

Commitment 4	
Thematic Area: Climate & Environment	
CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT: Raising Awareness on Biodiversity Conservation and Disaster Reduction by Mobilizing Communities	
June 2026 to April 2028	
Lead Implementing Agency/Actor	Office of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer
Commitment Description	
What is the public problem that the commitment will address?	The Philippines is one of the world's eighteen (18) mega-diverse countries, hosting 5% of the planet's plant species and ranking fifth globally in overall biodiversity resources. The country also exhibits a remarkable level of species endemism, with at least 25 plant genera and 49% of its terrestrial fauna found exclusively within its borders. Notably, it ranks fourth worldwide in bird species endemism. With more than 700 vulnerable species, the Philippines is recognized as a global biodiversity hotspot and one of the most critical areas for conservation. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Philippines has approximately 7.2 million hectares of forest ecosystems, which account for around 24% of its total land area—South Cotabato's natural resources are an integral part of this forest cover. Surveys conducted in MMPL from 2013 to 2016 confirmed the presence of 324 species of vascular plants, 185 species of bryophytes, 13 species of amphibians, 13 species of reptiles, 15 species of bats, and 81 species of birds. These surveys in six sampling sites representing different elevations (lowland, montane, mossy forest) and disturbance regimes (disturbed and undisturbed) revealed high levels of biological diversity and endemism. However, there is still incomplete knowledge about MMPL's biodiversity as the past surveys did not cover other groups of wildlife species. The critically endangered species such as <i>Shorea astylosa</i> (Yakal), <i>Phapitreron amethystinus</i> (Amethyst Brown Dove), and <i>Loriculus philippensis</i> (Philippine Hanging Parrot) can be found in MMPL. A subspecies of Snowy-browed Flycatcher (<i>Ficedula hyperythra matutumensis</i>) was recently discovered in the protected area and cannot be found elsewhere. Further, AVPL is also home of significant wildlife species which include: Philippine Eagle (<i>Pithecopaga jefferyi</i>), Tanguile (<i>Shorea polysperma</i>), Apitong (<i>Dipterocarpus grandifloras</i>), Philippine Tarsier (<i>Tarsius syrichta</i>), Philippine Monkey (<i>Macaca fascicularis</i>), Brahminy Kite (<i>Haliastur indus</i>), Pitcher Plant (<i>Nepenthes sp.</i>), Mindanao Blue Fantail (<i>Rhipidura superciliaris</i>), and Nabol (<i>Bischopia javanica</i>) which is widely distributed in the area (Source: MMPL/AVPL Protected Area Management Plan). With its abundant natural resources, there is an urgent need to protect and conserve these areas to sustain their essential ecological functions. However, protected areas (PAs) are increasingly threatened by unsustainable activities driven by rapid economic development. The province, characterized as an agro-industrial hub, relies heavily on both small- and large-scale agricultural industries. As the economy grows, population increases follow, placing mounting pressure on upland areas—particularly those targeted for agro-industrial expansion. Additionally, the complex nature of climate change and hazard data, as well as data gathered from the environment, makes it difficult to involve the public in disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation initiatives.

What the current state of the policy issue at the beginning of an action plan?	The Philippines, being a diverse archipelago with a biodiverse environment from ridge to reef located along the Pacific Ring of Fire, a lot of data is being gathered on the environment and hazards, and there are also a lot of plans being prepared such as local resource management and disaster risk reduction plans. Unfortunately, sometimes, data collected by local government units (LGUs) who prepare these plans in an effort to comply with multiple international commitments and national policies and issuances are not communicated to the public in a way that will make sense to them or will benefit them. Of course there are many factors leading to this, most important of which are the highly technical nature of the data and the limited capacity and resources to utilize the information.
What is the commitment?	The establishment of a biodiversity corridor in the Province of South Cotabato is a crucial step in protecting and conserving its natural resources. This corridor is a strategically designated strip of land that reconnects fragmented forest areas to stabilize wildlife populations—both flora and fauna—and enhance ecological coherence. It aids the movement of the wildlife between the disconnected areas to its natural habitat – the forest. It facilitates wildlife migration, reproduction, and population growth, which in turn contributes to increased vegetation and forest cover. The project aims to raise awareness and understanding of biodiversity conservation, improving biodiversity indicators through habitat restoration, enhancing community resilience to environmental challenges, and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities. These efforts are focused within the Mt. Matutum Protected Landscape (MMPL) and the Allah Valley Protected Landscape (AVPL), both designated as protected areas under Republic Act No. 11038, also known as the Expanded National Integrated Protected Area System (E-NIPAS). The corridor will cover approximately 6,424.84 hectares in the MMPL—spanning the municipalities of Polomolok, Tupi, and Tampakan—and 2,746.41 hectares in the AVPL, covering the municipalities of Surallah, Lake Sebu, and Tboli. Series of workshops, seminars, and educational campaigns through BCC and CineMatutum (short films/infomercial) are conducted which aimed to ignite a flame of awareness and action in the local communities. These activities are important for the stakeholders to learn about the richness of their natural surroundings and the pressing need for conservation that requires their active participation. The project also integrates economic opportunities aligned with conservation goals. These include the cultivation of rattan, k'nalom/loco (natural dye plants), Arabica coffee, bamboo, and abaca. These resources support local industries such as production of 'alamid coffee' (coffee droppings from civet cat), souvenir production and the traditional T'nalak weaving. By linking livelihoods with environmental protection, the initiative not only sustains local economies but also strengthens community commitment to preserving their natural heritage. In the same vein of involving the community to raise awareness, at the local government unit level, conducting focused group discussions (FGD) involving the proper stakeholders will be done. This way, both the government and the civil society will have a hand in identifying which data usually gathered for development plans should be the focus of this commitment (e.g., critical infrastructure, lifeline utilities, natural resource-

