

A YEAR IN REVIEW

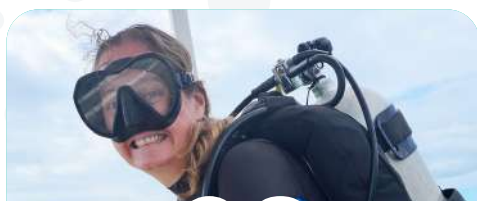
# Annual Report

20  
24

Healthy seas begin on land.



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by Axelle Jorcin  
Founder of  
People and the Sea



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The people behind  
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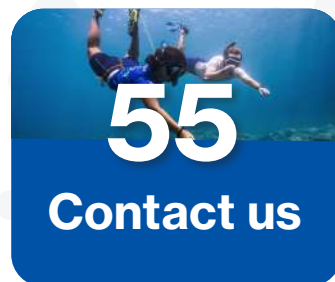
Investing where we  
make a difference

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**55**

## Contact us



# Word from the founder



**When we started People and the Sea nearly a decade ago, we had a simple but powerful belief: real conservation happens when communities lead. 2024 proved that belief wasn't just idealistic—it's working.**

This year, LogFA (*Logon Fishers Association*) took full ownership of monthly Crown-of-Thorns removals and organised their first event for *Malapascua's International Coastal Cleanup*. They're now advocating for Dakit-Lapus—the island's first fisher-managed marine sanctuary. In Higatangan, we found fisher groups already knowledgeable about reef protection and eager to act. With our support in re-energising their associations through officer elections, they immediately adopted monthly reef cleanups and COTS removals as their own — showing that building on existing knowledge creates lasting conservation action.

Our *Conservation Education* programme reached a new high when we handed our summer camps to youth volunteers from Malapascua. They didn't just teach 119 children—they formed "Isla Kabatan-on," the island's first *Youth Environmental Club*, and launched their own community projects.

The numbers tell part of the story: 188 fishers actively contributing catch data. Nineteen savings groups managing ₱31 million with 0% default. Over 653 students connecting waste management to ocean health. Nearly five tons of waste prevented through our *Eco-Mama* and *Eco-Napkin* initiatives.

But behind every number is a person whose relationship with the ocean has deepened. A child seeing coral for the first time. A fisher analysing his fish catch. A youth volunteer discovering their power as a community leader.

2024 reminded us this work takes resilience. Our income was lower than previous years, yet 89% of our budget went directly to the Philippines—39% in salaries for our incredible Filipino team, because empowering communities requires great people on the ground.

To our partners—*Blue Ventures*, *Maya*, *EOCA* and *DSM*—thank you for believing in the long game. To our volunteers who leave behind systems and knowledge that keep giving - keep coming! To our private donors who give again and again - thank you for your trust, it means everything. And to our Filipino team—you are the heart of everything we do.

Our *Sustainable Fisheries* programme is now our flagship initiative, accounting for 45% of expenses. It's an investment we believe in because we've seen what happens when fishers have the data and voice to lead: they become the most effective stewards of their own seas.

**Axelle Jorcin**  
Founder & Executive Director  
People and the Sea



Programme accomplishments



# Supporting fisheries

Community-led  
Marine Resources Management  
in the Visayan Sea

Malapascua, Daanbantayan, Cebu



# How fisher-led data is leading the way



## In sustainable fisheries management

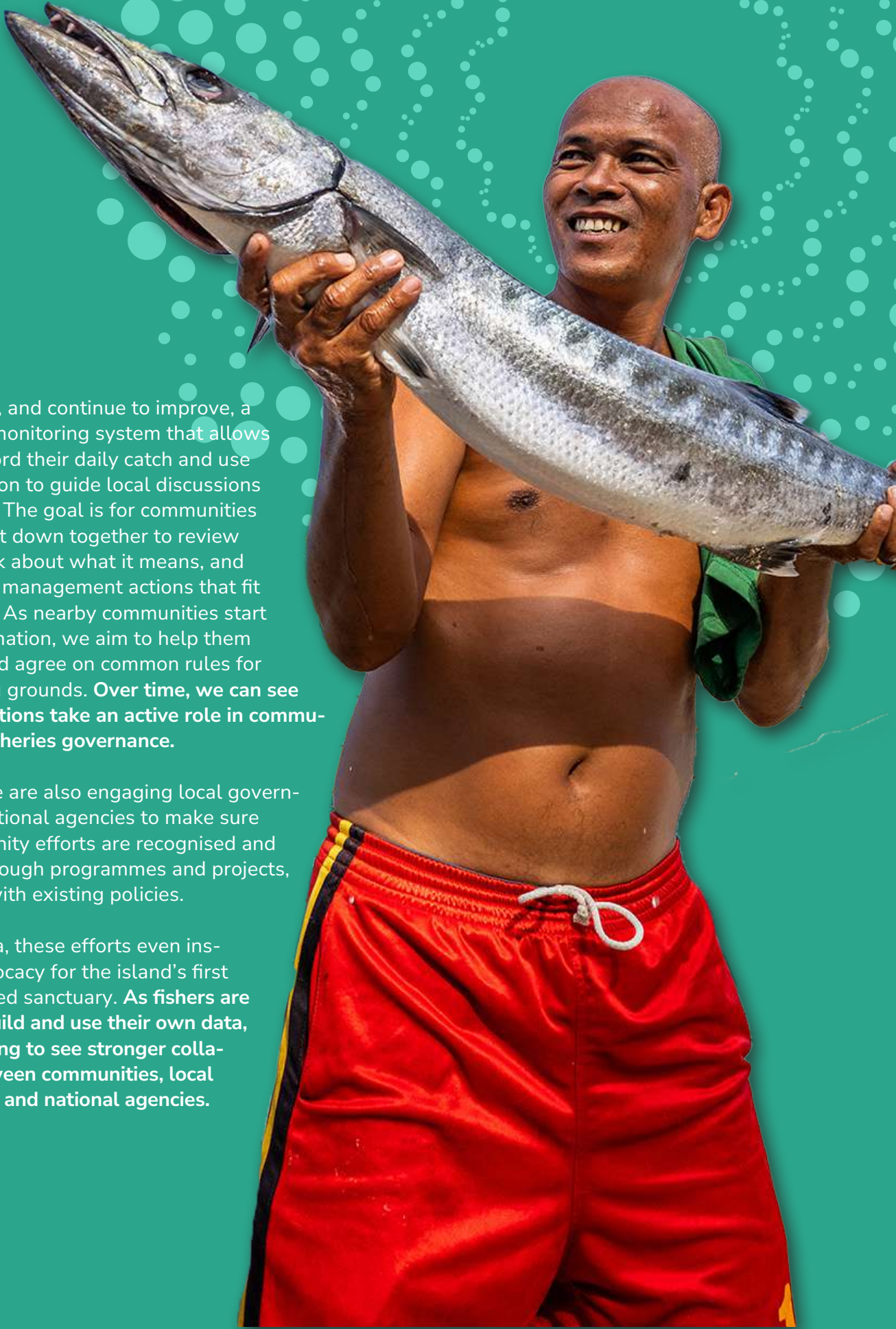
Our *Sustainable Fisheries programme* started from a simple realisation: if we want to keep our fish stocks healthy, we need to give small-scale fishers the tools and knowledge to understand what's really happening in their seas.

For too long, decisions about fishing were made without their voices or real data from the ground.

So we began working with local fishers' groups to help them collect and use their own catch data, giving them a way to see trends, discuss what's changing, and think about how to respond.



Ph. Stéphanie Guest

A smiling man with a shaved head, wearing red shorts, is holding a large, silver fish with both hands. The fish is long and slender, with a pointed snout and visible scales. The background is a teal color with a pattern of white dots of varying sizes, some of which are arranged in concentric circles.

