

Batanes Islands Observatory

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Batanes Tourism and Hospitality
Monitoring Center

A member of UN Tourism - INSTO

International Network of
Sustainable Tourism Observatories



Message from the Batanes Governor



Marilou Cayco

Governor, Batanes Province

Batanes, the Philippines' first member of the prestigious UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO), is determined to serve as a model for other Philippine tourism destinations, particularly island locations. The Ivatans, the renowned resilient indigenous people of Batanes, commit a continued involvement to the endeavors of the Batanes Tourism and Hospitality Monitoring Center (BTHMC). Our time-honored cultural strength and deep connection with the environment is a testament of our strong foundation and commitment towards the enrichment of inclusive and sustainable practices in the islands.

The inclusion of agriculture representative in the BTHMC Technical Working Group (TWG) signifies a forward thinking approach. This moves island food security measures to ensure Batanes' preparedness for the demands of a growing tourism industry. By prioritizing both responsible tourism practices and local food security, Batanes strives to become a leading example for sustainable island tourism development not only in the Philippines but also on a global scale.

Message from the Batanes State College



Djovi Regala Durante, DPA
President, Batanes State College

The collaboration between Batanes State College (BSC), the Provincial Government of Batanes (PGB), and the University of Philippines Diliman (UPD) has reached a significant milestone with Batanes' inclusion in the United Nations World Tourism Organization's International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (UNWTO-INSTO). This achievement marks the beginning of a continuous journey towards sustainable tourism in Batanes.

The partnership enters a new phase with a deepened focus on monitoring 8 of the 11 key issues areas mandated by UNWTO-INSTO, in addition to 2 unique areas for Batanes – cultural integrity and biodiversity. Through diligent data collection, outcome measurement and rigorous evaluation of strategies and actions, Batanes is well-positioned to achieve further milestones in sustainable tourism development.

In conclusion, the dedication to sustainability in the context of the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories shows a strong commitment to upholding sustainable tourism practices and the establishment of the center. This highlights the crucial role in creating a resilient destination with positive impacts locally and globally and ensuring environmental sustainability. Indeed, a remarkable investment for the future generation leads to environmental conservation and economic and community development.

Message from the UP Diliman Chancellor



Edgardo Carlo Vistan III

Chancellor,
University of the Philippines Diliman

The activities of the Batanes Tourism and Hospitality Monitoring Center (BTHMC) stands as fine examples of the research and extension service of UP Diliman. Through its programs and projects carried out with partners from the islands, it is able to generate much-needed data on sustainability issues that ultimately should benefit policymakers and other stakeholders.

We congratulate the team behind BTHMC for the work done in the past year. We look forward to your continuing engagement with industry partners, civil industry and government agencies not just to meet commitments with UNWTO-INSTO, assist in meeting development goals for Batanes, but also to achieve the agenda of the university for a more sustainable Philippine society. Padayon!

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Executive Summary

The Batanes Tourism and Hospitality Monitoring Center (BTHMC) has been virtually operational since 2019, with a physical office established at the University of the Philippines Diliman (UP Diliman) in 2021. The BTHMC serves as a key center for assessing the sustainability of Batanes as a tourist destination.

Data-Driven Decision Making

The BTHMC collects, analyzes, and reports on data, statistics, and metrics related to Batanes' economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability. This comprehensive data empowers stakeholders to make informed decisions for the island's future.

Collaborative Approach to Sustainability

A Stakeholders' Meeting held on July 19, 2019, played a pivotal role in establishing the BTHMC Technical Working Group (TWG). This group works to ensure alignment between BTHMC activities and existing plans for achieving sustainable development in Batanes.

Strong Partnerships

The BTHMC Research Team collaborates closely with the BTHMC Technical Working Group. This collaboration is formalized through memorandums of agreement (MOAs) between UP Diliman, the Provincial Government of Batanes, and the Batanes State College. These partnerships demonstrate a collective commitment towards a sustainable future for Batanes.

Sustainability Key Result Areas

The BTHMC Research Team to date monitors 8 key result areas (KRAs) (1) Resident Satisfaction, (2) Tourist Satisfaction, (3) Tourism Seasonality, (4) Governance, (5) Solid Waste Management, (6) Cultural Integrity, (7) Biodiversity and (8) Wastewater Management. The remaining INSTO mandated KRAs on Employment, Accessibility and Energy Management are taken up by BTHMC in the next two years.

The partnership is now entering a new phase with a deepened focus on monitoring 8 of the 11 key issue areas mandated by UNWTO-INSTO. Through diligent data collection, outcome measurement, and rigorous evaluation of strategies and actions, Batanes is well-positioned to achieve further milestones in sustainable tourism development, particularly as its membership with INSTO serves as a model for monitoring and evaluation under the national ecotourism strategy.

The Philippine framework for ecotourism development is detailed in the recently approved National Ecotourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2028. This strategic plan highlights the importance of monitoring and evaluation, as advocated by the United Nations Tourism - International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (UN Tourism-INSTO). By integrating INSTO into the NESAP 2024-2028 framework, the Philippines aims to collect vital evidence-based data to guide effective decision-making. To achieve this goal, destinations will be encouraged to apply to the UN Tourism INSTO. This application process is designed to obtain reliable data that will not only inform quality decisions but also improve tourism practices at the destination level. Through these initiatives, the strategy aspires to foster a sustainable and thriving ecotourism industry that benefits both the environment and local communities.

About Batanes

Batanes is the northernmost province of the Philippines. Composed of six municipalities, it is located about 162 km north of the Luzon mainland in the Luzon Strait. Of this island group, the largest and only inhabited islands are Itbayat, Batan and Sabtang. It is home to the Ivatans, the province's indigenous people. Conservationists note that Batanes is one of the last remaining areas in the Philippines retaining unique natural physiographic features, including wave-cut cliffs, cave-like outcrops, and secluded white sand beaches. This is attributed to its geographic location at the Pacific Ocean and West Philippine Sea meeting points. Consequently, strong winds and fast currents combine to create its morphology.

Because of its position, Batanes is home to distinct flora and fauna. Pink and red corals (*Corallum* sp.) abound in its marine environment. Seven of 42 known flowering plants in the country are found only in Batanes. Migratory birds pass through its mountains on their way to warmer climates. Researchers have also determined that it was the stepping stone long ago in the migration of Austronesians through the Philippines and beyond. Culturally, the province is the only area in the Philippines where traditional architecture is of stone, in response to the winds and monsoon weather, rather than the more typical, tropical, impermanent materials (wood, bamboo, thatch) commonly used in village architecture. Because of these qualities, the Batanes group of islands was declared in 1994 as the Batanes Protected Landscapes and Seascapes. It is the only province that has earned this distinction.

