MEET THE FISHERS
The United Nations has declared 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture, with the Food and Agriculture Organization as the lead agency. The celebration aims to focus global attention on the tens of millions of people, almost half of them women, who are directly or indirectly engaged in capture fisheries worldwide. They play an important role in providing food and nutrition to billions of people, as well as the sustainable use of natural resources in achieving Zero Hunger. (FAO, 2022)

In this booklet, we provide a snapshot of community-led management of coastal fisheries in the Philippines from the perspective of 10 small-scale fishers. From their experiences in guarding marine protected areas to promoting economic resilience for fishing households, they give a voice to the 1.9 million municipal fishers that rely on coastal ecosystems for food security and livelihood.
In our meetings every month, we invite fishers who are still doing illegal activities because it’s our responsibility to encourage unity and report violators. As fishers, we have to make sure that we protect the source of our livelihood.

JOSE ROEL LABAJO
Coastal fisher and community leader in Sipaway island in San Carlos City, on the importance of people’s organizations in sustaining municipal fisheries

AMSIA EMPANG
President of the all-women Katipunan Vegetable and Agar-agar Growers Association in the Municipality of Ipil, Province of Zamboanga Sibugay, on the impact of the pandemic on their livelihood

Before the pandemic, when we processed seaweed seedlings, we could have many people sitting side by side so it would only take one hour to three hours at the most. Now, it would take us up to five hours. The price of seaweed in the market is very low due to the lockdown. Prices of goods have gone up. We have to pay our seedling processors higher because this is the only available livelihood here. I am hoping that after the pandemic, our livelihood will go back to what it was before.


INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ARTISANAL FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE 2022
I have been with Bantay Dagat for five years, doing volunteer work after my fishing activities. We have caught around 30 people from different places who come here looking for crab traps. Here in Barangay Caub, things have changed a lot because of our daily roving patrols and sustainable management of our resources. There are no more illegal fishers and poachers here.

FREDERICK TESADO
Former Bantay Dagat member in an island community in Siargao islands, Surigao del Norte, on the impact of sustained patrols on their fishing grounds

Five years na ko nga boluntaryo sa una, liban-liban tapos managatay. Naa na siguro sa mga 30 nadakpan namo, mga dayo sa lain-lain nga lugar nga maabot diri sa pagpangita ug panggal. Diri sa Barangay Caub, dako ang kabaghuan kay gumikan sa pag-roving namo adlaw-adlaw, na-maintain na namo diri ang serbisyo sa pagdumaya. Sa kajun, nawaya na mga iligal tapos mga dayo diri sa amo.
Being a member of our savings club has been a huge help for our household. From my savings of 23,000 pesos, I was able to buy new gillnets for my husband who is a fisher.

“Daku kaayo ug tabang ang savings club sa among panimalay. Sa akong naipon nga 23,000 pesos nakapalit ko ug bag-o nga pukot para magamit sa akong bana nga mananagat.”

“Gerlita Bucalon
Fish Forever savings club member in Ayoke island in Cantilan, Surigao del Sur, on the benefits of financial resilience”
I used to be an illegal fisher — dynamite, everything. And then I learned about the Bantay Dagat and the marine sanctuary. I have contributed a lot by informing people that we should stop illegal fishing. We monitor continuously and if there are illegal fishers, sometimes we arrest them. Our livelihood has improved. There are plenty of fish now and the corals are healthier too.

HENRY SAMMY JARIL
Bantay Dagat member in Del Carmen, Surigao del Norte, on his journey from illegal fisher to protector of fishing grounds

When tuna is plentiful from April to June in Pandan Bay, it looks like a parade of boats at sea early in the morning. The fish is weighed at the bodega and we list down the number of fish and weight on paper. We pay the fisher after the fish is delivered to the buyer. With OurFish, the task is easier because all the transactions are now in our cell phone.


“MEET THE FISHERS

MARIBEL MATEO

Fish trader in Libertad in the Province of Antique, on how OurFish app helps with government requirements to report fish catch and lessen overfishing.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ARTISANAL FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE 2022

FISH FOREVER
Many fishers do not have a high level of schooling, so it is important to educate and help them understand proper fishing behavior, what gear to use and where not to fish so we don’t violate the law. Through our association, the fishers have changed a lot. They now attend meetings and discuss issues. They are respected now.

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Kasagaran, mangingisda, dili kaayo taas ang mga grado, mao nga importante nilang mahibaloan kung unsa ang ensaktong kinaiya sa pagpanagat. Dako kaayo’g ikatabang nga naa gyu’y pagpasabot nga bawal na dihang dapita, angay atong gamiton ang tarong nga klase nga panagat, aron dili makasupak sa balaod. Pinaagi sa asosasyon, dako na kaayo ang kausaban sa nga mangingisda. Mutambong na ug miting, kabalo nang manubag sa mga isyu. Respetado na sila.

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VIRGILIO AVISO
Chairman of Tandayag Fishermen’s Association in Amlan, Negros Oriental, on building the capacity of fishers to sustain fisheries
JACQUELYN CARANAY
Fish buyer in San Benito, Province of Surigao del Norte,
on the importance of reporting fish catch data and diversifying income sources

I have two boats that are used by municipal fishers. Whenever the fish catch is poor, it’s a bad day for me, but most especially for the fishers so I try to give them encouragement even though it is also a loss for me. To have a steady source of livelihood, I sell non-marine products in our neighborhood. As someone who benefits from our ocean’s abundance, I have been providing data to government staff so their experts can design programs that are relevant and useful for everyone.

I have been fishing since I was 12 years old. Because of the abundance of our seas, many fishers who are not from Surigao come here to fish. I joined (Bantay Dagat) to protect our fishing grounds from outsiders because if they keep coming here, future generations will have nothing left to catch.

Dose anyos pa lang, nanagat na ko diri. Tungod sa kaabunda diri sa among dagat, hamok mga dili taga diri, dili taga Surigao nga mangari. Para mas maprotektahan namo amo dagat, nag-entra ko niining nga kalihokan kay kung daan na kami hamok diri sa Caub na managatay, kon daun pa lain taga ya nay kuan sa sunod na mga henerasyon, ya nay makuha.
I always go to the municipal hall to get registered so we can avail of good programs and support for fishers, because our life is difficult. I have five children who are all fishers. We use single nets and make sure that our source of livelihood is legal.

Rare’s Fish Forever program is a global leader in reducing coastal overfishing and revitalizing small-scale fisheries. Through a replicable model rooted in behavioral science, Fish Forever employs an innovative approach that empowers communities and gives them control over their future. Strong governance, data for decision-making, financial inclusion, and participatory management help coastal fishers to sustain production while conserving marine resources. Today, Fish Forever is engaging over a thousand communities across eight countries where high biodiversity meets high human use.

For more information, visit our Fish Forever page