We've set-up, and continue to improve, a digital catch monitoring system that allows fishers to record their daily catch and use that information to guide local discussions and planning. The goal is for communities to regularly sit down together to review their data, talk about what it means, and come up with management actions that fit their realities. As nearby communities start sharing information, we aim to help them coordinate and agree on common rules for shared fishing grounds. **Over time, we can see fisher associations take an active role in community-based fisheries governance.**

In parallel, we are also engaging local governments and national agencies to make sure these community efforts are recognised and supported through programmes and projects, and aligned with existing policies.

In Malapascua, these efforts even inspired the advocacy for the island's first fisher-managed sanctuary. **As fishers are learning to build and use their own data, we're beginning to see stronger collaboration between communities, local governments, and national agencies.**



# Leading Data-Driven Fisheries Management



## Data Generation

Collection of daily catch data using digital tools

## Data feedback

Facilitated discussions: fishers interpret, validate, analyse catch data



## Management Action

Collective discussions and dialogues to design, implement and advocate for management measures

## Collaborative Actions

Harmonising local management initiatives among neighboring fishing communities



## Government Engagement

Advocacies for alignment of local initiatives with government policies



# Building a regional network

From 2015 to 2021, we focused on developing and refining our five core programmes on Malapascua Island, off the northern coast of Cebu, the starting point of our pilot community-based marine conservation in a tourism-driven setting.

## Higatangan

- Libertad Fishers Association (LiFiAs): 30 fishers
- Mabini Fishers Association (MaFiAs): 78 fishers
- 2 Data Collectors

## Carnaza

## Malapascua

- Logon Fishers Association (LogFA): 114 fishers
- 6 Data Collectors

In 2022, we explored Northeastward to Biliran Province for possible expansion areas and in 2023, we decided to apply and adapt our digital fish catch data collection in Higatangan Island, in Naval, Biliran, amidst a new ecological and social setting.

In 2024, we brought our other programmes to Higatangan, particularly our COMSCA, COTs population management, and waste management. Towards the end of 2024, we secured institutional funding to bring our initiatives to Carnaza Island, another small fishing community in northern Cebu, marking the next step in building an inter-island network for sustainable coastal management.



0 10 20Km

Scale: 1:90.000





# 2024 accomplishments



In 2024, our goal was **to improve the digital catch monitoring system** in Malapascua and Higatangan, and use the data to guide discussions with local fishers (Data Feedback Sessions, also called IMD). Through these sessions, fishers review and validate their own catch records, analyse patterns, and talk about what these mean for the state of their fisheries.

This process helps them link observed changes in their catch to factors like spawning seasons, reef health, weather, and fishing practices. A deepened understanding of fisheries, ecosystems, and sea dynamics eventually enables them to effectively come up with collaborative agreements to ensure that the sea and the livelihood they rely on are both protected.

We also re-established our work in Higatangan Island, **reconnecting with two local fisherfolk associations, LiFiAs (Libertad Fishers Association) and MaFiAs (Mabini Fishers Association)**, and the Local Government of Naval, Biliran.

This renewed partnership allowed us to run community activities and reinforce the digital fisheries initiative on the island. We began rebuilding interest and participation in fisheries governance among fishers who had been inactive for years.

**2024 marked a period of rebuilding, learning, and transitioning from data collection to practical action.**





# Improving data collection to match communities fishing effort

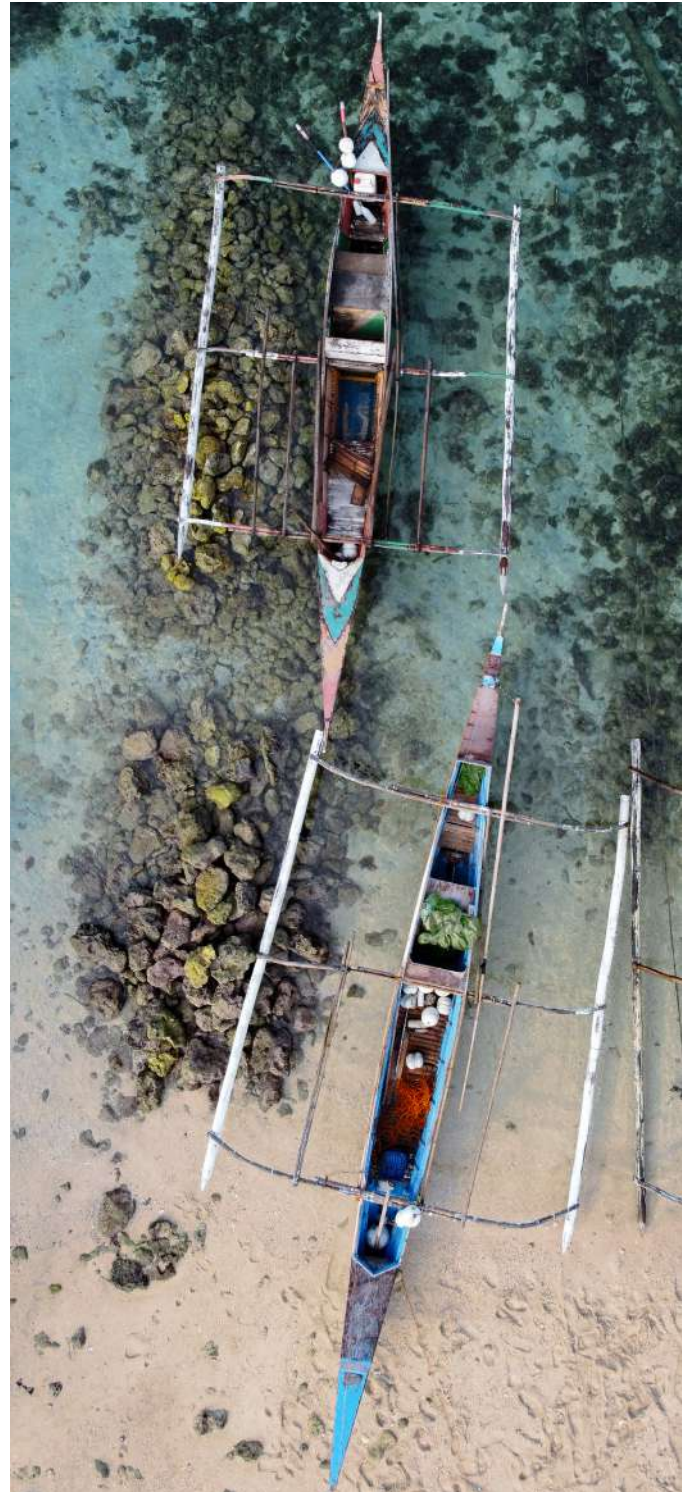


Across Malapascua and Higatangan, we maintained and improved daily catch data collection, involving **188 fishers from five villages** supported by trained local data collectors. We also started analysing the database to see trends in catch volume, fishing effort, and species diversity, and to identify patterns that can guide future management actions.

We have tested three types of data collection systems:

- Data collectors recording data at fish landing site
- Accessing fish records from buyers
- Individual reporting of catch to data collector

The system implemented varies according to the community's fishing habits, the acceptability for fish buyers to share their data and the willingness of fishers to voluntarily report data.





# From Data to Dialogue



"Isturyahanay Mahitungod sa Datos" (IMD) or "Conversations About Data".

