

# Creative Responses to Sustainability

PHILIPPINES GUIDE

Cultural Initiatives Engaging  
with Social & Environmental Issues



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**CREATIVE RESPONSES TO SUSTAINABILITY**

Cultural Initiatives Engaging with Social and Environmental Issues  
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| Table of Contents |                                                                         |    |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| I.                | PREFACE                                                                 | IX |
| II.               | INTRODUCTION                                                            | 02 |
|                   | OBJECTIVES                                                              | 04 |
|                   | TARGETED IMPACTS                                                        | 05 |
| III.              | METHODOLOGY                                                             | 05 |
| IV.               | STATE OF AFFAIRS                                                        | 07 |
|                   | FACTS AND FIGURES                                                       | 07 |
|                   | INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES<br>IN THE PHILIPPINES             | 09 |
|                   | INTRODUCTION OF FILIPINO<br>ART AND CULTURAL CONTEXT                    | 13 |
| V.                | TRENDS IN THE PHILIPPINE ART SCENE                                      | 17 |
|                   | CHALLENGES IN THE PHILIPPINE ART SCENE                                  | 17 |
|                   | REVITALISATION THROUGH A RETURN TO<br>INDIGENOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF ART | 19 |
| VI.               | TRENDS IN CREATIVE STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY                        | 21 |
|                   | CREATIVE METHODOLOGY                                                    | 21 |
|                   | DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH SIMPLIFICATION                                  | 23 |
|                   | INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES                              | 25 |
|                   | CRISIS RESPONSE THROUGH CREATIVE<br>COMMUNITY SYSTEMS                   | 26 |
|                   | YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT                                        | 28 |
| VII.              | RECOMMENDATIONS                                                         | 33 |
|                   | KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NETWORKS                                             | 33 |
|                   | DOCUMENTATION AND ARCHIVING                                             | 33 |
|                   | POLICY RECOGNITION                                                      | 34 |
|                   | MINDANAO ENGAGEMENT                                                     | 34 |
|                   | INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING STRUCTURES                                   | 34 |
|                   | CROSS-SECTORAL COLLABORATIONS                                           | 34 |

|       |                                                                                          |    |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| VIII. | DIRECTORY OF ORGANISATIONS                                                               | 35 |
|       | CLIMATE REALITY PROJECT PHILIPPINES                                                      | 36 |
|       | AURORA ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM AND SPACE (AARPS)                                        | 37 |
|       | SAMA-SAMANG ARTISTA PARA SA<br>KILUSANG AGRARYO (SAKA PH)                                | 38 |
|       | GOOD FOOD COMMUNITY                                                                      | 39 |
|       | 350 PILIPINAS                                                                            | 40 |
|       | PARTNERS FOR INDIGENOUS<br>KNOWLEDGE PHILIPPINES (PIKP)                                  | 41 |
|       | YOUTH ADVOCATES FOR CLIMATE ACTION<br>PHILIPPINES (YACAP)                                | 42 |
|       | THE CENTER FOR ART, NEW VENTURES AND<br>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CANVAS)                 | 43 |
|       | ARTS RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE IN<br>SOUTHERN TAGALOG, INCORPORATED (ARTIST, INC.) | 44 |
|       | KIKIK KOLLEKTIVE                                                                         | 45 |
|       | KASING SINING                                                                            | 46 |
|       | YOUTH EMPOWERING YOUTH (YEY!) INITIATIVE INC.                                            | 47 |
|       | GOODLAND                                                                                 | 48 |
|       | YOUTH ADVOCATES THROUGH<br>THEATER ARTS (YATTA)                                          | 49 |
|       | TAO FOUNDATION FOR CULTURE AND ARTS                                                      | 50 |
|       | COMMUNITY PANTRY PH                                                                      | 51 |
|       | GOOD AND GREEN PODCAST                                                                   | 52 |
|       | LOKALPEDIA                                                                               | 53 |
| IX.   | GLOSSARY: HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE                                                         | 55 |



# Preface

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in partnership with the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) are delighted to launch the Green Guide for the Philippines, the 10<sup>th</sup> in the series *Creative Responses to Sustainability*.

The Philippines, an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands, faces some of the world’s most acute climate challenges. At the same time, it is home to a vibrant cultural landscape where art is deeply interwoven with daily life, Indigenous knowledge, and community values. This Green Guide for the Philippines sheds light on 18 organisations that are reshaping how creativity can be harnessed for ecological resilience, social justice, and sustainable futures.

The guide also offers recommendations to nurture this ecosystem: fostering knowledge exchange networks across regions; strengthening documentation and archiving of ephemeral practices; recognising creative methodologies within policy frameworks; addressing geographic imbalances such as in Mindanao; supporting intergenerational structures; and building cross-sectoral collaborations that connect art to agriculture, disaster response, and urban planning.

What emerges from this landscape is a distinctly Philippine model of creativity that refuses to separate art from community life. Rooted in Indigenous interpretations of art as ritual, utility, and shared practice, these initiatives remind us that art is not simply an object, but a process of knowing, connecting, and transforming. Whether through weaving, theatre, film, performance, or grassroots community action, art in the Philippines mediates meaning where words fall short, helps communities process crisis and trauma, and grounds ecological reflection in lived human experience.

By bringing these stories together, the Green Guide for the Philippines invites readers to see how Filipino artists and organisations are not only responding to climate realities, but also imagining new futures grounded in cultural strength and ecological care. These initiatives offer locally rooted yet globally relevant models that show us how creativity can serve as both a compass and a catalyst for change.

Together, the organisations in this guide — and the practices they represent — remind us that environmental change is not only a scientific or policy issue, but a cultural one. Rooted in the Philippines’ immense artistic heritage and community wisdom, they offer a powerful model of sustainable development grounded in creativity, collaboration, and care.

The Green Guide for the Philippines invites you to listen, to learn, and to act — through the arts, for the planet.

**Valentina RICCARDI**  
Director, Culture, ASEF  
Singapore, November 2025

This publication would not have been possible without the commitment and expertise of the team at the **University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU)**.

Our sincere thanks go to Dr Diego S. Maranan and Dr Joane V. Serrano for their vision and leadership in guiding the research, and to the UPOU team, Lorena Jean D. Saludadez, Franchesca A. Casauay, and Raizza Anna M. Alforja for their tireless work in bringing together stories that illuminate the intersection of culture and climate. We would also like to thank Dan Koh, for his valuable comments and detailed copyediting of the guide.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the organisations and artists who generously shared their time, experiences, and insights, helping us map the rich and evolving intersection of art and sustainability in the Philippines.

Special thanks to Kerrine Goh at the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) for her thoughtful coordination and thorough editorial support throughout the development of this guide.

Since 2015, ASEF has been publishing the series *Creative Responses to Sustainability* through its arts website, **culture360.ASEF.org**. This series of country-specific guides looks at arts organisations and artists’ initiatives that address issues of sustainability in their artistic practice in several countries of Asia and Europe. The previous guides focused on Singapore (2015), Korea (2016), Indonesia (2017), Australia (2018), Portugal and Spain (2019), the United Kingdom (2021), India (2025), with the spin-off in the series on the city of Berlin (2017).

*Creative Responses to Sustainability* builds on the discussions initiated by the Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA)<sup>1</sup> since 2013 and previously, on ASEF’s engagement with the topic of artists and climate change in global dialogues around environmental sustainability through its Connect2Culture programme (2008-2011).<sup>2</sup> **Through this series, culture360.ASEF.org continues to respond to the existing gaps in the information on arts & culture in Asia and Europe.** In doing so, it also contributes to the Agenda 2030, particularly SDG 16.10 (access to information).<sup>3</sup>

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1 Established in 2013, the Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA) is an informal network of 45 cultural organisations across Asia, Europe and Latin America contributing to environmental sustainability through their creative practice. For more information: <https://greenartlaballiance.com/>

2 Download the programme portfolio of Connect2Culture (2008-2011) at: <https://culture360.asef.org/resources/special-dossier-outlines-role-culture-tackling-global-issues>

3 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements: <https://sdg16now.org/report/target16-10/>

# Introduction



The notion that the environment shapes our characters, culture, and ways of life has been widely observed across the world and history.<sup>4</sup> People’s relationship to the soil, nature, and their habitats influenced the formation of societies, nations, and civilisations.<sup>5</sup> When examining the Philippines in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the physical environment indeed explains much about the country’s history, culture, religion, and society. To understand the archipelagic state, one must first understand the environment’s defining impacts on the Philippines.

The Philippines is a country rich in natural resources due to its unique geography and climate. It is situated where the Eurasian, Indo-Australian, Pacific, and Philippine Sea tectonic plates meet.<sup>6</sup> As a result of these convergences, the Philippines experiences high seismic activity, leading to earthquakes,<sup>7</sup> which contributed to the formation of mountains, fertile soils, and an abundance of minerals. Alternating wet and dry seasons are also experienced, offering ideal conditions for agriculture. The rainy season lasts from June to November, while the dry season extends from December to May.<sup>8</sup>

The Philippines is surrounded by diverse ecosystems, ranking fifth globally in the number of plant species and maintaining 5% of the

4 M. Freilich, “Ecology and Culture: Environmental Determinism and the Ecological Approach in Anthropology,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1967): 26–43, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3316830>.

5 See F. Ratzel, *Anthropogeographie*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart, 1909); *Anthropogeographie*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 1912); and *Politische Geographie*, 2nd ed. (Munich and Berlin, 1903).

6 T.-Y. Zhang et al., “Identification and Evolution of Tectonic Units in the Philippine Sea Plate,” *China Geology* 5, no. 1 (2022): 96–109, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2096519222000891>.

7 N. T. Ramos et al., “Seismotectonic Reactions to the Arc-Continent Convergence in Central Philippines,” *Resource Geology* 55, no. 3 (2005): 199–206, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-3928.2005.tb00241.x>.

8 Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), “Climate of the Philippines,” accessed September 18, 2025, <https://www.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/information/climate-philippines>.

world’s flora. Additionally, species endemism (species found only in one geographic area) is high, with the Philippines ranking fourth in the world in bird endemism.<sup>9</sup> Owing to this ecological richness, the country has been recognised as one of the 18 mega-biodiverse nations globally by the UN Environment Programme’s World Conservation Monitoring Centre.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, abundant biodiversity is accompanied by a preponderance of natural hazards. The Philippines is recognised as one of the most vulnerable countries to extreme weather events, ranking as the tenth most affected globally between 1993 to 2022.<sup>11</sup> Rising sea levels threaten low-lying coastal communities, where approximately 60% of Filipinos reside.<sup>12</sup> The country endures an average of 20 typhoons annually, with increasing intensity attributed to climate change.<sup>13</sup> Heat indices continue to reach record highs. For example, the state weather bureau declared in 2024 that 36 areas fell under “dangerous” heat index classification, with temperatures ranging from 42°C to 47°C.<sup>14</sup> These natural and man-made challenges continue to threaten the Philippine environment, increasing the risks of insecurity, displacement, and even loss of life for many Filipinos.



In response to this existential threat, Philippine creative and art organisations have taken a frontline role in advocating for environmental and broader sustainability. For example, artist Marrz Capanang, Co-Founder of the Kikik Kollektive group in Iloilo, emphasises that given the country’s worsening environmental realities, the role of Filipino artists is evolving. Their function can no longer revolve solely around creating beauty — they now bear a growing responsibility to raise awareness among broader communities.<sup>15</sup> Among creatives and artists interviewed, there is a deepening recognition of the power of art to convey messages that not only inform but also resonate, stirring audience members towards a deeper concern for sustainability. For instance, Jerrey David Aguilar, Executive Director of Kasing Sining, shares how his Bohol-based repertory theatre troupe harnesses art, with its power to inspire, in expressing complex messages and advocating issues.<sup>16</sup> These case studies exemplify how arts organisations across the Philippines have begun to fully embrace their instrumental role in encouraging people to

make continuous and conscious decisions to care about ecology. With their unique, firsthand perspectives, Filipino creatives and artists recognise the potential impact they hold in championing for sustainability; they offer compelling approaches and opportunities for spurring direct environmental action.

At the grassroots level of the arts and environmentalism, it is critical to understand that small actions, whether beneficial or detrimental, add up. Art collectives operating within communities are often overlooked, yet are vital to the success of environmental advocacy. This guide seeks to highlight and centre the efforts of these cultural organisations, which have long contributed from the sidelines, so that they may be empowered and their efforts further amplified.

Objectives of this Guide

*Creative Responses to Sustainability: Green Guide for the Philippines* is an effort to provide a contextual overview of the intersection between sustainability and the arts in the Philippines. As a geographically diverse and environmentally vulnerable country, the Philippines faces unique sustainability challenges, and this guide seeks to foreground the creative approaches that have emerged in response. It aims to spark dialogue, encourage further research, and open opportunities for cross-sectoral and international collaborations focused on art and environmental sustainability. Specifically, this guide aims to provide:



A preliminary overview of the artistic landscape and environmental realities in the Philippines, informed by interviews and conversations with artists, cultural workers, and sustainability advocates;



Insight into the evolving role of arts organisations and collectives in responding to sustainability challenges through creative practices and community engagement;



Concrete reflections and recommendations to strengthen the contribution of the arts to a more sustainable and climate-resilient Philippines; and



A selection of notable creative initiatives and grassroots efforts across the country that integrate sustainability-related themes in meaningful and innovative ways.

9 Convention on Biological Diversity, “Philippines - Country Profile,” UN Environment Programme, accessed May 24, 2025, <https://www.cbd.int/countries/profile?country=ph>.

10 Convention on Biological Diversity, “Philippines - Country Profile.”

11 L. Adil et al., *Climate Risk Index 2025: Who Suffers Most from Extreme Wewather Events?* (Germanwatch, 2025), <https://www.germanwatch.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Climate%20Risk%20Index%202025.pdf>.

