

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Legal Name:

Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park Development Foundation Inc. (NSMNP-DFI)

Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement):

Integrated Conservation and Protection of *Crocodylus porosus* within the mangrove areas in Barangay Reina Mercedes (Blos) at Maconacon, Isabela.

Implementation Partners for this Project:

Local Government Unit of Maconacon, Isabela and Recipient Barangays,
Department of Education,
Department of Environment and Natural Resources,
Protected Area Management Board
Mabuwaya Foundation

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): April 1, 2006 – March 31, 2007

Date of Report (month/year): August 2007

II. OPENING REMARKS

Provide any opening remarks that may assist in the review of this report.

This is the project completion report of the project “Integrated Conservation and Protection of *Crocodylus porosus* within the mangrove areas in barangay Reina Mercedes (Blos) at Maconacon, Isabela”. The project is implemented by the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park—Development Foundation, Inc. (NSMNP-DFI) based at Barangay Minanga, Maconacon, Isabela. Funds come from a grant amounting to \$20,000.00 from CEPF thru Mr. Mike Atrigenio, the Fundraising & Partnership Engagement Director thru the assistance of Dr. Artemio Antolin of Conservation International (CI). The project addresses the protection of the estuarine crocodile and the conservation of its habitat through the local communities and the LGU living around the identified habitat of this species. The main goal of the project is focused on the threatened crocodile species in the Philippines (estuarine crocodile) but due to the confirmed presence of the critically endangered Philippine crocodile in the area so its protection and conservation was incorporated in the project.

The project was done through the following activities described below:

- 1) Community consultations, meetings, orientations and Planning;
- 2) Survey, delineation and demarcation of the crocodile habitat;
- 3) Awareness campaign;
 - 3.1. Preparation and distribution of IEC Materials
 - 3.2. Training of local community volunteers (BS, Dalaw-turo team) for awareness campaign activities and monitoring
- 4) Protection and enforcement
 - 4.1. Creation of Bantay Sangtuwaryo and Monitoring Group
 - 4.2. Formulation of resolution and adoption of a local ordinance

It was envisioned that out of this project and report, a community-based conservation strategy for the crocodiles will be formulated and later on adopted within the coastal towns of NSMNP. In this report, narrative questions are answered, additional donors who supported the project enumerated, it includes the practical recommendations on how to conserve the crocodiles and the habitat for the benefit of local communities and sharing the experiences and lessons learned in the project.

The project started only at August 2006 because of the late access on the funding and the delayed assembly of all the members of the NSMPDFI at Maconacon, Isabela because of bad weather conditions.

III. NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What was the initial objective of this project?

The project will address the protection of marine crocodile and the conservation of its habitat through the local communities living around the identified habitat of this species.

2. Did the objectives of your project change during implementation? If so, please explain why and how.

The objectives of the project did not change during the implementation but because of the confirmed presence of Philippine crocodile in the area which is threatened in the Philippines, its protection and habitat conservation was integrated in this project. It was confirmed by the community, LGU, DENR and the Mabuwaya Foundation that Po river/creek located at barangay Aplaya is a Philippine crocodile habitat. On February 2006, an actual capture of one Philippine crocodile was reported and properly documented. It was then successfully tagged and released at PO creek, its original habitat where it was captured. The released was done by the DENR, LGU, Mabuwaya Foundation, NSMNP-DFI and witnessed by the barangay officials.

This incident sparked the NSMNP-DFI to include the PO creek in the project. It also urged the attention of the community and brgy. Officials of Aplaya, Maconacon, Isabela to protect its existence in the area and requested the NSMNP-DFI during the consultation and meeting to include PO creek in the project and to declare Po creek as crocodile sanctuary. Through a resolution, the barangay council of Aplaya which has a jurisdiction

of PO creek, requested the Local Government Unit of Maconacon to declare the habitat as strict protection zone and through the prestigious support of the project implemented by NSMNP Foundation, the site was surveyed, delineated and finally declared as Crocodile sanctuary thru a Municipal Ordinance. There are 3 residents at the site volunteered as Bantay sangtuwaryo. Monitoring post and concrete billboards were also constructed to ensure the continuous protection and patrolling inside the sanctuary.

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

In achieving the objectives of the project, there are four major activities that need to be accomplished: (1) Community consultation, meetings, orientation and planning (2) Survey, delineation and demarcation of the crocodile habitat (3) Awareness campaign (4) Protection and Enforcement.