## IMD1:

Digital fish catch monitoring basics

## IMD2:

Analysis & validation of trends, fishers' interests in catch monitoring

## IMD3:

Prioritisation of species needing management interventions

## IMD4:

Management strategies and actions

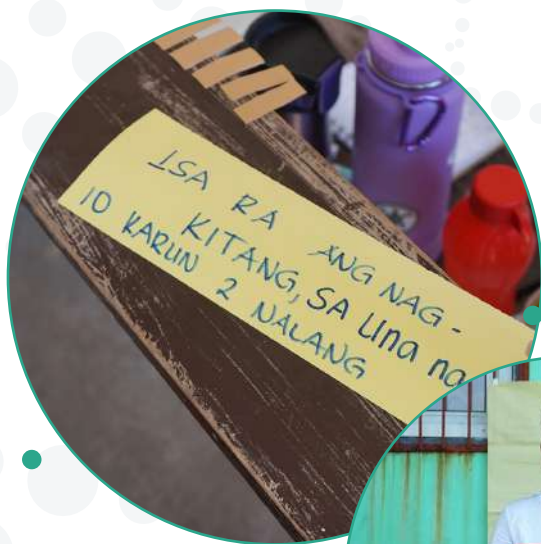
## Key figures

**9 total IMDs**

6 IMD2 in Malapascua, 2 IMD2 in Higitangan, 1 IMD3 in Malapascua

**5 fishing communities covered by IMD in Malapascua attended by 83 participants (30 women)**

**2 villages covered by IMD in Higitangan attended by 48 participants (7 women)**





Building on this data collection effort, we launched workshops called “**Isturyahanay Mahitungod sa Datos**” (IMD) or “**Conversations About Data.**” These sessions turned the numbers and data analysis into meaningful discussions by fishers, wherein they reviewed their own catch information, analysed patterns, and talked about what they noticed in terms of trends in species abundance, catch size, seasonality, and fishing efforts, among others.

We have conducted **9 IMD sessions**: seven in Malapascua and two in Higtangan, reaching more than 90 participants, including a large number of women.

During these sessions, fishers in Guimbayan identified **Lagaw (*Nemipterus spp.*)** as the most important species in Malapascua, both economically and culturally. They also recognised **Libod (*Spratelloides gracilis*)** as a key supporting species since it’s used as bait for Lagaw.

This led us to start focused discussions and research on Lagaw fisheries in collaboration with the local fishers. The research is reinforcing the fishers’ traditional knowledge about Lagaw and is also providing additional information about potential management strategies for its sustainability.

## Key Indicators

9 IMD workshops

131 participants

28% women

*In Malapascua and Higtangan*



# Strengthening fisher associations to support local management of marine resources



Our support to fishers' associations also grew beyond data. We provided LogFA (*Logon Fishers Association*) technical assistance as they pursued the creation of the **Dakit-Lapus Fish Sanctuary**, the first fisher-managed marine area in Malapascua. Together, we helped them draft a resolution, locate coordinates, and prepare maps for their advocacy to the local government.

The process is ongoing, with LogFA leading discussions with both the barangay and municipal governments, and engagement with the *Bureau of Fisheries* (BFAR). In Higtangan, we teamed up with *BFAR Biliran* and *LGU Naval* in reorganising and re-energising the fisherfolk associations in Libertad and Mabini (LiFiAs and Ma-FiAs), installing **new officers and reviving member participation**.



Throughout 2024, we continued strengthening the organisational foundations of our partner fisherfolk associations in MLP and HGT through a series of structured **organisational development (OD) trainings, technical workshops, and hands-on marine conservation sessions**.

Our goal this year was to help FAs transition from loosely coordinated groups into independent, functional, and forward-looking community organisations capable of managing their fisheries and coastal resources.



From June until September, we facilitated workshops on organisational strengthening, financial literacy, sustainable fisheries management, marine conservation, advocacy, and negotiation skills.

We also supported the groups in **establishing functional systems** within their organisations, such as conducting regular meetings, membership fees collection, registration of fishers and boats, savings groups formation, and partnerships with government agencies.

Lastly, we reviewed **LogFA's fish aggregating device (FAD) project** to assess its effectiveness in improving livelihoods while ensuring it does not add pressure on fish stocks. The findings showed that while FADs are useful tools for making the catch of pelagic fish easier, their management is complex and challenging—particularly in preventing intrusion by outsiders, avoiding damage from passing vessels, and minimising losses during typhoons.





# Empowering fishers associations



## Organisational development and governance strengthening form the foundation for empowering fisher associations.

By building the capacity of local leaders to participate effectively in governance structures, these interventions strengthen institutional systems, align community rules with broader policy frameworks, and enhance co-management arrangements between fisher groups and local government units.

### ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT 1

- Discussions on characteristics of a strong organisation: unity, clear vision and plans, transparency, teamwork, and internal rules.
- Discussions of key competencies needed by FAs: sustainable fisheries management, coastal resources management, marine conservation, financial literacy, advocacy & communication, and networking.

### ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT 2

- Workshop and self-reflections on organisational needs, duties and responsibilities toward being a strong group such as: establishing meeting system and committee structures, financial system, roadmap and plan for further strengthening towards fisheries sustainability, livelihood improvement plans.
- Planning for next activities: fishers and boats registrations, meeting arrangements, waste management, COT removals, savings groups formation, by-laws review, trainings on book-keeping and auditing, membership to LGU councils.

#### June 4

13 participants of newly organised LiFiAs (Libertad Fishers Ass.)

#### June 8

25 participants of newly organised MaFiAs (Mabini Fishers Ass.)

#### August 19

14 participants of LogFA (Logon Fishers Ass.)

#### September 4

14 participants of LogFA (Logon Fishers Ass.)

#### September 23

22 participants of MaFiAs (Mabini Fishers Ass.)

15 participants of LiFiAs (Libertad Fishers Ass.)



The *Crown-of-Thorns starfish* (*Acanthaster planci*) is a coral-eating predator that can severely damage reef ecosystems when populations reach outbreak levels. A single starfish can consume up to 10 square meters of coral per year, leaving behind white coral skeletons and degraded reef habitats.

Population outbreaks are often linked to nutrient pollution, overfishing of natural predators, and climate-related factors, making their management critical for coral reef conservation.



A major highlight was the start of FA-led removal of COTs and trainings on recording of COT biometrics, both signalling a significant

step of our partner fishers groups towards marine conservation. Fishers were trained on:

- Safety protocols in handling COTs
- Proper techniques for manual removal of COTs
- Conducting validation surveys of suspected outbreak areas
- Proper disposal of collected COTs.

### September 24

19 fishers from Libertad  
14 fishers from Mabini





A significant milestone was achieved in October when we officially turned over the conduct of monthly COTS removals to LogFA (the local fisherfolk organisation) in Malapascua.



This handover demonstrates the fishing community's growing capacity and commitment to reef protection. In Higatangan, despite introducing the initiative only in August, **the fisher groups have already taken ownership of the activity and are conducting monthly removals when possible.** This rapid community adoption reflects the strong engagement and understanding of the importance of protecting nearshore reefs from COTS outbreaks.





# Other fisheries management initiatives



We also began engaging Malapascua communities in understanding and protecting **seagrass habitats**, recognising their importance for food security and coastal health.

Through a **new gleaning data collection system**, we worked with 145 gleaners (90 of them women) from seven sitios to record what they collect from seagrass beds. This information became the basis for community discussions about habitat protection and the role of seagrasses in supporting marine life.

**Three IMD sessions on seagrass and gleaning followed, engaging 46 participants (mostly women)**, and resulted in a draft overview of gleaning practices on the island.





Programme accomplishments



# Conservation education







People and the Sea believes that lasting change for our seas begins with shaping the young minds who will one day inherit them.

When children grow up understanding and appreciating how marine ecosystems work, they become natural advocates for their protection. Yet, for many years, environmental education in small island communities has remained abstract, limited to classroom lectures and pictures in books. Few children had the chance to experience and understand the underwater world that sustains their families' livelihoods.