12 C. G. Taguam and C. B. Quiambao, “Rural Coastal Households’ Cognition of Sea Level Rise: The Case of Zambales, Philippines,” paper presented at the 13th National Convention of Statistics, Philippine Statistics Authority, Mandaluyong City, October 3–4, 2016, <https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/ncs-manuscripts-powerpoint/Session%25201-5%2520Rural%2520Coastal%2520Households%2527%2520Cognition%2520of%2520Sea%2520Level%2520Rise%2520The%2520Case%2520of%2520Zambales%252C%2520Philippines.pdf>.

13 Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), “Tropical Cyclone Information,” accessed September 18, 2025, <https://www.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/climate/tropical-cyclone-information>.

14 I. Laqui, “PAGASA: 36 Areas Under ‘Dangerous’ Heat Index Classification on April 29,” Philstar.com, April 29, 2024, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/04/29/2351297/pagasa-36-areas-under-dangerous-heat-index-classification-april-29>.

15 Marrz Capanang, Zoom interview with authors, March 18, 2025.

16 Jerrey David Aguilar, Zoom interview with authors, March 18, 2025.



## Targeted Impacts

Through this guide, the following impacts aim to contribute to the overall goals of environmental sustainability, particularly by recognising and strengthening the role of the arts and art organisations in the Philippines:

- ➔  Strengthen the visibility and voices of Philippine art organisations working at the intersection of art, sustainability, and community engagement, both locally and globally;
- ➔  Support the development of a national ecosystem in which artists, cultural institutions, and environmental advocates can collaborate more effectively on sustainability initiatives;
- ➔  Encourage interdisciplinary collaborations by providing international partners with an overview of potential collaborators in the Philippines;
- ➔  Foster deeper understanding of how localised, creative approaches can complement scientific and policy-driven solutions to sustainability challenges; as well as
- ➔  Inspire future research, programming, and cultural projects that centre artistic practice in responding to climate change, environmental vulnerability, and other sustainability challenges in the Philippines.

# Methodology

In compiling this directory of Philippine-based organisations that utilise creativity to respond to the challenges of environmental sustainability, desk research was initially employed. This was then supplemented with conversations with practitioners across the country. This chapter outlines how the researchers pieced together their understanding of this sector.

At the outset, the research consisted of attempting to understand how various organisations approached environmental advocacy through creative means: by sifting through websites, social media posts, and news coverage, and pursuing leads from both personal and professional networks. This preliminary mapping revealed a constellation of initiatives spanning the visual arts, live performances, community engagement, and Indigenous cultural practices.

Interviewing or researching one organisation would often lead to another, through mentioned partnerships or collaborative projects.

This organic snowball effect enabled the discovery of smaller, grassroots initiatives that might otherwise have remained hidden, especially across the major island groups of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

In developing this initial directory, priority was given to organisational profiles that remain less visible in environmental discourse. While a handful of established NGOs was included for necessary context, the primary focus was on grassroots and independent initiatives that met at least two of these criteria:

- ➔ Functioning without regular commercial backing or institutional funding;
- ➔ Operating without public relations or advertising budgets, and would benefit from being featured internationally in this guide;
- ➔ Working outside or beyond Metro Manila, to decentralise focus on the urban centre, which already has a lot of opportunities for visibility;
- ➔ Established by those native-born to their regions of operation, to prioritise knowledge production in communities with generational relationships to specific ecosystems; or
- ➔ If not native-born, with deep, long-standing relationships to the communities they work with, or clear protocols of engagement with these communities.

To verify findings and fill in gaps, the researchers reached out to shortlisted organisations and conducted interviews, both face-to-face and online, between November 2024 to March 2025. These conversations proved invaluable, offering insights into the day-to-day realities of running such initiatives, as well as their experience and challenges. Speaking with climate activists, artist collectives, and cultural workers facilitated a deeper understanding of the nuances of their work beyond what published materials could convey.

When analysing the gathered information, patterns were identified in how different groups approached environmental advocacy. Attention was paid to their artistic and creative methods, the communities they worked with, and the specific environmental issues they tackled. Assessment of their similarities and distinctions revealed trends that painted a clearer picture of the sector's current state and future potential.

Certain constraints were encountered during the data-gathering process. Many smaller initiatives, especially those in remote areas, maintain a minimal online presence, making them harder to find, document, and contact. Time limitations and scheduling conflicts also precluded interviews with every identified organisation. Additionally, some grassroots projects focus more on practice than documentation, leaving source gaps in understanding their full impact.

The resulting list of organisations, therefore, is not exhaustive, but hopefully provides a snapshot of how some Philippine organisations are tackling environmental challenges through creative means.

# State of Affairs

## Facts and Figures

The national currency is the Philippine Peso (₱).

The Philippines is an archipelagic country consisting of 7,641 islands, with a total land area of approximately 300,000 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>17</sup>

The country has three main island groups or geographical clusters: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

The Philippines is among the most populous countries in the world, ranking second in Southeast Asia with over 115 million inhabitants as of 2024.<sup>18</sup>

The major economic sectors comprise services, industry, and agriculture, with respective contributions to GDP of 62.9%, 28.3%, and 8.8%.<sup>16</sup>

The Philippines is recognised as one of the 18 mega-biodiverse countries in the world.<sup>20</sup>

The Philippines was colonised by Spain and the United States for, respectively, 333 years and 48 years, including three years under Japanese occupation.<sup>21</sup>

The national language is Filipino, also an official language with English. There are 175 native languages spoken across the country.<sup>22</sup>

During the Martial Law period (1972–81) of dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos, an estimated 3,200 people were killed, 34,000 tortured, and 70,000 incarcerated.<sup>23</sup>

In 2019, the Philippines was declared the deadliest country in the world for environmental defenders, with at least 19,498 of such advocates subjected to a wide range of human rights abuses under the Rodrigo Duterte administration.<sup>24</sup>

The Philippines is highly vulnerable to disasters and ranks as one of the world’s most affected countries by climate change.<sup>25</sup>

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, hunger surged, with 30.7% of Filipino families experiencing involuntary hunger in September 2020.<sup>26</sup> By August 2023, there were approximately 66,600 deaths from the coronavirus.<sup>27</sup>

The Philippines possesses some of the most diverse natural resources in the world, protected by Indigenous groups.



The country ranks fifth globally in the number of plant species and fourth in bird endemism.<sup>28</sup>



Indigenous communities developed sustainable practices and knowledge systems that were deeply intertwined with their spiritual beliefs and relationship to the land.<sup>29</sup> Art practices in the Philippines were inseparable from daily life, manifested in wood carving, weaving, and pottery.

The same natural resources were soon coveted and exploited by colonial interests.

### Colonial Experience

The Spanish colonial administration (1565–1898) initiated systematic changes in Philippine society that undermined Indigenous cultures and subsistence practices. These transformations laid the groundwork for subsequent colonial regimes: The American (1898–1946) and Japanese (1942–45) occupations intensified these impacts. Both periods further reshaped land management through extractive practices, resulting in serious ecological problems and the continued erosion of Indigenous ways of life.<sup>30</sup>

### Formation of the Philippine Ruling Class

➡ Colonial expansionism also introduced sociocultural, political, and economic changes that gave rise to a Philippine elite or ruling class.

➡ A new Filipino elite, collaborating with colonial authorities and reinforcing cultural imperialism, accumulated wealth, power, and influence during these occupations.<sup>31</sup>

Post-independence governance inherited layered historical influences while facing emerging environmental challenges.

➡ In the modern era, Filipino elites replaced the colonial administrators and continued practices of resource extraction to further their influence in Philippine society.<sup>32</sup>

➡ Resources in the Philippines have been heavily mismanaged, resulting in detrimental environmental and socioeconomic consequences, including environmental degradation and unequal access that has exacerbated poverty among the marginalised classes.<sup>33</sup>

17 CIA, “Philippines,” *The World Factbook*, last updated September 17, 2025, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/philippines/>.

18 The World Bank Group, “Population, Total - Philippines,” *World Development Indicators*, accessed September 20, 2025, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=PH>.

19 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, “Gross National Income (GNI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by Industry,” accessed September 20, 2025, [https://www.bsp.gov.ph/Statistics/Real%20Sector%20Accounts/tab29\\_giu.aspx](https://www.bsp.gov.ph/Statistics/Real%20Sector%20Accounts/tab29_giu.aspx).

20 Convention on Biological Diversity, “Philippines - Country Profile.”

21 G. C. Borlaza and C. G. Hernandez, “history of the Philippines,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, last updated July 27, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-Philippines>.

22 Ethnologue, “Philippines,” accessed May 24, 2025, <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/PH/>.

23 Amnesty International, “Philippines: Restore Respect for Human Rights on 46th Anniversary of Martial Law,” press statement, September 21, 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ASA3591392018ENGLISH.pdf>.

24 J. L. A. Dulce et al., “A War of Plunder Against Environmental Defenders in the Philippines,” in “Defenders and the Many Faces of Repression,” eds. A. Ramos et al., special issue, *Policy Matters* 22, no. 1 (2021): 28–35, <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/Policy-Matters-Issue-22-vol1.pdf>.

25 Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department, *Global Climate Risk Index 2021* (Facts in Figures no. 9, House of Representatives, 2021), [https://cpbrd.congress.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/FF2021-09\\_Global\\_Climate\\_Risk.pdf](https://cpbrd.congress.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/FF2021-09_Global_Climate_Risk.pdf).

26 H. Flores, “SWS: Hunger Hits New High of 30.7%,” *Philippine Star*, September 28, 2020, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/09/28/2045640/sws-hunger-hits-new-high-307>.

27 S. Locus, “Philippines Logs 977 COVID-19 Cases from July 31–August 6, Lowest in 22 Weeks,” *GMA News Online*, August 7, 2023, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/878130/philippines-logs-977-cases-from-july-31-august-6-lowest-in-22-weeks/story/>.

28 Convention on Biological Diversity, “Philippines - Country Profile.”

29 L. Acero, “Towards Environmental Sustainability: Beliefs and Livelihood Practices of Tagbanuas in Buong Narra Palawan, Philippines,” *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 505 (2020): 012034, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/505/1/012034>.

30 F. I. Rodriguez, “Reconstituting Damaged Ecologies: Ethics for Post-Colonial Development,” *Global Bioethics* 11, nos. 1–4 (1998): 47–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/11287462.1998.10800730>.

31 C. N. Magno and P. C. Parnell, “The Imperialism of Race: Class, Rights and Patronage in the Philippine City,” *Race & Class* 56, no. 3 (2015): 69–85, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396814542922>.

32 R. U. Mendoza et al., “Political Dynasties, Business, and Poverty in the Philippines,” *Journal of Government and Economics* 7 (2022): 100051, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jge.2022.100051>.

33 G. Porter and D. J. Ganapin, “Resources, Population and the Future of the Philippines,” in *In the U.S. Interest: Resources, Growth, and Security in the Developing World*, ed. J. W. Brown (Routledge, 1990), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429033605-3>.



In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, forest coverage declined from approximately 70% to 20%,<sup>34</sup> urban populations expanded dramatically, and industrial development intensified pressure on natural resources.



Recent Philippine administrations, including those of Duterte (2016–22) and Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. (2022–present), have faced criticism over environmental policies that prioritise economic development over conservation, as well as human rights violations and corruption.<sup>35</sup>

The historical experience of the Philippines, as outlined above, cannot be separated from the current challenges the country faces in terms of sustainability. This underlying context sets the foundation for understanding the approaches, perspectives, philosophies, and art practices of organisations in the Philippines.

## Introduction to Sustainability Issues in the Philippines

### Strengths

The Philippines is rich in biodiversity that is able to sustain unique and even complex ecosystems.

Indigenous knowledge systems have been continuously gaining recognition and are becoming more systematically documented, particularly for their roles in environmental protection and cultural preservation.<sup>36</sup>

Concern for environmental and social issues is deeply rooted in Filipino culture, evident in values such as: *bayanihan* (the tradition of helping one another, particularly in times of need), *pakikiramay* (one’s shared solidarity with those who are going through hardship), and *pakikipagkapwa* (recognising oneself in others, therefore treating them with empathy, respect, and shared humanity).<sup>37</sup>

Sustainability discourses appear to be gaining more interest within the arts sector, with many more artists actively responding to ecological and social concerns.

### Weaknesses

There is rapid loss of biodiversity due to the exploitation of natural resources, such as illegal logging and industrial agricultural expansion.

Indigenous cultures and their sustainable practices are in decline with the threats of globalisation, displacement due to environmental aggression, and the departure of Indigenous youth from traditional practices.<sup>38</sup>

Filipino values that espouse concern for the community and surroundings are slowly being replaced by modern ways of life, such as individuality, consumerism, and rapid urbanisation.

Environmental policies sometimes lack strong implementation and proper enforcement, resulting in continued exploitation of natural resources.<sup>39</sup>

Activists and Indigenous leaders who advocate for sustainable practices face threats and intimidation by corporate and even government entities.<sup>40</sup>



### Environmental Crises: Stripping Lands and Rising Perils

The Philippines has long been recognised for its biodiversity, boasting diverse ecosystems and habitats, including tropical rainforests, mangroves, coral reefs, and volcanic mountains.<sup>41</sup>

With this bountiful biodiversity, it comes as no surprise that natural resources have become one of the Philippines’ primary economic boosters. Several industries rely on the exploitation of land and sea. The country is experiencing what has been coined the “resource curse,” also known as the “paradox of plenty.”<sup>42</sup>

Environmental issues have become key concerns. The Forest Management Bureau reported that the Philippines is losing around 47,000 hectares of forest cover yearly.<sup>40</sup> Illegal logging, industrial agricultural expansion, and development projects continue to threaten remaining forests. The expansion of palm oil plantations, with 63,380 hectares planted as of 2022, has depleted significant forest areas, particularly in Mindanao potentially.<sup>44</sup>

Other resource-extractive activities are endangering not just land but lives as well. Mining and quarrying, a broad range of agricultural activities, and oil and gas extraction contribute to large-scale environmental degradation and can be life-threatening.<sup>45</sup>

This rapid industrialisation, alongside the observed worsening of floods, droughts, cyclones, and typhoons, continues to place the Philippines

34 R. D. Lasco et al., “Secondary Forests in the Philippines: Formation and Transformation in the 20th Century,” *Journal of Tropical Forest Science* 13, no. 4 (2001): 652–670, [https://www.cifor-icraf.org/publications/pdf\\_files/SecondaryForest/Lasco.pdf](https://www.cifor-icraf.org/publications/pdf_files/SecondaryForest/Lasco.pdf).