Notwithstanding the outstanding qualities of Batanes and its vulnerability to disasters, the monitoring and evaluation of tourism impacts on the island are yet to be well established. To date, a systematic assessment of the capacity of the islands and its people to support tourism and hospitality growth is yet to be conducted. Like many other country destinations, any monitoring and evaluation of how tourism and hospitality impact the physical, social, cultural, and environment is absent. Extant tourism-related data pertain mainly to the economic dimensions of tourism. Its comprehensive coverage remains to be seen, as what is assembled is mainly the number of visitors, broken into whether they are local or foreign. The demand side does not present a full picture as well. Social and environment-related data directly linked to tourism are collected by sectoral agencies of the national government, not by the local government of Batanes. These are some of the many gaps that exist in monitoring and evaluating the impacts of tourism on destinations within the context of the Philippines perhaps due to the Philippines' non-adoption of comprehensive methodologies and indicators. A robust monitoring and evaluation system will likely support identifying more sustainable trades and jobs. Livelihood options are needed to boost economic opportunities and, ultimately, a development equitably distributed downstream until the end of the value chain. A balanced approach to development is necessary to ensure future generations enjoy resources. Overall, there is an urgent need to carry out monitoring and evaluation methodically and assess the current conditions systematically.

Milestone Event

Batanes recognized as Philippines' First Tourism Observatory and Takes Center Stage in Sustainable Tourism

The Batanes Islands, a breathtaking archipelago in the Philippines, have taken a significant step towards sustainable tourism development. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) website announced Batanes as the latest member of the prestigious UNWTO Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO).

This inclusion highlights Batanes' commitment to responsible tourism practices. The INSTO network provides a framework for data collection and analysis on tourism's economic, social, and environmental impacts. By joining INSTO, Batanes gains access to valuable resources and expertise, enabling them to make data-driven decisions for the island's sustainable future. This move positions Batanes as a leader in sustainable tourism within the Philippines and the wider region.



The membership of the Batanes Islands into the UNWTO Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories was formalized in Cambodia on June 16, 2023 at an event hosted by DOT Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco. On hand to receive the certificate from UNWTO Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili was the Chancellor of UP Diliman, Atty Edgardo Carlo Vistan, together with the UP Diliman project team.

Milestone Event

MOA Signing between UPD - PGB - BSC: Batanes Bolsters Sustainability Efforts with Key Partners

The idyllic island chain of Batanes is taking a proactive approach to sustainable tourism development. To achieve this, a landmark Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed between the University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD), the Provincial Government of Batanes (PGB), and the Batanes State College (BSC).

This collaborative effort, as reported by both the UPD website (<https://upd.edu.ph/upd-batanes-govt-and-bsc-sign-mou/>) and DZUP (<https://dzup.org/news/upd-batanes-lgu-suc-sign-mou-on-long-term-tourism-sustainability/>), signifies a united front in ensuring responsible tourism practices for Batanes' long-term success. The establishment of a framework for collaboration focused on research, data sharing, and capacity building are all crucial aspects for Batanes' sustainable tourism journey.



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Monitoring Roadmap

BTHMC's operation since 2019, with a physical office established at the University of the Philippines Diliman (UP Diliman) in 2021 continues to serve as a key center for assessing the sustainability of Batanes as a tourist destination. With the approval of the National Ecotourism Strategic Plan for 2024 - 2028, BTHMC plays a vital role in replicating Philippine tourism destination membership to the INSTO.

7th BTHMC Technical Working Group

BTHMC plans to conduct the 7th Technical Working Group meeting during the 1st quarter of 2025 to present updates and thoroughly review sustainable tourism monitoring indicators.

2025 - 2026 INSTO KRA Monitoring

BTHMC continues to monitor the 8 INSTO KRAs: (1) Resident Satisfaction, (2) Tourist Satisfaction, (3) Tourism Seasonality, (4) Governance, (5) Solid Waste Management, (6) Economic Benefits, (7) Wastewater Management and locally identified priorities on (8) Cultural Integrity, and (9) Biodiversity. Additional team members are also expected to be on board to cover the other INSTO KRAs: (10) Water Management, (11) Climate change, (12) Accessibility and Inclusivity, and (13) Energy management.

Additional Philippine Tourism Observatories

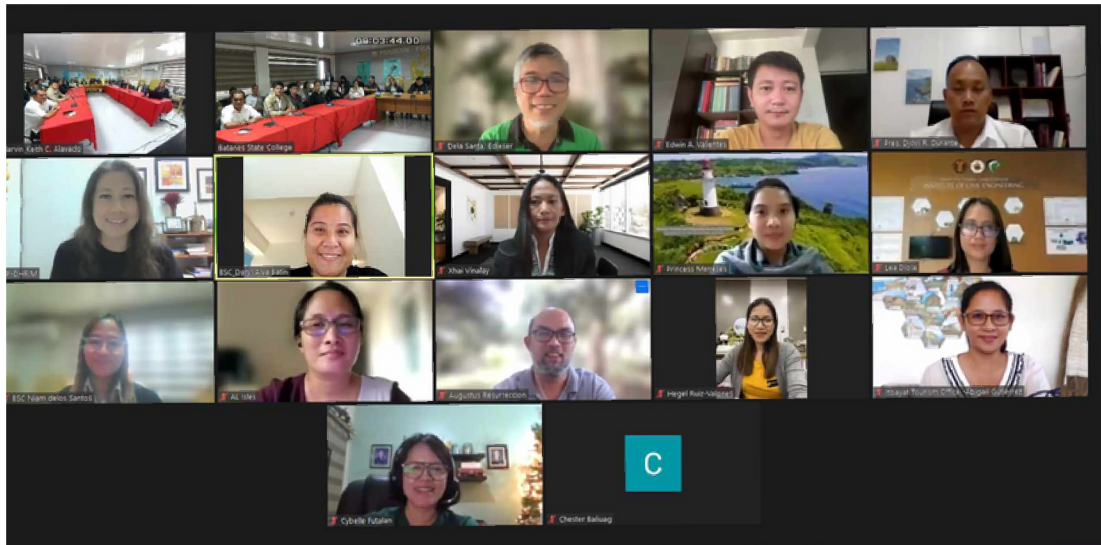
In collaboration with the Department of Tourism and the Department of Environment Natural Resources, possible Philippine Tourism Observatories will be explored for membership to the INSTO.

Center Activities

Stakeholder Engagement

5th TWG meeting

A hybrid meeting on November 20, 2023, with most participants assembled at the Batanes State College. The meeting provided updates and presented outputs of the research program, particularly on overall perceptions of carrying capacity.



6th TWG meeting

Held on January 29th to 31st, the UPD Research Team presented survey results on residents' view on tourism-induced change in the province, carrying capacity, governance and solid waste management during the 6th BTHMC TWG meeting. It focused on Batanes' pursuit of sustainable tourism on key challenges and opportunities, including:

- Protected Area Management: Gaps in resident participation and information dissemination were identified.
- Cultural Heritage: Preserving traditional Ivatan houses and addressing IP concerns related to shelter were highlighted.
- Infrastructure and Logistics: Limited funding for infrastructure development and delays in permit approvals were discussed.
- Waste Management: The need for improved solid waste management practices and infrastructure was emphasized.
- Balancing Economic Benefits and Sustainability: Balancing tourism development with environmental and cultural preservation was a key theme.

