonization of a forecasting model used by the Distribution Utility (ANECO) with that of the planning group in the city government; and a consultation process among the members of the Power Development Council.</li> <li>• Integration of the RE resources into the spatial plan of the city government for which the LGU recently presented in the Regional Development Council – Land Use Committee, last June 2022.</li> </ul>



## M/Y Navorca

2013 - PRESENT

<b>LOCATION</b>	Sulu Sea (Tubbataha, Cagayancillo, Puerto Princesa City, Bataraza, Balabac, etc.)
<b>PARTNERS</b>	European Union, Epson, WWF-France (CMA CGM), USAID-GRF
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide products and services that co-create scalable, science-based programs and build the right skills and innovative ways of working for marine conservation.</li> <li>• Supports marine conservation and social mission in the Sulu Sea</li> <li>• Help develop adaptive processes and technologies to sustain marine conservation in project sites</li> </ul>
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently updating Tubbataha Reef's resource map and cetacean survey</li> <li>• Ongoing implementation of Bataraza-Balabac mangrove restoration through community-based approach</li> <li>• Implemented a 6-month post-Odette emergency grant in Cagayancillo to aid affected seaweed farmers, support biodiversity-friendly enterprises, and monitor the impact of Odette on the coral reefs through citizen science</li> <li>• Conducted annual research on corals, fish, seabirds, and water quality in the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park and World Heritage Site in collaboration with the Tubbataha Management Office,</li> <li>• Conducted training on Citizen Science methods for assessing and monitoring coral reefs in collaboration with DLSU- SHORE and UP- MSI</li> </ul>





## Whale Shark Conservation and Ecotourism

FEBRUARY 2016 - DECEMBER 2022

<b>LOCATION</b>	Donsol, Sorsogon
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Royal Caribbean Cruise Ltd., Agoda Company Pte. Ltd.
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Expand Conservation Activities, Integrate Environmental Education & Expansion of Tourism Support.
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whale shark photo-ID monitoring in Donsol, Sorsogon for the Season 2022. 57 Individual whale sharks recorded, 16 whale sharks which are re-sighted and 41 new whale sharks as of June 2022.</li> <li>Completed Orientation for the Bantay-Dagat, Sanctuary Guards, Coast Guards, Coastal Barangay Captains, and Municipal Agriculture Officers regarding the salient points of RA 10654 and other FAOs.</li> </ul>



## Northeast Palawan - Marine Protected Area Network

JUNE 2020 - MAY 2023

<b>LOCATION</b>	Palawan
<b>PARTNERS</b>	WWF-Singapore
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management effectiveness of Northeast Palawan MPAN and component MPAs enhanced by at least 60 percent.</li> <li>The management plan of component MPA's in the Northeast Palawan MPA network developed/updated.</li> <li>100 hectares of the new / expanded MPAs established, and the management plan/s for these MPAs developed/updated.</li> </ul>
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coral Reef Assessment of Component MPA's</li> <li>MPA delineation and consultation of Brgy. Debangon, Taytay</li> <li>MOA signing of MPA co-management with Santinijo MPA</li> <li>Pre and Post Typhoon Odette assessment in Cambari Island, Araceli, Palawan (From 30.76% Hard Coral Cover to 0% HCC) and in Black Rock Reef MPA, Taytay, Palawan (From 48.08% Hard Coral Cover to 12.70% HCC)</li> </ul>



## Mitigating Climate Change Impacts through Mangrove Ecosystem Management

JANUARY 2022 - DECEMBER 2025

<b>LOCATION</b>	Ticao-Burias Pass Protected Seascape
<b>PARTNERS</b>	HSBC Philippines
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Integrated and community-based mangrove ecosystem management towards climate change mitigation and resilience
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline Assessment of Mangrove Areas in TBPPS.</li> <li>Visited offices of PAMB members including the NCIP – Sorsogon, DENR Region 5, and LGUs of Donsol, Pilar, and Ligao City for courtesy call and introduction of the project last February 2022.</li> <li>Granted PAMB clearances from the two mentioned protected areas, which were approved on March 9, 2022 from TBPPS and June 9, 2022 from Bongsanglay National Park</li> </ul>



## NORAD - Global policy

JANUARY 2022 - DECEMBER 2024

<b>LOCATION</b>	Philippines
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To push for an ambitious new legally binding global treaty to regulate plastic pollution has been adopted by UN member states
<b>RESULT IN 2022</b>	UNEA resolution for a global treaty

