

ESSENCE

ACTIONS FOR COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT
PROJECT ACE YEAR 2

JULY 2024

ACE
Actions for Communities and Environment
LMAX
PRRCFI

LMAX GROUP

Communities for Nature

PRRCFI



ESSENCE

Project ACE
Endterm Report
July 2024 | no. 3

ACE
Actions for Communities and Environment

LMAX GROUP
COMMUNITIES for NATURE
PRRCFI



About the Title

Community is the essence- the core of our conservation work.

When people in communities are reminded of the power they already hold in their hands, they meaningfully craft the future and take the lead on what is truly important.

We are honoured to continue learning from them.

We centre our actions on what they teach us- their deep understanding and experience of environmental, economic, and socio-political realities. We are anchored by our hope in the future where there is enough for everyone, and where exploitative greed doesn't dominate the planet. Our intrinsic nature is to keep working for a world where every island becomes a paradise once more, for all who take care of it.

Working with communities reminds us that we are all connected. Being part of the community helps us understand our purpose and the important work that still needs to be done.

Messages



Sef Alba Carandang

Trustee, Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation (PRRCFI)

As I reflect on the progress and achievements of ACE Year 2, I am filled with immense gratitude for the opportunity to be part of such an impactful project.

In our journey towards preserving and protecting our coastal and marine environment, it has become clear that the strength of our community can be our greatest asset. But the challenges we face in environmental conservation are significant because local communities lack social and economic incentives to become better environmental stewards. Through the project's collective effort, we were able to support women and men fishers and farmers, and even marginalised groups such as solo parents, become more resilient through diversified food sources and sustainable livelihood activities. We are hopeful about the five ACE Sustainability Scholars we've mentored and coached in the last two years; they represent the next generation of local conservationists. And we are inspired by the local climate solutions (some of which have the potential to be income-generating) we've co-developed with communities from Cauayan, Hinoba-an and Sipalay through an inclusive Hackathon process that allowed us to work with climate action leaders, youth organizations and the academe, expanding our community even more.

As we move forward to Year 3 of ACE, let us continue to draw inspiration from the work we've accomplished together. The dedication and hard work of my PRRCFI colleagues have been invaluable, and I look forward to the many more milestones we will achieve as a united team.

Thank you LMAX Group and Communities for Nature for your exceptional partnership and for being an integral part of this journey. Together, we are not only making a difference but also setting a powerful example of what can be achieved when a community comes together for a greater purpose.

Messages



Project ACE Team

Two years have passed since Project ACE started, and it is with heartfelt awe and fascination that we say how impactful it's been- to us as a team and as an organisation, to the communities we have grown and learned with, and to Danjugan Island that we call home.

This year, we have reached across so many groups of people from all walks of life, especially to those who are marginalised by the current systems but are on the forefront of conserving our planet. We made our way towards schools atop mountains, crossed dried-up rivers under the scorching heat, travelled across seas to the birthplace of our giant clams, rode up towards the hills to visit the homes of our communities, and celebrated amongst the floating cottages that survived the worst typhoons. In these places, we have found people who held the key to climate solutions in their local areas and supported groups and organisations with sustainable livelihood that they needed to thrive.

We are so excited for you to read about all these wonderful projects by our communities that we have partnered with- from organic vegetable gardens to solar panel installation in remote areas to biogas production (from black soldier flies!), we are honoured to support these amazing ideas and help make them come true.

With us in this journey are our sustainability scholars who will soon be in their 3rd year of college taking up environment-related courses- we have seen them grow in other aspects of their lives too: their leadership skills, their art, their care and compassion for communities and conservation, their joy in learning.

Thank you to everyone who made this possible. We are honoured to carry on this fulfilling work- for the planet and people, for always.

Messages



Rhoda Avanzado Phillips

CEO, Communities for Nature (CfN)

Another year, another win for communities and conservation!

We entered our second year of Project ACE: Actions for Community and Environment inspired and full of hope. And I can not be more happy to share the impressive results we have seen over that time.

Our communities in Barangay Bulata have truly felt the positive impact of Project ACE. The alternative livelihoods they've undertaken have made remarkable strides. For instance, the organic vegetable garden, lovingly tended by mothers of the small fisherfolk families has produced vegetables like sweet potato, okra, moringa, spinach and eggplant - simple crops that are affordable to grow yet significantly enhance the nutritional value of their household meals. It has contributed to food security of their families and increased solidarity amongst them, providing an opportunity for the children and parents to come together and appreciate the benefits of hard work. Meanwhile, the farmers in the upland areas have their own livelihood venture through raising native chickens. The initial households successfully raised enough chickens to turn over to the next batch of households thereby increasing the number of families benefiting from the program. Across all livelihood initiatives, Project ACE has supported more than 100 families.

This year, we have leaned into the wisdom and indigenous knowledge of the communities, which is adapted to create climate change solutions. The practical solutions and variety of ideas that emerged from the ACE Climate Solutions Hackathon were so inspiring. The Black Soldier Fly to Biogas project stands out as this climate solution hits so many aspects of resilient community building- from waste management to natural renewable energy production.

For this year, we really focused on strengthening relationships with stakeholders. Everyone from the partners, local government, organisation leaders, mothers, teachers, to the youth have all come together to make Project ACE a success.

We are now looking to expand the ACE program. Our next step is to evaluate best practices from this second year and replicate them to increase our impact. Next year will be about reaching more people and scaling the successes of year two.

A huge thank you to Communities for Nature, Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation, Inc and LMAX Group who have made this partnership a success.

Onwards to the next year!

Messages



Aidan Alberico

Senior Corporate Responsibility Partner

Since 2022, we have partnered with The Philippine Reef & Rainforest Conservation Foundation, Inc. through Communities for Nature to create Project ACE: Actions for Communities and Environment.

We are thankful to have established a long term partner in PRRCFI and recognise the incredible efforts of all those involved at the charity and within the ACE programme.

At LMAX Group, we understand that it is our responsibility to use our influence in helping to address issues with which our world is faced. That's why we are proud to have developed integrated partnerships with organisations such as The Philippine Reef & Rainforest Conservation Foundation, Inc. to collaborate and lend more than just resources, but expertise and creativity, to impact people and the planet on a global scale.

Through Project ACE, LMAX Group has been able to play a small role in the protection of an island in the Philippines- Danjugan Island- for conservation and its biodiversity, raise and train a new generation of conservationists and citizen scientists, and open opportunities for communities to have a sustainable future through education, livelihood and development.

This project is a great example of the importance of community engagement for other businesses who are on the path to climate justice. We can't wait to see how these initiatives continue to grow and flourish over the years to come!



About the ACE 2 Communities

For the second year of Project ACE, our community reach has widened and deepened. Beyond Barangay Bulata which we have supported with our livelihood projects since the first year of ACE, we have also partnered with other barangays in the Municipality of Cauayan, Municipality of Hinobaan, and the City of Sipalay for our Climate Solutions Hackathon this year.