Key Actions and Outcomes identified were as follows:

- Collaboration: The workshop fostered collaboration among government agencies, academic institutions, and local communities.
- Monitoring Indicators: A set of indicators was developed to track progress towards sustainable tourism goals.
- Advocacy for Funding: Increased funding for cultural heritage preservation, infrastructure development, and waste management was advocated for.
- Sustainable Tourism Plan: The need for a comprehensive plan tailored to Batanes' specific needs was emphasized.

Overall, the workshop provided a valuable platform for stakeholders to discuss and address the challenges and opportunities related to sustainable tourism in Batanes.

Center Activities

April and July 2024 Field Visits

From March 30th to April 5th, 2024, Prof. Tumanan and Ms Hegel Valones from the Provincial Government of Batanes facilitated a stakeholders meeting participated by the tourism officers from the five municipalities Basco, Ivanah, Sabtang, Uyugan, and Itbayat, including the municipal agriculturists and the head of municipal planning and development (as in the case of Itbayat). The workshop aimed to review the indicators for core issues such as economic benefits, tourist satisfaction and resident satisfaction. The outcomes reflect the gap between the required and the available data. The stakeholders identified impediments to include lack of staff resulting in multiple tasking by tourism officers, outdated data, and issues underpinned by the Certification of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) as in the case of Itbayat island. The workshops concluded with sharing of specific plans of actions based on learning from each municipality to guide future actions. For example, a way to measure the use of data for monitoring tourism satisfaction was illustrated by the tourism officer in Sabtang Island, in which she shared that a feedback mechanism to measure tourism experience is now in place and monitored by their office. She showed samples of feedback forms and data in excel to record the responses. A follow-meeting to assess progress and other interventions has been scheduled to take place in July.

Ongoing stakeholders' dialogue and collaboration with the local working group is an important means to guide the monitoring activities in Batanes. Here, the involvement of private tourism organizations, such as the the Batanes Food and Accommodation Services Association, the Batanes Tour Operators Association, the Batanes Homestay Association, the Batanes Tour Drivers Association, and the Batanes Tour Guides Association enabled the development of the final survey questionnaire to measure tourist satisfaction. Held in April and in July 2024, through a series of FGDs, the stakeholders provided valuable inputs regarding the survey questionnaire items to measure tourist satisfaction, deemed vital as they are the ones who have direct contact with the visitors. In a collaborative effort, Ms. Daryl Batin from the Batanes State College, Ms. Valones from the Provincial Office, and the project leaders—Professors Dela Santa, Tumanan, Resurreccion, Diola, and Futralan—convened to develop the final version of the questionnaire. This instrument delves into essential aspects of tourist motivation, the actual experiences within the province, and patterns of tourist expenditure. The external adviser of BTHMC equally provided his input on the content and will help with the data analysis. This again, reflects the spirit of participatory engagement, a principle that is consistently upheld by the Batanes Observatory. As of December 8th, 2024, the team successfully completed a pilot test of the questionnaire. However, the main survey is scheduled to commence in January, as recent severe typhoons have significantly disrupted the research activities across Batanes, prompting a temporary pause in their efforts.

A few photos were taken in April and July with stakeholders from Batan, Sabtang and Itbayat Islands representing the public and private organizations, including Governor Malou Cayco and Mayor Priscila Balbalo.



Center Activities

Field Visits April and July 2024



Left image: An organizational meeting convened representatives from the Batanes State College (BSC) and the Provincial Government aimed to plan for the International Conference on Sustainable Tourism and Hospitality (ICSTH). Unfortunately, this initiative was impacted by a series of severe typhoons that wreaked havoc across the island, ultimately preventing the event from taking place.

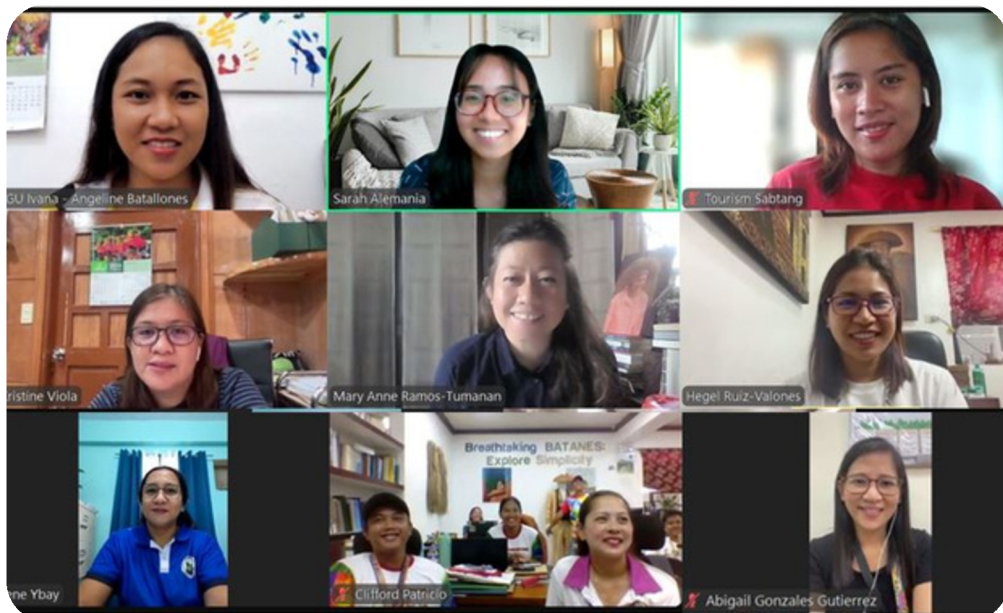
Right image: Meeting with Ms. Daryl Batin from Batanes State College (BSC) and Jerome Cabigao from the Batanes Provincial Office to discuss a funding proposal to the National Research Council of the Philippines-Department of Science and Technology (NRCP-DOST). This proposal has been approved for funding effective October 2024 until September 2025, crucial for tackling pressing issues surrounding food security in the province. This project aims to enhance the capacity of the BSC as the research arm of the Batanes Observatory.

Center Activities

Online Workshop: Tourism Seasonality core issue September 2024

An online workshop participated by the tourism officers across municipalities was held last 27th of September 2024 during which they presented their current travel packages offered in their respective municipalities. They also proposed new travel products designed to meet the needs of the tourists while considering their local tourism seasonality.

