



Sea wardens protect ecosystems and livelihoods in the Calicoan Islands

Location:
Calicoan Islands,
Philippines

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2017 National Agencies meeting with Calicoan Bantay Dagat Group in the National Contest of Coastal Resource Management, where Guiuan won 3rd place in the regional category in the Visayas
Photo credit: Cordaid

Clown Fish nest found in newly established Marine Protected Area in Eastern Samar.
Photo credit: Cordaid

Calicoan Island in the southern part of Guiuan has a population of 7,600 in the four villages on the Island, almost 100% of whom are dependent on fishing for livelihoods and food options.

Cordaid has worked with communities, local government and local organizations in Guiuan municipality, Eastern Samar since Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) devastated the region in November 2013. Guiuan was the first landfall of the super-typhoon and resulted in almost 100% damage across the municipality.

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Unsustainable fishing practices such as dynamite and cyanide fishing have damaged the fishing grounds; the absence of community managed coastal protection and an increase in storms is impacting fisherfolks ability to support their families with poorer fishing grounds and less fishing days. Typhoon Yolanda further devastated the municipal waters' coral beds.



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Bantay Dagat Team conducting monitoring and maintenance of Marine Protected Areas in Eastern Samar.
Photo credit: Cordaid

In 2015 and 2016 a comprehensive assessment of the condition of coastal resources surrounding Calicoan Island was implemented. In February 2017, community members worked with the Local Government to establish the largest Marine Protected Area in Easter Samar province, covering a total of 757 hectares of Strict Protection Zone and ensuring the most damaged parts of the marine ecosystem are protected and allowed to regenerate within the declared two Marine sanctuaries – the Enatraban Reef of 187 hectares and - Burunayan of 570 hectares.

Together with Municipal Government Unit of Guiuan, a protection, management and sustainability mechanism was established through capacity building with the local stakeholders in the three willing barangays. This resulted in the establishment of two community cooperation platforms engaging different sectoral groups such as the clustered wide Bantay Dagat Group and the three MMC - Multi Sectoral Management Council with fisher folk, women's and Barangay Local Government Units in the management and protection of the Marine Sanctuaries. One village on the island initially refused to participate in the strategy, but with support of the Municipal Government and a mediation process to meet the needs of the different users of the coast around Calicoan, engagement by representatives of this village in the broader island wide strategy is now possible.

Healthy marine ecosystems provide important spawning grounds for fish. Sea wardens or bantay dagat, community fishers were trained and empowered by the local government to protect the Marine Protected Areas. They also play a critical role with the Government in monitoring safety of fisher folk when dangerous weather and sea conditions occur.





Spear fishing is practiced in Calicoan Island where bounty of fish are slowly recognized as important to protect by communities

Photo credit: Cordaid

The new Marine Protected Area is the largest in Easter Samar province, covering a total of 757 hectares of Strict Protection Zone, including two Marine sanctuaries - the Enatraban Reef of 187 hectares and - Burunayan of 570 hectares.

In August 2018, the Calicoan wide sea wardens of the Boronayan and Enatraban Marine Protected Areas accelerated their strategy for cooperation in Integrated Risk Management.

To address issues they faced, threats to their work as protectors of the coast and seas by illegal fisher folk, 30 sea wardens worked with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR Region 8), through the Guiuan Marine Resources Protected Landscape and Seascape (GMRPLS), the Eastern Samar Provincial Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource (BFAR Region 8), Guiuan Philippines National Police (PNP) , Guiuan Recovery and Sustainable Development Group for Resilience (GRSDGR) and the Local Government of Guiuan to develop a multi-stakeholder plan for sustainability of the Marine Protected Area and the institutional systems They were also alerted by the Department of Environment and Natural and structure of the sea wardens.

They were also alerted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Section for Coastal Resource Conservation of a new opportunity for small grants for livelihoods for people's organizations such as the sea wardens.

Two weeks later a joint mission involving sea wardens, teachers and students from the Guiuan National High School Science Department was held in the Boronayan and Enatraban Marine Protected Areas, to document and monitor the health of the 2 protected areas, identify sites for development of eco-tourism diving enterprise and develop a small livelihoods development proposal, focusing on the women's groups on Calicoan to provide catering services to support the community managed eco-tourism initiative emerging in Calicoan.

Five sites for eco-tourism have been identified surrounding the newly regenerated Marine Protected Areas with species of Fire Corals, shark nests, Hidden Giant Clams, Clown Fish identified in the blossoming corals. The sea wardens took many photos of the health of their marine ecosystem to support their monitoring, research and planning for alternative livelihoods. They will work with the National High School and womens's groups in Calicoan to further prepare a proposal for associated livelihoods development.