## Extended Producers' Responsibility (NORAD)

JANUARY 2022 - DECEMBER 2024

<b>LOCATION</b>	Philippines
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To facilitate commitment by both governments and global consumer goods companies to the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)
<b>RESULT IN 2022</b>	EPR report 2 - Roadmap towards a functional EPR system in the Philippines

## Extended Producers' Responsibility (UNEP)

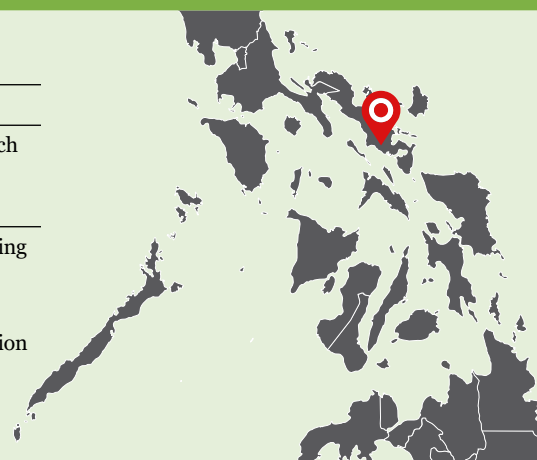
JANUARY 2022 - OCTOBER 2022

<b>LOCATION</b>	Philippines
<b>PARTNERS</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To facilitate commitment by both governments and global consumer goods companies to the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)
<b>RESULT IN 2022</b>	EPR report 2 - Roadmap towards a functional EPR system in the Philippines

## Plastic Pollution Free Coastal Town

SEPTEMBER 2019 - DECEMBER 2023

<b>LOCATION</b>	Donsol, Sorsogon
<b>PARTNERS</b>	WWF-Switzerland
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To create a plastic pollution free coastal town based on a circular economy which benefits people and nature and can serve as an example for other towns and islands.
<b>RESULT IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successfully piloted the NAKAMOTO solution in 6 barangays in Donsol resulting to 751 kg of plastic waste collected and 65 kg of PET bottles diverted through junk shops from January to March 2022;</li> <li>• KALUPI operations have been expanding to work with barangays in the collection of residual plastic wastes which they clean, sanitize, and use in their upcycled products; and</li> <li>• Donsol continuously commits to the Plastic Smart Cities movement.</li> </ul>



## Waste management strategies and pilot testing for plastic diversion systems in the Philippines

MARCH 2021 -  
AUGUST 2022

<b>LOCATION</b>	Donsol, Davao City, IGaCoS, San Isidro
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Coca-Cola Foundation Inc.
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To pilot different waste management strategies based on four (4) predominant landscape archetypes in the Philippines - highly urbanized cities (HUCs), coastal communities, islands, and lowlands.
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collected about 95,627.4 Kgs of PET from implemented project activities. All collected PET has been diverted by bringing these to junk shops and Materials Recovery Facilities (MRF) in the partner sites.</li> <li>Circularity audits were developed for all project sites, which guided interventions to be prioritized. This has also been adopted in other PSC project sites as a good guiding tool for identifying the appropriate solid waste management model.</li> <li>Commitment from all 4 LGUs have been secured for the sustainability of the piloted interventions in their respective areas. This has been done through culminating events wherein local officials signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and PSC declaration of intent.</li> </ul>



## The Incubation Network Project (Gender x Plastics research)

JANUARY 2022 - DECEMBER 2022

<b>LOCATION</b>	Philippines
<b>PARTNERS</b>	UP Center for Women's and Gender Studies and Angat Bayi
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To establish understanding about the interconnection of gender and plastic pollution, to be integrated in policy and communications toolkits, later on to be adopted by partner Local Government Units
<b>RESULT IN 2022</b>	Research completed - results to be used in the communications and policy toolkits.