For instance, there are proposed activities with year-round availability such as walking and built heritage tours in the islands of Batan and Sabtang and handicraft making experience in Itbayat. In Basco, during the months of January to June, water activities such as beach relaxation, snorkeling, dinner by the beach, and beach camping will be introduced via tour operators. In the dry season, particularly from March to June, outdoor activities including mountain viewing, trekking, birdwatching were also presented. Furthermore, the tourism officers came up with different agricultural-tourism activities including farm-to-table experience in Ivana and agricultural demonstrations in Basco. The workshop not only illuminated the creativity and the resourcefulness of the Ivatans, but also strengthened collaboration among the municipalities, paving the way for enhanced tourism offerings to address issues of seasonality in the province.



Participants

5 Municipal Tourism Officers from Basco, Ivana, Sabtang, Uyugan, and Itbayat

Center Activities

Cultural Integrity

Cultural integrity is a critical aspect of Batanes' commitment to achieving sustainable tourism. The Philippine government recognizes the Ivatans (native inhabitants of Batanes) as Indigenous Peoples (IP) or Indigenous Cultural Community (ICC). As such, any development plans should entail the protection and conservation of their cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSP).

In 2023, stakeholders in Batan and Sabtang islands identified several indicators to monitor the integrity of their culture. These indicators revolved around three broad themes: authenticity of their cultural heritage (identification and articulation of key aspects of their culture and their historical, social, material, and spiritual values), safeguarding of important cultural traditions and practices, and the protection of built and archaeological heritage.

In 2024, these indicators were further refined to facilitate a more targeted monitoring system. These new indicators revolved around issues of (1) language vitality, (2) preservation of traditional houses, (3) revitalization of traditional community organizations, (4) promotion of traditional subsistence activities and their associated rituals, (5) protection of archaeological and historical sites, (6) revitalization of indigenous crafts, and (7) promotion of indigenous verbal and non-verbal arts.

The Provincial Government of Batanes (PGB), in partnership with various national agencies and non-government organizations, is currently undertaking several start-up efforts to address the indicators identified by the stakeholders to monitor the integrity of their culture. These efforts include cultural mapping activities, capacity-building programs on heritage conservation, and the institutionalization of cultural festivals that aim to promote various aspects of Ivatan culture.

Cultural mapping involves a comprehensive inventory and detailed documentation of intangible and tangible cultural heritage properties. In August 2023, the PGB invited personnel from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) to conduct training in Batanes on cultural mapping. At least 50 tourism and heritage workers attended the training program. Participants from each of the six municipalities of Batanes expressed commitment to produce detailed documentation of at least 60 heritage properties from their town. The final output—the main basis for crafting a heritage management plan for Batanes—is due next year.

Center Activities

Cultural Integrity

Capacitating local stakeholders on the basic principles and techniques of heritage conservation is crucial in protecting the built and archaeological heritage of Batanes. Toward this goal, the Provincial Government of Batanes partnered with the Center for Continuing Education and Development of the University of Sto. Tomas (Manila) in conducting a Specialist Course on Heritage Sites and Building Conservation from March to May of this year. The Specialist Course was attended by 23 local heritage workers from various local government agencies and private organizations. The graduates of the course now form the technical body that advises the provincial government on matters about the conservation and management of important heritage buildings and sites in Batanes.

To increase awareness and appreciation of the new generation of Ivatans on their Indigenous culture, several municipalities of Batanes have institutionalized the conduct of annual cultural festivals in conjunction with their town's "foundation day". These festivals showcase specific aspects of Ivatan culture that are gradually dying. For instance, the Municipality of Ivana came up with "Wakay Festival" that highlights the value of planting root crops—the staple food of the Ivatans since time immemorial. The Municipality of Uyugan has "Kamañidungan Festival" that showcases the Ivatan tradition of community cooperation in building houses. The Municipality of Sabtang has "Vakul-Kanayi Festival" that celebrates and promotes Ivatan traditional craftsmanship.

The impact of these efforts on the indicators mentioned above is yet to be determined. However, the locals of Batanes are hopeful that it can generate a concerted effort towards the conservation and preservation of their cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems and practices.

Center Activities

Field Research: Solid Waste Management & Wastewater Management TWG session April 2024

On April 19, 2024, the team organized an online Zoom workshop for the Technical Working Group (TWG) focusing on solid waste management and wastewater management concerns. The workshop brought together the Provincial and six Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Officers (ENRO) to discuss the status and monitoring of solid waste management (SWM) indicators and to consult on developing indicators for wastewater management (WWM). The session concluded with planning future activities and formulating recommendations.

The ENROs shared the status of their respective LGUs regarding the seven identified SWM indicators and one additional indicator and provided their recommendations on strengthening monitoring and achieving desired outcomes. One key suggestion was the establishment of a dedicated Environment and Natural Resources Office in each LGU and the appointment of a separate ENRO to focus on SWM and WWM concerns. This recommendation addresses the challenges of multi-designation among Batanes ENROs, which often limits their capacity to fully focus on addressing environmental concerns.

For WWM, the group discussed the proposed compliance indicators, the rationale for their inclusion, and the data needed for effective monitoring. Emphasis was placed on ensuring the indicators reflect the progress and challenges in WWM

Lastly, the session also emphasized reviewing local policies, identifying effective information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns for SWM and WWM, and collecting monthly data on tourist arrivals to understand the impact of tourism on waste generation. The ENROs committed to providing the necessary information and data to support ongoing monitoring and evaluation efforts.



Participants

1 Provincial and 6 Municipal ENROs



Updated SWM indicators

7

Center Activities

Field Research: Solid Waste Management & Wastewater Management Fieldwork July 2024

From July 12 - 17, the research team visited Batanes to conduct a 1-day waste analysis and characterization study (WACS), a waste brand audit, and a wastewater management survey on tourism establishments.



With the support of volunteers from the Batanes Environment and Natural Resources Office, the Heritage and Tourism Office of Batanes, and Basco LGU, the team collected a total of 99 kg from 26 participating tourism establishments for sorting and analysis.

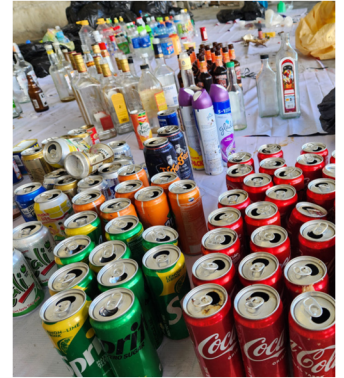


→	Tourism establishments that participated in WACS	26
→	Volunteers trained for WACS	10
→	Solid waste collected and analyzed	99 kg

Center Activities

Field Research: Solid Waste Management & Wastewater Management Fieldwork July 2024

Following the WACS guidelines approved by the NSWMC, the team conducted a training session for the WACS volunteers to familiarize them with the sorting process. The collected residual and recyclable wastes were then used for a brand audit to identify the most prominent brands used by the participating establishments.