The project was implemented in collaboration with the Local Government Unit, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, PAMB, the Project CROC Team was formed. With DepEd, and other members of the croc team of the project, the SUN Dalaw-Turo was formed and engaged in the IEC component of the project. Through their active and enormous participation and cooperation of the Croc Team, SUN Dalaw-Turo team and the community during the implementation, the project's aim was successfully accomplished.

Members of the Foundation and CROC Team attended the National Crocodile Forum and the Regional Crocodile Forum so as to be aware of other programs being done in the Philippines and in the region with regards to crocodiles and in order to work hand-in-hand with them.

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.

Though it is not purely considered as disappointments or failures, the problem regarding the territorial claim of the swamp in Reina Mercedes was handled toughly. It was found out that the crocodile site was covered by 10 lot owners. At first, these lot owners were so reluctant to attend meetings with the foundation. But through assistance of the DENR and Assessors office of Maconacon, a consensus was achieved to survey the marsh to know the area that is to be considered as sanctuary as it was explained to them that the swamp is still considered a government property as indicated in the water code of the Philippines including its buffer zones. The strict protected zone around the sanctuary should not be cultivated or developed so that the creature will not be displaced. The Croc team, LGU and DENR with to the lots owners then agreed to personally be involved in the actual survey of their lots and the parts to be covered by the crocodile sanctuary and will be deducted from their taxable lot upon signing the documents needed by the Assessor's office. 5 family members from the lot owners volunteered as Bantay Sangtuwaryo at Reina Mercedes.

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.

Crocodile sanctuaries will only be effective if supported and considered important by the majority of people, especially those living around the area. Another thing to consider in implementing similar projects like this is the bottom-up approach. Planning should be done with the community for them to feel the sense of ownership of the project because whether we like it or not they are the managers and partners in conserving our natural resources and they will be the one living with the crocodiles. Also, it's important to consider that the area is one of their source of livelihood so its important to act in behalf of them to seek assistance from all agencies in the government to assist them in livelihood projects so they would not depend in the sanctuary as their fishing ground. The people in the municipality thru intensive IEC made them realize the objective of protecting the crocodile and took away their fears that these animals are destructive and fearful but it's a part of ecosystem and it's something to be proud of.

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

There is a need to continuously conduct Information and Education Campaign (IEC) inside the park particularly Maconacon in which the first crocodile sanctuaries in the coastal towns of Isabela were established, especially these sanctuaries that are not only for the protection and conservation of the estuarine crocodile, but for the Philippine crocodile, which is now a threatened species. Expansion to declare other areas as sanctuaries since estuarine crocodiles are often seen in some other areas in Maconacon, Divilacan and Palanan which are adjacent areas of Maconacon should be done. The Estuarine crocodile is however a protected species by Philippine law (Wildlife Act) and is one of the key species of the NSMNP and thus also protected by the NSMNP Act. The freshwater marsh, Blos river estuary and the adjacent sea of Reina Mercedes have repeatedly been identified as an area of importance for estuarine crocodiles and can be considered a key habitat for their species in the NSMNP (NORDECO and DENR 1998, Hilterman 1998, Van Weerd 2001). It's a great possibility to conserve the crocodiles in Reina Mercedes and other sites in the coastal area if community awareness is raised, local support is won, laws are enforced and measures to avoid or compensate for crocodile-human conflicts are in placed.

On the other hand, local inhabitants have to be persuaded that crocodiles are protected species (in the Philippines in general and specifically in the NSMNP) and that killing of crocodiles is a criminal offense. That also means that people have to share habitat with crocodiles and since people are able to deliberate choices and crocodiles are not, it is the people who have to adjust to the crocodiles and not the other way around. Continue integrating environmental information and awareness on the established crocodile sanctuary during community consultations in the Barangay and mobilize the Bantay Sangtuwaryo in their role to spearhead the protection of crocodile habitat. If the sanctuary and its buffer zones would be protected and human intervention in this area is limited then crocodiles would have a greater chance to survive.

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

Crocodile night survey

Just after the DT/BS training, actual night survey of the two declared crocodile sanctuaries were conducted in collaboration with the Mabuwaya Foundation, in the person of Sammy Telan and Bernard Tarun with the participation by the newly identified community volunteers or Bantay sangtuwaryo. The team conducted the survey first in Kabuwayaan Swamp of Reina Mercedes. The team started the survey at 8:00 in the evening going around the 12 has. Sanctuary finding any signs of crocodile presence inside the sanctuary but the animal did not show up. The following night the Po creek sanctuary was visited and did the same survey. In this site the hiding place, tracks and basking area of the crocodile were found, but did not find the animal. Night surveys were then scheduled by the volunteers themselves. A scheduled night survey should be regularly done to determine the presence of the animal in the area.