The closest area by distance to Danjugan Island is Barangay Bulata, located in Cauayan, Province of Negros Occidental, Western Visayas, Philippines. It is located in the mainland across Danjugan Island, the marine reserve and sanctuary under the care of Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation Inc. (PRRCFI).

The main sources of livelihood in these areas aside from being employed by private companies are fishing and farming. However, these kinds of work come with risks and threats: the climate crisis, typhoons, decrease in fish catch due to illegal fishing practices and poaching, and the rising costs of basic commodities.

Due to these, Project ACE has reactivated and organised fisherfolk, farmers, and ecotourism workers through their associations and people's organisations by providing livelihood projects and leadership training opportunities.

Project ACE acknowledges and expresses gratitude to these following community associations for their dedication to the livelihood and development projects:

-Bulata Small Fisherfolks Association (BUSFA)
-Bantay Dagat of Danjugan Marine Reserve and Sanctuary and their wives / partners
-Bulata Watershed and Sustainable Fisherfolk Association (BWASSFA)
-Biga-a Dam Farmers and Fisherfolks Small Water Irrigation System Association (BIDAFF SWISA)
-Bulata Solo Parents Integrated Vendors Association (BUSPIVA)
-Bulata Resorts and Balsa Tour Guide and Workers Association (BREBATGAWA)



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People and planet in deep connection and harmony; with communities leading the way towards a sustainable future for all.

This is our dream.

Here at Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation Inc., we have been partnering with LMAX Group through Communities for Nature to co-create Project ACE: Actions for Communities and Environment, from June 2023 to June 2024.

Through Project ACE, we are helping protect and sustain an island in the Philippines— Danjugan Island— for conservation and its biodiversity, raise and train a new generation of conservationists and citizen scientists, and open opportunities for communities to have a sustainable future through education, livelihood and development.

We partner with the communities across the marine protected area of Danjugan Island, specifically in Barangay Bulata and across Cauayan, Sipalay, and Hinoba-an.

From our sustainability scholars to passionate teachers in Southern Negros to women in the fishing industry— these people are at the forefront of sustainability and climate action.

They are leading the way to our future. They are our dreams coming true.

Impact

798,400

People reached on social media



5

Sustainability Scholars

♀ Female: **3** ♂ Male: **2**



5

Community-led climate solutions implemented



188

Members of associations and people's organisations supported

♀ Female: **127** ♂ Male: **61**





18

Community members mentored in climate project management during ACE Bootcamp

♂ Male: **8** ♀ Female: **10**

18

Sacks of food waste recovered to produce biogas from black soldier flies



802

Students benefiting from the solar panels by Project SHINE

♀ Girls: **402** ♂ Boys: **400**



17

Family members with access to electricity for the first time

♀ Female: **10** ♂ Male: **7**



15

Families provided with Natural Plant-Based Foliar Fertilizer for trial





6

Agriculture students trained to produce organic fertiliser

♀ Female: **2** ♂ Male: **4**

30

Members of the Bamboo Planters association benefitted from the bamboo crafts training

♂ Male: **17** ♀ Female: **13**



354

Women involved in Lakbayon Women's Integrated Solid Waste Management Project



45

Families of women fisherfolk benefited from Organic Vegetable Farm livelihood project





28

Trained in Batik Printing, Jewellery Making and Beaded Slippers Production

♂ Male: **3** ♀ Female: **25**



86

Eggs produced per day by sea wardens from livelihood project

133

Native chickens turned over to upland farmers



25

Citizen scientists trained in fish and coral identification

♂ Male: **11** ♀ Female: **14**

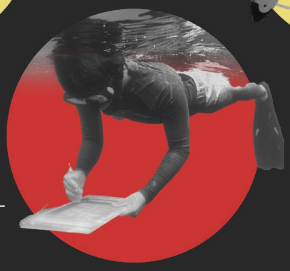


28

Trained in gender sensitivity

♂ Male: **10** ♀ Female: **18**





60

Giant clams reseeded in Danjugan Island



27

Trained in leadership and project management

♂ Male: **12** ♀ Female: **15**

Looking Back: A Timeline



2023

JULY

Kickoff of ACE Year 2

AUGUST

Community profiling and needs assessment

SEPTEMBER

Provision of laptops and printer for scholars

Chicken egg production for Bantay Dagat (sea wardens) livelihood project

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

Start of organic vegetable farming & vermicompost production for Bulata women

ACE Hackathon Climate Solutions Bootcamp

NOV 24-26

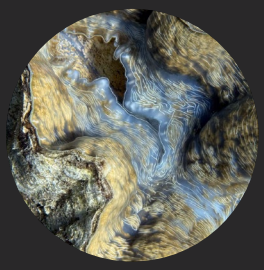


2024

JANUARY

Start of native chicken raising for upland farmers

Project implementation: Biogas from Black Soldier Fly



Project Implementation: Natural Plant-Based Fertilizer and Project SHINE Renewable Energy Training

Training for jewellery and crafts making

Leadership and Project Management training

FEBRUARY

APR 6-7

LMAX Group and Communities for Nature community visit in Bulata

APR 26-27

Bookkeeping and Accounting Training

APR 6

ACE Hackathon Climate Solutions presentation and awarding

APRIL

JUNE 22

Giant clams transfer and reseeding

JUNE

MARCH

Project Implementation: Lakbayon Integrated Women's Project

MAR 8

Project Implementation: Bamboo Crafts Workshop

MAR 11-15

Gender Sensitivity Training

MAR 23-24

MAY

Citizen Science Training: Fish and Coral Identification

MAY 16-17

Registration of new people's organisation: Bulata Resorts and Balsa Tour Guide and Workers Association (BREBATGAWA)