For the wastewater management survey, the team reached out to and visited several tourism establishments across the province, inviting them to participate in the project survey. A total of 31 establishments (26 in Basco, 3 in Sabtang, and 2 in Mahatao) agreed to complete the survey questionnaire. As of November 18, 2024, 16 establishments have responded.

Additionally, the research team conducted courtesy calls to the LGUs of Basco, Ivana, Mahatao, Uyugan, and Sabtang to gather data on INTSO monitoring indicators, particularly focusing on their water consumption data.



Tourism establishments which participated in the wastewater management survey

31

Center Activities

Information Dissemination

Professor Mary Anne Ramos-Tumanan delivered an online presentation during the 5th Management Tourism Continents (MTCON) Conference on Managing Tourism Across Continents on May 4 2024. She shared the highlights of the local satisfaction on resident perceptions of tourism-induced change in which she underscored the various perspectives on sustainability held by the Ivatans across the three primary islands—Batan, Sabtang, and Itbayat. Sustainable tourism in Batanes is shaped by the specific conditions under which tourism activities are implemented in these islands and thereby engaging local residents in open dialogue with Local Government Units (LGUs) and the provincial government is imperative. By providing regular opportunities for residents to voice their opinions, concerns, and aspirations regarding tourism, local authorities can better understand what the community desires and what they wish to avoid, as well as the potential outcomes of these tourism-led activities. Such engagement is essential for fostering a sustainable and resilient approach to Batanes tourism that respects and reflects the needs of the Ivatans.

In the same month, Professor Edieser dela Santa and Professor Tumanan participated in the 2024 China Observatories Training Program held in Huangshan, China. This initiative was particularly significant, as China has been addressing critical issues related to long-term sustainability since 2004. Currently, there are eight Chinese observatories affiliated with the UN Tourism INSTO, each dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism practices under the auspices of the School of Tourism Management in Sun Yat-sen University. This year's theme, "Rural Development and Governance," set the stage for representatives from various Chinese observatories to come together and share valuable insights about their ongoing monitoring initiatives and activities within their unique destinations. During this engaging forum, Professor Tumanan participated in a roundtable discussion where she emphasized the importance of community involvement in achieving sustainable development goals. In photos: group picture with delegates from China, UN Tourism-INSTO Madrid, Mexico, Indonesia, and the Philippines with the founder of MCSTO - Professor Bao Ji gang, 2024 UNWTO (UN Tourism) Ulysses Prize for excellence in tourism scholarship. In another, Professors Dela Santa and Tumanan in the moon-shaped pond or "fen" found in Hongcun ancient village, one of the eight observatories in China and gazetted as UNESCO World Heritage 2000.



Center Activities

Information Dissemination

Also in June 2024, Prof Dela Santa presented a paper entitled “Effectiveness of governance measures towards sustainability: The case of the Batanes Protected Landscapes and Seascapes” at the annual conference of the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education and Research (ATLAS) held in Breda University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands.

In September 2024, two research papers funded by the program were read at the 7th Philippine Research Conference in Tourism and Hospitality. These were “Exploring the Determinants of the Social Carrying Capacity of Batanes: Implications on Sustainable Tourism Management Planning” by Alizia Marquez and Chae Ann Rivera, and “Influence of PAMB Institutional Arrangements on Tourism Policy of Batanes as a Protected Area” by Adriana Saculo and Bianca Trinidad



Center Activities

Information Dissemination

Professors Dela Santa and Tumanan proudly represented the Batanes Tourism and Hospitality Monitoring Center at the 2024 Global Meeting of the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO), an event organized by UN Tourism- INSTO. This significant gathering took place on October 16, 2024, in the scenic setting of Casa Esment in Mallorca, Spain. The professors delivered an insightful 15-minute presentation titled “A Gestalt Participatory Process: The Case of Batanes Observatory, Republic of the Philippines.” Their presentation emphasized the innovative participatory and gestalt approach utilized in establishing the Batanes observatory, showcasing the effective engagement of local communities in sustainable tourism practices. Details of the presentation can be found here: <https://www.unwto.org/event/2024-global-insto-meeting>.



Center Activities

Information Dissemination

Following this event, they participated in the two-day Sustainable Tourism Annual Summit from October 17 to 18, 2024. This summit brought together a diverse array of stakeholders from across Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, including representatives from the private sector, government officials, and esteemed academics. This gathering covered a variety of topics from the role of destinations in the sustainability transformation process to diverse perspectives on sustainability and the generation of related evidence (<https://www.unwto.org/news/sustainable-tourism-through-destinations-mallorca-hosts-2024-global-insto-meeting-and-iii-sustainable-destinations-summit>).



Other events wherein information about the Batanes research program were shared include:

- the UP Asian Institute of Tourism Professorial Lecture Series on February 19
- the Council of Hotel Restaurant Educators of the Philippines Negros Island Siquijor Chapter Students Regional Convention on May 20
- EdukCircle Convention on Tourism and Hospitality on October 12
- Courtesy Visit to the Ambassador Philip Lhuillier of Philippine Embassy Madrid on October 14
- National Ecotourism Summit 2024 on December 16

Key Issue Areas

Economic benefits

The monitoring of tourism statistics is going through a process of transition. Before INSTO, it was mainly tourist arrivals and the number of tourist establishments which were the main concern. To gain a deeper understanding of the economic benefits, a lot more statistics needed to be collected. Efforts towards this is starting, with statistics on indicators such as employment, capacity of transport operations, accommodation, applications for business permit, gross revenue, proposed infrastructure projects for tourism, being collected.

Preliminary statistics reveal that the islands is still struggling from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Overall tourist arrivals in 2023 at 12,659 was just approximately one-fourth (1/4) of total arrivals in 2019, although it must be emphasized that the province opened for tourism only from June 2024. Most of the tourist activities were centered around the municipality of Basco, which had 88% of all rooms and beds in the province. A sizable number of same-day visitors travelled to Sabtang (9,594 individuals).

Visitors to Batanes supported the operation of the tourism industry. Altogether, direct employment generated by the accommodation, food and land transportation totalled 426 individuals, including tricycle drivers, whose motor vehicles serve as the main transport mode.



Photo by OPAL BALA

Photos from Breathtaking Batanes website:
<https://www.breathtakingbatanes.com/>

Visitor arrivals in 2023

12,659 visitors



Employment in accommodation, food and land transportation

426



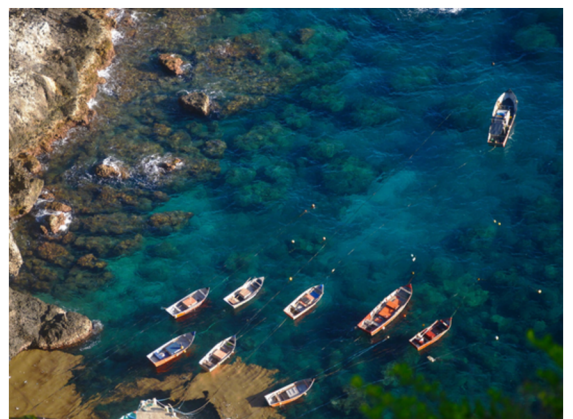
Capacity of tourism establishments

Total number of rooms: 342
 Total number of beds: 280



Average length of stay

3 days



Key Issue Areas

Resident Satisfaction

Understanding residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their notions of sustainability is necessary in creating effective policy recommendations for Batanes' long-term sustainability. Engaging the community in meaningful dialogue can reveal concerns, aspirations, and values of the locals that help shape sustainable tourism development. A survey with 1,056 residents shows that culture and environment accounted for the majority's notion on the island of what constitutes sustainability.

