



Association Loi 1901
Registration number: W751230383

Website :
www.ecotoneresilience.org

Contacts:

Tarek Toubale |
tarek@ecotoneresilience.org
Valérie Daoud Henderson |
valerie@ecotoneresilience.org
Elsa Ligaya Dingkuhn |
elsa@ecotoneresilience.org

info@ecotoneresilience.org



When V.I.P. means Verde Island Passage **NEWSLETTER # 2**



**ABRA DE ILOG, OCCIDENTAL MINDORO
PHILIPPINES**

December 2016

Overview

The **Ecotone Resilience** initiative began in the summer of 2015 with an approach built around three strategic pillars:

- The regeneration of **marine biodiversity** with the formation of a Marine Protected Area and **the end of illegal fishing**
- The preservation of the land with the promotion of **regenerative agroforestry practices** and organic agriculture
- Improved **livelihood** for the local populations

A core objective of Ecotone Resilience (ER) is the pursuit of an integrated, scientifically documented, multi-sector approach in close consultation with the local communities and local governmental teams. Ultimately by understanding the networks of livelihood, the state of the coral reef and the land, we will be able to determine how interventions can help conserve nature as well as improve quality of life.



ER has established its first project on the site of Barangay Udalo, one of the 10 barangays that compose Abra de Ilog, Occidental Mindoro, Philippines, and where it has received full support from the Local Government Unit (LGU) led by its mayor and his team. The site was chosen because of its location on the **Verde Island Passage**, a world-renowned hot spot for endangered biodiversity, further threatened by road construction through Barangay Udalo – the last link in a road that will connect the whole island of Mindoro.

How do we bring modernity and improve the quality of life without threatening biodiversity?

We would like to share with you ER's achievements to date and our prospects for the next stage.

Phase I



The first phase of the project started in November 2015 with an on-site team meeting and was officially launched in January 2016. This phase, which will be finalized in January 2017, encompassed the conceptual design, the launch of a baseline and documented scientific reports about the area and the start of implementation on the pilot site. Barangay Udalo is one of the most pristine areas of the Philippines, remarkable for the presence of a relatively large indigenous population and the lack of road infrastructure.

So what has been achieved during this Phase I?

On the marine side:

Our team, led by **Clément**, completed the preliminary scientific surveys of the planned Marine Protected Area (MPA), with a final report presented to the LGU during the team site visit in November 2016.



Thanks to **Marine** and **Ryan's** presence in the field for six months, ER was able to carry out thorough consultations and fish landing surveys with the fishermen communities that are directly impacted by the establishment of the MPA, to understand their needs and garner their full support. The completion of

these surveys led to strategic recommendations around the establishment of the MPA and its implementation:

- Human resources to enforce future regulation (Bantai Dagat) have been identified with the LGU in order to protect the MPA and put an end to illegal dulong fishing which is often taking place several times during night time.



- Technical features of the MPA have been proposed with the recommendation for a fish sanctuary protecting the shallow water corals as well as the deep reef. This protected zone is to measure 1.5 km long by 500 meters wide in order to also include the deep reef.

On the land side:



As of November 2016, the [road](#) project to connect the whole island of Mindoro with Barangay Udalo as the sole missing link was put on hold in order to study various options to divert it to a non-coastal alternative preserving the unique habitat of many species, in particular a 1km long turtle-nesting beach. This step towards an environmentally conscious solution

was obtained as a combined effort from local communities, the LGU and ER.



Road before



Road after ripping through Sigman village

Our team, led by Elsa and Fidel carried out agriculture surveys with local farmers, which resulted in identifying local agroforestry products with an estimate of local production.



ER partnered with [Masipag](#), a major Filipino farming organization, which provides technical assistance around sustainable and organic practices. This led a number of farmers to organize themselves locally and several pilot experiments have been conducted on new organic rice seeds (provided by Masipag) with mixed results. This is nevertheless providing

new opportunities and a direct access to a powerful local network that had totally overlooked the area.

In order to complement these experiments, ER approached international fair trade companies to consult them about possible market links.

Finally, Jonathan, a top-level scientist, conducted a study about the long-term impact of traditional burning agriculture technique on the soil, also known as [kaingin](#).

On the human side:

At the very beginning of the project, ER signed a cooperation agreement with the University of the Philippines (UP) providing scientific and human resources support over the course of Phase I. As part of this agreement, a team of students from UP - Los Baños completed a social baseline with multi-sector indicators.



True to its bottom-up approach and its desire to be an integral part of the communities, ER built a first scientific base in the village of Sigman mostly populated by indigenous people. This allowed ER to identify quickly that the village water supply was running dry and a new [well](#) was built.

The establishment of the base was made possible thanks to the Yap family, owner of the land in Sigman and with whom ER is drafting an agreement allowing ER to use the land. Helen Yap is one of the leading marine biology experts on the ER team.



