

HIGHLIGHTS

2023 WEST PHILIPPINE SEASCAPE
CIVIL SOCIETY SUMMIT



Harnessing the Power of Communities

A CSO Summit for the
Conservation of the WPS



MARCH 2023
SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS

Convened by USAID Fish Right, PATH Foundation, Conservation International Foundation Inc., C3 Philippines, Impl. Project, Environmental Legal Assistance Center (ELAC), Tambuyog Development Center Inc., Tanggol Kalikasan, Western Philippines University, Mariano Marcos State University, Palawan State University, Silliman University, Kalayaan Palawan Fisherman/Farmers Association, PANGISDA, KKAMPi, Kalayaan Islands Tourism Agents Cooperative, Punta Baja Fisherfolk Association, Samahan ng Mangingisda ng Bahile, Fisherfolk Organization in Quezon, Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka at Mangingisda, and with support from USAID SIBOL and USAID INSPIRE

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SOLIDARITY MESSAGES

The West Philippine Seascape (WPS) hosts a wide array of ecosystem services that generate rich economic and social benefits for Filipinos. It accounts for an estimated 15% (BFAR 2023) of the total commercial fisheries production of the Philippines. There are 109 coastal municipalities and cities in the WPS with more than 600,000 fishers dependent on its resources. Fish accounts for 36% of the total protein intake of the average Filipino (BFAR 2021); five of the country's most common finfish species are found in the WPS including skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, Bali sardinella, leopard coral grouper, and round scad (Abad 2021; FishBase 2019).

Annually, the Philippines loses about PhP68.5 billion from illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. In the WPS, distant water fleets pose a serious threat to the domestic fisheries in the Philippine waters from encroaching Chinese and Vietnamese fleets. These intrusions compete with small-scale fishers whose daily fish catch is reduced to one kg per fisher for 15 days per month (Mualil, et al, 2011). Reduced fish catch due to intense competition and the destruction of the rich ecosystem, compounded by climate change, poses major threats to the lives and livelihoods of Filipino fishers.

The 2023 Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Summit for the Conservation of the West Philippine Seascape (WPS) in the South China Sea brought together for the first time over 50 CSOs who have stakes in finding solutions to pressing issues confronting marine and fisheries resources in the seascape. With the theme "Harnessing the Power of Communities for the Conservation of the WPS," the summit was held on 1-3 March 2023 at Costa Palawan in Puerto Princesa City.

Over 150 attendees representing academia, women's groups, farmers and fisherfolk organizations, and Indigenous communities living along the seaboard attended the Summit to deliberate and agree on their basis of unity, discuss ongoing CSOs' initiatives, and develop synergies going forward. Western Philippines University served as CSO Summit Secretariat.

CSOs play significant roles in advancing an inclusive, decentralized, and co-management approach in fisheries governance in the country. Non-government organizations, people's organizations, academic, and research institutions as well as businesses are sources and facilitators of relevant science and information vital in finding solutions to pressing WPS issues such as IUU fishing, livelihood, and climate change.

RYAN WASHBURN
Mission Director
USAID Philippines, Pacific Islands and Mongolia

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March 1 - 3, 2023
Puerto Princesa City, Palawan

HON. EDWARD S. HAGEDORN
District Representative
Palawan, 3rd District

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ATTY. GERTHIE MAYO-ANDA
Executive Director
Environmental Legal Assistance Center, Inc.

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ROBERTO "KA DODOY" BALLON
Chairperson, Coalition of Municipal Fisherfolk Associations in Zamboanga Sibuagay
2021 Ramon Magsaysay Awards Recipient

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The Heritage Value of FMAs 5 and 6 in the West Philippine Seascape by Dr. Ben Malayang III of Silliman University

Dr. Ben Malayang III reiterated that Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs) 5 and 6 in the West Philippine Seascape is ours - or from his presentation *"Sa Atin ang Titulo"* (The Title is Ours) before detailing the economic, ecological, and heritage value that WPS can provide not only for Filipinos but for the rest of the world to benefit as well. The Philippines should take the lead not only in strengthening the life support systems and reducing the threats in FMAs 5 and 6, but in changing the narrative for a more inclusive approach in managing, protecting, and sustaining the heritage value of the West Philippine Seascape.



Public Budgeting and the Philippine Budget Process: Case Studies to Advance CSO Policy Agenda by iLead Executive Director Zyza Suzara

Zyza Suzara made the case that "The public budget is both a technical document and a political instrument" and therefore citizen participation in the budget processes is critical and crucial and has great potential to concretely influence policy outcomes. The presentation also summarized the budget cycle and where and how citizen participation in the budget processes occurs.



Advancing CSO Coordinated Action for the WPS, Para sa Buhay at sa Kabuhayan by Atty. Gerthie Mayo-Anda, Executive Director for ELAC

Atty. Mayo-Anda stressed the need for Filipinos, particularly the CSOs, to take the lead in advancing a more coordinated action in managing and strengthening the life support systems in the West Philippine Seascape, and in protecting and sustaining its heritage value.



Next Steps for the Coalition by Dr. Alaine Baaco, WPU Vice President for Research Development and Extension

Dr. Alaine Baaco identified the coalition's pioneering CSOs as well as new partners. She summarized the coalition's achievements in each of its priority themes: Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing; Sustainable Livelihood; and Capacity Building of Fisherfolks and Local Stakeholders/Community to Protect & Sustain Value of WPS.