Also, the radar charts present the nuance of sustainability across multiple dimensions. Figure A. illustrates the aggregated data, while Figure B. highlights the interisland differences. Results show that Sabtang and Basco South lean towards the cultural dimensions of sustainability, while Basco strikes a relatively balanced view in the cultural and environmental lens. On the other hand, Itbayat shows the highest score for economical view closely followed by culture. It may suggest that the economic and cultural aspects of sustainability are prioritized more highly than other dimensions in this part of the province. These findings offer valuable insights for designing sustainability strategies tailored to the specific needs and priorities of each island as perceived by its residents. A presentation of the resident satisfaction study findings is available on the Breathtaking Batanes website (<https://www.breathtakingbatanes.com>).

Following the above study, a new investigation on local satisfaction will commence to examine the social carrying capacity of the province using the Tourism Opportunities Spectrum framework by Butler and Walbrook (1991) largely informed by the Indigenous Knowledge System translating to the Ivatans coping and adaptive mechanisms as pathways to long-term sustainability. Broadly speaking, the study will address the food security issue in Batanes. More specifically, it will focus on three main aspects: allocation of ecological resources to satisfy residents and tourists needs; indicators to assess the conditions of tourism sites on three islands, particularly those threatened by tourism development; and guidelines for the local government units on the utilization of built heritage and archaeological sites across the three islands. This intervention is envisaged to provide evidence-based policy-making that promotes inclusive, sustainable, and resilient Batanes tourism. As noted above (under field activities), the funding source is the National Research Council of the Philippines, an attached agency of the Department of Science and Technology.

Figure A

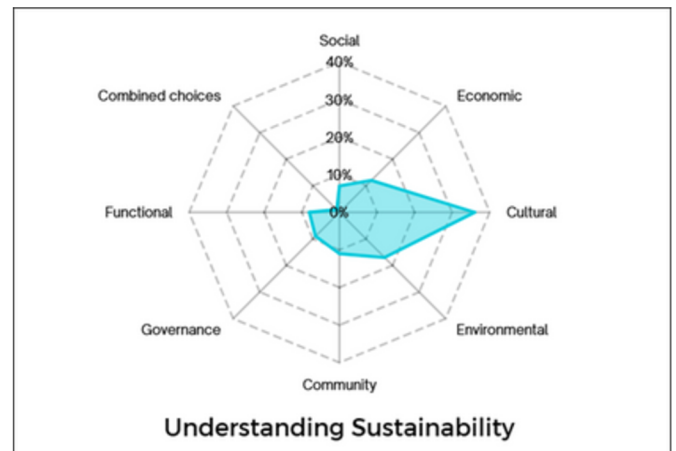
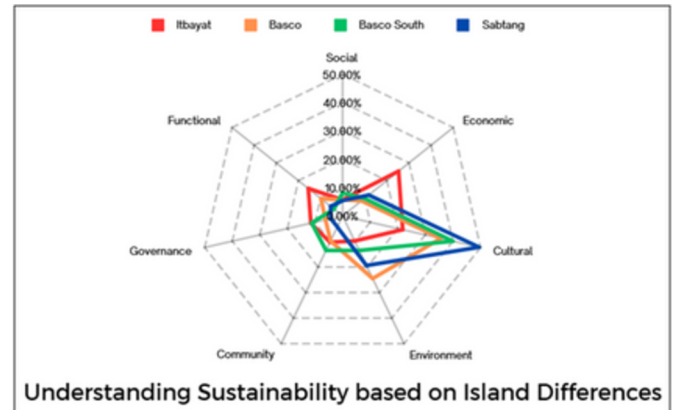


Figure B



Key Issue Areas

Tourism Seasonality

Like many travel destinations, Batanes experiences the effects of seasonality, which presents challenges during both peak and low seasons due to the significant variations in tourist arrivals. One of the primary causes of this seasonality in Batanes is its climate, influenced by its geographical location and altitude. Batanes has distinct cool, dry, and rainy seasons. Moreover, it is susceptible to typhoons, as it lies within the Pacific typhoon belt. In the past two months alone, five typhoons have impacted the islands, including two super typhoons, resulting in hundreds of stranded tourists. The timing of these weather events is predictable, allowing for better planning of tourism activities.

Tourism statistics indicate that the peak months for visitors are from February to May (cool to dry season), while the lean months are from August to October (typhoon and rainy season). To address the issue of seasonal employment and mitigate the effects of seasonality, new and existing tourism product offerings have been developed. These offerings fall under four key themes outlined in the proposed marketing plan by the provincial government: Ecotourism, Culture and Heritage Tourism, Education Tourism, and Special Interest Tourism.

Currently, local government units in Batanes are responsible for developing and partially implementing these tourism products. They will complement the Annual Tourism Calendar of Activities, which serves as a guide for tour operators in creating their respective tour packages. See the infographic for this purpose.

However, the implementation of these tourism packages is not without challenges. Many still require essential infrastructure and capacity building among stakeholders. The support and adoption of these tourism products by the Sangguniang Bayan are crucial for their successful implementation. The role of BTHMC is vital through its participatory monitoring mechanisms to ensure the commitment of the stakeholders, follow-up and feedback on the implementation of the tourism packages and to recommend necessary interventions to address the challenges posed by seasonality.

In the photograph: Vuhus Island. The local community has expressed a strong desire to transform this picturesque island into a prominent tourist attraction in Batanes.



Key Issue Areas

Tourism Satisfaction

It was reported that one of the highlights of the April and July fieldwork is a series of consultations with the stakeholders to gather valuable insights and ensure that the survey questionnaire accurately reflects the perspectives of the tourists. Initially, the actual survey was scheduled to be conducted between September and December of 2024.



However, unforeseen circumstances arose when a series of typhoons swept through the province, causing significant disruptions and necessitating a temporary suspension of all planned activities. At the time of writing, only a pilot test has been completed and a meeting is set to meet the tour guides for feedback to refine the instrument. Looking ahead, the team is preparing to resume the survey activities, which are slated to take place from January to April 2025.