So, we set out to change that with our **Conservation Education programme**. In this programme, we bring learning out of the classroom and into the field.

**We combine classroom lessons with snorkeling activities, field trips to mangrove and seagrass ecosystems, and creative, hands-on sessions designed to connect science with daily life.**

Each lesson is anchored on PepSea's advocacy for marine protection and sustainable community living.

Over the years, we've seen how these experiences stay with them. A child who first sees a coral reef underwater, or learns to identify seagrass species, begins to see their island in a new light. They start asking questions, joining clean-ups, and reminding adults about waste segregation or fishing responsibly. **This is how a new generation of environmental stewards begins — through curiosity, wonder, and connection.**







## Grade 5 Conservation Education

Our formal partnership with the *Department of Education (DepEd) Cebu Division* was established back in 2022 to complement the Grade 5 Science curriculum of *Guimbitayan Elementary School (GES)* and *Logon Elementary School (LES)* in *Malapascua* through interactive, experience-based learning approaches.

By April this year, we successfully completed our Academic Year 2023–2024 Grade 5 Environmental Education classes in *Guimbitayan* and *Logon Elementary Schools*, reaching a total of 89 students (47 from *Logon Elementary School* and 45 from *Guimbitayan Elementary School*).

From November 2023 to April 2024, we covered **10 science topics**, slightly fewer than our original plan of 13 due to several class suspensions caused by typhoons and other school disruptions.





The highlight of the programme was the series of 11 snorkeling sessions held from February to June, which allowed **71 students to explore the island's coral reefs firsthand.**

For many, despite living by the sea, it was their first time seeing corals, fishes, and other marine life up close, an experience that deepened their appreciation of the ocean's importance to their lives and community.





Building on our learnings from 2023-2024 science classes, we began the 2024-2025 academic year with a streamlined and more experiential curriculum.

We focused on five essential topics most relevant to PepSea's advocacies:

Marine  
pollution

Reef  
ecosystems

Ecosystems  
basics

Seagrass  
ecosystems

Mangrove  
ecosystems



This emphasises interactive learning and field-based experiences, including visits to seagrass and mangrove habitats in the island and guided snorkeling sessions to highlight reef ecosystems.

Classes started in August 2024 in both schools, **involving 91 Grade 5 students** (41 from Barrio, 50 from Guimbitayan). By the end of the calendar year, we had completed three topics and conducted four seagrass field trips, **with a total of 61 student participants**.



# Summer Camps



This year's summer camps were more participatory, vibrant, and full of youthful energy, as it was entirely led by Malapascua's own youth.

In July, we held **five summer camps** that brought environmental education to life through play, learning, and teamwork. It was a major turning point for the programme. Instead of conducting the summer camps ourselves, **we shifted our focus to training, supporting, and mentoring six youth volunteers and five youth interns to take the lead in planning, facilitation, logistics, and ensuring the safety of the children.**

Over four months of planning and preparations, from April to July, these young islanders (guided by PepSea staff), took full charge of the entire process, from conceptualisation to implementation. By the end of the activities, **a total of 119 children participated in the camps.**





The camps also showcased strong community support:



## 43 local businesses sponsored the events

while USANA Foundation partnered with us to introduce vegetable gardening to children.

Aabana Resort  
Angelina  
Atlas Dive Shop  
Bakhaw kiwi  
Be one Guest House  
Blanco  
Blue Corals  
Blue Water  
Budget Inn  
Crown Of Malapascua  
D5 Hardware store  
Daño Resort  
Dans Dive  
Devocean  
Dive Nation  
Edem Inn

Ellen Inn  
Fish Buddies  
French Kiss  
Fun & Sun  
Guanna Place  
Hide Away Resort  
Hilteys  
Joanna Store  
Johan resort  
Little Mermaid  
Malapascua Legend  
Mandurah's Inn  
Malapascua Garden Resort  
Moonlight  
Mr. Kwizz  
Pantalan Snacks Bar

Paradive  
Pareja  
Sea explorers  
Seaside Hostel  
Sharks Tail  
Starlight  
Triple M Store  
Thresher Shark Divers  
Villa potenciana  
Whitesand  
Zhang Resort



Post-activity reflection among the youth volunteers showed that this experience not only enriched the participating kids' environmental awareness but also significantly built the youth's capacity and confidence as young community leaders.

They mentioned that they developed stronger teamwork, planning, and communication skills.



# Youth Environmental Club



One of the most meaningful outcomes of the summer camps was the formation of **“Isla Kabatan-Onan” (Youth of the Island), Malapascua’s first Youth Environmental Club**, composed of nine initial members, all from the youth volunteers who led the summer camps.

The sense of purpose and camaraderie built during the camps inspired these young people to take the next step — to design and implement meaningful projects as a group.

Their first initiative, the “Maleta Project,” aims to foster a love for reading among children by bringing books closer to them through mobile “mobile libraries.” The youth are now brimming with ideas and eager to expand their group, inviting more of their friends to join and take part in creating positive change in their community.







## Waste Management activities

We also continued **our annual “Basura Lessons”**, a waste management education campaign held at the start of the school year.

In partnership with local teachers, we conducted lectures and hands-on sessions on proper waste segregation in **22 classrooms, reaching 653 elementary students**.

These sessions went beyond classroom cleaning practices as we emphasised the connection between waste management and ocean health, helping young learners understand how improper waste disposal on land can ultimately affect the seas that sustain their communities.

We also marked *World Ocean Day* on June 8, 2024, with a hands-on community initiative that brought together 16 youth participants. We started with an early morning coastal clean-up, followed by a collaborative art project where collected single use sachets were repurposed into a striking mural, drawn by local artist Geofil and his daughter. The completed artwork was displayed at the covered court to draw attention for both residents and visitors to the issue of single use plastics.





# Marine conservation

Our marine sciences and biodiversity conservation work is becoming increasingly integrated with our *Sustainable Fisheries programme*.

Research activities have been complementing fisheries data collection and reinforcing our ability to identify relevant hypotheses for community-based management.



# Researching Malapascua's fisheries



Our team investigated the lifecycle and species identification of Lagaw, a commercially important fish for the community of Guimbitayan. **Fisheries monitoring data revealed that Lagaw represents the largest demersal fishery in Malapascua**, providing a significant source of income and food for the community. It is caught using 'Kitang', a longline fishing gear. Despite its economic and nutritional importance, little information exists about this species in the Philippines or Malapascua specifically.

Our research focused on habitat, life cycle, distribution, and mating behavior to assess overfishing risk. We identified *Nemipterus furcosus* as the most commonly caught species and found that current fishing methods primarily target adults, minimising impact on juveniles and lowering the risk of overfishing.



We identified an issue of ray bycatch from kitang fishers and conducted interviews with local fishermen to better understand the local bycatch situation and ray population behavior. Bycatch tends to occur when fishermen use longlines in the evening or at dawn on sandy or rocky flatbeds near Carnaza, a neighboring island. Rays are caught after a standard soak time of 40-50 minutes, with lines placed close to but not touching the ground

in the demersal realm. Fishermen reported that rays prefer fresh bait over dried, appearing in higher numbers on longlines fitted with same-day bait. Interestingly, even though fishermen use longlines in other shallow areas, they only catch rays around Carnaza island.