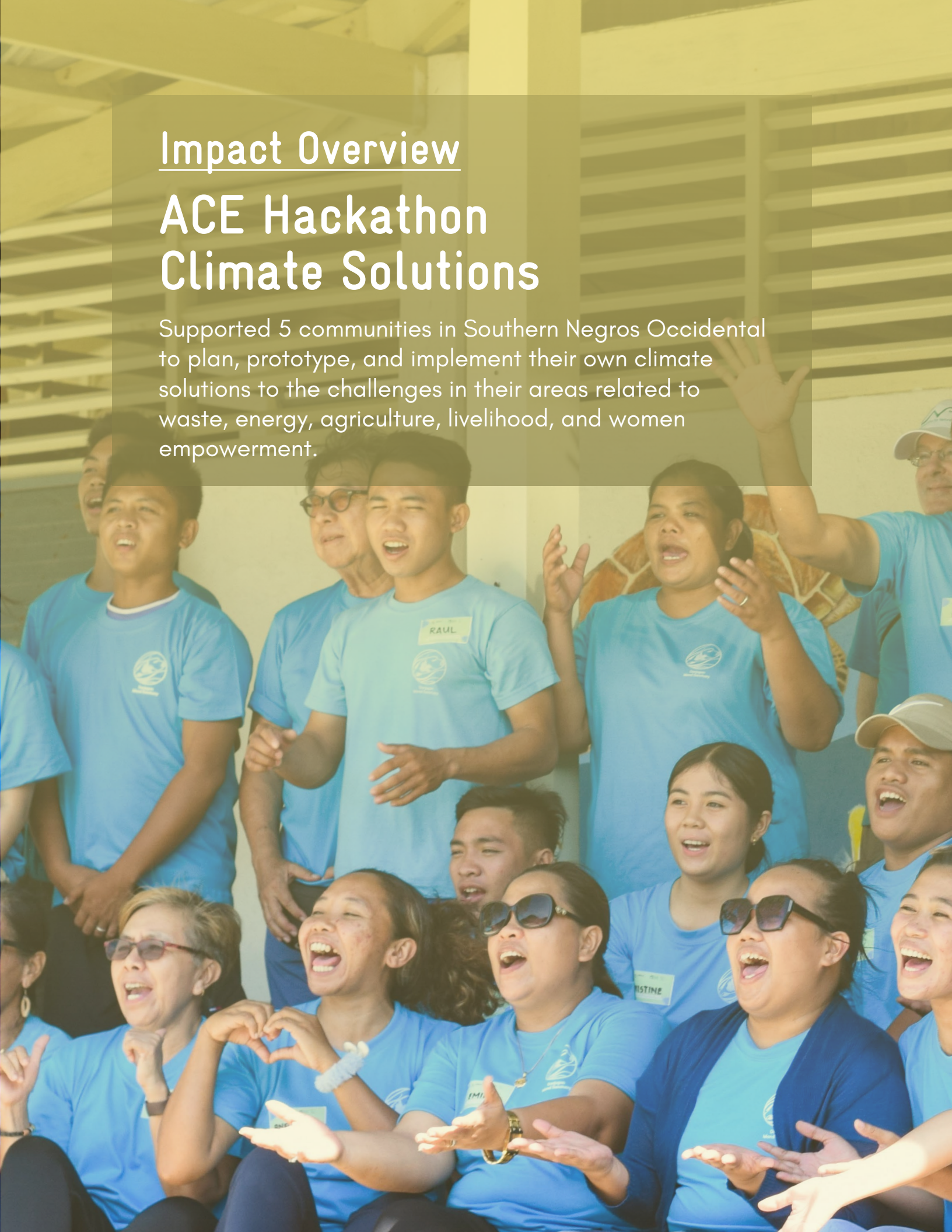
MAY 16

JULY

Free range egg production

Scholars' involvement with marine and wildlife camps and community workshops

JAN - JUNE



Impact Overview

ACE Hackathon Climate Solutions

Supported 5 communities in Southern Negros Occidental to plan, prototype, and implement their own climate solutions to the challenges in their areas related to waste, energy, agriculture, livelihood, and women empowerment.


ADELAIDA
MARITES
JODEL
JOJIE
GEORGIE
APRIL GRACE

Biogas from Black Soldier Fly: A Three-Fold Climate Solution

Rhodora B. Gaurana
SIPALAY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

Who would ever think that from a certain type of fly- one can solve the local problem of food waste, get biogas for cooking, have feeds for chickens and pigs, and acquire liquid fertiliser to make plants healthier?

Sounds too good- and fortunately for the planet- it is also true!

Hailed locally as the "Waste Queen" of their barangay, Rhodora Gaurana is a teacher from Sipalay City who is a living example of the sustainability lessons she teaches. From making her own mudhouse with her family to processing different types of waste to serve a better purpose, Rhodora stepped up once again to take her sustainability practices to the next level.

"Black soldier flies (BSF) can be found everywhere, especially in decomposing organic matter such as our food waste," Rhodora shared. "My goal is for the BSF to process the food waste so as to lessen the methane gas emissions, one of the gases that cause the climate crisis and is more dangerous than carbon dioxide."





BSF thrives in our country and can consume at most 500mg per larva which means 1 fly can lay 1000 eggs that can consume 500 grams of bio waste per day. Mature BSF do not bite, sting or transmit diseases to humans.

For Rhodora's project, she was able to partner with the Manlucahoc Diversified Farmers Association and gathered 18 sacks of food waste. These were processed in a biodigester that was constructed using the funds from Project ACE. A biodigester is a hollow structure in which the food waste is placed, and digestion of organic waste matter by BSF takes place.

The process goes like this: The waste is fed to the BSF, and with proper procedure, the BSF larvae will eat the market waste, leaving less methane gas emissions that would otherwise go to the atmosphere. BSF larvae contain high protein needed by livestock like chickens, ducks, pigs and even fishes. Its excrement called fras is one of the best organic fertilisers a farmer can use. Along the process a liquid material or leachate is collected and placed in a digester to produce biogas. The biogas is then be collected and used for household cooking, therefore mitigating the cutting of trees for firewood as well.

This project won first place in the ACE Climate Solutions Hackathon, as it is a novel solution in their local community that can address urgent climate issues in their areas.





"I am grateful that Project ACE has given me the opportunity to make this project a reality. We are only just starting," Rhodora expressed. Her next steps would be to test and expand her project to local schools and universities, and for her project to be adopted and supported by the local government of Sipalay.

Project SHINE: Powering Schools and Communities

Ramonito Villanueva and Ana Mae Catacutan

CAUAYAN, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

When our power is from the sun, the wind, the earth, and the water- it becomes limitless. When the power is with the communities- true energy democracy will be achieved.

For the proponents of Project SHINE- Mr. Ramonito Villanueva and Ms. Ana Mae Catacutan who are both teachers from the mountainous areas of Cauayan- lighting up their schools and communities through solar power is a form of giving hope.

They were inspired to implement this project because of their students who live far away from their school, and who would walk 2-4 hours everyday in the dark (before sunrise and after sunset) because they had no electricity to charge their phones and flashlights. Some of their students also struggle with alternative modes of learning such as online distance learning, which are implemented more and more lately because it's too hot inside the classrooms, another direct climate impact. These students are also mostly using oil lamps due to lack of electricity access, which has caused fires in their areas resulting in loss of shelters, crops, and lives.

"Through Project SHINE, these students can charge their devices inside the school for free. We want to be part of the solution towards achieving climate justice, one student at a time," Ramonito shared.



With fossil fuels that are non-renewable energy sources causing the climate crisis and disproportionately affecting exploited countries such as the Philippines, putting up solar and renewable energy sources managed by local communities is revolutionary.

Project SHINE is an acronym that stands for "Solar Henyos (Geniuses) for an Innovative and Nurturing Environment). The "solar henyos" are the students from Camalanda-an National High School who are also officers of their environmental organisations and student government. They were also trained in renewable energy and climate justice during a training-workshop in their school, which is one of the first activities the proponents conducted for the piloting of their project.

Through Project ACE, they were able to install solar panels in their school and community by holding discussions and partnering with various stakeholders such as the school faculty and staff, the parents, and the local government of Cauayan– who were able to sponsor additional solar devices and wholeheartedly supported the project as well.

"Not only will their homes be full of light, but they will also be enlightened— that it is important to maximise a source of energy that is all around us," Ana Mae expressed.