In photos: Winston Cataluna visited the tourism office to secure a new set of questionnaires for the pilot test as most of the questionnaires were torn and damaged by the flood that entered his home. In another, a photo of “bayanihan” or communal unity in the aftermath of Typhoon Krathon. Notably, this will be the first survey on tourist satisfaction conducted in Batanes.

Key Result Areas

Governance

There have been some development in the governance of sustainability in Batanes.

Increased democratization of policymaking:

Following a meeting of the TWG in January 2024, the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) worked to include the Department of Tourism (DOT) in the PAMB. The result is the recommendation by the DOT Regional Office to be represented by the Batanes Provincial Tourism Officer in the Board. In the local government of Itbayat, a Council of Elders is now consulted when it comes to policy and program decisions in the municipality.

Use of data for policy making: The local governments of Mahatao and Uyugan have reported using the INSTO-generated data on governance to draft tourism codes and related ordinances for the municipalities. This activity was preceded by the collection of PAMB resolutions, creation of a database thereof, and subsequent analysis of the resolutions in terms of PA priorities. The Provincial Government of Batanes has also reported that a provincial tourism code is being prepared on the back of the same resolutions.

Addition of governance layer: The local government of Itbayat reports a complication in governance processes, with planning decisions having to pass through the Council of Elders, as a result of the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) given to the municipality. While it is commendable that the voices of the elderly Ivatans, gatekeepers of tradition, are heard, increased democratization should not make the decision-making process burdensome.

Governance evaluation - A stakeholder assessment of the management effectiveness of the PA status was carried out. In the analysis, evaluations of performance were rated much lower than evaluations of importance across all categories of management effectiveness. The result shows gaps most especially in resource allocation, inputs and other management processes including stakeholder participation. That there is a geographic aspect to the evaluation suggests that authorities should think more consciously about having an inclusive approach in addressing PA goals, particularly as PAs move towards recovering from the pandemic, where tourism will once again exert pressure on the systems.

Enhanced PA management through integrated approaches


Publication of BPLS Protected Area Management Plan 2023-2032

Participation of stakeholders in the implementation of the management plan

Designation of Community Environmental Groups and Wildlife Enforcement Officers

Strengthened and enhanced governance structure

Dept of Tourism representation in PAMB approved

MEMORANDUM		SEP 10 2024
TO :	The PENR Officer Province of Batanes	
THRU :	The OIC, Park Operations Superintendent Batanes Protected Landscapes and Seascape	
FROM :	The Regional Executive Director	
SUBJECT :	RECOMMENDATION AS PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT BOARD MEMBER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM	

Considering the geographical location, logistics concerns and budget constraints, be informed that the Provincial Tourism Officer of Batanes was recommended to sit-in as member of the BPLS-PAMB.

Effective management of conflict over resource use

Congressional effort (HB04419) to convert a barangay in Uyugan from national park to an alienable and disposable residential site

Key Result Areas

Biodiversity

Biodiversity monitoring in Batanes relies on the implementation of monitoring systems. In 2024, the following key activities were pursued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Batanes:

Asian Waterbird Census in January covered 10 sites: 3 in Itbayat, 2 in Sabtang, 5 in Batan.

Biodiversity Monitoring System (BMS) in the first and second semesters of the year covering seagrass, hard and soft corals in Sabtang and Batan Islands. Indicator species were monitored in the mountains of Iraya, Matarem and Giraya

Landscapes and Wildlife Indicator (LAWIN) patrols on a monthly basis to monitor forest conditions, forest regeneration and indicator species

Another activity is impact monitoring of the ecotourism development program for the first semester focused on Mt Iraya, Mt Matarem, and the communities of Chanarian, Basco and Vatang, Ivana

Black-faced Spoonbill in Mahatao Creek, Barangay Haiñib



11 Tundra Bean-Goose in Kavaywan Lake, Itbayat Island



Photos from Asian Waterbird Census 2024 report

Most remarkable species

Tundra Bean-Goose - 11 individuals. This species has less than 10 recorded sightings in the Philippines.

Notable species

Black-faced Spoonbill and Great Cormorant

Amount of seagrass, hard coral, soft coral*

Batan: -6.13%, -5.46%, -5.45%, respectively
Sabtang: -6.36%, -0.45%, -5% respectively

*compared to previous recordings

Biggest trees

Mt. Iraya: Vaditi, 550cm circumference
Mt. Matarem: Vaditi, 540cm circumference

Highest recordings in forest regeneration

Moderate



Lowest recordings in forest regeneration

Dense



Highest recordings in forest condition

Open uncultivated



Lowest recordings in forest condition

Old growth



Key Result Areas

Solid Waste Management

The Batanes LGUs have been active in developing their respective Solid Waste Management Plans (SWMPs) and have shared working drafts with the project team. Mahatao and Itbayat have already secured the approval of the NSWMC for their respective 10-year SWMP last April 2023. Meanwhile, the Batanes provincial government and Ivana's plans are undergoing an approval process by the NSWMC. Moreover, Basco and Sabtang sent their plans to the EMB Region II for initial review. Uyugan noted that it had an NSWMC-approved plan last 2020 and is currently updating it this year.

Minutes of SWM committee meetings have been shared with the team as well.

All LGUs have conducted their waste analysis and characterization study as part of their SWMP. However, some LGUs need to update their methodologies in line with recent NSWMC guidelines.

Wastewater Management

Based on interviews and site visits, wastewater management of tourism establishments in Batanes largely depends on septic tank systems for containing black water. According to records from the provincial government, 12 out of 62 tourism establishments have their own wastewater treatment facility (WWTF). However, site visits confirmed that only 2 of these 12 establishments actually have a functioning WWTF.

Preliminary findings reveal that 11 out of 16 tourism establishments that completed the survey rely solely on septic tanks for black water containment and treatment. Additionally, 8 of the 16 establishments have reported to practice grey water recycling.

Approved 10-yr SWM Plans

3 (Uyugan, Mahatao, Itbayat)



Reconstituted MSWMBs

6 LGUs + Provincial government



Established MRF and SLF

**10 MRF; 1 SLF;
5 SLF (under construction)**



Share of population practicing waste diversion at-source

99%



Completed WACS

6



LGUs that shared water consumption data

2



Number of tourism establishments with WWTF

12 (from official list); 2 (based from interviews)



Survey participants

31 (26 in Basco; 3 in Sabtang; 2 in Mahatao)



Outlook

Plans are underway for Batanes Tourism and Hospitality Monitoring Center 2025 Sustainable Tourism initiatives on its 2nd year as INSTO member. Beyond the 11 INSTO mandated Key Result Areas and the 2 local priorities on cultural integrity and biodiversity, BTHMC embarks on data and information management, collaborative approach towards tourism sustainability, and partnership strengthening.



