

# CEPF Small Grant Final Project Completion Report

Complete the following report worksheet to provide CEPF with an overall summary of the results of your project. Within the narrative section, responses should be concise, but include sufficient detail to present a clear understanding of the development and progression of this project.

<b>Date of Report (MM/DD/YY)</b>
11/17/2003

## Organization Information

<b>Organization Name</b>
Conservation International

<b>Project Title</b>
Conservation Assessment in Bataraza and Balabac, Palawan

<b>Project Dates (as stated in the contract agreement)</b>
19 May 2003 to 19 September 2003

<b>Partners</b>
Kabang Kalikasan ng Pilipinas (WWF-Phil), Palawan Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Center (PWRCC), Environmental Legal Assistance Center (ELAC), Katala Foundation, Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff (PCSDS), State Polytechnic College of Palawan (SPCP), local government units of Bataraza and Balabac

<b>Project Description – Provide a brief description of the project your team implemented.</b>
From June-August 2003, surveys or rapid assessments were conducted by several teams from the partner institutions. These were divided into six major components: mangroves, birds, crocodiles, marine mammals, threats and extent of destruction. These were conducted in a total of 17 barangays within 2 municipalities of Palawan. Some components covered several barangays in both municipalities while others were confined to only 2-3 barangays due to limited habitat range of certain fauna and/or security reasons.

## Narrative Questions

<b>1. What was the initial objective of this project?</b>
The project had three major objectives: (1) identify populations of critical species and other mangrove-associated fauna; (2) determine the extent and condition of mangrove forests in Bataraza and Balabac and the threats to these important habitats; and (3) recommend priority actions and assess conservation opportunities in these areas.

<b>2. Did the objectives of your project change during implementation? If so, please explain why and how.</b>
No

**3. How was your project successful in achieving the expected objectives?**

The project was successfully able to qualify initial perceptions that the mangroves in Bataraza and Balabac are rapidly being destroyed because of human activities.

**4. Did your team experience any disappointments or failures during implementation? If so, please explain and comment on how the team addressed these disappointments and/or failures.**

Some disappointments arose when locals associated with illegal activities perceived the team members to be enforcement or intelligence personnel of the government. This made them defensive and led them to stop the teams from conducting their surveys in some areas. This was despite doing extensive preparatory groundwork and networking with local government officials and community leaders prior to the study. In response to this, the teams persisted in explaining their objectives to them and were eventually allowed to continue their surveys.

**5. Describe any positive or negative lessons learned from this project that would be useful to share with other organizations interested in implementing a similar project.**

There is great value in linking up with and involving local leaders (barangay captains, kagawads, tanods, chieftains and elders) in the project, especially if you're dealing with contentious environmental issues. They not only have the support of most of the community members, they also help overcome conflicts within the area and are valuable sources of information.

**6. Describe any follow-up activities related to this project.**

Planned follow-up activities include training needs assessment (TNA) tools for stakeholders, trainings on protected area management and conservation biology, development and/or revision of municipal land use plans and Regional Physical Framework Plan for the South Palawan Planning Area (SPPA), and development of action plans for conservation of flagship species.

**7. Please provide any additional information to assist CEPF in understanding any other aspects of your completed project.**

Despite a high diversity of flora, the mangroves and associated wildlife of Bataraza and Balabac undoubtedly show signs of serious degradation. Fragmented forests composed mostly of small trees, decreasing numbers of bird and crocodile species, absence of critical species and presence of illegal activities (tanbarking, wildlife poaching, fishpond development) all indicate the declining conditions of the ecosystem. Members of indigenous groups are usually employed as laborers for destructive activities and they agree to do so because of poverty and lack of better livelihood options. They are also greatly constrained by systems of patronage and debt with local financiers. Some of these illegal activities have existed for decades and remain unabated in these areas, indicative of how poorly laws are enforced and how weak environmental management systems generally are in the two municipalities. Law enforcement on the whole was deemed to be generally weak with minimal monitoring, very few apprehensions, and cases of bribery and corruption.

The current problems cannot be solved by one entity or solution. A suite of short-, medium- and long-term actions need to be done through concerted efforts of all stakeholders. Each component of the project outlined general and specific recommendations based on the information gathered in the two municipalities (please refer to the technical reports). The technical working group summarized these and identified the following as the strongest initiatives to halt if not reverse degradation trends in the mangroves of Bataraza and Balabac:

1. Strengthening of enforcement systems and development of a comprehensive law enforcement strategy
2. Introduction of alternative livelihood options and financing schemes to local communities
3. Information, education & communication campaigns
4. Identification of priority areas for conservation and establishment of protected areas integrated into a comprehensive environmental management plan
5. Capacity-building of communities, local government officials and enforcement personnel to develop them as mangrove/environmental stewards
6. Sustained biodiversity surveys and targeted research
7. Mangrove rehabilitation programs

A broad coastal resource management program that will address the problem of mangrove destruction and similar threats is needed for the municipalities of Bataraza and Balabac. A strong partnership between national agencies, LGUs, stakeholders, indigenous groups, and NGOs is necessary to ensure its success.

**For more information about this project, please contact:**

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