



## **Citizen action is helping save Philippines seahorses and their seas**

CM APALE, HJ KOLDEWEY, ACJ VINCENT

Presenting Author: Charity Mae Apale

Zoological Society of London-Philippines, Philippines and Project Seahorse, Vancouver, Canada

iSeahorse is designed to put the power of marine conservation in the hands of local citizens throughout the world, wherever seahorses are found. The program provides a platform for individuals and groups to contribute information on seahorse sightings, and supports them in using the data they (and others) collect to advocate for conservation gains on behalf of seahorses and their marine environments. In order to kick-start iSeahorse, we secured funding to employ a national iSeahorse champion in the Philippines for two years. Her work enabled iSeahorse contributors to make measurable and important conservation gains for seahorses and their marine habitats. For example: 1) iSeahorse was the catalyst for the creation of a new marine sanctuary in Bohol where a local dive organization used iSeahorse data to petitioned for protection of valuable, yet threatened, seahorse habitat; 2) the Filipino government used data from iSeahorse to develop an action plan in support of sustainable seahorse fisheries and trades; and 3) there is now a larger and more engaged constituency supporting seahorse and marine conservation in the Philippines through iSeahorse collaboration with individuals, communities and institutions. That said, it has sometimes been difficult to engage fishers as contributors, because of legal issues, poor access to technology and the need to incentivize contributions. Nonetheless, thanks to iSeahorse, Filipino seahorses and seas are better protected.

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