35 Center for Environmental Concerns – Philippines, “Rising for Climate Justice Is Demanding Accountability and Reparations for Environmental Destruction Caused by Foreign Capitalist Plunder and the Complicit Duterte and Marcos Jr. Governments!,” press statement, November 18, 2024, <https://www.cecphils.org/rising-for-climate-justice-is-demanding-accountability-and-reparations-for-environmental-destruction/>.

36 L. D. Camacho et al., “Indigenous Knowledge and Practices for the Sustainable Management of Ifugao Forests in Cordillera, Philippines,” *International Journal of Biodiversity Science, Ecosystem Services & Management* 12, nos. 1–2 (2016): 5–13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21513732.2015.1124453>; J. N. Paing et al., “Exploring the Connections Between Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Ecosystem Services, and Agroecosystem-Based Livelihoods in the Cordillera Region, Northern Philippines,” *Tropical Ecology*, August 30, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42965-025-00393-w>.

37 See V. G. Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: The Philippine Experience* (University of the Philippines Press, 1992) for a foundational discussion of these Filipino cultural values.

38 For further discussions on the deterioration of Indigenous culture amid growing modernity, see K. Dream and O. R. Ravanera, “How Oppressed Are the IPs?: The Lives of the Indigenous People Matter,” Cooperative Development Authority, November 10, 2020, <https://www.cda.gov.ph/updates/how-oppressed-are-the-ips-the-lives-of-the-indigenous-people-matter/>; M. T. G. Ting Jr. et al., “Modernity vs. Culture: Protecting the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines,” *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies* 1 (2008), <https://arastirmax.com/en/system/files/dergiler/25821/makaleler/1/1/arastirmax-modernity-vs.culture-protecting-indigenous-peoples-philippines.pdf>.

39 F. A. Magno, “The Growth of Philippine Environmentalism,” *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 9, no. 1 (1993): 7–18, <https://scispace.com/pdf/the-growth-of-philippine-environmentalism-1yxj5wufhm.pdf>.

40 W. Dressler, “Defending Lands and Forests: NGO Histories, Everyday Struggles, and Extraordinary Violence in the Philippines,” *Critical Asian Studies* 53, no. 3 (2021): 380–411, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2021.1899834>.

41 ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, “Philippines,” ASEAN Biodiversity Dashboard, accessed September 20, 2025, <https://dashboard.aseanbiodiversity.org/philippines>.

42 B. Chanco, “Resource Curse,” *Philippine Star*, December 6, 2023, <https://www.philstar.com/business/2023/12/06/2316684/resource-curse>.

43 Biodiversity Management Bureau, “Trends and Threats,” Philippine Clearing House Mechanism, accessed May 24, 2025, <http://www.philchm.ph/status-of-philippine-biodiversity-2/trends-and-threats>.

44 Philippine Coconut Authority, *Philippine Palm Oil Industry Roadmap 2024–2033* (Philippine Coconut Authority – Operations Branch, 2023), [https://www.pca.gov.ph/images/OilPalm/PDF\\_Philippine\\_Palm\\_Oil\\_Industry\\_Roadmap\\_2024-2033.pdf](https://www.pca.gov.ph/images/OilPalm/PDF_Philippine_Palm_Oil_Industry_Roadmap_2024-2033.pdf).

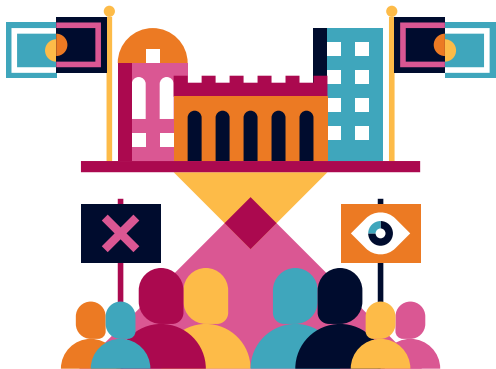
45 N. Myers, “Environmental Degradation and Some Economic Consequences in the Philippines,” *Environmental Conservation* 15, no. 3 (1988): 205–214, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0376892900029337>.



in increasingly precarious conditions. Severe consequences of climate change and global warming, intensified natural disasters, and increasing levels of waste and pollution are already felt, with more to unfold. In an alarming occurrence in the last quarter of 2024, six major storms passed through the country in the span of four weeks, as the multi-institutional World Weather Attribution reports,

“This clustering of storms in November, never before witnessed in the basin, affected more than 13 million people, destroying lives and livelihoods and putting enormous strain on resources and infrastructure.”<sup>46</sup>

Should matters proceed with a business-as-usual attitude, without embracing genuine environmental action and reforms, more lives will be lost to complacency.



**Social Injustice: Margins of Society as the Centres of Struggle**

Human rights issues continue to be documented in the Philippines, including cases of harassment, intimidation, silencing of dissent, enforced disappearances, and killings.<sup>47</sup> Vulnerable communities — farmers, fisherfolk, informal settlers, Indigenous peoples, and the poor — are among those who are often affected. As documented by various reports from both mainstream and alternative media sources, these often occur within the context of power and elite dynamics.

While the country has made significant economic pursuits, high poverty incidence remains, and social mobility continues to be a pressing concern. Social scientists have long recognised and discussed how, in the Philippines, “access to the state apparatus is the primary means of private accumulation,” describing how elite rule is dominant in the country.<sup>48</sup>

In 2022, activists Rose Marie Galias and Silvestre Fortades Jr., who campaigned for peasant and workers’ rights, were fatally shot in what was widely seen as a politically motivated attack.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, in 2017, Indigenous leader Renato Anglao was killed. His death is believed to be tied to a land dispute between his tribal group and a local pineapple plantation.<sup>50</sup> Rodne Galicha, Executive Director of non-profit organisation Living Laudato Si’ Philippines, reaffirms that environmental defenders

experience risks, particularly when their campaigns target political families with business interests in real estate, mining, large-scale agriculture, reclamation projects, and other related industries and ventures.<sup>51</sup> A 2024 report by investigative organisation Global Witness supports these claims, revealing that between 2012 and 2023, 64% of environmental defenders murdered in Asia happened in the Philippines. The Philippines was hence dubbed “the most dangerous country in Asia for defenders.”<sup>52</sup>



**Cultural Resilience: Empowering Cultures at Risk of Being Forgotten**

Given the Philippines’ rich history and cultural diversity, it faces a paradox wherein globalisation and development are driving economic growth while simultaneously accelerating the erosion of Indigenous cultures. This cultural decline not only threatens national heritage but also compromises environmental sustainability, as Indigenous knowledge systems are deeply intertwined with ecological stewardship.

Indigenous people, in particular, are affected by industrial expansion, such as large-scale mining, agribusiness, and other resource-intensive ventures, and its related human rights violations, like forced evictions, displacement, and land grabbing.<sup>53</sup> Global Witness and Kalikasan People’s Network for the Environment report that since the 1990s, Indigenous communities in the Philippines have lost a total land area bigger than the size of Timor Leste due to mining activities.<sup>54</sup>

This loss of land, lives, and security threatens Indigenous cultural heritage, sovereignty, traditions, and ways of life. One example is the Kankanaey and Ibaloy in northern Luzon, who are being displaced by large-scale gold mining. This has disrupted their deep-rooted connection to ancestral lands, resulting in the intangible loss of traditional knowledge and environmental management practices.<sup>55</sup>

Indigenous languages, too, are at stake. According to the University of the Philippines’ Department of Linguistics, of the country’s 175 Indigenous languages, 35 are endangered and 11 are critically at risk.<sup>56</sup> This threatens the loss of crucial portions of Philippine identity, as language constitutes an “important part of our sense of who we are.”<sup>57</sup>

46 World Weather Attribution, “Climate Change Supercharged Late Typhoon Season in the Philippines, Highlighting the Need for Resilience to Consecutive Events,” December 12, 2024, <https://www.worldweatherattribution.org/climate-change-supercharged-late-typhoon-season-in-the-philippines-highlighting-the-need-for-resilience-to-consecutive-events/>.

47 S. L. Taya, “Political Legal Overview Perspective: Evaluating Human Rights in the Philippines,” *REKA-YASA : Journal of Ethics, Legal and Governance*, 4 (2008): 87–98, <https://repo.uum.edu.my/id/eprint/11936/1/9.pdf>.

48 P. D. Hutchcroft, “Oligarchs and Cronies in the Philippine State: The Politics of Patrimonial Plunder,” *World Politics* 43, no. 3 (1991): 9n, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010401>.

49 K. A. Fabro, “Who Were the 11 Philippines Environmental Defenders Killed in 2022?,” *Mongabay*, September 21, 2023, <https://news.mongabay.com/2023/09/who-were-the-11-philippines-environmental-defenders-killed-in-2022/>.

50 Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, “Philippines: AIPP Condemns the Killing of Lumad Leader Renato Anglao, Calls the Authorities for Effective Investigation and Justice,” press statement, February 20, 2017, [https://aippnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/statement\\_anglao-case-RMP-NMR\\_FINAL.pdf](https://aippnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/statement_anglao-case-RMP-NMR_FINAL.pdf).

51 Rodne Galicha, Zoom interview with authors, March 18, 2025.

52 Global Witness, *Missing Voices: The Violent Erasure of Land and Environmental Defenders* (Global Witness, 2024), <https://globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/land-and-environmental-defenders/missing-voices/>.

53 L. L. P. Simporios, “Silenced Narratives: Assessing the Human Rights Situations of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives* 2, no. 5 (2024): 16–36. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2024.0062>.

54 Global Witness, “How the Militarisation of Mining Threatens Indigenous Defenders in the Philippines,” December 3, 2024, <https://globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/land-and-environmental-defenders/how-the-militarisation-of-mining-threatens-indigenous-defenders-in-the-philippines>.

55 D. K. Sunuwar, “Indigenous Peoples Continue 100-Year Fight Against Large-Scale Gold Mining in the Philippines,” *Cultural Survival*, July 11, 2023, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/indigenous-peoples-continue-100-year-fight-against-large-scale-gold-mining-philippines>.

56 E. Aglipay-Villar, “Save Our Endangered Languages,” *Philippine Star*, August 6, 2024, <https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/08/06/2375844/save-our-endangered-languages>.

57 J. Edwards, *Language and Identity: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), i, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511809842>.



Traditional concepts, such as bayanihan, which are rooted in concern for collective well-being and environmental balance, are slowly disappearing and increasingly forgotten, especially among younger generations. While there remain active and visible instances of bayanihan, keeping such values alive, anecdotal observations show how competition for aid has grown and neighbourly help has diminished over time, particularly as people realise that their needs often exceed the available assistance. Cultural shifts are also unavoidable with changing times: In the period of subsistence farming, people were reliant on the help of their neighbours, but with the modern economy, wherein hiring labour has become the norm, this natural practice of bayanihan is disappearing. Overall, modern values are gradually replacing traditional values and practices.<sup>58</sup>

Likewise, there is an observed loss of knowledge of traditional food culture, like root crop delicacies, as the importance of Indigenous and regional cuisines is increasingly being displaced by modernisation and further diminished by lack of practice.<sup>59</sup> The loss of Filipino culinary heritage, which is rooted in biodiversity, community feasting, and respectful harvesting, weakens cultural identity and also distances people from sustainable food practices that were once central to Filipino life.

## Introduction of Filipino Art and Cultural Context

### Strengths

Filipino art is deeply guided by ideology and principles, and is rich with advocacy.

Indigenous arts practices, such as carving of *bulul* (the Ifugao people’s granary idols),<sup>60</sup> textile weaving, boat-making, and oral epics, are interwoven with philosophies and actions that promote sustainability and ecological stewardship.

Filipino artists are creatively upholding Indigenous philosophy and practices of art, while promoting a deep and wide understanding of sustainability issues through the use of recycled materials, public installations, and climate-themed works.

### Weaknesses

Despite the presence of government bodies that support and empower artistic pursuits, poor implementation, lack of coordination, and bureaucratic red tape hinder the impact of community-based arts initiatives.<sup>61</sup>

Local governments often lack resources — particularly funding, technical capacity, and data systems — to support or scale environmentally themed arts programmes.



To renowned Filipino art historian Alice G. Guillermo, “Art is not an innocent and neutral practice but contains ideologies which are perspectival and interest-linked.”<sup>62</sup> This quote sets the philosophical backdrop needed to understand artists in the Philippines and the beliefs they promote through their practices. Increasingly, arts in the Philippines — both Indigenous and present-day forms — operate at the forefront of sustainability discourse, addressing ecological decline, cultural loss, and sociopolitical marginalisation through creative, community-based initiatives.

The following section reviews literature that sets the tone for understanding the artistic context of the Philippines.