## PSC-TVA Project for City of Manila

JANUARY 2021 - DECEMBER 2024

<b>LOCATION</b>	City of Manila
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation and NORAD
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To achieve 30% reduction of plastic waste leakage into our oceans by 2024, thus contributing to the achievement of 100% reduction of plastic waste leakage in Manila City by 2030.
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline Studies conducted on Waste Analysis and Characterization Study (WACS) and market study and stakeholders' enterprise readiness</li> <li>Small Waste Collection Vehicles deployed in pilot barangays with narrow streets that are not accessible to city waste collection trucks.</li> <li>New MRF established and existing MRF improved</li> <li>60 households trained on Solid Waste Management and practicing at-source segregation</li> </ul>





## Clean Cities, Blue Ocean (CCBO) Women in Waste Economic Empowerment program

MARCH 2022 - FEBRUARY 2024

<b>LOCATION</b>	Metro Manila
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Coca Cola Foundation Inc.
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To facilitate business support for women entrepreneurs
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 grantee</li> <li>• 5 evaluated for fund provision</li> <li>• 4 women groups for mentorship</li> </ul>



## Clean Cities, Blue Ocean (CCBO) Project Calinisan

MARCH 2022 - FEBRUARY 2024

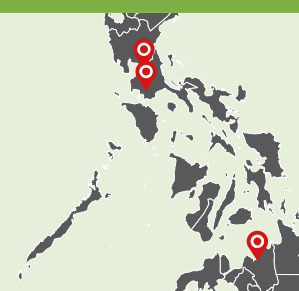
<b>LOCATION</b>	Batangas City
<b>PARTNERS</b>	USAID
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To pilot waste management strategies for stopping plastic pollution
<b>RESULT IN 2022</b>	Baseline completed for Barangay Calicanto, Batangas City



## Clean Ports, Clean Oceans: Improving port waste management in the Philippines

OCTOBER 2020 - SEPTEMBER 2023

<b>LOCATION</b>	Manila North Port, Port of Batangas, Port of Cagayan de Oro
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Grieg Foundation
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	At least 50% reduction of plastic waste leakage in ports
<b>RESULT IN 2022</b>	Strategic Action Plans, based on baselining results, developed for the 3 project ports. Two selected ready-to-scale social enterprises to be piloted in the project port sites



## Foodshed Farming Enterprise

VARIOUS PROJECT DURATIONS

<b>LOCATION</b>	Philippines
<b>PARTNERS</b>	BPI Foundation, Sunlife Foundation, Atlassian, Allianz PNB
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To improve resilience of low-income communities to stresses affecting already-limited food accessibility and increase capacity of community residents to utilize the foodshed farming technology to secure food and livelihoods
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60 food sheds established</li> <li>• 1,650 households, about 8,250 household members, benefitted from the technology</li> </ul>

## Sustainable Finance

APRIL 2018 - JULY 2022

<b>LOCATION</b>	Philippines
<b>PARTNERS</b>	German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, International Climate Initiative (BMU IKI)
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Ensure banking sector 1) does not add to deforestation and biodiversity destruction by financing irresponsible production of companies, and 2) incentivize E&S integration into their business practices
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actual policies issued: 5 policies (SEC MC No. 4, Series of 2019; BSP c1085 and c1128, ITSF Sustainable Finance Roadmap, and Guiding Principles)</li> <li>Actual bankers trained YTD: 2000+ bankers and other stakeholders</li> <li>Launched the Finance Flows Sustainable Banking Academy, an online learning management system on the Asia Sustainable Finance Initiative platform, comprising 5 modules that utilize the UNEP Principles for Responsible Banking as a learning framework, in collaboration with GRI, ADFIAP, UNEP FI and UNESCAP.</li> </ul>

## Sustainable Tuna Partnership 2

NOVEMBER 2021 - DECEMBER 2024

<b>LOCATION</b>	Lagonoy Gulf, Mindoro Strait
<b>PARTNERS</b>	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Resilience of handline fishers in the project region to poverty and disasters is increased through the sustainable management of yellowfin tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders in Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Council member states, China, Philippines and Indonesia support harvest strategies and harvest control rules for yellowfin tuna;</li> <li>3 multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms have been strengthened and are advancing sustainable tuna fisheries and small-scale fishers' interests;</li> <li>Registration, licensing and catch documentation of Tuna Fisher Association (TFA) members in the Lagonoy Gulf and Mindoro Strait is improved;</li> <li>Handline fishermen's organizations have improved entrepreneurial management capacities in order to represent their members' interests</li> </ul>



## MS-SETB Project Buhay: Tuna Habambuhay, Dagdag Hanapbuhay

FEBRUARY 2022- JANUARY 2025

<b>LOCATION</b>	Occidental Mindoro
<b>PARTNERS</b>	European Union, WWF-Austria
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Transform tuna fishing into a sustainable and equitable industry for tuna fishers by addressing post-harvest losses, diversifying income through alternative livelihoods, empowering women to get involved, securing investments and capital funding for the identified livelihoods, and inspiring replication in other communities through community stories.
<b>RESULT IN 2022</b>	Since its launch, Project Buhay has been working on acquiring baseline data on tuna fishers' post-harvest losses and alternative sources of income. An ongoing Comprehensive Ecological and Economic Social Accounting Matrix (CEESAM) analysis aims to understand the roots of poverty of small-scale fishers and identify interventions to strengthen multi-sectoral linkages and stimulate the domestic economy.