Through the installed solar lights and solar panels for charging, 802 Students (402 female; 400 male) have benefitted from the solar panels by Project SHINE. They also conducted a survey and identified students who did not have electric power in their homes, and a total of 17 family members have been given access to electricity for the first time (10 women; 7 men).

The solar panels in the school were put up in their newly established "green building" or library on campus, with their goal for it to run on 100% renewable energy. Students and staff can charge their phones and gadgets needed for research and academic purposes.

They want their school, and eventually their community, to be one of the "hope spots" for renewable energy. They also plan to expand this project to Camindangan National High School that has a lot of students from indigenous communities, where Ramonito is now teaching.

The proponents along with their schools are now an active partner of several renewable energy advocacies in the province of Negros Occidental: One Negros for Renewable Energy and the 10 Million Solar Rooftops movement. They have spoken in national conferences and are now a source of inspiration for communities around the Philippines.





Going Organic! Natural Plant-Based Foliar Fertiliser and Training of Young Farmers

Louie John Gelluagan

HINOBA-AN, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

The one who takes care of the land takes care of the world. What we eat is from the land, and so all our lives are connected to it.

The Philippines is an agricultural country, and we owe our lives and livelihoods to our farmers. Despite this fact, our farmers are one of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in the country, receiving little support from institutions to continue the work that they do. This results in harmful chemicals being used to increase crop productivity and profit, but this damages our local environment and biodiversity, and contributes to land degradation. To add to this wound, more and more young people are getting discouraged to pursue farming due to lack of financial support, making the average age of Filipino farmers around 57-59.

These past few summers, Negros Occidental has also experienced severe droughts- worsening the struggles of our agricultural workers.

These are the motivations of Louie John Gelluagan, an organic farmer and a community organiser in Hinoba-an whose project aims to produce natural-plant based organic fertiliser and to train young farmers. He has dedicated the past few years of his life supporting the people of Sitio Payab-on, Purok Asia- a small community whose main source of income is farming.

The ingredients of the plant-based foliar fertiliser can all be found in their locality: Alugbati (Malabar spinach), bamboo shoots, wild banana trunk, ipil-ipil (river tamarind) leaves, azolla (mosquito ferns)— which are then mixed





with molasses and spring water. They are mixed thoroughly and stored for 3 weeks, and can then be harvested and used as foliar fertiliser.

For the piloting of the project, 15 families were given the product for trial, and 6 agriculture students trained to produce organic fertiliser (2 women, 4 men).

"This natural plant-based fertiliser is a big help to us, the environment, and our farmers— to lessen farming costs and avoid the deadly synthetic chemicals that degrade our soil in the process of food production," Louie shared.

Louie added that this project's goal is to break the reliance of the community on harmful chemicals used in conventional farming (insecticides, herbicides, molluscicides, etc.). Through this project, they will be able to make their own farming inputs from the shrubs/plants and other materials located in the community. It will boost up



their income and will protect the forest, soil, water source, and wildlife abundant in the community.

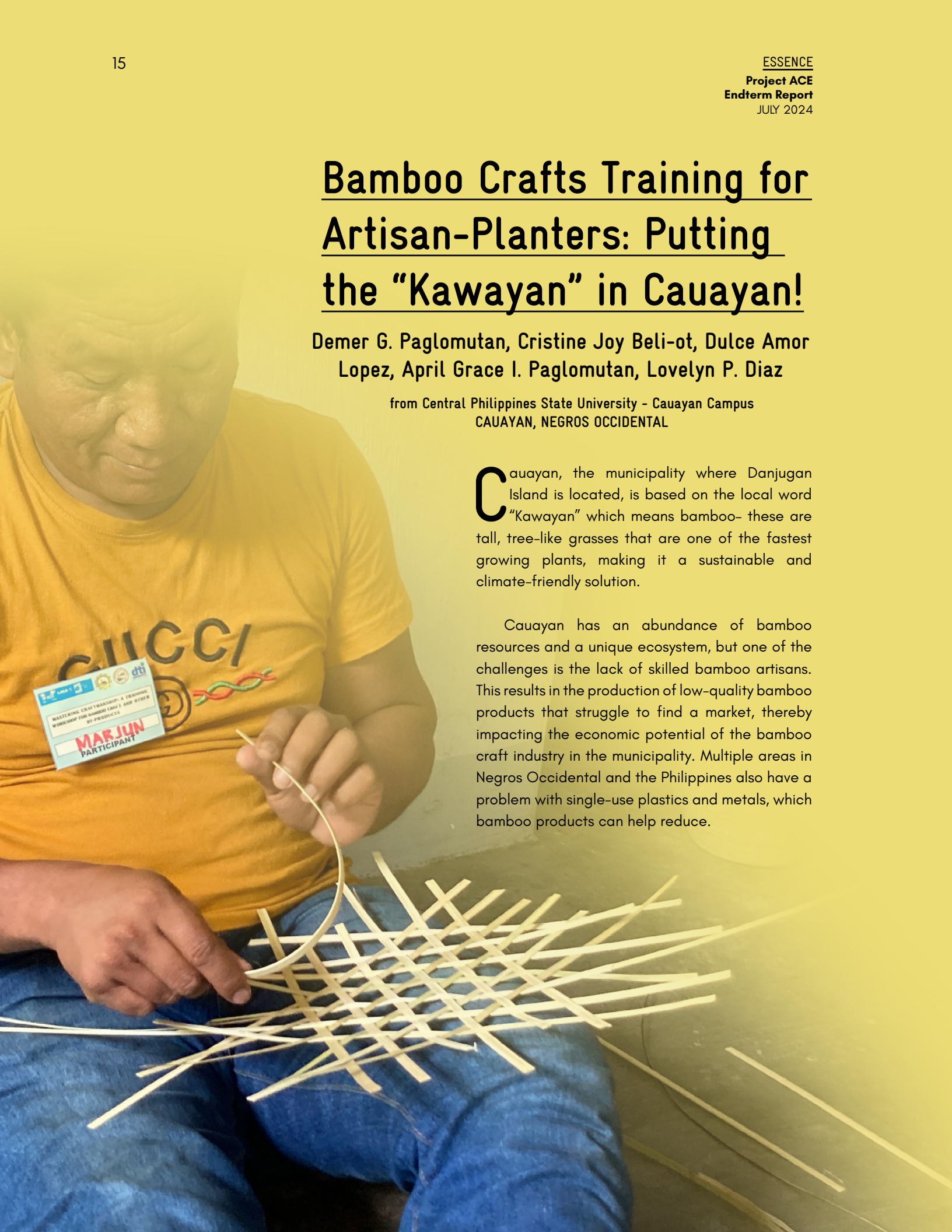
By 2030, Louie envisions that the Payab-on community will produce their own farming fertilisers made from plants and animal waste, and that 500 (Ha) hectares of their farming fields will be free from these harmful chemicals. He hopes for an increase of farming income by 50%, and that Payab-on will be the "Organic Foods Mountain of Hinoba-an".



Bamboo Crafts Training for Artisan-Planters: Putting the "Kawayan" in Cauayan!

