

# Biliran mangrove garden blends environment protection, livelihood

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Barangay Looc, Cabucgayan, Biliran – This town’s mangrove gardening project is the perfect blend of environmental protection, ecotourism, livelihood and poverty alleviation.

The project in sitio Naga, Rawis Villa Corro demonstrates that environmental protection and conservation can go hand in hand with livelihood undertaking to improve people’s lives.



*Chilling out – Tourists relax in the middle of Looc’s mangrove forest. (Restituto Cayubit|Manila Bulletin)*

The rise of ecotourism has inspired Cabucgayan Mayor Edwin Masbang to put up the project.

Visitors find relaxation, communion with nature, and a unique experience by exploring Cabucgayan’s mangrove growth, which provides a natural habitat for a variety of marine species.

It also provides income for the 100 sustenance fisherfolks in Looc.

The project, which was unveiled by Masbang last January 8, features a 300-meter boardwalk build above the mangrove forest that leads to the sea.

There are cottages, a restaurant and boat for rent for the tourists.

Masbang said the project is managed by the NARAVIL Association composed of the members from sitios Naga, Rawis, Villa Corro of Barangay Looc.

Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Regional Director for Eastern Visayas Restituto Macuto told reporters that 52 4Ps beneficiaries who are also recipients of the DSWD sustainable livelihood program are engaged in the protection and conservation of the mangrove forest.

Director Leonardo Sibbaluca of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) regional office based in Tacloban City said the 18-hectare mangrove forest provides a home for birds and other mangrove animal species. It is also a breeding area for several fish species, he added.

Sibbaluca is encouraging other communities to protect mangroves considering that mangrove forests protect coastal communities from rising sea water during strong typhoons.