## National Youth Council

JANUARY 2017 - PRESENT

<b>LOCATION</b>	Philippines
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Bank of the Philippine Islands (January-December 2022)
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Spread the message of environmental conservation and brings pressing issues to the general consciousness of Filipino youth and empowers them to create positive and concrete actions
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership of NYC Batch 3 (Romina Lim, Gab Mejia, Justin Domingo, Giselle Lapid, Ron Caguliodo, Mirus Ponon, and Ganden Medved-Po);</li> <li>• Organized the Youth Environment Summit for Oceans, an environmental webinar series that crafted a youth declaration statement in support of marine conservation, serving as guidance to decision-makers in creating solution-based projects, programs, and policies for our oceans and marine environment;</li> <li>• Created the kagubatan.ph, a virtual art exhibit showing the beauty of Philippines forests, and produced the Life Below Water book, a compilation of photos featuring Philippine seascapes and marine wildlife;</li> <li>• Encouraged first-time voters to #VoteForThePlanet through a series of social media campaigns; and various activities to inspire the Filipino youth to live sustainably</li> </ul>

## Geographic Information Systems

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Provide technical support related to GIS and remote sensing and offer the most recent in spatial advances, making them available to the projects, stakeholders, partners, and the public.
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided GIS support for over 10 projects and target for annual "revenue" for cost recovery achieved.</li> <li>• GIS Software acquired (June 2022–June 2023) and GPS with sub-meter accuracy purchased</li> <li>• Served as KKP Mangrove focal person for all mangrove-related events and provided coordination, representation, project proposal formulation, and implementation guidance.</li> </ul>

## Individual Donor Program

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Individual Donors Program is a fundraising unit that focuses on individual giving. Its main goal is to raise funds for the organization through multi-channel fundraising.
<b>RESULTS IN 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We continue to develop our multi-channel fundraising efforts and we were able to connect with over 6,200 individual donors through various campaigns and events such as the Holiday Serenade, Earth Hour Virtual Run, and Pride for the Planet Virtual Run.</li> <li>• Together with our Panda community, we were able to quickly set up an emergency appeal for our fellow pandas and partner communities devastated by Typhoon Odette</li> <li>• Our Fundraise For WWF continues to promote bayanihan with 19 individual and group fundraisers who donated their time and effort to support the organization</li> </ul>



Kabang Kalikasan ng Pilipinas  
Foundation, Inc.  
*(A Nonstock, Nonprofit Corporation)*

Financial Statements  
June 30, 2022 and 2021

and

Independent Auditor's Report



A member firm of Ernst & Young Global Limited

## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

The Board of Trustees  
Kabang Kalikasan ng Pilipinas Foundation, Inc.

### Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

#### Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Kabang Kalikasan ng Pilipinas Foundation, Inc. (the Foundation), which comprise the statements of assets, liabilities and fund balances as of June 30, 2022 and 2021, and statements of receipts and expenses, statements of changes in fund balances and statements of cash flows for the years then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the statements of assets, liabilities and fund balances of the Foundation as of June 30, 2022 and 2021, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with Philippine Financial Reporting Standards for Small and Medium-sized Entities (PFRSs for SMEs).

#### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audits in accordance with Philippine Standards on Auditing (PSAs). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are independent of the Foundation in accordance with the Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants in the Philippines (Code of Ethics) together with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the Philippines, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements and the Code of Ethics. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

#### Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with PFRSs for SMEs, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Foundation's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Foundation or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.



Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Foundation's financial reporting process.

