#PEPSEATHROWBACK

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Surviving a Typhoon... on Xmas eve!

We're building a new Reef

Sangguniang Bayan Accreditation

Waste Management: what's next?
What a difference each day makes!

Thanks to our amazing team and enthusiastic volunteers, the last 6 months were full of new projects, the evolution and development of existing projects, and remarkable achievements for the Malapascua Pep & Sea.

For the People

66,158 kg waste collected

290 children benefit from educational programs

28 volunteers hosted

For the Sea

8 survey sites monitored

230 hours of underwater monitoring

294 fisherfolks profiled
On December 24, Typhoon Ursula (Phanfone) hit Malapascua, bringing enough destruction to remind everyone of Yolanda (Haiyan), which devastated the island 6 years ago. We woke up on Christmas Day to witness the wreckage the typhoon had left behind. Many houses were damaged, boats were sunk or broken; The pathways had vanished and some of the places we all love had collapsed on themselves. It was a terrible sight.

However, we all had the chance to witness how incredibly resilient the people of Malapascua are. They stood up and gathered their strength, and started to rebuild what had been taken away from them overnight. But most of all, they did this while still wishing you ‘Merry Christmas’ and with a broad smile on their face!

"The humanity lesson that we all received that day has been the greatest Christmas gift we could wish for: Ursula may have taken our Christmas day away, but it didn’t take away our spirit and willpower. PepSea is very proud to be part of such a generous, strong and inspiring community."

Roberta, Field Scientist

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Sadly, another consequence of this was the amount of solid waste gathered all over the island and the coastline.

It was a challenge to prioritise solid waste management when everyone’s focus was to get their houses rebuilt. We set about doubling the efforts of all our land staff and volunteers in collecting household garbage and marine litter. In collaboration with the Barangay and the private sector, the garbage aftermath of Ursula was slowly but surely collected and transported to the mainland. After one month of hard work, the island was finally back to some sort of normal.

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Hence, our scientific team developed a protocol to perform a rapid assessment of typhoon damages on the reefs. It was conducted on all of our 18 sites around Malapascua, Campatoc, and Carnaza, in January and February 2020.

(continue on the next page)
For each site, a team of two divers assessed typhoon damage over four randomly selected circle plots of five-meter radius. The extent of the damage was recorded as the percentage of corals affected within the plot, and the severity of the damage was evaluated using three categories:

1 = damage affecting only the edges of the coral colonies; 2 = broken parts/branches of the corals; 3 = damage affecting the whole colonies.

To integrate the extent and severity information, we used a Damage Impact Index developed by Australian scientists to survey typhoon impacts on the Great Barrier Reef (Beeden et al. 2015).

Preliminary results showed that all the assessed reefs were moderately affected by the typhoon, except for Coral Garden North site that presented extreme coral damages – most likely due to the very shallow depth at this location.

Corals are slow-growing animals: sadly, our shallow reefs will likely take time to recover.

Therefore, it is very important to limit other stressors to give them a better chance to heal. Long-term monitoring will allow us to further investigate that impact and the recovery of the reefs.
We are (so) proud to announce that (finally)! our Reef Structure Project was approved by all the local authorities and will soon be launched.

It aims to create a reef structure in Malapascua using Mineral Accretion Technology. This innovative technology utilises low voltage electricity to improve the health and growth rates of corals and other marine organisms. As electricity flows to metal structures placed underwater, limestone (the building material of most hard corals) will accumulate onto those structures. Corals growing on these electrified artificial reefs tend to grow 3-4 times faster than their natural growth rate, and survive much better during bleaching events, disease outbreaks and other disturbances.

Through the strong relationships we have built with the different groups of Malapascua (tour guides, businesses, schools, fisherfolks, etc.), we are hoping to involve the community from the outset of this project to ensure everyone is proud for Malapascua to be home to such an innovative coral restoration initiative.

Initial work for the proposal was started in November 2018; final approval was received in February 2020 through the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) entered into by People and the Sea, Barangay Logon, and the Municipality of Daanbantayan.

This was a big achievement for our team who dedicated so much effort and resources to making sure that the project was supported by all stakeholders: Barangay Council, Municipal Government, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.
People and the Sea received accreditation from the Municipal Legislative Body (Sangguniang Bayan) of Daanbantayan.

What does it mean?
People and the Sea is eligible to be an implementing partner for social development programs of the local government.

Why is this significant?
Most of all, it is a sign of acknowledgment from the local government. It is a statement that given all the efforts and successes we have had up to this point, they now want to strengthen our working relationship by officially recognising our capacity as a technical support organisation.

This is a big opportunity to further efforts towards supporting the local community of Malapascua, and Daanbantayan as a whole, in crafting environmentally sound management policies while building resilient infrastructures and sources of livelihood.
Hence, this has been one of the focus areas of PepSea work with Malapascua’s community. Our team has developed and implemented a Waste Collection and an Educational program (WCE) in collaboration with the Malapascua Business Association. And the results are hugely encouraging...

Additionally, to respond to this increase, a new material recovery facility was funded by the government and allowed greater efficiency in waste storage and transport.