Demer G. Paglomutan, Cristine Joy Beli-ot, Dulce Amor Lopez, April Grace I. Paglomutan, Lovelyn P. Diaz

from Central Philippines State University - Cauayan Campus
CAUAYAN, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL



Cauayan, the municipality where Danjugan Island is located, is based on the local word "Kawayan" which means bamboo- these are tall, tree-like grasses that are one of the fastest growing plants, making it a sustainable and climate-friendly solution.

Cauayan has an abundance of bamboo resources and a unique ecosystem, but one of the challenges is the lack of skilled bamboo artisans. This results in the production of low-quality bamboo products that struggle to find a market, thereby impacting the economic potential of the bamboo craft industry in the municipality. Multiple areas in Negros Occidental and the Philippines also have a problem with single-use plastics and metals, which bamboo products can help reduce.

"These intertwined challenges necessitate a comprehensive approach that addresses both socio-economic and environmental dimensions, laying the groundwork for sustainable development through the use of bamboo," says Demer.

Beyond these challenges, Cauayan is home to significant bamboo plantations, further underlining the potential for sustainable development. A substantial bamboo plantation spanning 265 hectares in Sitio Hanot, Brgy. Inayauan, showcases four bamboo varieties. This plantation is managed by the members of BITGA (Brgy. Inayawan Tree Growers Association), comprised of 30 members (13 females and 17 males).

The project aims to establish bamboo craft as a sustainable industry, creating employment opportunities and supporting local artisans in Cauayan for socio-economic development. It emphasises bamboo's eco-friendly qualities as a rapidly renewable resource, aiming to reduce reliance on single-use plastics. This is the motivation behind the bamboo crafts training they held for the association members last March, funded by Project ACE.

"To my knowledge, this is the first time in the Municipality of Cauayan that we did a training for bamboo crafting for 5 days," Demer shared.

Evangeline Buenavista, the president of the association, was grateful for the project and was overcome with emotions by the end of the training. For years, they were only cultivating bamboo varieties under the heat of the sun, not knowing where it would lead. Through the training, they have realised the untapped potential of the bamboo, and all the abundance it will lead them to.



"There really is "gold" in bamboo. They are a symbol of abundance in a way that they don't easily run out; they even grow and spread more when harvested and used properly," Evangeline expressed.

Following the workshop, an initial collection of 11 bamboo crafts, including intricately woven fruit baskets, eco-baskets, and eco-friendly lampshades, showcased the artisans' newfound skills. These crafts were exhibited and sold during the local festivals and they were able to gain profit four times their capital, demonstrating a highly successful and efficient use of resources.

They plan to go through the process of durability and efficiency testing of their products, and conduct more training to improve their crafts.

The establishment of small-scale bamboo enterprises, coupled with awareness campaigns and educational programs, seeks not only economic growth but also cultural preservation.

They want to put the "kawayan" in Cauayan!



Lakbayon Women's Project: Protecting the Coasts, Greening the Roads

Adelaida Ombi-on and
Marites Barcoma

SIPALAY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

How you spend your days is how you spend your life, and for these groups of women in Sipalay, they spend it by **taking care of their coastlines from waste and growing food for their communities.**

Sipalay City is known for its beaches- where people from the Philippines and throughout the world go on vacation for their famous diving spots and marine ecosystems. However, wastes end up on the shores of these beaches and threaten the ecotourism industry and marine life. This is the drive behind the Lakbayon Women's Group, whose members have been doing daily coastal cleanups, established with the support of the local government of Sipalay around 3 decades ago.

Lakbayon comes from two local words "lakbay" and "baybayon", which means "walking along the beach". This project was started to involve more women in environmental conservation while also helping with their health, since walking under





the early morning sunlight has a lot of benefits. By consistently doing this, they were able to win an award for global tourism, because they "significantly cleared and cleaned the 11-hectare beach and mangrove forest of waste, which led to the declaration of 40 percent of the shoreline as a conservation area for sea turtles."

With the support and mentorship of Project ACE, Adelaida Ombi-on and Marites Barcoma from two different barangays in Sipalay were able to improve their project further: they established a Materials Recovery Facility near their barangays where the wastes they collected would be segregated; in which the recyclables were sold and added to their income and compostable wastes were processed as compost for their organic vegetable gardens.

This project aims to provide additional income to 524 women of 2 barangays, to provide nutritious and healthy food for the members and their community, and to reduce waste.

In the future, they plan to expand their gardens, be trained in vermi-composting and organic fertiliser production, and extend to other barangays.







Impact Overview

Community Livelihood and Development

Helped organise 6 associations and people's organisations in Bulata by implementing community livelihoods and training to supplement their income and help in conserving Danjugan and their environment.



Organic Vegetable Farming for Women Fisherfolk

A sense of fulfilment, a source of nourishment, and a shared joy in community- this is what the women members of the fisherfolk association feel the most proud of while spending time in their organic vegetable garden.

The Organic Vegetable Farming livelihood project for the women members of Bulata Small Fisherfolks Association (BUSFA) seeks to empower by providing additional sources of income for women and by ensuring the supply of healthy, nutritious, and sufficient food for their families.

This livelihood project is for the association to continue their noble work as fisherfolk who provide for their community, while also respecting the boundaries of the Danjugan Marine Reserve and Sanctuary. These fisherfolk are an example that sustainable fishing is possible, where there is harmony between people and wildlife. This alternative source of income also aims to help them during low-catch seasons.

This project also employs organic and sustainable farming methods such as vermi-casting, conventional compost, and different concoctions of natural organic fertilisers.





"This is our favourite time of the day," one woman shared with the ACE Team visiting their garden. "We get to talk to each other and listen to music while working on the garden, and it's also a fun way to exercise!"

A lot of the women involved in the project are also bringing their kids to the farm, exposing them to how food is grown and taken care of, making them appreciate the journey of food from their farm to their tables.

This communal organic vegetable farm is also an avenue for women in Bulata to take on leadership roles and see themselves as important movers in the advocacy of food safety, security, and sovereignty. While working on their vegetable garden, they are also supporting and helping to increase the biodiversity in their local community.

"One afternoon, we all got together and made soup filled with all the vegetables we harvested from our garden," one of the women members of BUSFA said. They harvested eggplants, okras, string beans, spring onions, water spinach, horseradishes/ malunggay, bottle gourds/kalubay. It was a sunny afternoon filled with laughter, friendship, and hearty meals- a joyous and meaningful experience for their community.

Now that they have these fresh sources of food that they can nourish their families and loved ones with- they are also starting to sell these in their community and nearby markets. They plan to add more vegetables in their garden, attend more training on organic farming, and learn and grow with their bountiful garden they have sown together as a community of women.





Jewellery & Crafts Making

To make art, while also earning from it, is one of the most fulfilling things we can do. For the solo parents of Barangay Bulata, putting beauty out into the world and supporting their families are one and the same.

On February 2024, 44 members (39 women and 5 men) of the Bulata Solo Parents Integrated







Vendors Association (BUSPIVA) were trained in making tie-dye shirts, jewellery, and beaded slippers to help in supplementing their income while also making wearable works of art. For a tourist destination like Bulata where Danjugan Island and other beautiful places can be found, it is surely a treat for tourists to buy and support!