BOOTH EXHIBIT



The exhibit highlighted the objectives that the CSO Coalition will advocate in the West Philippine Seascape which include the following: (1) Reduction of IUU fishing and increasing compliance of fishing laws and regulation; (2) Development of sustainable livelihoods to alleviate the situation of fishers that are affected by IUU fishing in the WPS; (3) Capacity-building for fisherfolks and local stakeholders; (4) Promote climate adaptive actions in the WPS, and (5) Development of a research agenda for WPS that takes into account ethical and equitable considerations and prioritizes local communities, including small and artisanal fishers.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Participants identified key issues and demands from government about the West Philippine Sea. Groups were divided into three main themes: IUU Fishing; Sustainable Livelihood; and Capacity Building for Fishers and Local Stakeholders.

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing

- Clear and consistent law enforcement on all levels: from citizens, the FARMC, the Bantay Dagat, and all national agencies; and for the law to apply equally to Filipino foreign fishers, whether commercial or municipal in scale.
- The creation of targeted policies supporting the Bantay Dagat and BFAR; and to pass a law to create a Department of Fisheries that will enact a Bantay Dagat Bill; as well as to add more platforms and systems to encourage public and stakeholder participation in creating government policies.
- To improve and strengthen monitoring and reporting systems for IUU fishing in the WPS,

improve traceability of fish production at the local and national level; and to create a data collection division to focus on processing and analyzing data and making the information accessible to all agencies.

Sustainable Livelihood

- Livelihood Trainings
- A fund to be given directly to fishers in WPS
- To protect and support fishers in WPS similar to how China actively protects their own fishers

Capacity building for fishers and local stakeholders

- Support for Community Engagement and Empowerment
- Ensuring allocation for Budget for WPS programs and projects
- Strengthening Law Enforcement and its implementation in the WPS



FIRESIDE CHAT

On March 3, USAID Mission Director to the Philippines, Pacific Islands, and Mongolia, Ryan Washburn held a fireside meeting with summit participants to discuss their takeaways from the Summit.

The Palawan State University Choir and Dance Troupe performed for attendees at the closing ceremony; together with children from Tagburos Elementary School who danced the soltero.



Live poll answers during the fireside chat

What is the most pressing IUU fishing issue in the WPS that needs urgent attention?

Open text poll 18 responses 16 participants

- Anonymous: Intrusion of foreign fishing vessels
- Anonymous: Militia boats of Chinese
- Anonymous: local and national officials na hindi nagbibigay priority sa mga Pilipino ang paggamit ng wps.
- Anonymous: Chinese militia boats
- Anonymous: Adherence and Compliance to Fishery Laws
- Anonymous: Mga chinese na nangunguha ng mga huling isda ng mga Filipino.
- Anonymous: Destructive fishing practices and overfishing
- Anonymous: Encroachment of municipal waters by the commercial fishers
- Anonymous: Foreign encroachment, both commercial and military
- Anonymous: Foreign fishing vessel encroachment
- Anonymous: Security of filipino fishermen
- Anonymous: Policy implementation
- Anonymous: Lack of standard or uniform reporting of data

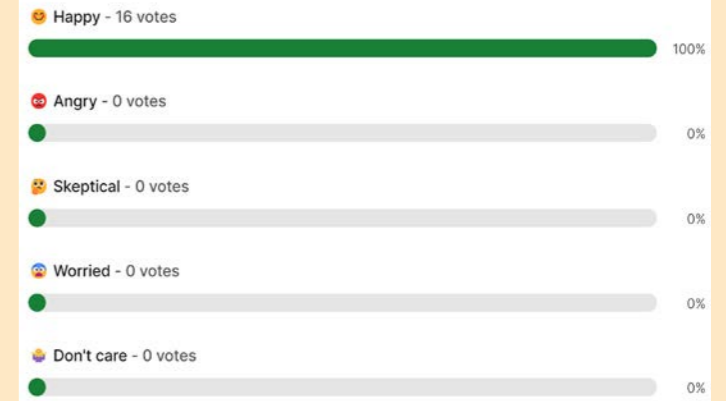
What one word comes to mind when you think about the WPS?

Wordcloud Poll 44 responses 33 participants



How do you feel about the creation of a new CSO coalition?

Multiple Choice Poll 16 votes 16 participants



During the fireside chat, attendees participated in the moderated discussion by way of an online live poll. The poll results show that members of the new coalition view 'foreign encroachment', 'compliance to fishery laws', and 'lack of data' as the most pressing issues in the West Philippine Sea.

'Heritage value', 'China', and 'Fish' are the top answers for what comes to mind when WPS is mentioned. Attendees are all in favor of creating a coalition of civil society organizations for the conservation of WPS.



I LOVE THE OCEAN PLEDGE

I believe that the ocean is life.

I believe that all life on Earth is interconnected; everything I do affects the delicate balance of life on the planet.

I believe that the ocean is our common heritage: all people everywhere, whatever their circumstances may be, have a fundamental right to fair and just access to a healthy ocean.

We are the ocean.

We therefore join hands to harness the power of diversity, inclusion, and community to sustain ocean biodiversity.

We pledge to live in harmony with the ocean, and to lead by example.

We commit to protect the ocean in any way we can as individuals, organizations, and communities.

We stand together as one for the ocean.

SCAN THE QR CODE
To access the West Philippine Sea
coalition's signed resolution