Overall, waste is now managed in a more environmentally conscious manner, for the benefit of the community. Furthermore, the WCE Project has served to bring more structure and legitimacy to Malapascua’s waste management efforts.
WASTE MANAGEMENT: WHAT'S NEXT?

Whilst this important progress, we now face new challenges and it’s crucial to continue the efforts towards more sustainable and efficient waste management. This was highlighted by the Department of Tourism in a recent visit, pointing out waste management as one of the most important issues still facing the island:

- The new materials recovery facility is rapidly being overwhelmed by the volume of waste, and the three weekly removal boats are proving unable to meet the need for waste removal
- Though residents now mostly practice proper segregation, the bulk of waste is residual and therefore cannot be recycled meaningfully or in a sufficient capacity – although this is not a problem unique to Malapascua.

In short, Malapascua now faces the the need to take a ‘value chain approach’ to waste management, combining upstream initiatives aimed at reducing the quantity of waste (especially non-recyclable waste) with downstream initiatives aimed at increasing the sustainable waste processing capacity of the island.

And that’s no small task! More to come on this topic in the coming months!
People and the Seas has been conducting Crown of Thorns (COTs) removal activities around Malapascua since February 2018. Considering the persistence of the outbreak, and the often poorly coordinated response we were seeing, People and the Sea partnered with the MENRO (Daanbantayan Municipal Environment, Natural Resources Office), DENR 7 PENRO/CENRO and the Malapascua Business Association to organise a classroom workshop and a field removal session with all stakeholders in an effort to agree on and standardise best practices, as well as put in place mechanisms for coordination and data collection.

WHY ARE COTS A THREAT TO CORAL REEFS?

COTs are a voracious coral predator and when their population reaches outbreak levels it is killing coral at a rate that exceeds the coral’s growth rate - meaning coral reefs are in decline! Our reef monitoring results show that COT densities on the reefs of Malapascua are now 7 TIMES the threshold defining an outbreak (more than 15 COTs per hectare).

The workshop saw presentations from the local and regional government officials as well as the Lead Science Officer of People and the Sea (Alicia Dalongeville). After considering the threat posed by COTs in more detail, and a look at the survey results of PepSea, there was a review of the conduct of collection/removal activities as well as how best to work together to ensure the best use of collective effort of the concerned parties.
**LET’S COUNT BABY FISH!**

We are happy to announce our new partnership with *Ecocean* — a French company that develops biorestoration solutions to promote marine biodiversity. Together we’ve launched a Post-Larvae Fish Monitoring Project with the direct involvement of the fisherfolks.

**PROJECT GOALS**

**Marine Resources Management**
With the ultimate goal of rebuilding wild fish stocks, we aim to deepen our understanding of fish recruitment dynamics (baby fish production) around the island.

**Fishermen Engagement**
We want to involve the fisherfolk community to increase its acceptance and ownership of the project and foster its support of future fishery-related management interventions.

**OVERVIEW**

Through a participatory data collection approach, the fisherfolks have been trained to conduct post-larvae fish monitoring: using a floating light trap, post-larvae reef fish are captured, photo-documented, identified, and released. Data collected from this study (monitoring will be done for a minimum of one year) will show fish recruitment around the island and will be shared to local authorities for effective management interventions.

**MILESTONES**

- Technology transfer (training) to fisherfolks, People and the Sea staff, and representatives from LGU (February 2-5, 2020)
- Secure Permit for Research (LGU)
- Monthly Data collection for a duration of 12 months min.
- Report Presentation and Identification of Next Steps
Sustainable management of fishing activities is one of People and the Sea’s core goals. Our team kicked off a set of initiatives to further understand the fisheries sector on Malapascua, its impact on the island’s marine resources and its socio-economic dynamics.

The results of all these activities are regularly presented and discussed with the fisherfolk community and set the basis to identify training needs and define the activities roadmap for the upcoming year. We are close to publishing the full report of the Fisheries Activities for 2019, keep an eye on the ‘Reports’ section of our website.

**FISHERIES MONITORING**

In order to estimate fish stocks, we’ve implemented a fish catch monitoring system that includes not only direct measurements of landed catch (done regularly in 2 sites) but also participatory data collection, by providing the community representatives the proper data collection tools. This is a great example of community engagement that resulted in the empowerment of fishermen to autonomously and consistently record the daily volume of fish catch.

**FISHERIES PROFILING**

We conducted a fisherfolk profiling exercise through a structured questionnaire and focus group discussion. The aim was to understand in depth the socio-economic status of this group and ultimately to be able to design and implement new solutions for sustainable fishing.
TOWARDS FISHERIES SUSTAINABILITY

FISHERIES REGISTRATION

Each year, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) through the Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) conducts a nationwide fishery registration for everyone engaged in fishing activities.

The main goal is to gather the necessary updated and reliable information to develop efficient and sustainable fisheries management policies that promote fishermen’s livelihood security, fisheries welfare, and coastal conservation.

This information also assures efficient and immediate delivery of government services to the beneficiaries in the fisheries sector. With the help of our volunteers and local staff, we were able to register a total of 124 fishermen.