Arts in the Philippines is recognised and categorised by government entities in various ways. The Philippine Creative Industries Development Act (Republic Act No. 11904) identifies nine domains of the industry: Audiovisual Media, Digital Interactive Media, Creative Services, Design, Publishing and Printed Media, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Traditional Cultural Expressions, and Cultural Sites.<sup>63</sup> In addition, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the official government agency for culture, deeply recognises Indigenous traditions alongside contemporary art. As Felipe M. de Leon Jr., NCCA’s former Chairman and Commissioner for the Arts, writes, “It is heartening to realise that no matter how extensive Western influence is on Philippine culture, the Filipinos’ traditional sensibility, world view, values and attitudes remain essentially intact.”<sup>64</sup>

Earlier forms of artistic expression in the country offered unique methods for encoding and applying Indigenous ecological and cultural knowledge. Given the intrinsic connection that Indigenous Filipino communities have with the environment, stemming from careful observation and long-standing tradition, their artistic practices are also deeply rooted in ecological knowledge systems.

Some examples of how Indigenous communities have effectively integrated agricultural and environmental practices into their way of life include: In North Luzon, the Banaue Rice Terraces — a UNESCO World Heritage Site — exemplify the engineering, environmental knowledge,

58 D. Hilhorst et al., “Is Disaster ‘Normal’ for Indigenous People? Indigenous Knowledge and Coping Practices,” *Disaster Prevention and Management* 24, no. 4 (2015): 506–522, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/DPM-02-2015-0027>.

59 B. T. Gayao et al., “Loss of Traditional Rootcrops Knowledge (TRK) Among Some Indigenous People in Northern Philippines,” *Benguet State University Research Journal* 75 (2016): 6–15, <https://doi.org/10.70884/mjsir.v75i0.73>; B. D. M. De Villa et al., “Explicating the Culinary Heritage Significance of Filipino *Kakanin* Using Bibliometrics (1934–2018),” *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science* 28 (2022): 100522, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijgfs.2022.100522>.

60 National Museum of the Philippines, “Bulul and the Socio-Cultural Significance of Rice,” November 30, 2022, <https://www.nationalmuseum.gov.ph/2022/11/30/bulul-and-the-socio-cultural-significance-of-rice>.

61 For example, see F. M. Cervantes, “House Leader Calls for Speedier Release of NCCA Grants to Artists,” *Philippine News Agency*, February 15, 2023, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1195322>.

62 A. G. Guillermo, “Art and Society,” in *Humanities: Art and Society Handbook* (University of the Philippines Press, 1998), 46–56.

63 An Act Providing for the Development and Promotion of the Philippine Creative Industries, and Appropriating Funds Therefor, Republic of the Philippines Act No. 11904 (18th Congress, 2022), *Lawphil*, [https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2022/ra\\_11904\\_2022.html](https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2022/ra_11904_2022.html).

64 F. M. de Leon Jr., “In Focus: Philippine Arts in Context,” National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), July 29, 2011, <https://ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/in-focus/philippine-arts-in-context>.

and cultural practice of the Ifugao group through this agricultural system.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, the Ifugao’s forest management system called *muyong* (meaning “woodlot”) demonstrates unique cultural knowledge rooted in Indigenous practices. Muyong serves as a forest conservation strategy, a watershed rehabilitation technique, and an assisted natural regeneration approach. The intricacy of the muyong system reflects a way of life and culture that is deeply intertwined with the use of the environment and natural resources.<sup>66</sup>

In coastal communities, art forms such as dance have been used to convey littoral practices. For instance, the folk and occupational dance Mananagat depicts the acts of catching and gathering fish, while the Pamulad Isda dance of the Visayas island Negros portrays the drying of fish and is traditionally performed in summer, when fish are plentiful.<sup>67</sup> In boatbuilding traditions among the Bajau of Mindanao’s Tawi-Tawi islands, knowing how to build a boat — especially for boys — is a rite of passage into manhood. Indigenous boatbuilding knowledge is passed down from father to son, including specific knowledge about wood selection and sustainable harvesting calendars, to ensure the construction of high-quality boats resistant to shipworms and the elements.<sup>68</sup>

Among the T’boli people of southern Mindanao, the weaving of the T’nalak cloth is a sacred ritual, guided by beliefs and undertaken with great care. Performed at festivals, its making is regarded as an eco-spiritual experience in which the tools connect and engage with the environment.<sup>69</sup> This production involves sustainable cultivation practices of abaca — or Manila hemp, the fibre of a native banana’s leafstalk — using natural dyes derived from forest plants<sup>70</sup> harvested in accordance with seasonal calendars.

Epic narratives and Indigenous songs also function as sophisticated ecological knowledge systems encoded in artistic form. The Panay Bukidnon’s epic chants (*sugidanon*) and poem (“Hinilawod”) contain detailed accounts of the early history, culture, origins, and beliefs of Indigenous groups residing in the Visayas’ island of Panay. These oral literatures also describe farming practices, medicinal plants, and systems of timekeeping, orientation, and weather monitoring, effectively serving as field guides to the region’s biodiversity, practices, and ways of life.<sup>71</sup> As cited by the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, “Hinilawod” reflects “the worldview and cultural identity of an Indigenous community that has remained largely untouched by external influences.”<sup>72</sup>

Today, different contextual realities have influenced how these artistic practices are manifested. They are, nevertheless, still informed by Indigenous perspectives, in which art responds to and emerges from one’s surroundings.

Modern Filipino artists continue to draw upon traditional ecological knowledge systems to address present environmental challenges. The Talaandig soil painters in Bukidnon, Mindanao, for example, demonstrate how traditional art can be adapted for environmental education. Their soil-painting tradition, imbued with imagination, spirituality, and cosmology, enhances appreciation of the earth and the different colours of ancestral soil. This builds awareness of the beauty of nature and provides deeper insight into agriculture, mining, and construction.<sup>73</sup>

In the contemporary art sphere, artists are increasingly engaging with environmental issues through various media. Interviews with artist organisations revealed that urban artists in Metro Manila often utilise recycled materials and the technique of assemblage, reflecting the challenges of urbanisation and the pursuit of sustainability goals. Coastal communities in the Visayas, on the other hand, incorporate themes of climate resilience and motifs of marine life into their crafts.<sup>74</sup> These practices demonstrate that the interplay between art and environmental activism has gained momentum and diversity.



Filipino art, however, no longer deals solely with environmental issues. With the ripple effect caused by the growing complexity of sustainability challenges, Filipino art is evolving in response. Artists continue to serve as vital cultural responders, preserving traditions while innovating new approaches. Their current work not only documents sustainability challenges, directly or indirectly, but also contributes to imagining more sustainable futures for the archipelago in general.

In the coming chapters, this guide will explore the current trajectory of arts organisations in creatively responding to sustainability issues.

65 UNESCO World Heritage Centre, “Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras,” accessed May 24, 2025, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/722/>.

66 M. Butic and R. Ngidlo, “Muyong Forest of Ifugao: Assisted Natural Regeneration in Traditional Forest Management,” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed September 19, 2025, <https://www.fao.org/4/ad466e/ad466e06.htm>.

67 L. Gabao, “Philippine Occupational Dance,” National Commission for Culture and the Arts, accessed September 20, 2025, <https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-the-arts-sca/dance/philippine-occupational-dance>.

68 P. R. R. Castrillo, “Getting the Lepa on an Even Keel in the Philippines and Malaysia,” Budayaw Festival, accessed September 19, 2025, <https://budayaw.com/getting-the-lepa-on-an-even-keel-in-the-philippines-and-malaysia/>.

69 L. d. R. Garcia and H. T. Biana, “Weaving Dreams of a World Among Worlds: T’nalak of the T’boli as an Ecological Practice,” *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 16, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v16n1.05>.

70 K. Palasi, “Philippine Natural Dyes: A Short Overview,” *HABI Highlights* (blog), HABI: The Philippine Textile Council, February 22, 2022, <https://www.habiphilippinetextilecouncil.com/blogs/habi-highlights/philippine-natural-dyes-a-short-overview>.

71 E. Caballero-Padernal, “The Panay Bukidnon Sugidanon (Epic) and Prototype Glossaries for Epic Excerpts,” *Philippine Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities: Danyag* 22, nos. 1–2 (2021), <https://pjssh.upv.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/The-Panay-Bukidnon-Sugidanon-Epic-and-Prototype-Glossaries-for-Epic-Excerpts.pdf>.

72 *Daily Guardian*, “UNESCO Honors Stewards of MOW Hinilawod Epic Chant Recordings,” May 10, 2025, <https://dailyguardian.com.ph/unesco-honors-stewards-of-mow-hinilawod-epic-chant-recordings/>.

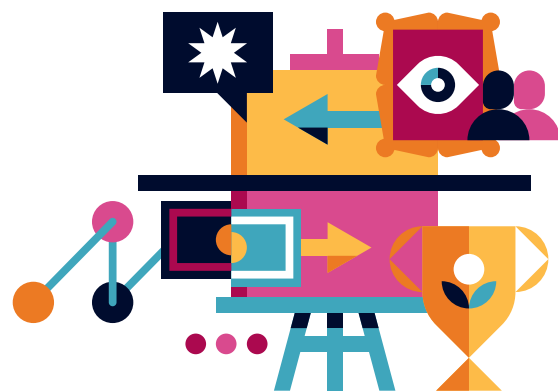
73 MindanaoArt, “MindanaoArt (9 of 10): Colors of the Earth by Talaandig Soil Painters,” *Minda News*, October 6, 2019, <https://mindanews.com/arts-culture/2019/10/mindanaoart-9-of-10-colors-of-the-earth-by-talaandig-soil-painters/>.

74 Marz Capanang, Jerrey David Aguilar, and Martha Atienza, interviews with authors, 2025.

# Trends in the Philippine Art Scene

In this guide's effort to recognise organisations that highlight issues of sustainability, it is equally important to acknowledge the challenges involved in creating art. These tasks are not straightforward, largely due to the following realities unique to the Philippine art scene and broader community.

## Challenges in the Philippine Art Scene



### An Underappreciated Field

Given the instability of art as a profession, rather than a mere hobby, Filipinos, particularly students who begin to demonstrate a passion for art, are often discouraged from pursuing it. The sentiment *walang pera sa sining*, or “there is no money in art,” is all too common. Due to widespread economic instability, Filipino families tend to push their children towards more stable and profitable careers.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> N. J. Matitu, “Deconstructing the Underappreciated Local Art Scene in the PH: Why Not Art?,” *Noelyn Joy Matitu* (blog), June 18, 2023, <https://medium.com/@matitu.noelynjoy/deconstructing-the-underappreciated-local-art-scene-in-the-ph-why-not-art-232a11e30e14>.

This dominant attitude is echoed in survey findings by the Asian Development Bank in the Philippines. On “youth education investment and labour market outcomes,” the 2019 study ascertained that among students who preferred to take an arts and design track, only 6% of their parents had the same preference; 83% of their parents preferred that they take an academic track instead. One of the primary considerations guiding parents of university students helping them choose their future occupations is employment prospects and wage considerations.<sup>76</sup>

Given that the arts generally do not pay as much as other fields, it is often seen as a hobby or profession that can only be comfortably pursued by those with socioeconomic safety nets. For typical Filipinos, who are preoccupied with meeting day-to-day necessities, art is relegated to the least of their concerns.

### Driven by Market Demands

Making a stable livelihood out of creative work in the Philippines requires artists to adapt to current market demands. The market for purchasing and commissioning art in the Philippines is heavily concentrated among the elite classes, so their influence drives the overall industry. The perception of the arts as a non-lucrative field, reserved for the privileged few, raises the barriers to entry, on top of high ticket prices in relation to average wages. Additionally, according to University of the Philippines Diliman graduate Daniel Sebastianne Daiz, “the practice of art criticism is also reserved for a few who intellectualise the arts and their meanings,” making art seem like a closed clique with very particular demands.<sup>77</sup>

In an interview for this guide, JAS, an independent Filipino artist, explained that he had to step away from the private gallery system due to the burnout from producing only what was marketable, such as made-to-order or fashionable artworks, instead of the art he truly wished to create. The Quezon City-based artist added that the audience within art galleries is very limited.<sup>78</sup>

### Low Formalisation and Visibility

In the Philippines, organisations tend to come and go depending on their ability to sustain participation. This has resulted in a low level of formalisation and visibility, especially for collectives located farther from the metropolitan areas. Fluctuating membership and the lack of promotion and documentation — such as on online platforms — affect the public awareness and perceived credibility of these art collectives. Outdated or inactive websites and social media pages also make it difficult for these organisations to garner potential opportunities and collaborations. Resultantly, these organisations are primarily accessible through the limited means of word-of-mouth referrals.

<sup>76</sup> Department of Education and Asian Development Bank, *Youth Education Investment and Labor Market Outcomes in the Philippines: Survey Report* (Department of Education and Asian Development Bank, 2019), 30 and xii, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/516971/youth-education-labor-market-survey-philippines.pdf>.

<sup>77</sup> D. S. Daiz, “The Exclusivist Nature of Art Stifles Creative Freedom,” *Philippine Collegian*, March 3, 2024, <https://phkule.org/article/1129/the-exclusivist-nature-of-art-stifles-creative-freedom>.

<sup>78</sup> JAS, interview with authors, November 27, 2024.

## Revitalisation Through a Return to Indigenous Interpretations of Art



### Art as a Response to Life

Indigenous art in the Philippines offers a unique experience and perspective compared to the Western forms of art introduced during the height of colonisation, such as painting, engraving, and sculpture. Such “high art” effectively marginalised Indigenous arts and crafts, like wood carving, textile weaving, and basketry. These ethnic art forms are created communally and closely tied to ritual or daily use, embodying cultures and traditions linked to the rest of Southeast Asia.<sup>79</sup> With foreign occupation and exchange, the concept of patronage also emerged, in which artisans were commissioned to create Spanish and Chinese art.<sup>80</sup> So-called high art heavily influenced Philippine society, with Western frameworks, schools of thought, and techniques being introduced into the country’s formal education system. This shifted the dominant understanding of art from being community-based, everyday, and ritualistic to paintings on the wall or a sculpture on display.