Finally, Marine and Ryan, conservation ecologists, conducted a successful waste management initiative mainly around the residual waste and plastic issues that affect both the sea and the land. The first pilot project took place at Camurong Elementary School, which is the main elementary school in Barangay Udalo, to educate children on waste through an “ecobricks” program. With the active support of Emer, the Local Government Unit (LGU) fully embraced the program and has decided to replicate it throughout the barangay before expanding it to the whole municipality (and the nine other barangays).



On the financial side:

On all fronts, significant progress has been achieved with limited yet very valuable financial resources (less than 50 000 € of donors' funds was spent in 2016 but countless hours by our team of volunteers), often ahead of our own timeline. Most of all, and clearly one of the biggest achievements, has been the trust developed with local communities and the integration of the ER team amongst them.

Where do we go from here? Why do we need your support?

Phase II

The second phase was redefined last month with the local government and calls for an expansion of the portfolio of initiatives in continuation of Phase I and the creation of economic linkages which is so important to help these local communities come out of poverty, resources depletion by developing sustainable models of livelihood.

New initiatives to be launched are:

Biocoal using vegetal waste: coal made locally is very destructive as it uses cut trees and contributes to a rampant deforestation.



Current charcoal techniques

Solar energy: a number of villages have no electricity or irregular feed. ER will partner with a solar provider to electrify a pilot site chosen among indigenous villages.

Reforestation: ER plans to fund an ambitious reforestation program through an international company. Replanting local trees is a crucial initiative to limit erosion and preserve biodiversity.

Social impact:



In full coordination of the LGU, ER will help to replicate the waste management initiative throughout the whole network of schools in the barangay.

Furthermore, the social baseline, which was completed in November 2016, highlights the need for action on several fronts, including health & nutrition, education, sanitation and livelihood (to fight a very high local unemployment rate).

Read more on our [website](#).

Ecotourism:

This area has unique assets including the biggest grotto in the Philippines. We are already working closely with a local eco-resort and plan to improve a flow of very selective tourism, which will translate into additional job creations.

Creation of an international MPA norm:

ER plans to partner with a leading consulting firm to complete the groundwork started by its team members.

ER targets completion of the MPA implementation MPA by the end of 2017 in full coordination with the LGU and the fishermen communities.

To conclude:

As Ecotone Resilience has limited human and financial resources, we work through partnerships in order to maximize our results and bring the best possible teams to the area to work with and empower the communities.



We believe we can win the battle to preserve this unique environment, while bringing economic linkages and improve the livelihood of the communities. Additionally ER is uniquely positioned to connect this isolated area with selected companies and organizations.

In order to achieve our goals, **we are seeking to raise between €50.000 and €100.000 to help finance our initiatives until they reach their own economic sustainability.**

The pilot in Barangay Udalo will achieve two major long-term goals:

- Develop a complete tool kit of initiatives on the biodiversity and human side backed by documented science.
- Inspire and lead to replication in the Philippines and in the coral triangle area.

To preserve this unique place, ER needs your support.

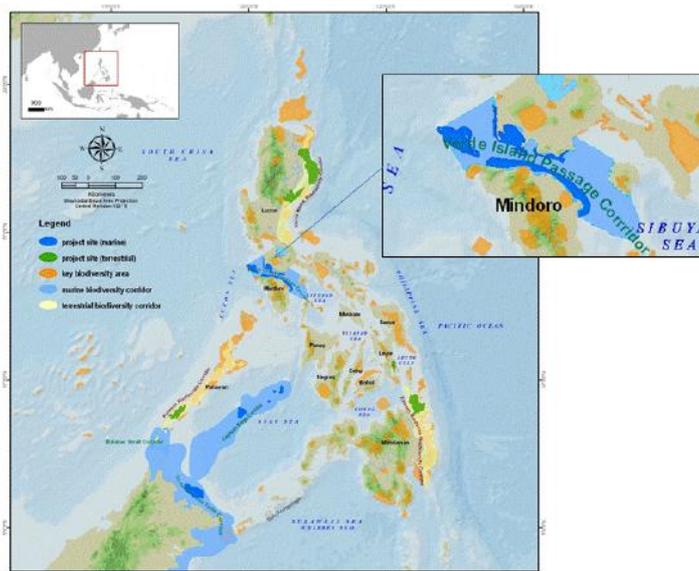
*ER is a registered NGO,
which can provide tax breaks for French donors.*

Project location

The pilot project is situated in **Occidental Mindoro, Abra de Ilog, Philippines** on the **Verde Island Passage**.

Ecotone Resilience brings together scientists, development field experts and traditional communities willing to engage in profitable environmental projects through international cooperation.

All of this would not be possible without your financial help and the dedication of our team some of whom have lived in total immersion with the local communities. We have added new members to our team: Carina who is our translator, Christine who is in charge of rolling out the waste management initiative as well as the food feeding programs in the schools, with a particular attention to the Mangyans kids, and organizing the handicrafts for women, and finally Nemesio who will help with following up with the agriculture initiatives which aim to create market links, better agriculture practices and organize farmers groups with a view to create a cooperative.



To view the full team: www.ecotoneresilience.org

Thank you!