The solo parents were trained by Ms. Mercedita Dela Cruz-Tamayo, a local trainer and maker of handicrafts for tourism and has worked with several private and government organisations like the country's Department of Trade and Industry and the Technological Livelihood Development Council.

They were taught the basic skills on how to come up with different kinds of tie-dye designs and prints on shirts, how to assemble different kinds of beads, pearls, and stones for slippers, and how to design jewellery and accessories to help boost their income and Bulata's tourism.

Their designs have been sold during the local fiestas in Barangay Bulata and Cauayan, and they are looking forward to more training-workshops to hone their skills in craft-making with emphasis on using local and nature-sourced materials to highlight the sustainability aspect.

With their works of art out into the world, they are now more inspired to keep being active in their association- and of course, to help the foundation in promoting marine and wildlife conservation in their communities.

Native Chicken Raising for Upland Farmers

Whenever there are native chickens served on the table- **it's always a celebration for a lot of Filipino communities!**

This is why for the members of Biga-a Dam Farmers & Fisherfolks Small Water Irrigation System Association (BIDAFF-SWISA)- receiving a total of 131 native chickens managed by their members has been such a huge blessing.

Raising native chickens is becoming one of the best alternative income-generating livelihoods for rural communities. Native chickens are in high demand in restaurants, markets, and local communities. Plus, they have a competitive edge over commercially-raised poultry because the public believes they are stronger, healthier, and more delicious.





At first, only 10 beneficiaries (selected randomly through drawing of lots) could avail of the native chickens with 11 heads each (10 ready-to-lay hens and 1 rooster). A dispersal system was established to have a proper turnover to the next beneficiaries, wherein the current heads produce another batch of native chickens to be given to the next family. This process goes on until all families under the association have received 11 heads of native chickens, and will continue to be sustained and expanded to supplement their daily income needs.

The native chickens are grown for their meat and their eggs, which are now being consumed by the families raising them and are now also being sold to various markets in Bulata.

The community expressed their need for this project to supplement the income that they get from tilapia fish farming. A future project to be explored by Project ACE with this association is to aid in their existing tilapia farming business and kickstart the reforestation and conservation efforts in their area at Biga-a Dam.





Egg Production for *Bantay Dagat* (Sea Wardens) and their Families

Eggs are one of the most accessible, affordable, and tastiest sources of protein for most Filipinos. An average of 80 eggs are being produced daily by the egg-laying chickens under the care of the sea wardens that the project has partnered with, and it has been an additional source of income to supplement their family's daily needs.

In Barangay Bulata, farming and poultry production are the main sources of livelihood after fishing. Through several consultations and meetings with the community, egg production has been identified by them as a small business opportunity that can help increase their income in a sustainable way.

This livelihood project is under the care and management of the Barangay Bulata Bantay Dagat DMRS (Danjugan Marine Reserve and Sanctuary) Enforcement Team and their wives or partners. These are the sea wardens who guard and protect



the reefs and waters of Danjugan from poaching of endangered marine life, illegal compressor fishing, and other destructive activities. Project ACE want to honour the work that they do and further motivate them to keep their passion and commitment to marine and wildlife conservation in their local community- especially the marine sanctuary of Danjugan. This area serves as a nursery for important fish species that spill over to the coasts, feeding the population of the local communities.

Project ACE also value the work that their wives and partners do- most of them are in charge of managing their household finances and operations, taking care of their children and their families, and also juggling a few jobs. They are co-owners and co-leaders of this livelihood project.

As commitment to this projet, the sea wardens also constructed the housing for the chickens and made them free-range.









Training for peoples' organisations

In times of crises and struggle, it is our own communities that will learn with us, grow with us, and shape the world with us. This is why in Project ACE, a huge part of our community development program is organising and conducting training-workshops for our partner associations and people's organisations. In this way, they learn how to work better with each other and increase cross-organisation and multi-sectoral solidarity.

For each training-workshop, around 30 officers and members from the 6 community organisations were selected as participants. The lessons they have learned are crucial to the success and sustainability of their livelihood projects, so that they can strengthen the foundation of their groups in the coming years.

Leadership and Project Management Training

Through this training, the participants were able to develop an output laying out the mission, vision, and values of their organisations. They also formulated and discussed their annual action plan, and how to lead their group members towards their goals of providing a better life for their families through economic empowerment and environmental conservation.

Gender Sensitivity and Environmental Education

One of the priorities of Project ACE is to give more opportunities to women and queer folk, as they are the ones most impacted by the climate crisis. For a more gender-just world, awareness and sensitivity regarding gender must be taught to everyone, as well as the role we all play in







achieving this. In this training, the participants were equipped with knowledge on challenging and breaking down gender stereotypes, how to recognize and address gender-based violence and harassment, and the Magna Carta for Women. They also developed plans on how to be more gender-sensitive in their livelihood projects and their conservation initiatives.

Simple Bookkeeping and Accounting Training

As partners and managers of their livelihood projects, the officers and members of the organisations were trained in the basics of running a business effectively and efficiently. They were trained how to properly record sales and expenses, proper bookkeeping and documentation, and balancing profit with sustainability and conservation.

Team Building

After 2 days of training and team building among the organisations in the community of Bulata, they were able to enhance their communication and conflict management skills, and developed mutual trust and strengthened their relationships with each other. They also increased their groups' morale and motivation by seeing the benefits in each other's successes and how their livelihood projects and conservation practices affect their personal, familial, and communal lives.



Impact Overview

Sustainability Scholars

Actively supported 5 local community scholars taking up environment-related courses through financial asssitance, including mentorship through community and livelihood training-workshops, Marine and Wildlife camps, and conservation-related activities



Scholars for Sustainability: Beyond the Four Walls



John Christian Matia-ong
Bachelor of Science in Fisheries



Angelica Nicole Entrealgo
Bachelor of Science in Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering



Kristian Myle Gascon
Bachelor of Science in Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering



Rica Mae Cabanero
Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness



Ryan Ellanic
Bachelor of Science in Forestry

It is often said that the youth are our future leaders and conservationists. **But to us in Project ACE, the youth are today's leaders and today's conservationists too.** This is why one of our flagship programs is the support we give to our young sustainability scholars from Southern Negros Occidental, who are studying in diverse environmental fields. They are now incoming 3rd year college students- right in the middle of their college journey.

Before the start of ACE 2, the team had an end-of-year sharing, feedbacking, and celebration with our sustainability scholars. While they are excelling in their academics, there is also a serious lack of equipment in their schools and communities which affect their studies. They also come from underprivileged sectors, and they do not have the means to purchase these equipment. This is why, before the start of their school year, Project ACE through the LMAX funding provided them with laptops that they can use for research, project-





making, and presentation of their outputs in school. A printer is also made accessible to them for free in the PRRCFI staffhouse in Bulata.