Crocodile Monitoring

Occurrences of crocodile in the two declared sanctuaries were recorded by the Bantay Sangtuwaryo. Last April 01, 2007, the crocodile swim the whole day besides Kabuwayaan swamp according to Mr. Ricardo Valiente, team leader of BS in Reina Mercedes and at 7 o'clock in the evening same day, it crawled going inside the sanctuary. There is no photo documentation of the animal but the tracks on the beach entering the sanctuary were documented. The crocodile stayed there for a week. Night surveys with the Bantay Sangtuwaryo were conducted hoping that it will appear but it did not. Month of June'2007, the crocodile was sighted swimming in the mouth of Dirayrayan river by the community of brgy. Malasin, Maconacon, Isabela. First week of July, the crocodile was again seen inside the kabuwayaan sanctuary by a dumagat and we actually saw the tracks in the beach.

Actual and continuous monitoring should be done. In this way the actual activities of the crocodile can be spelled out. This also would serve as warning to residents near the area to take precautionary measures especially in roaming around near the sanctuary.

Field Development Exposure

To continuously strengthen the croc team and community volunteers or Bantay Sangtuwaryo of the project, a field development exposure was done. Last May 27 to 31, of this year, 11 croc team and 7 BS and head of the Dalaw-Turo team participated the educational trip at San Mariano, Isabela, the place where crocodile sanctuary and rearing station have been in operational since 2001. The team visited also the Diwagden and Dunoy Lake of Barangay San Jose, San Mariano, Isabela. In there, they experienced catching of juvenile crocodile during the night survey at Diwagden Lake, saw in actual the new crocodile nest at Diwagden River, experienced the monitoring of crocodile in Dunoy Lake at the top of their monitoring tower and participated actively during the

interactions with the BS in San Mariano and in the briefing of Mabuwaya Foundation staff. In our first day at San Mariano, we immediately visited the municipal rearing station of crocodile located at Barangay Minanga, San Mariano. Because everyone was so excited to see the 35 individual hatchlings of crocodile reared there and they really want to hold the crocodile.

Dalaw— Turo Sessions

Dalaw—turo sessions were conducted at Reina Mercedes attended by community members and pupils of Reina Mercedes Elementary School. This activity was conducted through the excellent participation of the formed SUN Dalaw-turo team of Maconacon National High School and through the strong leadership of their teacher. Said activity was executed so that the local people to include their children can internalize in their minds the importance of protecting and conserving our natural resources. To summarize the activity, the following were done. The project team leader discussed briefly what is Protected Area, followed by For. Carlos de Vera tackled the importance of Biodiversity, what are the different wildlife by Juliet Merin—NSMNP/DFI staff, waste management by For. Ericson Colobong of the LGU and the skit by the SUN DT team of Maconacon National High School headed by their teacher Mr. Junimar Aggabao. All audiences of this session were very attentive; it signifies that this approach is an effective tool in sharing environmental information to community people.

The schools are now requesting the NSMNP-DFI and the Dalaw-Turo team to undertake this activity often in their school to refresh children about importance of protecting biodiversity and habitats.

IV. ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
Mabuwaya Foundation	Technical		Conducted bantay sangtuwaryo training and lectures about crocodiles for free. They also impart some IEC materials (komiks newsletter, posters and calendars) to the NSMNP Foundation for distribution in the coastal municipalities of

			Isabela.
Department of Education (DepED)	Technical Instructional		Resource persons in the conduct of Dalaw Turo training. They are very active in conducting dalaw turo sessions in the project sites with their DT team.
LGU Maconacon	Transportation Technical Personnel/Officials		Provided services vehicle of croc team in going to field Including personnel/officials needed in a particular activity
Community people/Bantay Sangtuwaryo	Labor (bayanihan)		During the construction of their monitoring post and public meetings/hearing

***Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:**

- A** *Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF project)*
- B** *Complementary funding (Other donors contribute to partner organizations that are working on a project linked with this CEPF funded project)*
- C** *Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project.)*
- D** *Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*

Provide details of whether this project will continue in the future and if so, how any additional funding already secured or fundraising plans will help ensure its sustainability.