#### **Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements**

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with PSAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with PSAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Foundation's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Foundation's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Foundation to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

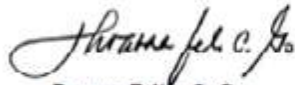




**Report on the Supplementary Information Required Under Revenue Regulations Nos. 34-2020 and 15-2010**

Our audits were conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the basic financial statements taken as a whole. The supplementary information required under Revenue Regulations Nos. 34-2020 and 15-2010 in Note 19 to the financial statements is presented for purposes of filing with the Bureau of Internal Revenue and is not a required part of the basic financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of the management of Kabang Kalikasan ng Pilipinas Foundation, Inc. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in our audit of the basic financial statements. In our opinion, the information is fairly stated, in all material respects, in relation to the basic financial statements taken as a whole.

SYCIP GORRES VELAYO & CO.



Jhoanna Feliza C. Go

Partner

CPA Certificate No. 0114122

Tax Identification No. 219-674-288

BOA/PRC Reg. No. 0001, August 25, 2021, valid until April 15, 2024

SEC Partner Accreditation No. 114122-SEC (Group A)

Valid to cover audit of 2021 to 2025 financial statements of SEC covered institutions

SEC Firm Accreditation No. 0001-SEC (Group A)

Valid to cover audit of 2021 to 2025 financial statements of SEC covered institutions

BIR Accreditation No. 08-001998-103-2019, November 7, 2019, valid until November 6, 2022

PTR No. 8853497, January 3, 2022, Makati City

October 18, 2022



**KABANG KALIKASAN NG PILIPINAS FOUNDATION, INC.**  
 (Also known as WWF - Philippines/World Wide Fund - Philippines,  
 A National Organization of World Wide Fund for Nature - International)  
 (A Nonstock, Nonprofit Corporation)

**STATEMENTS OF ASSETS, LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES**

	June 30	
	2022	2021
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents (Note 4)	P146,148,057	P118,758,205
Receivables (Note 5)	731,107	1,311,529
Other current assets (Note 6)	29,156,125	71,378,871
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>176,035,289</b>	<b>191,448,605</b>
<b>Noncurrent Assets</b>		
Investments in securities (Note 7)	54,393,377	62,097,126
Property and equipment (Note 8)	205,244	285,610
Computer software (Note 9)	-	1,729
<b>Total Noncurrent Assets</b>	<b>54,598,621</b>	<b>62,384,465</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>P230,633,910</b>	<b>P253,833,070</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES</b>		
<b>Current Liability</b>		
Accrued expenses and other payables (Note 10)	P33,847,823	P28,272,785
<b>Noncurrent Liability</b>		
Retirement benefit obligations (Note 11)	6,991,805	4,173,765
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>40,839,628</b>	<b>32,446,550</b>
<b>Fund Balances</b>		
Restricted	167,089,476	199,018,072
Unrestricted	22,704,806	22,368,448
<b>Total Fund Balances</b>	<b>189,794,282</b>	<b>221,386,520</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES</b>	<b>P230,633,910</b>	<b>P253,833,070</b>

See accompanying Notes to Financial Statements.



**KABANG KALIKASAN NG PILIPINAS FOUNDATION, INC.**  
 (Also known as WWF – Philippines/World Wide Fund – Philippines,  
 A National Organization of World Wide Fund for Nature – International)  
 (A Nonstock, Nonprofit Corporation)

**STATEMENTS OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENSES**

	Years Ended June 30	
	2022	2021
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Donations (Note 12)	P204,179,404	P168,460,206
<b>COSTS AND EXPENSES</b>		
Project (Note 13)	199,655,499	118,838,794
Fund raising (Note 14)	10,958,208	13,508,927
Administrative (Note 15)	23,025,801	14,865,585
	<b>P233,619,508</b>	<b>147,213,306</b>
<b>OTHER INCOME (EXPENSES)</b>		
Foreign exchange gain (loss) - net	(1,392,121)	3,246,930
Mark-to-market gain (loss) on investments (Note 7)	(809,137)	2,590,092
Others (Note 4)	49,124	71,696
	<b>(2,152,134)</b>	<b>5,908,718</b>
<b>EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF RECEIPTS OVER COSTS AND EXPENSES</b>	<b>(P31,592,238)</b>	<b>P27,155,618</b>

*See accompanying Notes to Financial Statements.*





**KABANG KALIKASAN NG PILIPINAS FOUNDATION, INC.**  
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**STATEMENTS OF CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES**  
**FOR THE YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 2022 and 2021**