	based production areas, population, urban use, etc.). This will be included in the AIP and Annual Budget proposals. Once substantial financing will be secured, a training with PSA will be organized to prepare publication materials on the data, and the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT) will be partnered with in training the community, especially the youth sector, to gather the relevant data and upload it onto OpenStreetMap. Other ways to communicate the data gathered to the community will also be explored.
How will the commitment contribute to solve the public problem?	The Biodiversity Corridor project will help address the pressing issue of environmental degradation and biodiversity loss in the identified areas of the Province. Considering the objectives of the project, it will restore and protect the province's natural ecosystems, which are currently under threat from unsustainable land use practices, deforestation, soil erosion, and the declining state of biodiversity. By focusing on ecological rehabilitation, the project directly tackles the root causes of environmental degradation. Restoring degraded areas contributes to the conservation of native species and their habitats, improves ecosystem services (such as clean water, fertile soil, and carbon sequestration), and enhances the resilience of natural systems against the impacts of climate change. These benefits extend beyond environmental gains—they also help secure the livelihoods of local communities who depend on natural resources for food, water, and income. Hence, by engaging the upland communities as active partners—and not merely as beneficiaries—represents a paradigm shift from top-down conservation models to one rooted in community stewardship. This project stands as a significant reformative action because it provides a multifaceted, community-driven solution to the critical issue of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. It moves beyond short-term solutions and instead lays the groundwork for long-term sustainability by rehabilitating natural ecosystems and empowering the immediate communities that depend on them. By doing so, it not only protects the province's natural heritage but also contributes to building a more inclusive, resilient, and environmentally responsible society. Additionally, involving the public in multiple steps of the disaster and climate mitigation planning (e.g., deciding what data to gather, data gathering proper, plan communication, etc.), awareness will be raised on climate change and hazard risks in the community level.
What long-term goal as identified in your Open Government Strategic Vision does this commitment relate to?	This Biodiversity Corridor initiative is a locally funded and priority project of the Provincial Government of South Cotabato, aligned with its mandate to protect and conserve natural resources within its jurisdiction. As a Local Government Unit (LGU), it is mandated under the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160) to promote health and safety and uphold the people's right to a balanced and healthful ecology. The project also supports the province's commitment to the National Greening Program (NGP) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which aims to rehabilitate 1.5 million hectares of degraded timberland across the country. Through this initiative, the province contributes to national goals by fostering environmental stability, conserving biodiversity, enhancing climate change mitigation and adaptation, and providing sustainable livelihood opportunities for upland

	communities. In addition, the project supports the Philippines' commitment to its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. It is envisioned to serve as a carbon sink to help offset the greenhouse gas emissions of the province. As a whole, this commitment impacts the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As for the outcome, the relevant SDGs include 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life Below Water), 15 (Life on Land), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).
Primary Policy Area	Open Data, Right to Information
Primary Sector	Environment & Climate
Why is this commitment relevant to OGP values?	Transparency and Participation: The project recognizes the participation of various stakeholders both in planning and decision-making processes. Each stakeholders plays a vital role in the implementation. People's Organizations (POs) served as the primary sources of planting materials, while their members acted as direct partners in the execution of project activities.
Additional information	Beyond environmental conservation, the Biodiversity Corridor project also emphasizes the importance of sustainable development. It aims to support upland communities by promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities that are compatible with environmental goals. This includes integrating these areas into the Carbon Emission Trading (CET) initiative, offering both ecological benefits and economic incentives to local stakeholders.

Milestone Activity with a Verifiable Deliverable	Responsibility	Source of Fund	Start Date	End Date
Rehabilitation of 59 hectares (with 24 beneficiaries) using native species such as <i>Tuai (Bischofia javanica)</i> , Dipterocarpaceae species (lauan, bagtikan), 51 hectares (with 15 beneficiaries) for rattan enrichment planting, 5 hectares (with 6 schools) for YES-O adopted sites, 6 hectares for dye plant (Loco and/or knalom – with 6 beneficiaries), and 25 hectares (with 34 beneficiaries) for coffee plantations dedicated to Alamid coffee production	OPENRO	OPENRO	June 2026	March 2028
Mapping and Inventory of the Allah Valley Protected Landscape (AVPL) and Mt. Matutum Protected Landscape (MMPL)	OPENRO	OPENRO	June 2026	March 2028
IEC on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Risks Strengthened advocacy initiatives through Behavioral Change Campaigns (BCC) and	OPENRO	OPENRO	June 2026	March 2028

Milestone Activity with a Verifiable Deliverable	Responsibility	Source of Fund	Start Date	End Date
Cinematutum - Since 2019, it successfully facilitated a series of BCC sessions with partner communities and Cinematutum with schools and other stakeholders.				
Provision of Sustainable Livelihoods Linked to Biodiversity Conservation Recognizing the importance of sustaining the participation of upland communities in biodiversity conservation efforts, the project has integrated sustainable livelihood schemes through labor-based activities and the maintenance of planted indigenous tree species, rattan, and dye plants. This approach not only provides income opportunities but also fosters a sense of ownership and accountability within communities over their respective areas of responsibility (AOR).	OPENRO	OPENRO	June 2026	March 2028