**Future research could map the complete fishing ground to better understand distribution patterns and identify potential bycatch sites.**



# Dakit Lapus

## Malapascua's first locally managed marine area



Following from the community discussions initiated in 2023, the fishing community has made significant progress toward establishing Malapascua's first *Locally Managed Marine Area* (LMMA). **Our team conducted baseline video surveys at Dakit Lapus, the area identified by fishers for protection. These surveys will help the community see the difference between before and after management measures are implemented.**

We also supported the *Local Fisherfolk Organisation* (LogFA) in mapping the area they want to protect, ensuring that boundaries were decided by the community and then shared with the rest of Malapascua for approval.

This development demonstrates the fishing community's growing understanding of marine protected areas and their commitment to leading conservation efforts.

Location of proposed fishers managed reserve





# Reef survey training programme



Ph. Stéphanie Guest

Building on our 2023 work restarting reef surveys, **we launched a new training programme in 2024 designed to engage local divers and create long-term survey capacity.** We successfully trained the first two local dive guides in our reef survey methodology, representing an important step toward locally-led monitoring.

In order to attract local divers and short term visitors in participating in the survey training, **we created a shorter version of our standard reef training programme and we reviewed and added to our learning materials.** Trainees can now learn benthic, fish, and invertebrate identification through the Quizlet app, making the material more accessible and engaging.





We reached out to all dive centres on the island and approached several freelance dive guides and instructors to explain the training objectives. **Reef survey training offers local divers an opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the marine environment, enhance their skills, and pass these learnings on to their diving guests.**

Our goal is to build a trained local team capable of conducting regular surveys without relying on monthly volunteer training. However, we faced significant challenges. Despite offering free training, dive centres and guides struggled with the time commitment—training days represent lost income. It proved difficult to get people to commit to a week's training, and such professional development isn't part of the dive centre culture.



We did manage to train two local dive guides, but it required considerable effort to see them through the programme, primarily due to scheduling difficulties. The reality is that dive guides and instructors are heavily reliant on daily work and do not see the need for data collection. Moving forward, we need to work on raising awareness about the critical need for reef monitoring data.

Despite these challenges, we remain committed to surveying the reefs regularly and comparing recent data with our pre-COVID baseline from 2015-2019. Currently, no systematic information exists on the state of Malapascua's reefs, and our goal remains to inform government and stakeholders about reef conditions on an ongoing basis.

Ph. Stéphanie Guest



# Crown of Thorns (COTS)



Building on our 2023 work in Malapascua, we expanded our *COTS Population Management programme* to Higatangan Island in 2024, training local fishers in removal techniques.

We initiated 21 manual removal activities across both islands, maintaining an almost monthly schedule.

**Fifteen removals were conducted in Malapascua and six in Higatangan, with an average participation of seven community members per activity.** We removed a total of 1989 COTS from the reefs of both islands.





Programme accomplishments



# Economic resilience

Ph. Stéphanie Guest







Ph. Stéphanie Guest

Since PepSea's early years, we have always acknowledged that building community resilience requires more than protecting marine ecosystems, it also means strengthening the financial stability of coastal households.

When coastal households are financially stable, they are better positioned to protect the ocean and equitably benefit from the gifts of the sea.

This gave rise to **PepSea's Economic Resilience programme**, which focuses on helping families develop savings habits, financial literacy, and collective control over their resources.



We launched the first **Community Managed Savings and Credit Association (CoMSCA) group** in 2019 with only 12 members in Malapascua.



The initiative quickly gained traction for its effectiveness, simplicity and community-driven nature. **In 2024, the initiative grew to 19 groups with 475 members, with total collective savings of over ₱31 million**, very impressive for a small island economy.

What makes the savings clubs effective is their self-managed, transparent, and inclusive system. Each group establishes its own bylaws, sets share values, and defines roles and responsibilities among members, ensuring accountability and equal participation.

Members save flexibly and can borrow from the pooled fund at a fair 5% interest rate, with loans repaid within a 12-month cycle. Because the groups are fully community-controlled, the default rate has remained at 0%, with all loans repaid by the end of each cycle.



Ph. Stéphanie Guest





Depending on group savings, members are assured annual savings ranging from ₦20,000 up to ₦110,000 or more, in exceptional cases.

Loans are typically used to cover essential household needs such as food, health, education, and house or boat repairs. Nowadays, more loans are directed to establishing and/or growing small business ventures and livelihood activities.

Each group's rules clearly outline expectations for attendance, timeliness, and transparent money-counting, while members themselves perform checks and balances during every meeting.

**Our role has always been facilitative: providing initial training, financial literacy guidance, and technical troubleshooting when needed.** Autonomy over managing COMSCAs stays with the community.

We also guided groups on organisational growth and cooperative formation. In May, we facilitated the visit of the **Cooperatives Development Authority**, who conducted a lecture on transitioning to cooperatives.

While members appreciated the guidance, they currently prefer maintaining a simple savings group structure.

**Governance remains a core strength of the model.**





# Local Partnerships



PepSea works at the intersection of marine conservation, fisheries management, knowledge sharing and community development. Making this possible requires us collaborating with multiple actors such as local governments, national agencies, fisherfolk associations, academic institutions, funding partners, research and both local and international organisations.

Partnerships make things possible on the ground. It allows us to test the effectiveness of our initiatives, align them with existing policies and programmes, and scale local innovations. **Through collaborative actions across multiple actors, we ensure that community-led conservation efforts translate into broader policy influence and lasting management frameworks.**





Ph. Evangeline Faburada

Over the years, we have cultivated relationships with local governments in Daanbantayan, Cebu and Naval, Biliran; national agencies such as *Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)*, *Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)*, *Department of Science and Technology (DOST)*, *Department of Education (DepEd)*, *Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)* and *Department of Tourism (DOT)*; academic and research institutions including *University of San Carlos*, *Cebu Technical University*, and *University of Philippines Visayas*; and local and international development partners like *Blue Ventures* and *DSM*.

**These partnerships have been instrumental in implementing and continuously improving our community-based initiatives,** particularly in institutionalising fisheries management practices, promoting coastal waste management and reduction, and strengthening local capacities in marine resources governance.



# In 2024, PepSea's partnership work expanded and deepened across multiple fronts



We renewed strong ties with the *LGU Naval and the Biliran Provincial BFAR Office*, exploring opportunities to collaborate in strengthening fisherfolk associations in Higatangan, conducting COTs removals, utilising fish-catch data, and organising community events led by fishers groups, including the November visit of an Australian cruise ship.

We also provided technical and secretariat support to fisherfolk participation in LGU-led capacity-building activities, such as the Fish Processing Training of the DOST, and registration of fishing boats by the LGU.

In Daanbantayan, PepSea became an official member and committee head within the *Municipal Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council* (MFARMC) after its re-organisation in May. This formal membership significantly enhances our visibility among Daanbantayan's fisherfolk and coastal communities, while also providing our organisation a local government platform for local policy engagement.



Ph. Stéphanie Guest





# The people behind the impact



Our team is our greatest strength—a mix of local expertise, global passion, and hands-on dedication.

70% of our Filipino staff are women from coastal villages, many of whom started with no formal training. By recruiting from the communities we serve and training them in skills they'll use for life, we transform local knowledge into conservation leadership.

From designing education programmes to collecting reef data, organising fisher meetings, or navigating boats before sunrise, our team shares one mission: giving communities the tools to protect their seas.