In the present, however, there is a visible return to more Indigenous interpretations of art. Emphasising process over product and community over individuality, contemporary artists increasingly practise art as a response to the pressing challenges faced in day-to-day lives. Live and participatory performances are also on the rise.



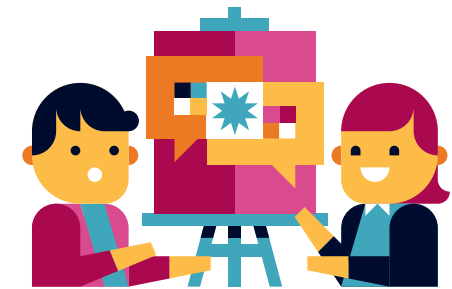
### Art as Community-Centered

From the interviews conducted with Filipino artists, discourses emerged on how art is intrinsically tied to the community. Art, to them, always exists as a response to the context of the community in which it was

created. If one attempts to interpret art independently of the community it emerged from, one will not fully grasp its importance and relevance.

JAS, the Quezon City artist, shared that artists always draw from the beauty and struggles of their immediate surroundings as inspiration. When the artwork is removed from the community and placed against a white wall, such as in the gallery system, certain meanings are lost; the viewer is no longer surrounded by the context that inspired the piece.<sup>81</sup>

Indigenous interpretations of Filipino art, therefore, do not begin with a blank canvas; rather, they spring from deeply rooted historical, social, political, and economic experiences. Art is created as a response and always has a community in mind as an audience. Contemporary Filipino art is once again becoming a practice that is passed on to, co-created, and shared with the community.



### Art as a Mediator of Meaning

Another role of art in the Philippines is to convey meaning that cannot be fully understood unless it is felt. When elaborate explanations fall short, art deepens understanding. It allows meaning to emerge through the resonance of emotion.

The multifaceted issues in the Philippines, while often difficult to articulate, can easily evoke a profound sense of humanity, as the everyday struggles of Filipinos revolve around basic human needs — not to thrive, but simply to survive. Art has served as a vital mediator of ineffable, universal meaning, effectively capturing lived experiences and addressing the challenges faced within Filipino society.

<sup>79</sup> A. G. Guillermo, “The History and Current Situation of Modern Art in the Philippines,” paper presented at Contemporary Art Symposium 1994: The Potential of Asian Thought, Japan Foundation ASEAN Culture Center, Tokyo, October 15, 1994, 1, [https://www.jpfa.go.jp/j/publish/asia\\_exhibition\\_history/pdf/15\\_Symposium-1994\\_Potential\\_ENG\\_Handout\\_2.pdf](https://www.jpfa.go.jp/j/publish/asia_exhibition_history/pdf/15_Symposium-1994_Potential_ENG_Handout_2.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> E. M. P. Hernandez, “The Spanish Colonial Tradition in Philippine Visual Arts,” National Commission for Culture and the Arts, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-the-arts-sca/visual-arts/the-spanish-colonial-tradition-in-philippine-visual-arts/>.

<sup>81</sup> JAS, interview with authors, November 27, 2024.



# Trends in Creative Strategies for Sustainability

Given the diversity present within the Philippines — from cultures and practices to physical environments — arts organisations interviewed highlighted a wide range of sustainability challenges and strategies to overcome them. This section presents various creative and sustainable artistic interventions implemented by arts organisations in the Philippines.

## Creative Methodology

Principally, Philippine organisations treat art as less of a physical output and more of a process. To them, a creative methodology allows for intricate experiences to emerge as self-realisations for audience members. Art is used as a method to bring people to an understanding of ideas that are too complex to be communicated through conventional means, including an appreciation of sustainability. Reflection is encouraged: to look at themselves, their situation, and their environment. Beyond the artwork produced at the end of the day, the entire process of creating art becomes a transformative experience for those who participate in and experience it.

Visual artist Martha Atienza from the GOODLand platform exemplifies this strategy, stating:

“I never got into creative work for white spaces [...] that said, the whole process really became about [conceptualising] how does [art] become a methodology, how is it a methodology?”<sup>82</sup>

– MARTHA ATIENZA, CO-FOUNDER OF GOODLAND PLATFORM

<sup>82</sup> Martha Atienza, interview with authors, March 28, 2025.

<sup>83</sup> Atienza, interview, 2025.

<sup>84</sup> Roselle Pineda, interview with authors, March 29, 2025.

Arts organisations addressing sustainability are not limited to those who showcase artworks with sustainability-related themes. Some Philippine groups, like Atienza’s, help viewers develop a broader, contextual understanding of sustainability through the creative process itself:

“We use the video camera for documentation [of our process]. If people document themselves, what happens? They can see themselves, but they can also analyse their own identity, and also their situation. The documentation has become kind of a core of what we’re doing here [...] If you have proof of culture, it’s like we’re building a case, we get into the core of the problem of why are we in this.”<sup>83</sup>

– MARTHA ATIENZA, CO-FOUNDER OF GOODLAND PLATFORM

In Luzon, the Aurora Artist Residency Program and Space (AARPS) echoes this approach. At the core of their residency and exchange programmes, research centre, and art space is the belief that “sustainability can be achieved through caring for people, the community, and the environment,” as AARPS founder Roselle Pineda shares.<sup>84</sup> Their mapping activities — including of cultural biodiversity — bring especially those who are outsiders to sustainability advocacy to a greater awareness of culture and the environment. With this creative methodology, AARPS fosters a deeper concern for the respect that culture holds for the environment, in the hope that people become more intentional in caring for the world and those around them.



Philippine Center for Photojournalism - Professional Photojournalism & Documentary Photography Workshop, conducted under the AARPS Education and Cultural Exchange Programmes in November 2018. Image courtesy AARPS

Food bank movement Community Pantry PH, which started food distribution in Quezon City before expanding nationwide, also displays creative design thinking. “Magbigay ayon sa kakayahan, kumuha batay sa pangangailangan” (Give what you can, take what you need)

became its guiding principle. Started during COVID-19, Community Pantry PH pooled and distributed community resources, reinforcing the values of sustainable consumption and collective well-being. In doing so, the movement reimagined how resources could be shared.

Promoting sustainability through food systems, Good Food Co. of Luzon employs creative methods in designing their farmers markets. The organisation does not merely put together events to raise awareness about sustainable food systems, it actively tests alternative economic models by connecting consumers directly to farmers. Removing middlemen and other exploitative practices that often disadvantage farming communities, this approach employs creativity as a process for building and testing new ways of relating to the environment.

This section highlights how art is not just about producing objects — it is a way of knowing, connecting, and transforming. Art helps shift how people think and act in relation to sustainability. Organisations that use creative methods as a sustainability strategy often generate different, invaluable forms of environmental knowledge and practice.

## Democratisation Through Simplification

Discussions about the environment, especially when filled with technical terms, can often feel exclusionary. This is why many arts organisations work to make environmental issues easier to understand. By simplifying these conversations, more people can get involved. As non-profit Climate Reality Project Philippines stated:

“Arts and culture connect and bridge the gap between science and the realities of the climate crisis. By making it more accessible, the arts could showcase the similarities, diversity, and connectedness of the lived experiences of different communities.”<sup>85</sup>

### – CLIMATE REALITY PROJECT PHILIPPINES

Through their project Climartivism, a portmanteau of “climate,” “art,” and “activism,” the Climate Reality Project Philippines provides a social media platform to share stories and creative expression. Turning scientific ideas into relatable, everyday experiences, Climartivism helps users take part in policy discussions and encourage leaders to act for a more sustainable future.

The Good and Green Podcast is another online initiative that makes knowledge and information on sustainability-related topics more accessible to general listeners through audio storytelling. With solo discussions and guests from sustainability-related advocacies and organisations, Pacita “Chit” Juan covers a wide range of topics, including permaculture, organic farming, stingless beekeeping, the slow food concept, sustainable fashion, weaving, and more. The intention of

this initiative, as Juan stated, is to inspire sustainability as not just a choice but a way of life:

“Being good is being practical and leaving the world a nicer place than when we found it. And green is about doing practical things that will make a planet a nicer place to live in.”<sup>86</sup>

### – PACITA “CHIT” JUAN, GOOD AND GREEN PODCAST

In Iloilo, Kikik Kollektive’s murals about river systems employ visual storytelling to communicate environmental issues. Besides beautifying public spaces, their wall art help people see how watersheds are connected, bringing ecological awareness into everyday surroundings.



Local youth with Marrz Capanang’s mural painting, as part of Kikik Collective’s Procoast Project on Taklong Island, Guimaras. Image courtesy Kikik Kollektive

Visual archive Lokalpedia takes a similar approach online. By documenting local food biodiversity and heritage, such as traditional ingredients and cooking practices, it raises awareness about sustainable food practices. Their meaningful images have encouraged pride in local cuisine, deeper cultural appreciation, and a stronger commitment to protecting both culture and the environment.

Supporting the Philippine climate movement, volunteer network 350 Pilipinas has developed a strong understanding of how creative symbols can break through information overload. As explained by its National Coordinator Fread De Mesa and Chuck Baclagon, Asia Regional Finance Campaigner for 350.org, their creative actions help make complex ideas easier to grasp. For example, during an Earth Day celebration — when people usually turn off lights to save energy — they chose to

<sup>85</sup> Climate Reality Project Philippines, “Climartivism,” accessed September 18, 2025, <https://climatereality.ph/climartivism/>.

<sup>86</sup> C. Juan, host, *Good and Green*, podcast, episode 1, “What Is Good and Green?,” *Good and Green*, July 15, 2024, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/25lhxePm4lXtXiyOdT23D6>.



turn on solar-powered lights in a community. Their message was clear: the goal is not just to reduce energy use but to replace harmful sources like fossil fuels with clean, renewable energy.

Using creative methods rooted in Filipino culture, these organisations build understanding through local ways of knowing and seeing — making climate action more relatable, meaningful, and inclusive.

## Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices

Some of the most thoughtful environmental ideas come from communities whose ways of life are deeply connected to nature over generations. Recognising the depth of understanding that Indigenous groups hold as natural ecological managers, Philippine arts organisations do not treat Indigenous knowledge as mere tradition, but as an essential and sophisticated framework for ecological thinking.

For instance, the learning network Partners for Indigenous Knowledge Philippines (PIKP) centres Indigenous knowledge as a framework for action. Its Arts Stream Lead Allan Lumbaya Carino explains:

“The purpose of PIKP is to allow space for Indigenous knowledge positions in relation to sustainability, climate, and biodiversity to be expressed in their own language or formulation. We intend to raise awareness that the vocabulary of these policy spaces has other approaches to it. We strongly advocate for respecting Indigenous knowledge, not as an oddity or an ancient thing, but as a current and living system. It is a current and living system because there are current discourses wherein Indigenous knowledge systems can contribute. In some ways, they just need to be given a wider space.”<sup>87</sup>

— ALLAN LUMBAYA CARINO, ARTS STREAM LEAD OF PARTNERS FOR INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE PHILIPPINES

Recognising the importance of Indigenous knowledge across food systems, health, wellness, arts, culture, and biodiversity, PIKP publishes nonfiction, creative writing, and children’s books, documents traditional farming methods, produces plays, and facilitates community workshops. These efforts are grounded in the belief that the intergenerational transmission of knowledge is essential to sustaining Indigenous practices, cultures, traditions, and knowledge systems.

Other positive case studies include: the Tao Foundation for Culture and Arts, which works with Agusanon-Manobo communities in Mindanao and views Indigenous practices as living environmental knowledge that must be shared and strengthened.

In their collaborations with the Dumagat peoples in Aurora province, Luzon, aforementioned residency programme AARPS treats them as partners who hold critical knowledge about forest ecosystems. Lastly, Atienza’s initiative GOODLand embeds respect for local wisdom directly into project design, acknowledging that meaningful solutions must come from communities with the deepest understanding of their environment.



Participants presenting their output through song during Partners for Indigenous Knowledge Philippines (PIKP) Youth for Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity programme. Image courtesy PIKP

What sets these approaches apart from other acknowledgements of Indigenous knowledge is their emphasis on specificity. These organisations understand that Indigenous ecological knowledge is not a generic form of traditional wisdom, but a place-based environmental science developed over generations, through close observation and lived experience. PIKP, the Tao Foundation, AARPS, GOODLand, and other platforms practise deep, Indigenous connections with hyperlocal sites as a cornerstone of sustainability.

## Crisis Response Through Creative Community Systems

Philippine organisations demonstrate unique ways of responding to crises. Their community-based systems provide immediate support and serve as models for long-term, sustainable solutions.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, Community Pantry PH’s food banks became a nationwide experiment in resource redistribution, sustaining many Filipino families. The movement’s deceptively simple formula, “Give what you can, take what you need,” embodied the cultural value of bayanihan and reinforced values of sustainability, such as mindful consumption and concern for collective well-being.

87 Allan Lumbaya Carino, interview with authors, November 27, 2024.

In Luzon, the farmers markets of Good Food Co. promote the zero-waste model, addressing both the waste crisis and food sustainability. By connecting small farmers directly with urban consumers, Good Food Co. also bypasses traditional supply chains, promoting ecological and economic sustainability. The group describes their philosophy:

“[Community shared agriculture] is a relationship where a community of eaters commit to purchasing our farmers’ harvest weekly, and get it delivered to our doorstep. In return, our farmers are assured that there is a market for their produce and can focus on building biodiverse and nutritious food.”<sup>88</sup>

— GOOD FOOD CO.

In the world of theatre, Kasing Sining responds to crises like Super Typhoon Rai in 2021 by staging physical theatre productions such as “Usa Ka Isla” (One island). Through collective movement and story-telling, the theatre group honours local resilience in Bohol, Central Visayas, and helps the victims of natural disasters find a sense of community and solidarity in the face of shared trauma.

