

## Global Seed Savers U.S. Transitions Full Operations to the Philippines Organization

*– Hal Atienza remains Philippines executive director –*

**DENVER, April 7, 2026** – Global Seed Savers today announced that its Philippines team will assume full leadership of the organization’s operations, marking a milestone in the nonprofit’s 16-year journey to build a locally led, community-driven organization. As part of this transition, the organization’s U.S. office will close on July 31, 2026, and founder and CEO Sherry Manning will step down while continuing to support Global Seed Savers Philippines as an advisor and financial donor.

This transition represents more than an organizational shift; it reflects a broader success story in international development. At a time when the sector is increasingly prioritizing localization, country ownership, and sustainable capacity building, Global Seed Savers stands out as a clear example of how long-term investment in local leadership can result in a fully independent, locally governed institution.

For more than 16 years, Global Seed Savers has worked with farmers and communities to preserve heirloom seeds, strengthen local food systems, and advocate for seed sovereignty. During that time, operations have expanded from Benguet and Cebu to include the three island regions of Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao. The organization’s initiatives include:

- Training more than 5,000 farmers across the Philippines to save seeds.
- Establishing 16 Seed Saving Communities (SSCs) farmer-led organizations committed to saving seeds across all three major regions across the Philippines.
- Managing two Seed Sanctuaries, one in Tublay, Benguet and one in Bogo, Cebu, which are currently growing 175 varieties of open-pollinated seeds.
- Training a network of Farmer Leaders and Advocates who now lead Seed Schools in their own communities and across the Philippines.
- Growing the Philippines team from just two staff in 2020 to the current robust team of five dedicated members.
- Distributing 175 household seed library boxes to partner farmers, which equips farmer leaders to store, share, and steward a wide diversity of seeds at home and withstand ongoing climate realities. Remarkably, 100% of these boxes survived the devastating typhoons and earthquakes of 2025.

These outcomes highlight a core lesson increasingly recognized across the development field: locally led systems are more resilient, more adaptive, and more sustainable over time.

“I have so much pride for this movement we’ve built together over the past 16 years,” said Founder and CEO Sherry Manning. “Thank you to our donors, community leaders, team members, and friends who have been an essential part of our success and growth over these years. An organization is much more than the sum of its individual parts, and it has been an honor to get to build this with each of you.”

“Building sustainable local operations driven and led by the Philippines, where our farmers and communities live and work, has been our goal since day one,” Manning added. “After years of building toward this moment, I’m honored and so proud to see the Philippines team and partner farmers ready to lead this next chapter. I’m excited to watch Global Seed Savers Philippines deepen our commitment to seed sovereignty through local ownership and leadership.”

Hal Atienza, who joined Global Seed Savers in April 2023 as the Philippines executive director, will continue to lead GSS Philippines into the next independent chapter. Atienza brings more than 30 years of experience in social development and NGO leadership, with a focus on building resilient communities through social accountability and participatory governance. In this next chapter, he will focus on deepening partnerships with small and family-owned farms to further Global Seed Savers’ mission of fostering sustainable communities.

“I’m honored to lead Global Seed Savers into this new chapter as a fully Philippines-based organization,” said Hal Atienza, executive director for Global Seed Savers. “We have a strong foundation in place, and our team is ready to build on that by deepening our partnerships with farmers and communities here. This transition represents what we’ve always worked toward—local leadership driving local solutions for seed and food sovereignty.”

As global development actors—including bilateral donors, development finance institutions, and philanthropies—seek more effective and equitable models, Global Seed Savers’ transition offers a replicable blueprint: start with community ownership, invest deeply in local capacity, and design for eventual independence from the outset.

Events in the U.S. and the Philippines this spring/summer will celebrate this milestone for GSS. In Denver, a “Next Chapter Happy Hour” will take place in May, while celebrations in the Philippines will take place on June 20 in Bogo, Cebu and June 27 in Baguio City.

A Legacy Fund has been established to support this next chapter, ensuring that Global Seed Savers Philippines continues to scale its impact as a fully independent, locally led organization. [Donations can be made here.](#)

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