



sulu-sulawesi seascape



The Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape, located between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, is known as the center of the world's marine biodiversity. It spans an area of 900,000 square kilometers (nearly 350,000 square miles) and provides livelihoods and food for over 40 million people.

Many marine species and habitats in the seascape are threatened by overfishing, pollution, destructive fishing practices, coastal development and sedimentation. In addition, local people's livelihoods are threatened as fish stocks decline and commercial fishing increases, leaving less fish for local consumption. Climate change is also a reality felt in Sulu-Sulawesi. Rising sea levels, increased ocean temperature, ocean acidification and coral bleaching attributed to climate change are affecting not only the region's fragile ecosystems and species, but also the communities that rely on fishing and tourism for their livelihoods.

CI's work in the seascape involves developing the scientific basis for ecosystem-based management; facilitating the establishment of marine protected areas (MPA) and MPA networks in marine biodiversity conservation corridors; developing stakeholder and enforcement capacities through targeted training and provision of logistical support; and establishing highly effective partnerships

with national government agencies, other NGOs, local and provincial governments, communities and the private sector.

Through this work, CI aims to conserve important species and habitats while sustaining people's need for the products and services derived from the ocean. By developing sound management plans and making fisheries more sustainable, local food needs will be ensured over the long term, and tourism development will not jeopardize the natural capital upon which it depends. Recreational activities must be developed in such a way as to promote local culture and bring maximum benefits to local communities.

The Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape team has already achieved significant results. Armed with ecological and socio-economic information, CI and our partners increased MPA coverage of the Tubbataha Reef Natural World Heritage Site from 33,960 to 99,066 hectares (approximately 84,000 to 245,000 acres), supported the establishment of 15 new MPAs and designed ecologically functional networks of MPAs based on connectivity. We also worked to significantly improve the management and enforcement of these areas through formulation of management plans, equipping hundreds of volunteer enforcers and park rangers, and by promoting increased local and national government allocations to marine conservation.

To address climate change risks, a group of more than 100 scientists, politicians and local community members in the Verde Island Passage Corridor of the Seascape gathered to assess the vulnerability of communities—and the marine biodiversity upon which they depend—to the effects of climate change so that adaptation plans can be developed. Upon hearing about the climate change effects that have already been observed in the area, provincial governments

began the process of reviewing their current coastal management plans and adapting them to be more “climate smart.” Suggested adaptations included constructing ports on stilts to allow natural current movements, protecting seagrass beds, mangroves and coral reefs, promoting alternative livelihoods such as seaweed farming, and conducting outreach activities to increase awareness of the issues and community engagement. The Philippines' first Climate Smart MPA, covering 14,000 hectares (almost 35,000 acres), including a 1,000-hectare no-take zone, was recently launched on Lubang Island.

Efforts to date have already proven successful, and governments are responding. In response to CI's work, Philippines President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo issued an executive order calling for guidelines for designating biodiversity areas and critical habitats in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape, especially at the Verde Island Passage. President Arroyo also appointed the director of CI-Philippines as a member of the National Advisory Board for Climate Change Commission to provide input to the National Strategy Framework on Climate Change.



demonstrating how **healthy ecosystems benefit human well-being** in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape

human well-being

- 40 million people sustained
- continued tourism revenue



ecosystem services

- healthy fish stocks
- climate regulation



healthy ecosystems

- 99,000 ha (approximately 245,000 acres) protected
- abundant and diverse species conserved (sea turtles, fish, mammals)