Also in Visayas, Youth Advocates Through Theater Arts (YATTA) focuses on environmental disasters in theatre shows like “Bukidagatan” (Mountains and seas). Such performances have helped Filipinos in Dumaguete reclaim ownership of their experiences through the transformation of trauma into powerful expressions of insight, healing, and strength.



Women’s Month Roundtable Discussion by Sama-Samang Artista para sa Kilusang Agraryo (SAKA PH). Image courtesy SAKA PH

88 Good Food Community, “What Is CSA?,” accessed May 24, 2025, <https://www.goodfoodcommunity.com/pages/what-is-community-shared-agriculture>.

An alliance of artists, cultural workers, and creatives, Sama-Samang Artista para sa Kilusang Agraryo (SAKA PH) bridges seemingly separate crises. The Luzon-based network connects artists with agrarian reform movements to address food security through land justice. Their annual “Babae, Babawi” (Woman, will take back) concerts of protest music merge cultural expression with political organising, recognising that Philippine food systems cannot be separated from ongoing land struggles.

In the long run, these approaches to crises set up alternative systems to foster shifts in attitudes and ways of thinking. These organisations build functional prototypes and interventions that model new relationships between communities, resources, and ecosystems. By developing working, community-scale models to meet immediate needs, they also offer tangible glimpses of more sustainable futures.

## Youth Leadership and Empowerment

Young people in the Philippine arts scene are not merely participants but central actors who help drive progress in sustainable practices. As nationwide alliance Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines (YACAP) put it:

“We believe the youth, alongside the most impacted sectors of society, should now lead the ongoing global struggle against the climate crisis for the survival of our planet.”<sup>89</sup>

— YOUTH ADVOCATES FOR CLIMATE ACTION PHILIPPINES



Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines’ “Fashion Against Fascism and Fossil Fuels” show 2023: Drought and Deluge. Image courtesy Angekyla Barroquillo

89 Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines (YACAP), “About,” June 2023, <https://yacap.org/about/>.



Grounded in the understanding that the climate crisis is deeply political, YACAP affirms the importance of youth mobilisation in climate activism. As one of their calls to action powerfully declared:

“The youth will inherit the planet, but we refuse to inherit a dead planet.”<sup>90</sup>

#### — YOUTH ADVOCATES FOR CLIMATE ACTION PHILIPPINES

In their demand for climate justice, YACAP engages fellow young people through accessible and culturally relevant forms, including its annual “Fashion Against Fascism and Fossil Fuels” fashion show, open mic sessions, and exhibitions.

Intergenerational structures that honour both youth leadership and elder wisdom are manifested through programmes like YagangYoung by the Youth Empowering Youth (YEY!) Initiative Inc. in Visayas’ Negros Island. The non-profit trains young artists in biodiversity conservation through direct, cross-generational engagement with scientific experts and community knowledge holders.

Functioning under a similar principle, the Tao Foundation for Culture and Arts in Mindanao operates community-based schools that support knowledge transmission from Indigenous elders to the youth. Coming under the Foundation’s Schools of Living Traditions programme, these schools teach courses on Indigenous languages, ancestral domain, customary law, leadership, and artistic practices such as embroidery, the making of musical instruments and traditional houses, performance chanting, spirituality, environmental protection, and plant medicines.



Tao Foundation for Culture and Arts, School of Living Traditions, La Paz, Agusan del Sur. Image courtesy Grace Nono

In Visayas, YATTA’s youth-led theatre work also exemplifies how young creatives can reimagine heritage to address present-day realities.

Their performance “Pulang Langob” (Red cave) draws from mythological traditions, shaped by the beliefs of early ancestors, weaving them into contemporary concerns for the environment.

In Luzon, the Centre for Art, New Ventures and Sustainable Development (CANVAS) fosters an early appreciation for the relationship between art and nature. Their Tumba-Tumba Children’s Museum of Philippine Art is specifically designed to help children cultivate empathy, critical thinking, and an early appreciation for environmental relationships through Philippine visual storytelling.



“If Trees Could Talk” International Art Biennale at Tumba-Tumba Children’s Museum of Philippine Art. Image courtesy CANVAS

Across these organisations, there is a shared recognition that environmental challenges require youth engagement, cultural continuity, and radical innovation. These groups develop methodologies that actively facilitate the flow of knowledge between generations, while empowering young leaders to adapt traditional ecological principles to present-day realities.

There is no single model for artistic engagement with sustainability; instead, a distinctly Filipino creativity characterised by integration rather than separation. These organisations acknowledge the lack of division between environmental protection and cultural preservation, traditional knowledge and contemporary innovation, and urgent crisis response and long-term, systematic change. Their approaches demonstrate that effective artistic-environmental work in the Philippines must grow from cultural values, centre community knowledge, and recognise the inseparability of ecological sustainability from social justice.

90 YACAP, “About.”



As climate impacts intensify across our archipelago, these creative approaches to sustainability offer inspiration as well as practical methodologies for building environmental resilience through cultural strength. The patterns identified — creative methodology, democratisation through simplification, Indigenous knowledge systems and practices, crisis response through creative community systems, and youth leadership and empowerment — reveal how Philippine environmental organisations have developed sophisticated approaches to global challenges through deeply local engagement.



Kasing Sining's physical theatre production "Usa Ka Isla" (One island).  
Image courtesy Kasing Sining

These organisations embody entirely different ways of conceptualising our relationship with environments, demonstrating that creativity is not an add-on to environmental work but its essential methodology. Through their insistence on approaches that honour local cultural contexts while addressing urgent ecological challenges, they offer a valuable model for other movements within the Philippines and globally, showcasing how creativity functions as sustainable practice.



Good Food Community's Food as Medicine – Cassava Pizza Party workshop. Image courtesy Good Food Community



School of Living Tradition in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur. Image courtesy Tao Foundation for Culture and Arts

# Recommendations

Building upon the trends and patterns identified across these organisations, the following recommendations are offered to further strengthen the emerging ecosystem of initiatives. The aim is to creatively respond to environmental sustainability while preserving distinctive characteristics: rootedness in place, integration of cultural and ecological concerns, and commitment to community-centred approaches.



## Knowledge Exchange Networks

Establish structural connections between geographically dispersed organisations to facilitate methodology sharing across the archipelago's fragmented environmental landscape. Organisations employing creativity as a design methodology (such as GOODLand) could share their process-based approaches with those focusing primarily on creative outputs (like Kasing Sining). On the other hand, performance-based organisations might integrate insights from approaches that centre Indigenous knowledge. These exchanges would enhance all practices while preserving their distinct, place-specific methods and community relationships.



## Documentation and Archiving

Develop community-run documentation platforms for ephemeral arts practices, particularly performance-based approaches to environmentalism that leave limited material traces. Similar to how Lokalpedia visually documents endemic and endangered Filipino ingredients, other archives could capture methodological innovations exemplified by groups like

Community Pantry PH, whose creative systems risk disappearance once immediate crises resolve. Emphasis should be placed on preserving process knowledge without extracting it from contextual relationships.



## Policy Recognition

Advocate for formal acknowledgement of creative methodologies as legitimate environmental practice within national policy frameworks. Organisations like Climate Reality Project Philippines demonstrate how creative approaches influence policy discussions; broader recognition of arts-based environmental work as research could establish new pathways for institutional support and knowledge integration without compromising grassroots innovation.



## Mindanao Engagement

Address the geographic imbalance in environmental arts organisations, particularly in remote areas of Mindanao, by engaging local coordinators/researchers to assist in identifying, interviewing, and documenting emerging and ongoing initiatives. The lack of accessible data on Mindanao organisations working at the nexus of creativity and environment, aside from the Tao Foundation and Talaandig soil painters, indicates a need to focus on this island group. Such an approach should acknowledge the unique intersections of environmental challenges, cultural diversity, and complex political contexts in southern Philippines.



## Intergenerational Learning Structures

Formalise the knowledge transfer models between generations as successfully demonstrated by organisations like YEY! and YATTA. Create structured opportunities for elder knowledge holders and youth innovators to collaborate on environmental challenges. These structures would become increasingly vital as climate change accelerates, requiring traditional knowledge systems to adapt while maintaining their core principles and cultural integrity.



## Cross-Sectoral Collaborations

Facilitate partnerships between environmental arts organisations and sectors not traditionally associated with creativity, including agriculture, disaster management, and urban planning. The innovative methodologies developed by organisations like Good Food Co. and Community Pantry PH offer valuable models that could inform conventional environmental approaches, without requiring grassroots organisations to conform to institutional expectations or assessment frameworks.



# Directory of Organisations

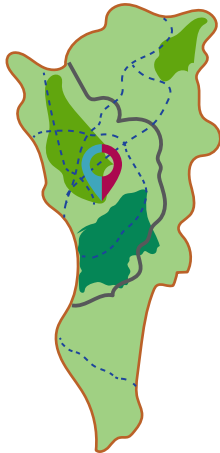


The guide presents a list of organisations that respond creatively to various sustainability challenges, ranging from environmental to socio-cultural issues commonly experienced in the Philippines. Reflecting an emerging trend in the Philippine arts scene, this directory highlights groups that embody Indigenous or community-centred interpretations of art. These organisations emphasise art’s role as a mediator of meaning — fostering understanding and emotional resonance within Filipino communities to promote sustainable shifts in methods, attitudes, and philosophies.

The directory features key details of each organisation, including: a brief description of its mission and goals; type of creative sector; category of trend pattern; location; and relevant web links for further exploration. This selection is based on extensive research, including over 15 interviews conducted in the Philippines from November 2024 to March 2025. Not intended as a comprehensive listing, this directory, arranged by island groups, highlights notable organisations that reflect the diversity and significance of creative sustainability efforts across the country.

1

FOUNDED:  
**2016**  
SECTOR:  
**MULTIDISCIPLINARY**  
WHERE:  
**QUEZON CITY, NATIONAL  
CAPITAL REGION, LUZON**  
CATEGORY:  
**DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION**  
MORE INFO:  
**CLIMATEREALITY.PH/  
CLIMARTIVISM**



## CLIMATE REALITY PROJECT PHILIPPINES

In 2006, Nobel Laureate and former US Vice President Al Gore raised global awareness of climate change through the Oscar-winning film “An Inconvenient Truth.” That same year, he founded the Climate Reality Project, a non-profit organisation dedicated to transforming awareness into worldwide climate action. Now with 11 regional branches, the organisation uses innovative education and communication to inspire urgent climate solutions. The Philippine branch, founded in 2016 and relaunched in 2020, focuses on empowering over 1,800 local “Climate Reality Leaders.” Collaborating with government and civil society, it supports climate initiatives, shares stories, and influences national policies to advance renewable energy, sustainable transport, and climate resilience.



Climate Reality Project’s Poets for Climate Exhibit and Workshop. Image courtesy Climate Reality Project



FOUNDED:

**2016**

SECTOR:

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY**

WHERE:

**AURORA PROVINCE,  
CENTRAL LUZON, LUZON**

CATEGORY:

**CREATIVE METHODOLOGY,  
INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE  
SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES**

MORE INFO:

**THEBEACHHOUSEPROJECT.  
WORDPRESS.COM**

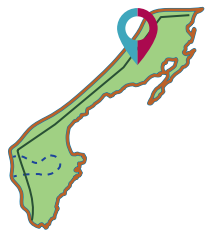
AARPS art space located in Casita Aurora, Brgy. Butas na Bato, Dingalan, Aurora Province. Image courtesy AARPS

### AURORA ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM AND SPACE (AARPS)

AARPS is an independent, non-profit residency programme and art space focused on initiating discussions on community empowerment and environmental sustainability through research, education, and creative thinking and action. AARPS believes in the potential of creativity — both in process and output — to cultivate critically engaged communities. It works in close partnership with various grassroots groups in Aurora, Luzon, particularly the five Dumagat communities in Dingalan, located in the villages of Matawe, Caragsacan, Ibona, Umiray, and Dikapanikian. The organisation is composed of highly skilled and dedicated volunteers who share a vision and passion for community empowerment through cultural and creative work. Its members come from diverse backgrounds and professions, offering their full capacities for the betterment of collective relationships and initiatives.

“We cannot really claim environmental sustainability as our primary advocacy, but because our process is rooted in Indigenous practices and collaboration with communities, it becomes sustainable because of the care you give and extend to the people and place you work with. If you employ that kind of care — caring about context, caring for the land, caring about everyone’s time, and caring for the environment — your programmes and projects organically become more sustainable.”

— ROSELLE PINEDA, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER  
AURORA ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM AND SPACE



FOUNDED:

**2017**

SECTOR:

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY**

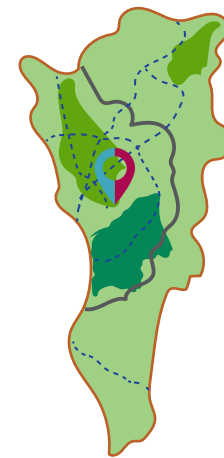
WHERE:

**QUEZON CITY, NATIONAL  
CAPITAL REGION, LUZON**

CATEGORY:

**DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION,  
CRISIS RESPONSE THROUGH  
CREATIVE COMMUNITY SYSTEMS**

MORE INFO:

**FACEBOOK.COM/  
SAKA.PILIPINAS**

### SAMA-SAMANG ARTISTA PARA SA KILUSANG AGRARYO (SAKA PH)

SAKA PH is an alliance of artists, cultural workers, and creatives committed to supporting and advancing land justice and food security. SAKA PH organises year-round performances, film screenings, workshops, publications, exhibitions and mural paintings, radio programmes, and media appearances to raise public awareness of land justice issues and amplify farmer-led campaigns.