As we experienced in the implementation of the project and based on the feedback of the community, a follow up project should be implemented again in the area to continue replicating the initial project of the foundation and to sustain the activities of the project especially the monitoring and implementation of the adopted Ordinance. The same project should be extended to identified crocodile habitats near the declared sanctuaries inside the park particularly other sites in Maconacon, Divilacan and Palanan, Isabela to ensure the immediate protection and conservation of our unique species.

The NSMNP Foundation with the formed croc team of the project is lobbying a resolution requesting the Municipality of Maconacon to include in their annual budget the incentives, supplies and patrolling expenses of the organized Bantay Sangtuwaryo to guarantee their active involvement in the protection of their established crocodile sanctuary. To source out funds for the Bantay Sangtuwaryo to have more trainings on para-legal and other related trainings in order to equip them with knowledge in apprehending violators not only in the crocodile sanctuaries but also fish and other sanctuaries within and near their area of responsibilities.

To keep in touch with the DENR/PAWB for national programs related to crocodile and livelihood for the people, also to closely in touch with the CEPF and Conservation International for next projects that they could extend to our Foundation.

V. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park provides one of the last refuges for crocodiles in the Philippines. But also in the park, *Crocodylus mindorensis* and *Crocodylus porosus* face serious threats: direct killing, the use of illegal fishing methods and agricultural encroachment threaten the survival of crocodiles in the park. Comprehensive conservation strategy is urgently needed to safeguard the crocodile population in the NSMNP.

- Continue and strengthen the on-going Information and Education Campaigns to educate and inform the people in the NSMNP particularly crocodile sanctuary sites about the importance of crocodile conservation.
- Crocodiles have a protected status in the NSMNP: the killing of crocodiles and destruction of their habitat is strictly prohibited. It is crucial that these existing policies and laws should be strictly implemented in the NSMNP. The office of PASu should strengthen their efforts to implement the laws and strictly follow existing procedures to stop killing of crocodile and other prohibited activities in the NSMNP.
- Integrate crocodile conservation activities with protected area management, and assure that crocodile conservation is an integral part of the annual plan of LGU and management plan of NSMNP. Harmonization of existing government policies is a prerequisite for successful crocodile and protected area management. The Bantay Sangtuwaryo of the LGU Maconacon needs to be strengthened (this important local initiative deserves replication in other municipalities of the NSMNP).
- Continue establishment of crocodile sanctuaries in the identified areas confirmed with crocodiles by various scientists inside the NSMNP multiple use zones with the full consent and cooperation of the local people. This will minimize crocodile-human interactions and address the conversion of lowland freshwater habitat agricultural purposes, which is a long term threats for crocodiles in the park. Crocodile sanctuaries will only be effective if supported and considered important/ legitimate by the majority people.
- Provide technical and financial support to the Bantay Sangtuwaryo. Render technical assistance to the BS of Maconacon, Isabela, for them to exercise their duties and responsibilities and actively implement pertinent laws inside

and adjacent areas of the established crocodile sanctuaries. The municipal governments should support these local initiatives and should strengthen their efforts to stop illegal fishing and logging in the NSMNP.

- Establish a reward system for successful breeding crocodiles. This will prevent the destruction of nest. In addition, a study must be made on the feasibility of a compensation scheme for crocodile attacks on livestock.
- Establishment of a clear protocol to deal with dangerous problem crocodiles. It is essential to minimize the threat of large estuarine crocodiles on humans. Therefore, effective measures should be taken (establishment of strict protection zones and sanctuaries). In case of accidents, only PWRCC is allowed to capture the animal.
- Establish a protocol to release captured crocodiles. Training for PASu staff and LGU officials on protected area and wildlife legislation will be necessary.
- Explore the possibilities of establishing an equitable compensation scheme for crocodile attacks on livestock. Creative solutions for financial and practical constraint should be found.
- Continue the annual monitoring of the crocodile populations in the NSMNP most particularly inside the established crocodile sanctuaries, assessment of threats and conservation efforts on the community. It is essential that the two crocodile habitat declared as sanctuary included in the annual monitoring program. Community members should also be trained to monitor changes and assess threats to crocodiles, fish stocks and wetlands in the sanctuaries. General research efforts to gather the necessary scientific information which is needed for the design of effective conservation interventions should also be strengthened.

VIII. INFORMATION SHARING

CEPF aims to increase sharing of experiences, lessons learned and results among our grant recipients and the wider conservation and donor communities. One way we do this is by making the text of final project completion reports available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and by marketing these reports in our newsletter and other communications. Please indicate whether you would agree to publicly sharing your final project report with others in this way.

Yes YES

No _____

If yes, please also complete the following:

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