Data & Information Management

- Conduct a series of stakeholders' workshops to monitor progress of indicator sets informed by key questions regarding how local government units and the provincial office currently utilize the data to enhance tourism practices and inform decision-making. Although there is evidence that the Ivatans have implemented the recommendations from BTHMC as mentioned in the report, more tangible outcomes are expected in the long term. For instance, survey results reveal that local satisfaction with tourism-induced changes varies across different islands. To fully understand their perspectives, it is essential to engage with stakeholders regularly and adopt research methodologies that can help clarify their needs and wants and the consequences of these preferences.
- Evaluation of indicator sets in terms of their relevance, scope and implementation or immediate outputs and outcomes during the stakeholders' engagement.

Outlook

Partnership Strengthening

- Forging agreements with local agencies, such as the Department of Tourism in light of National Ecotourism Strategic Plan 2024-2028 to institutionalize efforts of BTHMC. (See Appendix A)

8 out of 11 INSTO KRA Monitoring

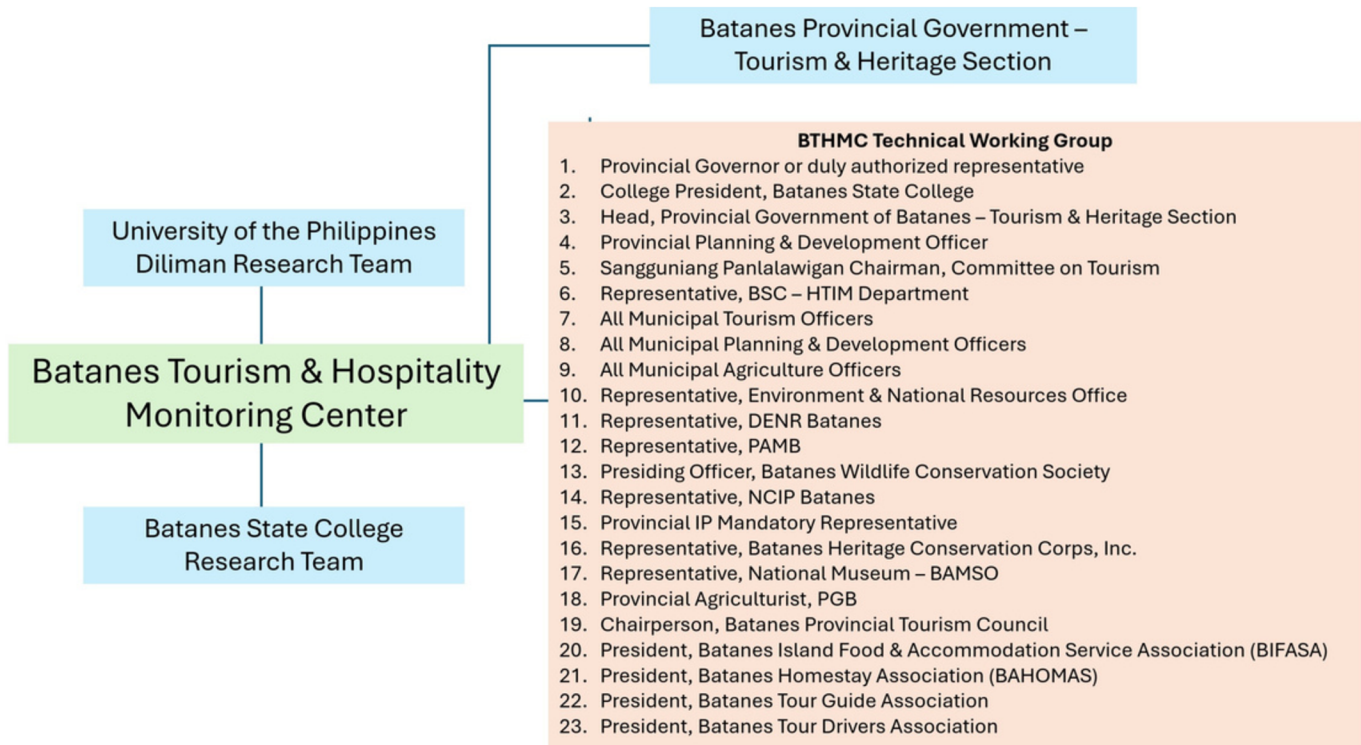
- Monitoring of other core issues, such as climate change, accessibility, energy, and water management.
- Regular monitoring of ongoing core issues.
- The conduct of a survey on tourist satisfaction.
- Solid waste management: The team will analyze collected data to gain insights into the waste generated by tourists and identify leading brands of recyclable and residual wastes found in tourism establishments in Basco, Batanes. The findings will be disseminated to Batanes LGUs and shared with the broader research community. To capture seasonal variations, the team plans to conduct another WACS during the high season (April - May). Additionally, the team aims to assist the municipality of Uyugan, Batanes, with their WACS initiatives, tentatively scheduled for January - February 2025.
- Wastewater management: The team will follow up on pending survey responses and update the database in early 2025. Efforts to strengthen collaboration with LGUs will continue through regular follow-ups and courtesy calls, scheduled to coincide with planned fieldwork in January or February 2025, with a focus on obtaining water consumption data. Additionally, the team will visit other tourism establishments equipped with WWTF to perform site inspections.

Agency Collaboration

- In the context of the social carrying capacity of Batanes, a noteworthy initiative is the launch of “Slow Food Batanes” through the assistance of a non-government organization movement headed by Ms. Chit Juan - president of Slow Food Philippines. This program aims not only to promote sustainable food practices but also to preserve local culinary traditions and enhance the community's resilience in the face of food shortages.
- Possible partnerships with the Monitoring Center of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (MCSTO) through Sun Yat-sen University as well as the Philippine Embassy in Madrid to advance the Observatory's VMO.

Organizational Overview

BTHMC Technical Working Group



Vision

A well-preserved natural and cultural environment that supports sustainable tourism, promotes heritage conservation and social equity, through healthy collaboration and data from the observatory.

Mission

To gather and analyze (tourism) relevant and accurate data for sharing, planning and decision making

Objectives

1. Build participatory approach by creating awareness and support capacity-building in sustainability and resiliency among tourism stakeholders;
2. Develop & provide methodological references & recommendations for a sustainable & resilient Batanes;
3. Systematic monitoring & evaluation of indicators of sustainability & resiliency in support of future decision & policy making;
4. Identify & disseminate good practices in the process of facilitating the exchange & comparison of information;
5. Promote a condition of balanced tourism that empowers and legitimizes the Ivatan's control over its activities and management practices.

BTHMC Research Team

The Batanes Tourism and Hospitality Monitoring Center has witnessed significant growth since its inception in 2019. Initially established with a core team, the BTHMC strategically expanded to include subject matter experts. These experts focus on the 11 key issue areas mandated by UNWTO-INSTO, while also addressing relevant concerns raised by Ivatan communities during consultations. This expansion ensures the BTHMC has the necessary expertise to effectively monitor and address the multifaceted aspects of sustainable tourism in Batanes.

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Asian Institute of Tourism
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