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
<b>Fund balances at July 1, 2020</b>	<b>₱22,184,681</b>	<b>₱172,046,221</b>	<b>₱194,230,902</b>
Excess of receipts over costs and expenses for the year	183,767	26,971,851	27,155,618
<b>Fund balances at June 30, 2021</b>	<b>22,368,448</b>	<b>199,018,072</b>	<b>221,386,520</b>
Excess (deficiency) of receipts over costs and expenses for the year	336,358	(31,978,596)	(31,592,238)
<b>Fund balances at June 30, 2022</b>	<b>₱22,704,806</b>	<b>₱167,089,476</b>	<b>₱189,794,282</b>

*See accompanying Notes to Financial Statements.*



**KABANG KALIKASAN NG PILIPINAS FOUNDATION, INC.**  
(Also known as WWF – Philippines/World Wide Fund - Philippines,  
A National Organization of World Wide Fund for Nature - International)  
(A Nonstock, Nonprofit Corporation)

**STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS**

	Years Ended June 30	
	2022	2021
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Excess (deficiency) of receipts over costs and expenses	(₱31,592,238)	₱27,155,618
Adjustments for:		
Retirement benefit expenses (Note 11)	2,818,040	400,223
Foreign exchange losses (gains) - net	1,392,121	7,807
Mark-to-market loss (gain) on investment (Note 7)	809,137	(2,590,092)
Depreciation and amortization (Notes 8, 9 and 15)	215,592	262,833
Interest income (Note 4)	(49,124)	(71,696)
Excess (deficiency) of receipts over costs and expenses before working capital changes	(26,406,472)	25,164,693
Decrease (increase) in:		
Other current assets	42,222,745	(65,700,141)
Receivables	(573,497)	991,436
Increase (decrease) in accrued expenses and other payables	5,353,732	(1,763,861)
Cash generated from (used in) operations	20,596,508	(41,307,873)
Interests received (Note 4)	49,124	71,696
Net cash flows from (used in) operating activities	20,645,632	(41,236,177)
<b>CASH FLOWS USED IN AN INVESTING ACTIVITY</b>		
Withdrawal from investment in securities (Note 7)	6,894,612	-
Acquisitions of property and equipment (Note 8)	(133,497)	(115,499)
Net cash flows from (used in) investing activities	6,761,115	(115,499)
<b>NET INCREASE (DECREASE) IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS</b>	<b>27,406,747</b>	<b>(41,351,676)</b>
<b>EFFECT OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE RATE CHANGES IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENT</b>	<b>(16,895)</b>	<b>215,460</b>
<b>CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>118,758,205</b>	<b>159,894,421</b>
<b>CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT END OF YEAR (Note 4)</b>	<b>₱146,148,057</b>	<b>₱118,758,205</b>

*See accompanying Notes to Financial Statements.*



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**Maria Isabel Garcia**  
Chairperson



**Raymond Rufino**  
President



**Atty. Melissa Lichaytoo**  
Corporate Secretary



**Regina Angela Lorenzo**  
Trustee



**Maria Theresa Marcial-Javier**  
Trustee



**Cesar Purisima**  
Trustee



**Nanette Medved Po**  
Trustee



**Anthony Charlemagne Yu**  
Trustee



**Jose Ramon Villarin**  
Trustee



**Jose Gabriel Mejia**  
Trustee



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**Aurelio Montinola III**  
Chairman



**Jose Ma Lorenzo Tan**  
Vice Chairman

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Vincent S. Pérez Jr.  
Alexandra Romualdez  
Guillermo Luz  
Doris Magsaysay Ho  
Joselito D.Y. Campos Jr.

Lance Gokongwei  
Margie Moran-Floirendo  
Nicasio I. Alcantara  
Jaime Ayala  
Atty. Lorna Kapunan  
Donald Lim

Robert Suntay  
Paul Dominguez  
Irene Martel Francisco  
Evangelina Lourdes Arroyo-Bernas  
Jaime Urquijo

## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



**Katherine Custodio**  
Executive Director

**Perla Chrisma Salao**  
Director for  
Conservation Programs

**Luz Teresa Baskiñas**  
Director for Project  
Development

**Mara Fara Sarmiento**  
Chief Finance Officer

**Romeo Lescano, Jr.**  
Head of Human Resources  
and Administrative Services

**Cloda Marie Urquico**  
Head of Resource Generation  
and Marketing

**Marielle Bordado**  
Head of Communications





# Force For Nature

## CHAPTER 5





# Panata sa Kalikasan at Kinabukasan

*Ako si, (Pangalan), isang Pilipino  
Mula sa lahi ng mga magigiting na bayani,  
Taglay ang damdaming buhay at malaya,  
Ay nanunumpa ng aking panata  
Sa pangangalaga at pagtataguyod  
Ng aking kapaligiran*

