

Restoring the Philippines' Forests

Title The Haribon Foundation (BirdLife in the Philippines), with the support of the *Disney's Friends for Change* has produced a 6-minute video aimed at children on deforestation and its impacts, and what Haribon is doing to tackle the problem and restore degraded forests as part of BirdLife's Forests of Hope programme. For several years, Haribon has been implementing a conservation project in the Sierra Madre, the longest mountain range in the Philippines, on the island of Luzon. The Sierra Madre supports one of the largest remaining forest blocks, and one of the richest wildlife communities known from any forest area in the country. It is the home to one of the biggest eagles in the world – Philippine Eagle *Pithecophaga jefferyi*. Aside from its rich biodiversity, it also serves as water catchment for the major urban centre of the Philippines – Metro Manila. Haribon has identified a well-forested area of around 40,000 ha in the Sierra Madre, suitable for a large-scale conservation initiative – the Irid-Angelo Mountains. There is strong support locally and nationally for protecting and restoring the forest and the efforts were given a boost by the recent selection of the project as one of those promoted under *Disney's Friends for Change: Project Green*. Through the Friends for Change website, children had the chance to vote on environmental projects they believed deserved support, and Haribon's *Forests of Hope in the Philippines* project at Mount Irid-Angelo was one of those selected. Educational and campaigning activities are a big part of the project. Haribon have organised a nature camp for high schools to involve youth in forest conservation, and participated in the Maligaya Festival, a street dance competition among General Nakar schools; this is based on the story of a Philippine Eagle called Maligaya, rescued from a boar trap and named after a village in the Sierra Madre Mountains. The video is an important part of this programme. Haribon is now working on a rigorous, legally-backed conservation plan for the Sierra Madre forests. This requires an exhaustive process of consultation with all the 19 barangays (districts) in the Municipality, followed by evaluation by the Local Government Unit staff, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and Indigenous People's representatives. When all concerned are happy with the plans, they will be formally adopted as the framework for the management of the forests of Mt Irid-Angelo, the heart of the Sierra Madre forests. Meanwhile, for many years Haribon has been implementing conservation work on the ground around Mt Irid-Angelo, notably through its 'rainforestation' programme, supporting local people to restore lost rainforest by replanting a range of native and endemic plants. Through this Project, Disney also became one of the first sponsors of the long-term initiative of the BirdLife's **Forests of Hope** Programme. Working in tropical countries around the world, BirdLife is identifying and piloting innovative management, financing and governance systems for forest conservation and restoration, generating local and national economic benefits for sustainable development, and combating climate change. Through *Disney's Friends for Change: Project Green*, BirdLife, Haribon and local organisations have made great strides towards conserving the forests and placing them in hands of local

managers who will look after and restore them. The rainforestation programme has made a difference on the ground, showing beyond any doubt that community-based action is possible and effective. Haribon, with support of the BirdLife Partnership, is planning a major increase in efforts at Mt Irid-Angelo, building on experience from other large-scale forest projects such as the [Harapan Rainforest Project](#) implemented by Burung Indonesia (BirdLife in Indonesia), RSPB (BirdLife in UK) and BirdLife International. **About Disney's Friends for Change**

Disney's Friends for Change is a multiplatform initiative that helps inspire kids and families to join together and make a positive impact on their world (and the people and animals that live there). Through the program, kids can learn practical ways to help the environment, get their friends involved, track their collective impact and have the opportunity to help Disney decide how \$1 million in contributions to environmental causes will be made each year. To date, Friends for Change has funded over 41 projects that help the planet ranging from educational & community programs to species & habitat protection. Friends for Change currently has over 3 million actions taking place from kids in 33 countries throughout Europe, Latin America, Japan, India, and China. To learn more visit, www.Disney.com/projectgreen