# Permanent team Rooted in the Philippines

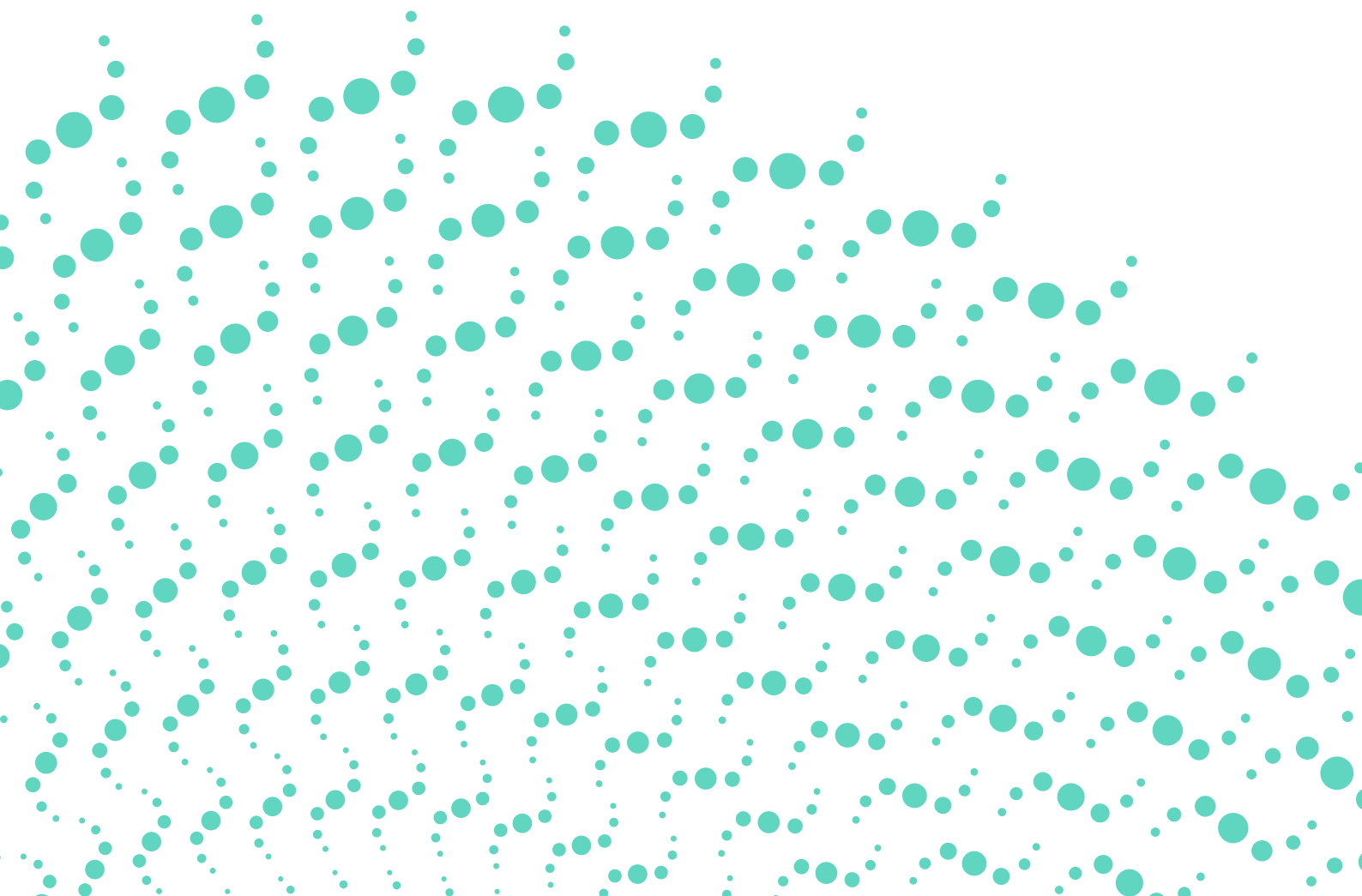


Our Filipino-led core team ensures every decision starts with local needs and stays accountable to them. In 2024, we expanded our leadership by creating the role of Director of Operations to strengthen programme delivery and operational resilience.

**Rene Vidallo** joined in February 2024. He brings 20-year experience in NGO work in the Philippines and Southeast Asia and has in-depth knowledge and experience in the full-cycle management of capacity building programmes. He ensures our projects run smoothly while staying true to our participatory, bottom-up approach.



**Rene Vidallo**  
Director of Operations







## Guiding our vision

In 2024, we took a major step toward long-term governance by formalising a Board of Directors—a group of passionate, values-aligned leaders who share our commitment to community-led conservation.

- **Antonio Florendo** • Our Corporate Secretary since 2016, he is instrumental in navigating legal and administrative challenges, ensuring PepSea's compliance and stability in the Philippines.
- **Alicia Dalongeville** • With a PhD in marine ecology and genetics and hands-on experience as People and the Sea's Lead Science Officer, Alicia brings rigorous scientific expertise—from designing field protocols to analysing complex data.
- **Anton Xavier** • An experienced entrepreneur, Anton supports our scaling efforts, helping us replicate our model while staying true to our grassroots, human-centered approach.

**We're actively expanding our board - we are looking for the right people: Filipino leaders, fishers, scientists, and changemakers who share our core values of community-driven impact and efficient, action-oriented work. If you're passionate about coastal conservation, grounded in grassroots collaboration, and eager to turn ideas into real change, we want to hear from you!**



# The backbone of our work



**Judith Almonacid**  
Site Manager  
& Admin Officer

The operational backbone of PepSea, Judith manages logistics, finances, and partnerships—ensuring our team can focus on impact.



**Rhena Mae Gulfan**  
"Mykey"  
Education Officer

Mykey leads our Conservation Education programme, designing engaging, culturally relevant curricula for schools and youth.



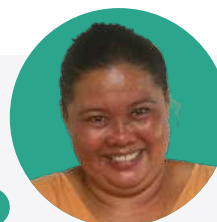
**Evangeline Faburada**  
"Vangie"  
Senior Fisheries Liaison

A bridge between PepSea and fishing communities, Vangie's 20+ years of experience and deep local networks ensure our initiatives are co-created with those who depend on the sea.



**Michell Rivera "Mitch"**  
& **Jerra May Aballe**  
"Maymay"  
Fisheries Technicians

Mitch and Maymay lead fisheries data collection and stand alongside fishers through the meticulous but vital work of organising meetings, documenting decisions, and tracking progress—ensuring local knowledge drives real change.



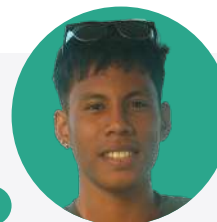
**Marticela Pelayo**  
"Mattie"  
Chef & Seagrass  
Community Liaison

Mattie nourishes our team (and volunteers!) with a variety of local meals while championing seagrass conservation—a vital but often overlooked ecosystem.



**Alex Gosbee**  
Site Safety Officer

Alex delivers top-tier PADI dive training for staff and volunteers, setting the standard for safe, responsible operations—both underwater and onshore. With a background in aviation, he brings a methodical, fix-anything mindset to our team.



**Ivan Gilda**  
Boat Captain  
& equipment  
maintenance

Ivan keeps our boat afloat and out of trouble. He is also essential for maintenance of our dive equipment—where "everything breaks twice before it's fixed."



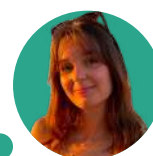


# Service civique & Interns

## Fresh energy, wider perspective



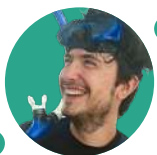
Juliette Wan Fat



Agathe Luini



Zoé Lupez-Hurel



Martin Malleville

We're grateful for the dedication and fresh ideas brought by our service civique (french national volunteering programme) and interns. **Juliette Wan Fat** - A multi-talented force, Juliette juggled accounting, fundraising, and partnership development while spearheading our first seagrass data collection initiative. Her deep community bonds and seamless integration into the team—whether cooking meals, troubleshooting IT, or mentoring colleagues - left a lasting impact, and her departure was bittersweet for the whole team.

**Martin Malleville** joined in October, and with a background on marine ecology and fisheries, he is able to work on both fisheries data and reef surveys.