These additional technological support including mentorships, training-workshops, and fieldwork in Danjugan Island and Bulata contribute to their holistic learning beyond the four walls of their room. They have assisted in the Marine and Wildlife Camps in Danjugan Island involving several community and government stakeholders, provided documentation and logistical support for the livelihood and leadership trainings in the community, and helped in establishing the mangrove and beach forest nursery in the island.

Through these, the Earth and the communities are their classrooms, enabling them to develop a deeper connection to the world around them and integrating these lessons into their fields of study.

Beyond excelling in their academics, our sustainability scholars are also active in volunteering in their school's programs and activities while also representing their universities in competitions. They are also continuing the things they love doing- such as dancing, sketching, painting, crocheting, performing, and joining in sports.

This upcoming year, they will be preparing for their thesis studies and internships. Project ACE will continue to guide and mentor them, integrating them in the hackathon climate solutions and community livelihood and development projects.

Impact Overview

Biodiversity Conservation

Conducted research and data gathering on local endangered marine species such as giant clams, to be incorporated with citizen science trainings among locals for community-led biodiversity conservation







Training Community Citizen Scientists: Fish and Coral Identification

There is so much wonder and life in our oceans, especially in the Philippines, which is in the center of the Coral Triangle— an area in the world with the highest concentration of corals and with diverse marine ecosystems.

Through this training, the local communities and citizens in Bulata have experienced this wonder in their very own waters, in the sea that they call home.

The 25 citizen scientists were from various walks of life— Bulata tourism stakeholders, balsa and resort owners including their operators and staff, barangay officials through the youth officers, and Danjugan staff and ACE scholars.

During the first day of training, they were taught the basics of corals and fish species, the importance of ridge-to-reef conservation, how the climate crisis affects oceans and communities and how they can be part of the solution. Through these newfound information, they can boost their local ecotourism businesses while contributing to conservation and highlighting the importance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) such as Danjugan.

By the end of the first day, a historic first was achieved as well: through Project ACE community development, the balsa operators and resort owners in Bulata were organised as an association and they conducted their elections. Through this, they are now eligible to receive grants and funding from the local government and NGOs.





On the second day, they were taught the basics of snorkeling and were provided with gears. Despite living near the sea, most of them were first-timers in snorkeling because they didn't have access to snorkeling masks, life vests, and fins. They were also provided with waterproof guides for fish and coral identification, and they were able to explore the reefs and see the species of marine life for themselves.

"I was amazed with all the fishes and corals I saw in the waters of Bulata, I never knew we had that so close to home," one citizen scientist shared.

They also visited Danjugan Island and snorkeled in its reefs, and they were able to see the difference between an area that is protected and one that is not. "The Bulata reefs were already beautiful, but Danjugan is on another level. The fishes and the corals were so abundant, and they really are thriving," another participant shared.

Through this experience, they were able to realise that the fishes from the protected area spilled off into the Bulata reefs, increasing the catch of the fisherfolk and increasing their income. Without the protected area of Danjugan, there will be little to nothing left to be caught.

This inspired them further to protect and conserve marine ecosystems, the source of their bountiful blessings.

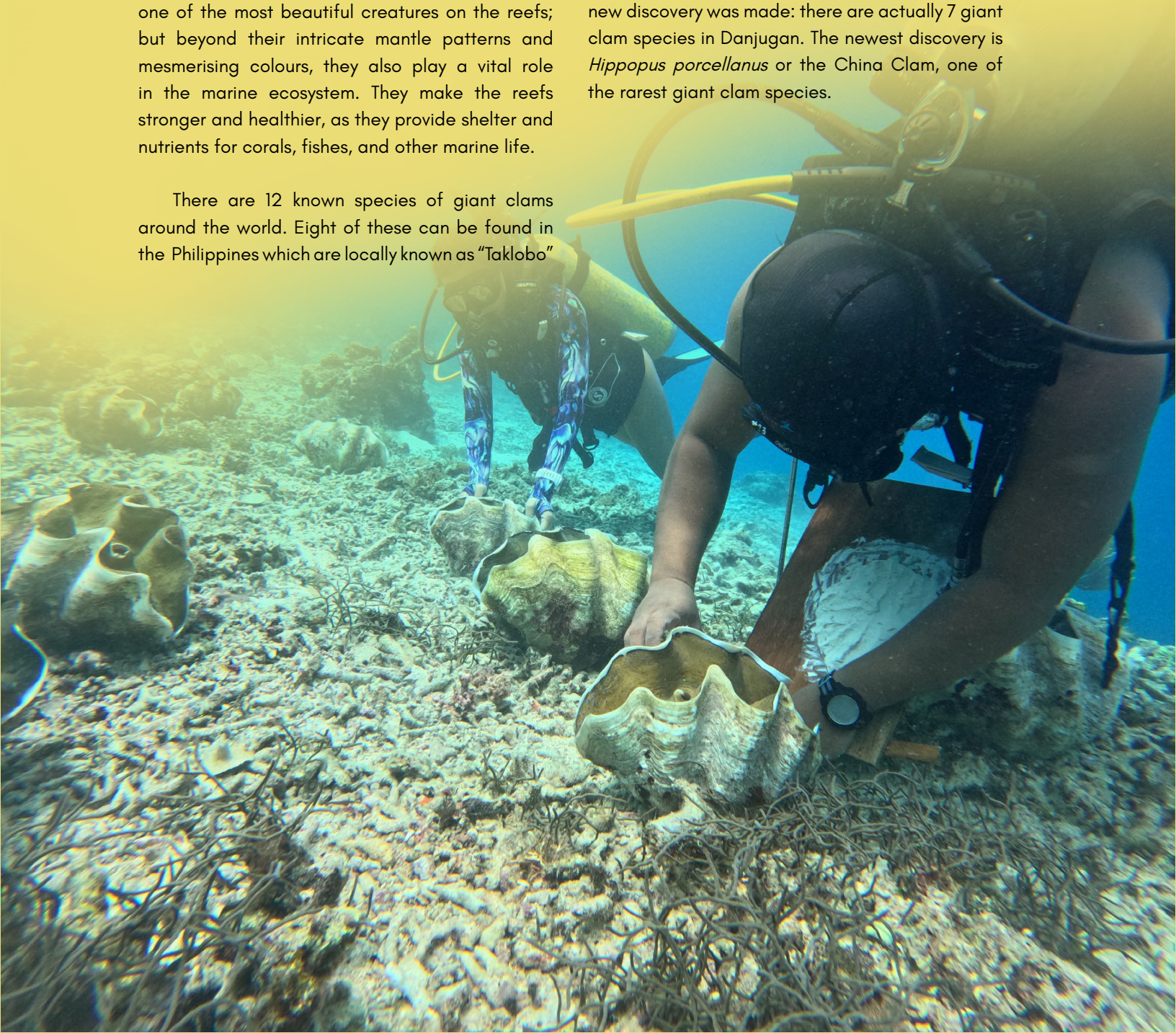
Future plans include identifying participants to be part of annual reef monitoring activities in ACE Year 3, and setting up a citizen science database to be used in data analysis and interpretation.