*Batid ko ang aking tungkulin  
Bilang tagapangalaga at alagad ng aking tahanan,  
Puno't dulo ng aking buhay at mithiin  
Pinagkukunan ng buhay at kabuhayan*

*Tutuparin ko ang aking tungkulin  
Hindi lamang sa kalikasan  
Ngunit pati sa mga taong nabubuhay  
At kumukuha ng kanilang kabuhayan dito*

*Sisikapin ko sa abot ng aking makakaya  
Na araw-araw ay magsilbing alagad ng pagbabago*

*Itatataguyod ang pinagsasama-samang pangarap  
Ng kinabukasang maunlad  
At kapaki-pakinabang sa tao at kalikasan*

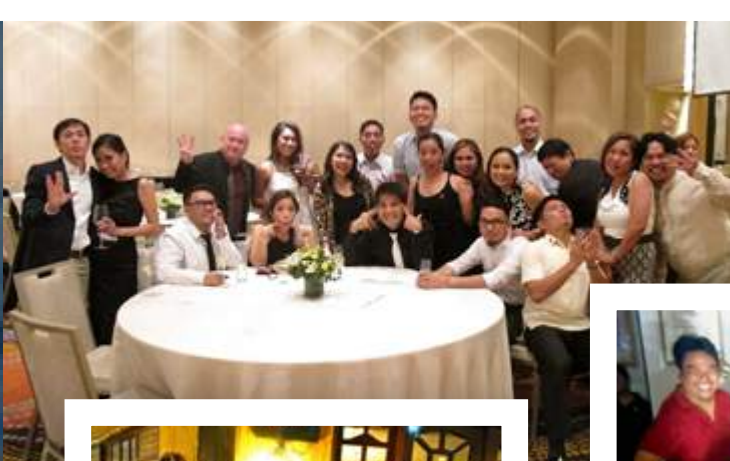
*Batid ko ang mga hamon na aking haharapin  
Buong puso kong itataguyod  
Kung ano ang nakabubuti at nararapat  
Upang mapagtagumpayan ang isang kinabukasang para sa lahat*

*Maigiging ehemplo ako ng kabutihan at panindigan  
Titindig laban sa mali at mapang-abusong pamamaraan  
Palalawakin ang bayanihan, pagkakapit-bisig at pakikipagkapwa  
Sa pagharap ng mga hamon tungo sa adhikain ng maayos na kinabukasan*

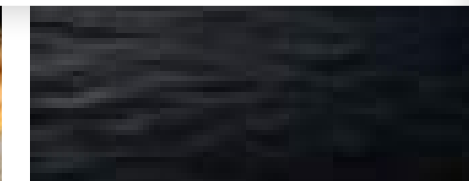
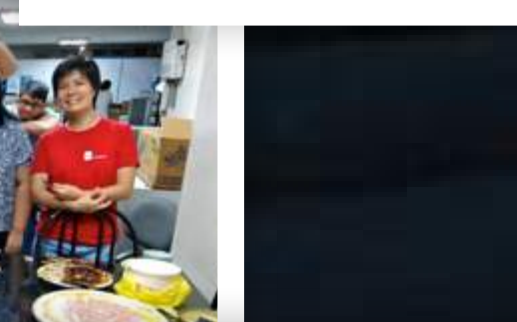
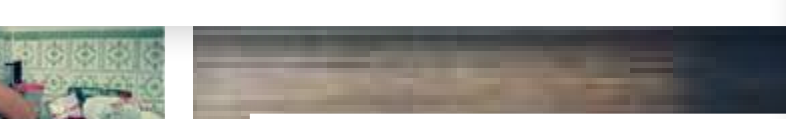
*Lagit' lagi, ang puso ko'y mananatili sa paglilingkod  
Upang protektahan ang kalikasan,  
Ang mga taong nangangalaga nito,  
Lalo na ang mga pinaka nangangailangan*

*At higit sa lahat,  
Pag-iigitngin ko ang paniniwalang  
Kayang-kaya, kapag sama-sama.*











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