SAKA PH in Mayo Uno (May 1) World Labor Day Rally. Image courtesy SAKA PH





4

FOUNDED:

2011

SECTOR:

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

WHERE:

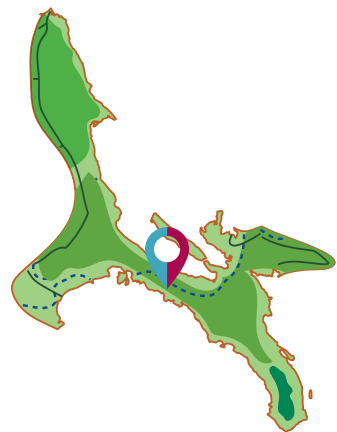
QUEZON CITY, NATIONAL  
CAPITAL REGION, LUZON

CATEGORY:

CREATIVE METHODOLOGY,  
CRISIS RESPONSE THROUGH  
CREATIVE COMMUNITY SYSTEMS

MORE INFO:

GOODFOODCOMMUNITY.COM



## GOOD FOOD COMMUNITY

Good Food Community is an organisation that promotes sustainability through food systems. It connects farmers and consumers, making healthy eating more accessible and encouraging sustainable consumer habits. The organisation runs various events, including food fairs, cultural programmes, cooking classes using sustainable ingredients, community kitchens for disaster relief, educational discussions, and art or creative workshops. These programmes are related to food security, farmers' struggles, and agricultural issues, such as Good Food Sundays, a Sunday market that promotes inclusiveness, biodiversity, and education. All events follow a zero-waste policy, and guests are encouraged to bring their own cutlery, bags, and containers.



Meal Prep Club. Image courtesy Good Food Co.

“We are constantly learning that, to grow organic produce sustainably, we cannot just change production practices, we must also shift our lifestyles to embrace nature, and the community that grows from working together towards a shared good.”

– GOOD FOOD COMMUNITY

5

FOUNDED:

2014

SECTOR:

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

WHERE:

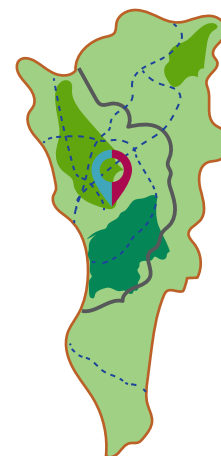
QUEZON CITY, NATIONAL  
CAPITAL REGION, LUZON

CATEGORY:

CREATIVE METHODOLOGY,  
DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION

MORE INFO:

WORLD.350.ORG/PHILIPPINES



“Life in a Bubble” creative action. Image courtesy 350 Pilipinas



## 350 PILIPINAS

A local network of volunteers supporting the Philippine climate movement, this organisation is committed to creating a secure and promising future by empowering individuals and communities, and by fostering justice, prosperity, and equality — all while working towards a climate-safe environment. They are building a grassroots movement to accelerate the transition to an economy powered by new, just, and clean energy by supporting community-led energy solutions. Through symbols, art, and creative actions, they help visualise climate change's problems and solutions — for communities, the media, and policymakers. These creative modes of communication often speak more directly to the heart, offering a powerful reminder of what is at stake.



FOUNDED:

**2017**

SECTOR:

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY**

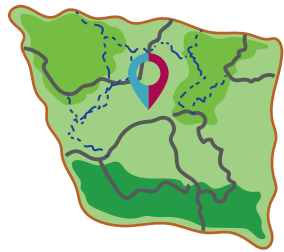
WHERE:

**BAGUIO CITY, CORDILLERA  
ADMINISTRATIVE REGION,  
LUZON**

CATEGORY:

**CREATIVE METHODOLOGY,  
INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE  
SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES**

MORE INFO:

**PIKP.ORG**

## PARTNERS FOR INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE PHILIPPINES (PIKP)

PIKP is an NGO that serves as a bridge and learning network connecting organisations, Indigenous knowledge holders, researchers, artists, advocates, and communities in the Philippines, particularly in the Cordillera region. Promoting and strengthening Indigenous knowledge, the organisation advocates for biological and cultural diversity, as well as the preservation of nature and Indigenous knowledge systems connected to the natural environment.



Youth participants during the Youth for Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity programme. Image courtesy PIKP

“The purpose of PIKP is to allow space for Indigenous knowledge positions in relation to sustainability, climate, and biodiversity to be expressed in their own language or formulation. We intend to raise awareness that the vocabulary of these policy spaces has other approaches to it. We strongly advocate for respecting Indigenous knowledge, not as an oddity or an ancient thing, but as a current and living system. It is a current and living system because there are current discourses wherein Indigenous knowledge systems can contribute. In some ways, they just need to be given a wider space.”

– ALLAN LUMBAYA CARINO, ARTS STREAM LEAD  
PARTNERS FOR INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE PHILIPPINES

Image courtesy PIKP

FOUNDED:

**2019**

SECTOR:

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY**

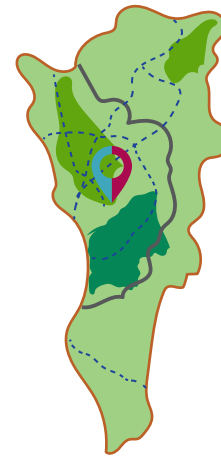
WHERE:

**QUEZON CITY, NATIONAL  
CAPITAL REGION, LUZON**

CATEGORY:

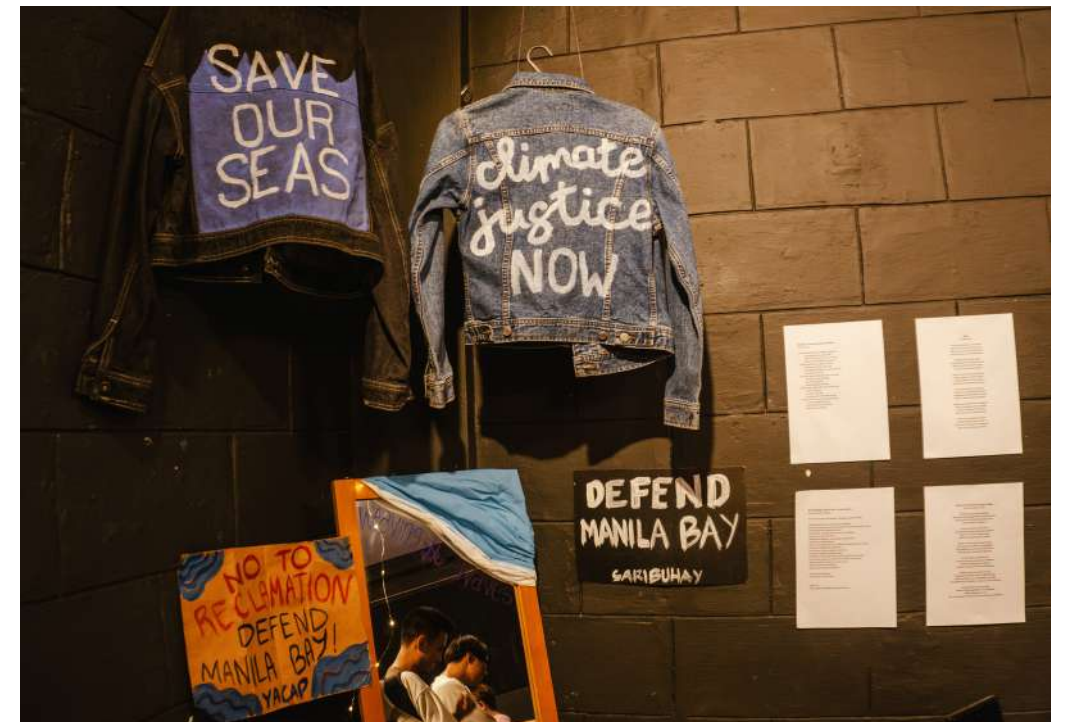
**DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION,  
YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND  
EMPOWERMENT**

MORE INFO:

**YACAP.ORG**

“We believe the youth, alongside the most impacted sectors of society, should now lead the ongoing global struggle against the climate crisis for the survival of our planet.”

– YOUTH ADVOCATES FOR CLIMATE ACTION PHILIPPINES



Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines (YACAP)'s Weaving the Waves. Image courtesy Viggo Sarmago

## YOUTH ADVOCATES FOR CLIMATE ACTION PHILIPPINES (YACAP)

YACAP is a nationwide alliance of youth organisations, individuals, and student councils advocating for urgent global climate action led by young people. The alliance believes that the youth, alongside the most impacted sectors of society, should lead the ongoing global struggle against the climate crisis to ensure the survival of our planet.



FOUNDED:

**2005**

SECTOR:

**LITERATURE, PUBLISHING,  
VISUAL ARTS**

WHERE:

**QUEZON CITY, NATIONAL  
CAPITAL REGION, LUZON**

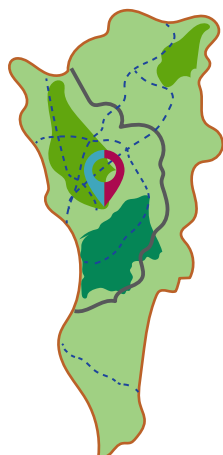
CATEGORY:

**DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION,**

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND  
EMPOWERMENT**

MORE INFO:

**CANVAS.PH**



Tumba-Tumba Children's Museum of Philippine Art. Image courtesy CANVAS

## THE CENTER FOR ART, NEW VENTURES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CANVAS)

CANVAS is a non-profit organisation that works with the creative community to promote children's literacy, explore national identity, and deepen public appreciation of art, culture, and the environment in the Philippines. It was inspired by the 1980s animated short film "The Man Who Planted Trees," based on Jean Giono's eco-fable on one man's lifelong devotion to planting acorns and transforming a barren landscape. In 2005, this story was adapted for the Philippine context in "Elias and His Trees" — CANVAS' first book and its official beginning. Since then, CANVAS has thrived by sharing stories freely and gifting books to disadvantaged children, nurturing imagination and hope, with the belief that one story can spark a generation's change.

FOUNDED:

**1987**

SECTOR:

**THEATRE ARTS,  
VISUAL ARTS**

WHERE:

**MUNICIPALITY OF LOS BAÑOS,  
LAGUNA, LUZON**

CATEGORY:

**DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION**

MORE INFO:

**ARTISTINC.ORG**



## ARTS RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE IN SOUTHERN TAGALOG, INCORPORATED (ARTIST, INC.)

Conceived in 1987 as an NGO, ARTIST, Inc. aimed to popularise and develop people's art and literature from the Southern Tagalog region. Its vision and mission now focuses on advancing arts and culture as a pathway to sustainable and empowered Filipino communities, while providing relevant and accessible cultural services. The organisation primarily seeks to produce meaningful artistic and cultural expressions, and engage communities in the ongoing development of their cultural and artistic capabilities.



ARTIST, Inc. members and youth networks participate in reflective thought and movement exercises exploring the whys and hows of theatre practice. Image courtesy ARTIST, Inc

“When we say we are involved in cultural work, when we talk about culture, it is not just about working with the past, about heritage, but also looking at culture as encompassing present-day issues. And one of the things that a lot of people still need to be aware of is the ongoing damage and destruction being done to nature.”

– EDWARD PEREZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ARTS RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE IN SOUTHERN TAGALOG, INCORPORATED



10

FOUNDED:

**2017**

SECTOR:

**VISUAL ARTS**

WHERE:

**ILOILO CITY, WESTERN VISAYAS,  
VISAYAS**

CATEGORY:

**DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION,  
YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND  
EMPOWERMENT**

MORE INFO:

**KIKIKOLLEKTIVE.COM**

“The soul of art lies in how it harnesses the power of imagination. For me, imagination matters — both for the individual and the collective. Many of the things happening in the Philippines today rob us of that imagination. But when we return to it, when we embrace its beauty, we are reminded of what truly matters. Imagination nurtures critical thinking and brings us closer to the truth — to what is genuinely best for our society.”

— KRISTINE BUENAVISTA, CO-FOUNDER  
KIKIK KOLLEKTIVE



Local youth of Barangay Pedada, Ajuy, after the mural painting as part of the Procoast Project.  
Image courtesy Kikik Kollektive

## KIKIK KOLLEKTIVE

Kikik Kollektive is an independent artist collective that fosters connections between artists and grassroots communities, guided by fundamental values rooted in localisation, communal reciprocity, and the revitalisation of public spaces. For over seven years, the collective has consistently created public art projects that amplify the voices of the unheard and marginalised, decolonise West-normative perspectives, and reclaim narratives through dignifying visual expressions such as murals. Their community-engaged arts practice includes initiatives like gatherings that enable children to express their experiences of devastating typhoons through art activities and installations, subverting dominant narratives of grandiosity by centring community stories.

11

FOUNDED:

**2013**

SECTOR:

**THEATRE ARTS**

WHERE:

**MUNICIPALITY OF BOHOL,  
CENTRAL VISAYAS, VISAYAS**

CATEGORY:

**CRISIS RESPONSE THROUGH  
CREATIVE COMMUNITY  
SYSTEMS,  
DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION**

MORE INFO:

**FACEBOOK.COM/  
KASINGSININGCOMMUNITY**

## KASING SINING

Kasing Sining is an arts group in Bohol that provides stress relief and psychosocial support to communities affected by natural and man-made calamities, through arts-for-healing and arts-for-expression programmes. In their theatre productions, they use found, existing, and recycled materials for set design, props, and costumes to minimise waste, actively promoting upcycling and thrifting as part of their creative process.

Kasing Sining's physical theatre production "Usa Ka Isla" (One island). Image courtesy Kasing Sining



“The relationship is clear — caring for culture necessitates caring for nature. The materials we use for cultural practices, like traditional basket weaving, also come from nature. Protecting the environment is crucial for preserving cultural heritage.