Giant Clams of Danjugan: the New Generation

A Giant Clam Reseeding Project by Don Papa Rhum

If you have ever seen a giant clam mantle up close, its beauty and magnificence is unlike any other- otherworldly, some would say. They are one of the most beautiful creatures on the reefs; but beyond their intricate mantle patterns and mesmerising colours, they also play a vital role in the marine ecosystem. They make the reefs stronger and healthier, as they provide shelter and nutrients for corals, fishes, and other marine life.

There are 12 known species of giant clams around the world. Eight of these can be found in the Philippines which are locally known as "Taklobo" or "Manlot". Last year during the ACE Giant Clam Survey project, the team identified 6 giant clam species and 47 individuals in Danjugan. This year, a new discovery was made: there are actually 7 giant clam species in Danjugan. The newest discovery is *Hippopus porcellanus* or the China Clam, one of the rarest giant clam species.



Levelling off the giant clam survey from ACE Year 1, Don Papa Rhum reached out to partner with PRRCFI to conduct Project SEED: reseeding giant clam species along with mangrove and beach forest species in Danjugan.

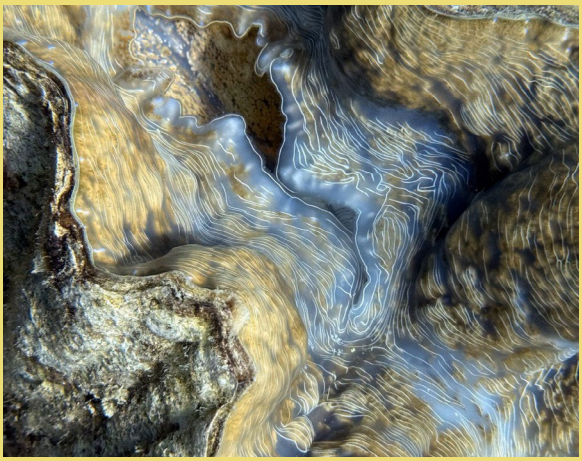
After a lot of logistical preparations from the ACE Science and Project Officer, Georgievic Jessica Cruz, and Head Guide of Danjugan, Ryman Armada who travelled to Bolinao, Pangasinan (the birthplace of the giant clams in Danjugan that were reseeded more than 20 years ago)— they were able to transfer 60 giant clams from Bolinao over land, air, and water to their new home: the reefs of Danjugan Island.

This reseeding process was aided by the UP BML (University of the Philippines - Bolinao Marine Lab), and there is an exploratory discussion of a possible seed bank in Danjugan of other giant clam species for conservation.

For the third year of Project ACE, an Adopt-a-Clam program is on the works to preserve this awe-inspiring and ecologically-important species.







Hippopus porcellanus



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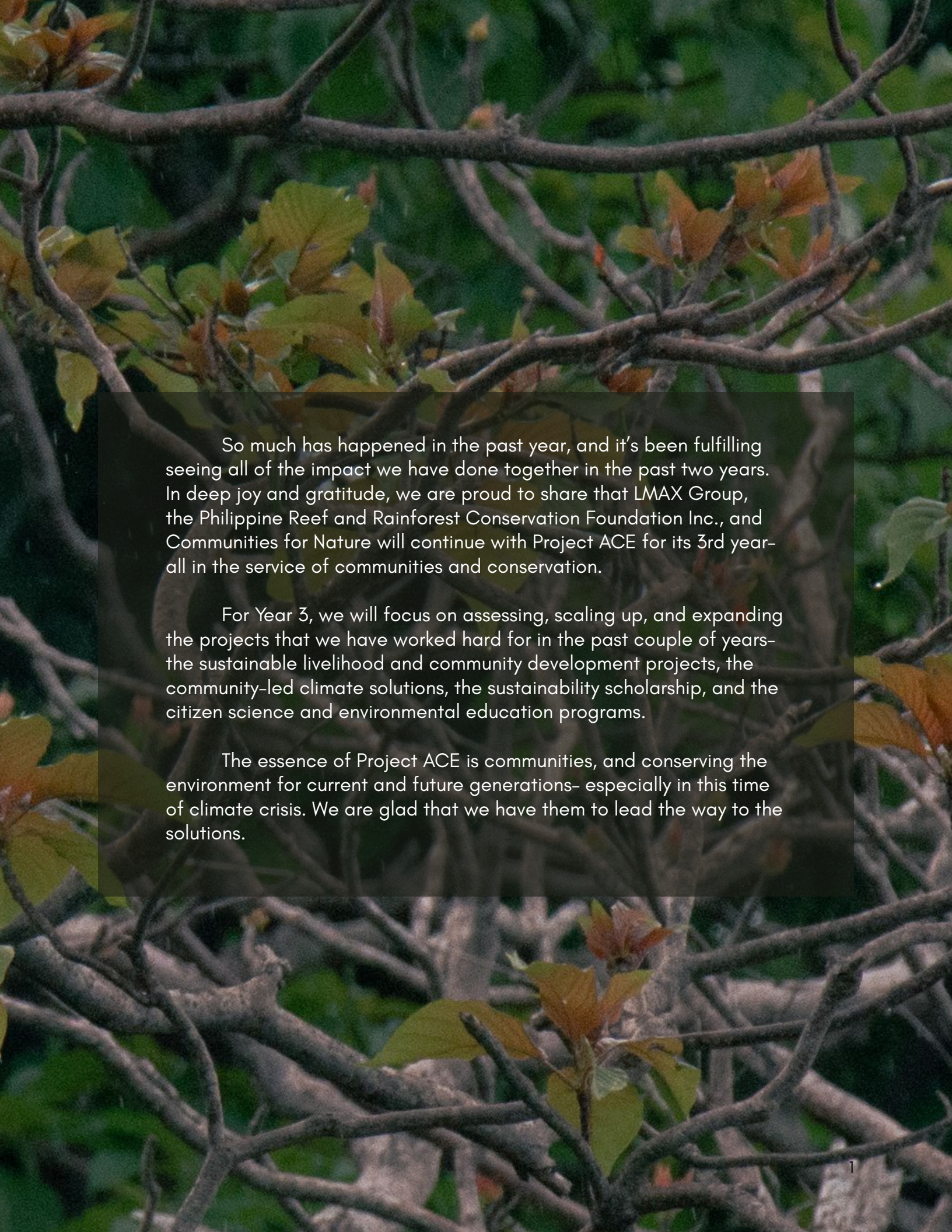

So much has happened in the past year, and it's been fulfilling seeing all of the impact we have done together in the past two years. In deep joy and gratitude, we are proud to share that LMAX Group, the Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation Inc., and Communities for Nature will continue with Project ACE for its 3rd year- all in the service of communities and conservation.

For Year 3, we will focus on assessing, scaling up, and expanding the projects that we have worked hard for in the past couple of years- the sustainable livelihood and community development projects, the community-led climate solutions, the sustainability scholarship, and the citizen science and environmental education programs.

The essence of Project ACE is communities, and conserving the environment for current and future generations- especially in this time of climate crisis. We are glad that we have them to lead the way to the solutions.






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