



BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE MUNICIPALITY HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

According to few living pioneer settlers who lived in Wao until today, there were 60 people of various ethnicities, from the south and north Cotabato, who were then gathered in Maramag, Bukidnon and sacrificed themselves hiking from Maramag to the place now called "Wao" on January 19, 1954, in order to resettle under the LASEDECO Program of late President Ramon Magsaysay.

Those settlers were welcomed by the Muslim residents of Wao, led by Sultan Mamaco Saripada, the first appointive and elective Mayor of Wao together with other Muslim brethren.

After seven (7) years, Wao was officially declared as Municipality of the Republic of the Philippines on February 22, 1961 by virtue of executive order no. 418.

That historic event on January 19, 1954, witnessed by Col. Labaun, Chief of Police of Maramag, Bukidnon marked the camaraderie among various tribes/ethnic groups in town (Ilokanos, Ilonggos, Cebuanos, Boholanos, Maranaos, Tausugs, Warays, Ivatans, Tagalogs, Batangueños, Manobos and few other ethnics) living together harmoniously among others, which are generally classified as Muslims and Christians. In fact, 2 among those first batch of settlers became the Municipal Mayor of Wao: Captain Silverio Eleazar and Elvino Balicao, Sr.

Geographically, Wao spans an area of 35,404 hectares of rich and verdant flat, rolling and steep lands. It is one of the 39 municipalities of Lanao del Sur, ARMM and geographically the farthest from the seat of the provincial government which is Marawi City, located at the southern tip of the province. It is landlocked municipality and located away from the crossroads of Bukidnon and Cotabato Province and is accessible by land and air transportation. The Wao Airport is ready for utilization; hence there are only no proper manpower to operate it. It is approximately 18 kilometers from Bukidnon, 200 kilometers from Cagayan de Oro City, 325 kilometers from Marawi City and 125 kilometers to Cotabato City, (via Libungan of Cotabato Province) the seat of Regions XII and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The municipality is located outside the typhoon belt and is protected by mountains and hills against the onslaught of strong winds or heavy rains. Wao has 26 barangays, 4 of which are considered urban while the remaining 22 possess more of rural characteristics.

In summary of Wao's political history, the first appointed mayor of Wao was Sultan Mamaco Saripada. He served from 1961 until 1963, and won the first local elections in 1963, there by ending his term in 1967. Captain Silverio Eleazar then followed; who was Re-elected in 1971, hence completed his 15 years of administration in 1982. Dionisio Baldeviso was the third elected mayor of Wao who served from 1982 to 1986. During the people power revolution, an officer in charge was designated in the person of Wilfredo Villalba to serve as Mayor. In the 1988 local elections, Attorney Remedios Guiab won over former Mayor Villalba and was re-elected in 1992, there by served her full three terms as Municipal Mayor until 1998. Next to her was Hon. Elvino C. Balicao Sr, the former Vice Mayor who also served office for three consecutive terms from 1988 to 2007. After him, his son Hon. Elvino B. Balicao Jr, the former ABC President, was elected and also served three consecutive terms as Mayor of the municipality from 2007 to 2016. Ret.Col. Bobby B. Balicao, AFP, presently the 2016 elected Municipal Mayor of Wao.

Under the Governance of various mayors, Wao was able to accomplish great things for its advancement. The Municipality received two (2) GALINGPOOK AWARDS (2010) for its Watershed Management and Solid Waste Management. Also, Wao has been a constant awardee of Seal of Good Housekeeping since 2011 and recently awarded with the Seal of Good Local Governance from DILG National Office.

In addition to these advancements, are the establishment of Land Bank of the Philippines Wao Branch, Wao Water District, FIBECO Field Office, Schools, Hospital, Birthing Clinic, Philhealth Service Desk, Category 1 Sanitary Landfill, tourism sites and many more. Wao is almost complete of its facilities that cater the needs of its constituents. All of these are the fruits of sacrifices done by our settlers and Muslim residents of Wao who welcomed them and worked together in making Wao a better place to live in. Waonians is truly a proof of success though unity in diversity.

Source: Wao Municipal Tourism Office