

Gaining recognition for community-based organisations at Zambales Mountains IBA, the Philippines

Title

Sales of tree seedlings from communal nurseries set up by forest dependent families in the municipality of Mangatarem, in the east of the island of Luzon, The Philippines, have provided enough income to meet daily needs, while helping with the reforestation of the Zambales Mountains Important Bird Area. The nursery project was implemented by the six newly-established IBA Local Conservation Groups in the Zambales IBA, with the help of the Haribon Foundation, the BirdLife Partner in the Philippines. Haribon provided technical assistance to the SSGs on organisational management, leadership building, finance management, forest fire control, forest patrolling and law enforcement, With Haribon's support, they were able to establish themselves as People's Organisations, which are recognized by the Philippines government as legal entities able to take action on behalf of their communities, and to share in the benefits of the resulting environmental improvements.

The LCGs entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Haribon and the Philippines' Department of Environment and Natural Resources, to intensify their forest restoration and protection activities in the IBA. The MoA spelled out the rights, roles and responsibilities of the parties, which include payments to the community for land preparation and protection and plantation maintenance, and guarantees that seedlings produced by the participating families will be purchased by the project. Part of the proceeds of selling the seedlings goes into a community livelihood fund, which has been used to set up biodiversity-friendly income-generating activities such as vermi-composting (using earthworms to break down organic matter), goat-farming, tilapia (fish) culture, and the collection and sale of scrap material. A hand tractor and a "videoke" machine are available for rental, and funds were also used to purchase a motorcycle with a carrier for the transport of the videoke machine, and to deliver compost to local farmers. Four of the People's Organisations have implemented micro-credit projects for their members. Thanks to the income provided by the various livelihood schemes, standards of living have improved, and community members spend far less time in firewood

collection and charcoal production, significantly reducing some of the main pressures on the forest. *Juan Valdez Jr./Haribon Foundation*