124 FISHERMEN REGISTERED

People and the Sea, being identified as the leading marine conservation organisation in Malapascua, was invited to help conduct the activity.
Community-Managed Savings and Credit Associations (CoMSCA),
is a savings scheme introduced by World Vision International (WVI)-Philippines as a way to empower vulnerable families and teach them financial management and literacy.

As is often the case on Malapascua, communities are often held back by poor control of their finances – they live on a day-to-day basis, have very little knowledge of financial planning and have no access to the tool needed for it (i.e. banks, internet, savings schemes). This limits their ability to manage ‘shocks’ (such as the ongoing situation with COVID-19 for example) or make secure plans for the future.

In November 2019, members of our team participated in a 3-day trainer’s training in Tacloban to be able to introduce CoMSCA to the local community of Malapascua. This PepSea initiative is aimed to address these issues of economic resilience, that have resulted in the growth of ruthless loan-shark operations on the island. Following the training, the whole People and the Sea onsite team has formed a CoMSCA group as an opportunity for the team to develop their understanding of what they learned during the trainer’s training and to become fluent in the CoMSCA process.

In the future, we expect to expand this programme into the community by identifying groups to whom we can offer the training and support necessary to establish successful community-managed saving schemes.
Adopt A Pathway Program is a good example of a creative way to involve the local community with the waste management issue in the island.

Why?
Aside from educating the local community on more sustainable waste management solutions, the aim is to get their direct involvement as a way to promote a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the waste management in the island.

How?
With the help of our volunteers, we've launched an adoption campaign for the waste collectors and segregator points all over the island - ADOPT A PATHWAY!

We invited the community to use their creativity to give a fresh look to the pathways: they were painted, built with sturdier frames, and are ready to serve their purpose to enable a more sustainable and engaging waste management process.
Another batch of **91 students** from our Environment Education Class graduated this year!


The ceremony was attended by our PepSea staff and volunteers who also shared some fun spaghetti time with the kids!
PEPSEA FAMILY NEWS

WELCOME DAFF BINOBO! OUR NEW SITE MANAGER

Daff grew up in the province of Iloilo in the Visayas. His family came from a fishing community and so he grew up developing a love for the ocean.

Officially becoming a member of the PepSea family in January of 2020, he has taken the role of Site Manager, being the first Filipino Site Manager for the organisation.

Daff’s career has taken him around the country working with disadvantaged and remote communities, empowering and educating those who need assistance.

In working for People and the Sea, he hopes to share his knowledge and contribute to the efforts for marine conservation.

FAREWELL SEAN, KATIE, AND ALICIA

Alicia
Alicia planned, managed and interpreted all the science data our staff and volunteers collected. Having stayed with the team a little over a year, she has made a huge contribution in the role of Lead Science Officer. Her rigour, drive and dedication have resulted in a number of key milestones in People and the Sea’s science programme.

Sean
Sean has been our Site Manager since April 2019 and he pretty much kept the whole PepSea team working together. This scruffy fellow was a bit rough on the outside but had a playful, gentle heart!

Katie
Music and singing (lots of it). There’s never a dull moment when you're with Katie. She can make anyone see the fun out of every mundane task. Our bubbly Dive Operations Manager will surely be missed both in the dive room and on the boat.

It’s been a privilege to work with these extraordinary humans! Thanks for choosing to be part of the PepSea family. Our volunteers and the people of Malapascua are grateful for your work, dedication and all the positive energy you gave! Well wishes, and we’ll hopefully see you around!
VOLUNTEERS

Martin Lacroix
Garden Volunteer / Let’s Grow Greens Volunteer

Martin is a plant biology student from Paris-Diderot University. His fascination with plants and the drive to help the community brought him to PepSea. He worked for the rehabilitation of our garden (destroyed by Typhoon Ursula) and collaborated with our staff on conducting garden and compost monitoring around the island. One of his major achievements was creating a tool to help our locals understand the economic and social benefits of having a garden.

Lena Rouznau
Movie Volunteer / Happy Volunteer

Lena has worked with PepSea for four months. Lena wants to become a journalist, and she spent most of her time documenting the projects we run to summarise them in short, impactful videos. Watch out, these will be released soon!

EARLY GOODBYE DUE TO COVID-19

Amid the global spread of Corona Virus - COVID-19 - the Island of Malapascua was officially placed under ‘enhanced community quarantine’. Our top priority is always the welfare of our volunteers, so we had to take the hard decision to cancel all volunteer activities and helped our volunteers repatriate to their countries. To Martin, Gio, Delphine, Tjerk, and Bastien, we salute you. Thank you for the time that you have spent with us and we hope that you treasure all the memories as we’ll certainly do. We could not be more proud and inspired by these guys for their maturity and resilience they demonstrated in this difficult situation. Keep in touch!
COVID 19 - PEPSEA STILL AT WORK! ...

PepSea has not escaped the unprecedented impact of Covid 19. All volunteer operations have been suspended for the time being. We have managed to maintain a core team on site to continue to run the projects quarantine conditions allow. Needless to say our priority continues to support the community of Malapascua in any ways we can.

Watch out for more news coming soon with more detail about the situation.

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