**Zoé Lopez-Hurel** also joined in October as our Volunteer Coordinator. Zoé ensures our volunteers feel supported and inspired while sharing PepSea's story with the world.

**Agathe Luini** worked from France on a short term - but super efficient - internship. She spent time on funders presentations, the 2023 impact report and social media.



# Our volunteers



## Local impact, global skills

Every volunteer brings unique expertise, leaving behind tools, knowledge, and systems that keep giving long after they've gone.

### Waste Reduction & Community Solutions



#### Joshua Thomas

UK, 8 weeks

Tackled disposable diaper waste by introducing reusable alternatives to 739 community members.

**Result: 15 families switched, preventing 21,036 disposable diapers from being burned, buried, or dumped at sea.**



#### Elula Hennart

France, 11 weeks

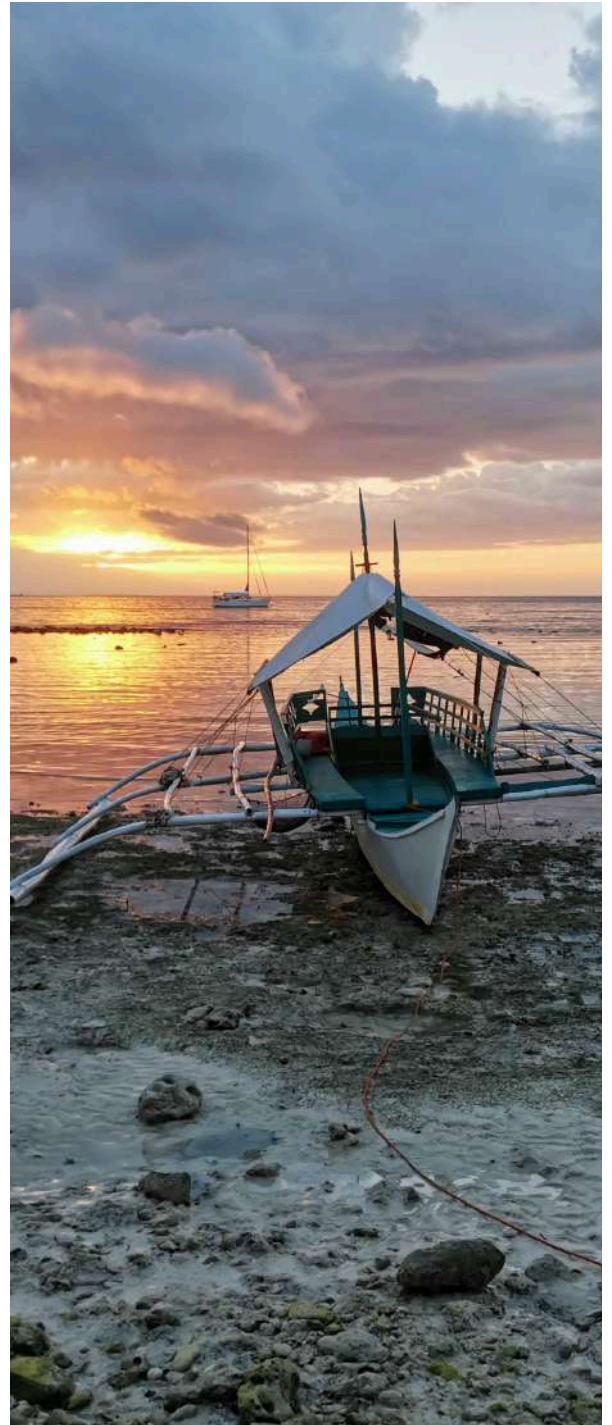
Built on our EcoBata programme to address another women-led waste solution: reusable napkins. By listening to the community, **she helped women cut costs and reduce waste.**



#### Nathan Pascual

France, 11 weeks

An aerospace engineer who builds things that last. Nathan designed and constructed our office's waste management infrastructure—**now a working model for the community.**





# Marine Science & Fisheries Management



●● **Filippos Giannakakis**

**Greece, 4 weeks**

Demystified seagrass identification, creating simple, teachable methods for the community to recognise all 9 local species.



●● **Orane Calvo**

**France, 6 weeks**

Studied *Fisheries Aggregation Devices* (FADs) in Malapascua, proving their economic and social value—and **confirming that when managed by coastal communities, they remain a responsible tool.**



●● **Alina Holtz**

**Germany, 6 weeks**

Cracked the local lagaw mystery: Fishers' term for "bream" actually covered multiple species, with *Nemipterus furcosus* dominating catches. **Her work now guides stock protection efforts.**



●● **Sofia Smorgoni**

**Italy, 4 weeks**

A data wizard who transformed our fisheries monitoring. Her custom tool now tracks who catches what, where—giving us precise insights **to support each fishing community.**



●● **Sofia Soto**

**Mexico, 9 months**

●● **Celine Cruchadeau**

**France, 4 months**

Revived our reef survey programme from the archives up. **They standardised training—online lectures, snorkel/diving tests—and extended it to local community members.**





All our staff and youth volunteers have experienced diving through the *PADI Discover Scuba Dive training*.

Not only do our staff know what underwater marine life looks like, they are also trained in the necessary safety measures in conducting dives.







Ph. Mia conducting tour guides survey

## Community & Conservation



**Mia Pryor-Hare**

**Australia, 8 weeks**

Mapped Malapascua's tourism ecosystem—from canvassers to boat captains—revealing pressure points on the reefs. **Her findings sparked dialogue between fishers and tour operators, strengthening MPA protections.**



**Celia Didier & Enora Cugno**

**France, 4 weeks**

Documented our work through sharp photography and storytelling, while teaming up with Mykey to take kids on seagrass and mangrove field trips—**planting seeds for the next generation of stewards.**

To every  
alumni who  
keeps sharing  
our story

**"We can't name you all  
— but we see you."**

**"Whether you're talking about your  
time here, spreading our work, or still  
advising from afar, your trust and  
commitment keep this mission alive.  
Thank you".**





# Investing where we make a difference

This year has presented both challenges and opportunities as we continue our mission in the Philippines. While our income of €48,355 was considerably lower than previous years, we are steadily bouncing back from the lingering effects of Covid-19.

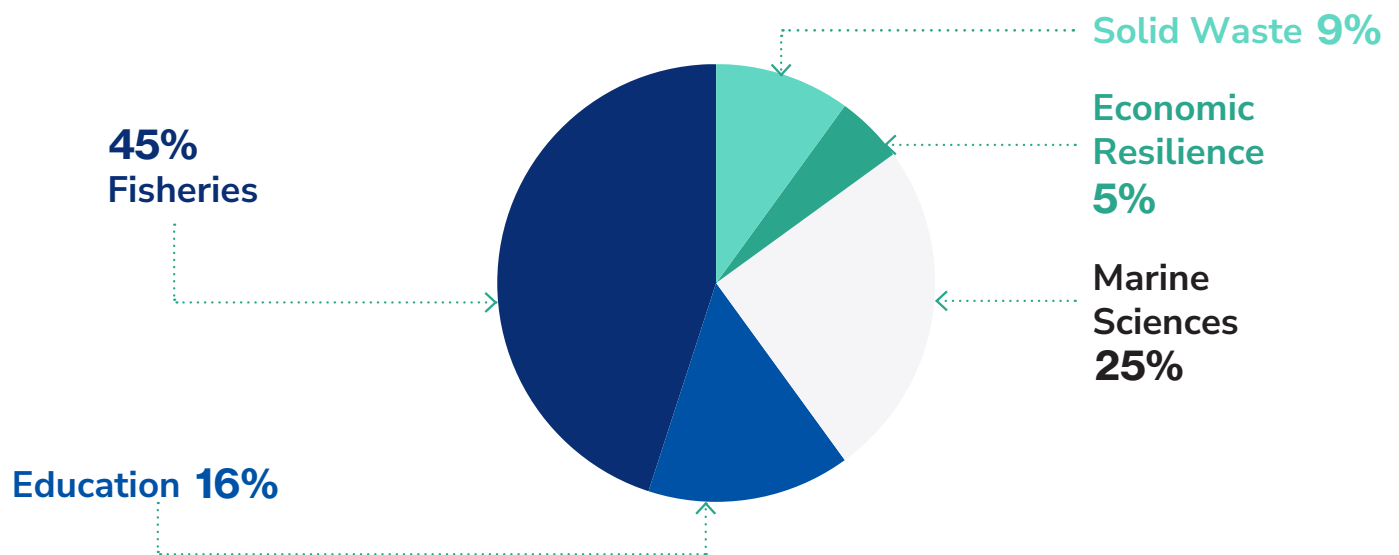
We've also learned that securing funding is a long-term endeavor, with some grants taking over a year from initial contact to funds being received.