In a country where promoting culture has always been associated with colours, grandeur, and ostentation, Kasing Sining presents the heart of Philippine culture as interrelated with the environment. Our advocacy emphasises the need for continuous and conscious decisions to ensure that culture amplifies the environment rather than compromising it.”

- JERREY AGUILAR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KASING SINING



12

FOUNDED:

2013

SECTOR:

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

WHERE:

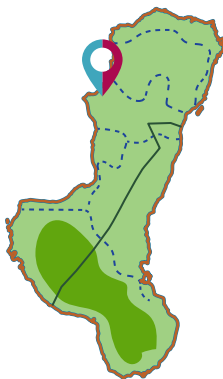
BACOLOD CITY, NEGROS ISLAND  
REGION, VISAYAS

CATEGORY:

DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION,  
YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND  
EMPOWERMENT

MORE INFO:

FACEBOOK.COM/  
YEYINITIATIVEINC



Youth Empowering Youth (Yey!) Initiative Inc. facilitates the “KamPinoy” activity during the Developing Filipino Identity in the Arts class. Image courtesy Yey!

YOUTH EMPOWERING YOUTH (Yey!) INITIATIVE INC.

Yey! is a youth-led, non-profit organisation based in Negros Occidental. It envisions a generation of young people empowered to care about, participate, and take action in grassroots community building. This is achieved through facilitated learning experiences in the fields of leadership, education, environment, and culture and the arts.

13

FOUNDED:

2020

SECTOR:

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

WHERE:

BANTAYAN ISLAND, CENTRAL  
VISAYAS, VISAYAS

CATEGORY:

CREATIVE METHODOLOGY,  
DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION,

MORE INFO:

GOODLAND.PH



GOODLAND

GOODLand is a platform under artist Martha Atienza’s Art Lab that develops and applies a creative, collaborative methodology to address social, economic, and environmental issues. It organises with communities and collaborates with individuals, collectives, and institutions across various fields of expertise. Centred around community-based art projects, GOODLand’s methodological approach is called the Place, People, and Art-based Model — and is grounded in earlier art projects by Atienza conducted on Bantayan Island, like the 2011 short film “Gilubong ang Akon Pusod sa Dagat” (My navel is buried in the sea).



Adlaw Sa Mananagat or Fisherfolk Day. Image courtesy GOODLand



GOODLand's aerial photo of Mambacayao Daku. Image courtesy Roberth Fuentes



14

FOUNDED:

**2005**

SECTOR:

**THEATRE ARTS**

WHERE:

**DUMAGUETE CITY, NEGROS  
ORIENTAL, VISAYAS**

CATEGORY:

**DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION,  
YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND  
EMPOWERMENT**

MORE INFO:

**YATTADUMAGUETE.WIXSITE.COM**



What If?, an educational performance on the interconnectedness of the mountain and forest systems to the rivers and the coastal resources. Image courtesy YATTA

**YOUTH ADVOCATES THROUGH THEATER ARTS  
(YATTA)**

YATTA was born out of the confluence of theatre and advocacy. It is a youth-focused theatre organisation based in Dumaguete City. Founded in 2005, YATTA has produced and performed original theatre productions for communities across Negros Island and other parts of the Philippines. Over the years, YATTA has partnered with various organisations and government agencies to raise awareness and inspire action through theatre, addressing issues such as child rights, bullying, gender-based violence, and environmental stewardship and climate justice. In 2008, YATTA was recognised as one of the Ten Accomplished Youth Organisations in the Philippines by the National Youth Commission. In 2021, it received the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Kaisa Ini sa Sining, Lunsay nga Artistang Pilipino Award for the Visayas region.

15

FOUNDED:

**1994**

SECTOR:

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY**

WHERE:

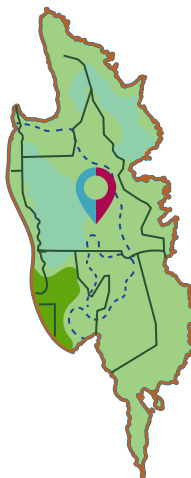
**AGUSAN PROVINCES,  
MINDANAO**

CATEGORY:

**INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE  
SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES,  
YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND  
EMPOWERMENT**

MORE INFO:

**TAOFOUNDATIONPHILIPPINES.  
ORG**



**TAO FOUNDATION FOR CULTURE AND ARTS**

Tao Foundation is composed of Filipino artists, scholars, and community leaders engaged in cultural and environmental regeneration initiatives in the Philippines. Their work includes community-based schools and training programmes, publications, performances, and a land-based environmental restoration programme. The foundation aims to promote local and Indigenous knowledge and contribute to the empowerment of knowledge bearers in ways that foster intercultural understanding and support planetary survival. They established the Agusanon-Manobo Schools of Living Traditions, where a wide range of courses are offered, such as on Indigenous languages, ancestral domain, customary law, and environmental protection.

School of Living Traditions in La Paz, Agusan Del Sur. Image courtesy Tao Foundation for Culture and Arts





16

FOUNDED:

2021

SECTOR:

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

WHERE:

NATIONWIDE

CATEGORY:

CREATIVE METHODOLOGY,  
CRISIS RESPONSE THROUGH  
CREATIVE COMMUNITY SYSTEMS

MORE INFO:

FACEBOOK.COM/  
COMMUNITYPANTRYPH.ORG

“Magbigay ayon sa kakayahan, kumuha  
batay sa pangangailangan” (Give what  
you can, take what you need)

- ANA PATRICIA NON, ORGANISER, COMMUNITY PANTRY PH



Long lines waiting in Quezon City's community pantry. Image courtesy Ana Patricia Non



Image courtesy Community Pantry PH

COMMUNITY PANTRY PH

A food bank movement that connects small farmers with city dwellers, promoting food sovereignty. The community pantry movement began in April 2021, when Ana Patricia Non set up a food bank on Maginhawa Street in Quezon City during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative quickly went viral on social media, recognised as a grassroots response to the state’s shortcomings, inspiring thousands of similar pantries to emerge across the country. At one point, there were over 6,700 community pantries operating nationwide. The movement embodies the Filipino spirit of bayanihan — a cultural value centred on solidarity and collective action. Today, the network remains active, particularly in disaster-response efforts across the Philippines, through the organisation of community kitchens and relief initiatives.

17

FOUNDED:

2024

SECTOR:

AUDIO STORYTELLING

WHERE:

NATIONWIDE  
(DIGITALLY AVAILABLE)

CATEGORY:

DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION

MORE INFO:

GOODANDGREEN.BUZZSPROUT.  
COM

GOOD AND GREEN PODCAST

The Good and Green Podcast was created for the purpose of helping social entrepreneurs overcome challenges and grow impactful ventures that drive meaningful change. Each week, its episodes share the tools, strategies, and stories that empower changemakers to build businesses with purpose. The podcast aims to provide practical insights and inspiration for sustainable ideas, models, and practices, in support of building a sustainable future.



Good and Green Podcast with Pacita "Chit" Juan. Image courtesy Pacita "Chit" Juan, Good and Green Podcast

“Our goal is to get more people  
interested in how they can help save the  
planet. Like we said, carbon footprint,  
carbon sequestration: it does not mean  
that just because we are counting  
carbon, we are already saving the world.”

- PACITA “CHIT” JUAN, HOST, GOOD AND GREEN PODCAST



FOUNDED:

2021

SECTOR:

CULTURAL HERITAGE,  
VISUAL ARTS

WHERE:

NATIONWIDE  
(DIGITALLY AVAILABLE)

CATEGORY:

CREATIVE METHODOLOGY,  
DEMOCRATISATION THROUGH  
SIMPLIFICATION

MORE INFO:

FACEBOOK.COM/  
LOCALFOODHERITAGEPH

“Sustainability is not made up of grand, one-off gestures. The way to sustainability is through small, incremental but consistent steps.”

- JOHN SHERWIN FELIX, FOUNDER, LOKALPEDIA



Agta women of Camarines Sur. Image courtesy Lokalpedia

## LOKALPEDIA

Lokalpedia is a visual archive that documents endemic and endangered Filipino ingredients. It uses visual storytelling to underscore the importance of preserving biodiversity through sustainable food practices.



Documenting food culture with the Dumagat Indigenous group in Sitio Singawan, Aurora. Image courtesy Lokalpedia

Documenting food culture with the Dumagat Indigenous group in Sitio Singawan, Aurora. Image courtesy Lokalpedia.





## Glossary: How to Read this Guide

*Bayanihan* – a core Filipino value; a profound Filipino concept rooted in the words “bayan” (community) and “bayani” (hero; one who loves the community). It represents a communal spirit that transcends individual interests, focusing on collective well-being.

*Bulul* – a carved wooden statue used by the Ifugao people of northern Luzon to guard their rice crop. Carved on a single piece of wood, depicts humans with exaggerated features.

Community kitchen – a volunteer-driven initiative cooking food using donated ingredients with borrowed kitchen equipment and utensils. Mostly conducted for poor urban communities to ensure good food for all.

Dumagat – first groups of people who lived in Luzon’s Dingalan.

Food bank – a pantry dispensing free food for the needy, such as Ana Patricia Non’s bamboo cart in Quezon City, which sparked off the Community Pantry PH movement.

“Hinilawod” – an epic from the highlands of Panay Island in Visayas. Specifically, it is the cultural heritage of an Indigenous group, Suludnon or Panay Bukidnon, who reside in the mountainous interior. “Hinilawod” roughly translates to “Tales from the mouth of the Halawod River.”

*Kasing* – from the word “kasing-kasing,” a Visayan/Cebuano term for “heart.” Used both in the literal, anatomical sense, as well as figuratively to refer to emotions, feelings, and the metaphorical heart.

*Kikik* – from the word for “cicada” in Hiligaynon, a language spoken in the rural areas of Iloilo Province.

Luzon – one of the Philippines’ three major island groups and its largest island.

Mindanao – one of the Philippines’ three major island groups, the second largest of the three. The southernmost part of the Philippines.

*Pakikipagkapwa* – a core Filipino value pertaining to how Filipinos perceive oneself in others, recognising each other as fellow equals, and extending respect and empathy.

*Pakikiramay* – a core Filipino value that reflects one’s concern for the welfare of others, particularly during times of hardship. It is the expression of shared solidarity with those experiencing difficulties or in need.

Schools of Living Tradition – community-based schools that facilitate the transmission of Indigenous knowledge systems and practices from Indigenous elders to youth of the same ethnolinguistic group.

*Sining* – the Filipino word for “art” or “the arts.” The term encompasses various forms of artistic expression: the visual, performing, literary, and traditional and Indigenous arts and crafts. However, it has also been claimed that *sining* “originally bore the sense of ‘reflection,’ or ‘meditation’” and had an aspect of “skilful execution of minute details.”<sup>88</sup>

*Sugidanon* – epic narratives reflecting the existing customary laws, beliefs, practices, and values of the Panay Bukidnon ancestors.

*T’nalak* – a sacred cloth woven by the T’boli people in communities around Lake Sebu, Mindanao, which are traditionally made by women of royal blood.

Visayas – between the island groups of Luzon and Mindanao, the smallest group in terms of land area.

88 K. T. Subido, “In Focus: Best Practice Crafting: Reflections on the Word ‘Sining,’” April 26, 2004, National Commission for Culture and the Arts, <https://ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/in-focus/best-practice-crafting-reflections-on-the-word-sining/>.



PHILIPPINES GREEN GUIDE

(NATIONWIDE)

Community Pantry PH  
Good and Green Podcast  
Lokalpedia

Partners for Indigenous Knowledge  
Philippines (PIKP)

Climate Reality Project  
Philippines

Sama-Samang Artista para sa  
Kilusang Agraryo (SAKA PH)

Good Food Community  
350 Pilipinas

Youth Advocates for Climate  
Action Philippines (YACAP)

The Center for Art, New  
Ventures and Sustainable  
Development (CANVAS)

Kikik Kollektive

Aurora Artist Residency Program and  
Space (AARPS)

Arts Research and Training  
Institute in Southern Tagalog,  
Incorporated (ARTIST, Inc.)

GOODLand

Youth Empowering Youth (YEY!)  
Initiative Inc.

Kasing Sining

Youth Advocates Through  
Theater Arts (YATTA)

Tao Foundation for Culture  
and Arts



# CREATIVE RESPONSES TO SUSTAINABILITY

Cultural Initiatives Engaging  
with Social & Environmental Issues

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METHODOLOGY](#)

[STATE OF AFFAIRS](#)

[TRENDS IN THE PHILIPPINE ART SCENE](#)

[TRENDS IN CREATIVE STRATEGIES FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY](#)

[RECOMMENDATIONS](#)

[DIRECTORY OF ORGANISATIONS](#)

CLIMATE REALITY PROJECT PHILIPPINES

AURORA ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM AND SPACE  
(AARPS)

SAMA-SAMANG ARTISTA PARA SA  
KILUSANG AGRARYO (SAKA PH)

GOOD FOOD COMMUNITY

350 PILIPINAS

PARTNERS FOR INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE  
PHILIPPINES (PIKP)

YOUTH ADVOCATES FOR CLIMATE ACTION  
PHILIPPINES (YACAP)

THE CENTER FOR ART, NEW VENTURES AND  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CANVAS)

ARTS RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE IN  
SOUTHERN TAGALOG, INCORPORATED (ARTIST, INC.)

KIKIK KOLLEKTIVE

KASING SINING

YOUTH EMPOWERING YOUTH (YEY!) INITIATIVE INC.

GOODLAND

YOUTH ADVOCATES THROUGH THEATER ARTS (YATTA)

TAO FOUNDATION FOR CULTURE AND ARTS

COMMUNITY PANTRY PH

GOOD AND GREEN PODCAST

LOKALPEDIA

[GLOSSARY: HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE](#)