# We're proud that 89% of our budget is spent directly in the Philippines, where our work happens.



## % of expenses per programme



Salaries, representing 39% of our total expenses, are entirely invested in our Filipino team.

This allocation reflects our core belief: empowering people requires great, well-trained people on the ground.

Our Sustainable Fisheries programme has become our flagship initiative, accounting for 45% of our expenses. We believe this programme will create meaningful impact for countless fishers and their communities.

# Income and sources of income

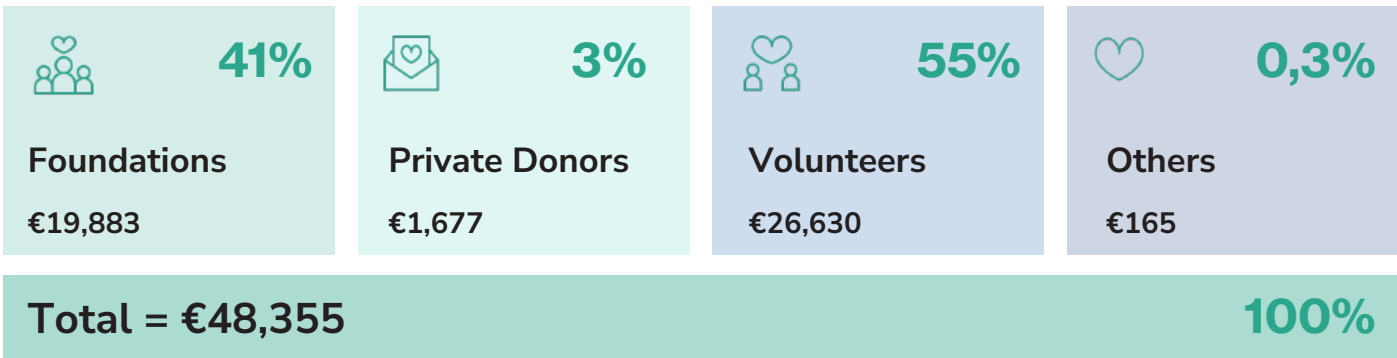


Our income of €48,355 was considerably lower than previous years. Securing funding has proven to be a marathon, with some grants taking over a year from initial contact to funds received.

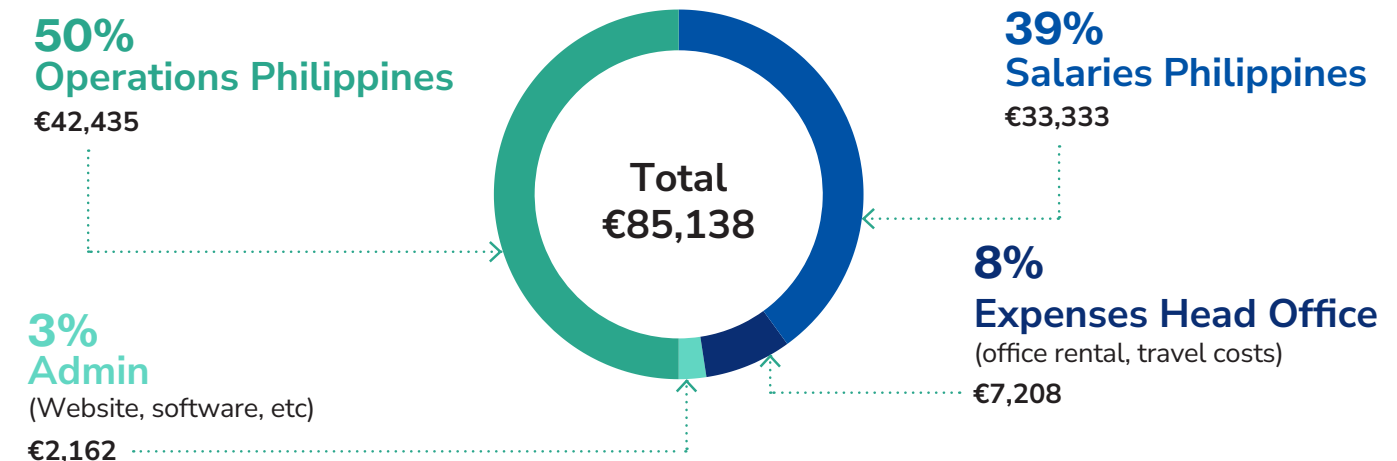
Some of the gap between our income and expenses reflects the timing of grant payments—sometimes arriving at year-end for the following year's activities.

As we anticipated this revenue gap, we've also worked hard to reduce expenses compared to 2023 while maintaining programme quality.

We remain committed to spending where it matters: **89% of our budget goes directly to the Philippines, with 39% invested in salaries for our Filipino team.**



## Expenses



Our volunteer expeditions remain a cornerstone, **contributing 55% of our income**. Volunteers inject incredible energy and skills into our programmes while helping cover overhead costs that traditional funders often avoid.

Looking ahead, 2025 is already brighter: **Blue Ventures has committed to three-year funding support, and we've secured a grant with EGIS Foundation spanning 2025 and 2026.** This stability will allow us to deepen our impact and strengthen our community partnerships.



Blue Ventures has continued their support towards the development of data collection in Higatangan and Malapascua, and Vangie and Rene were invited to the *Blue Ventures Partner Network Forum* in Bali in June, which was followed by the *Global Ocean Dialogue*.

These events provided invaluable opportunities to share experiences and learn from community focused conservation organisations across the region.

Michell and Rene were invited to Bali again in September to attend a marine

assessment workshop conducted by BV. It allowed them to enhance their technical skills in GIS mapping, manta tow surveys and marine ecosystem assessments.

**We remain a key partner of Blue Ventures, and their first partner in the Philippines, sharing our field experiences in data-driven sustainable fisheries management for multi-species small-scale fisheries.**



*Ph. Rene and Michell attending Blue Ventures workshop in Indonesia*



## Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz

**We also want to recognise Maya, DSM and EOCA who have stood by us since 2021-2022.**

Maya, a Swiss NGO, supports our *Conservation Education programme*, while *Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz* (DSM), a German foundation dedicated to marine protection, helps safeguard our ocean work.

EOCA, who supports and funds grassroots conservation has been supporting the re-birth of our *Reef Survey programme*, the *Crown of Thorns Population Management programme* and other participatory projects. Their long-term partnership has been invaluable.





Ph. Stéphanie Guest

## Contact us



[info@peopleandthesea.org](mailto:info@peopleandthesea.org)

## Follow us



[www.peopleandthesea.org](http://www.peopleandthesea.org)

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