



# OCEAN-ACTION RESOURCE CENTER

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

## ORC Newsletter September 2015



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## 1) Infrastructure

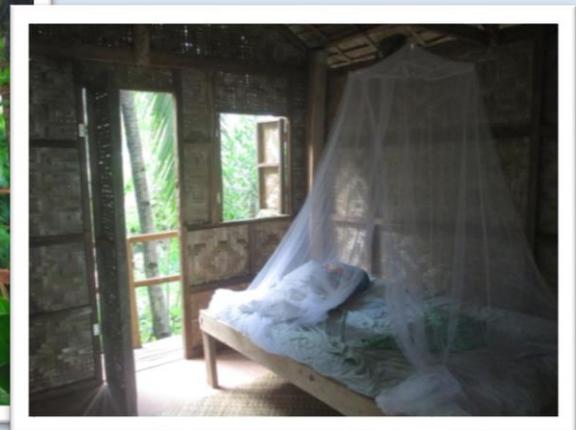
Our incredible friendship with fellow Pacific Towns volunteer **Leia Howes** from Australia gave us the chance, through a generous donation, to make ORC truly open for visitors by building new accommodations and an extended outdoor activity area for the science and conservation education games we love to play with big groups. With two new native *kubus* (leaf-roof huts made from bamboo and sustainable lumber from local tree farms), we'll be able to host long- and short-term volunteers, interns, tourists, scholars, researchers... you name it! The extended flat area around our biggest *Talisay* tree allows us and our many kid (and adult) education program participants to run around without falling down the hill into the ocean... Thank you Leia Howes!!!



*Our new activity area.*



*Constuction of our new kubos - for visitors, students and volunteers.*



*..ready to move in!!!*

## 2) *Conservation Solutions for Communities: Community-Managed Savings and Credit Associations and Organic Chicken Farming*

Thanks to a grant from the Germany-based **Schmitz Foundation**, which specializes in supporting small-scale, community development-intensive projects in developing countries, ORC has been able to work with five new *People's Organizations (POs)*, neighborhood-based groups with missions to uplift their members' and their neighborhoods' social and economic wellbeing. Every group has been trained in **World Vision's** pioneering community bank system COMSCA (see full name above), a system which helps participants reduce expenditure to save money, which can then be loaned at very low rates to the group members for livelihood, education, and emergencies. Side-by-side with COMSCA, ORC community development officer Novie Sales (Bobit) has developed a kabir chicken-raising plan for three of the POs, who will raise organically fed chickens for meat, chicks and eggs sales.

The poster features a yellow header with the text 'Conservation Solutions for Communities'. Below this, the title 'Microfinance and Alternative Livelihood Project' is displayed in bold. The main content lists 'CoMSCA – Community Managed Savings and Credit Association', 'Organic Kabir Chicken Farming', and 'Conservation Education'. On the right side, there are two photographs: the top one shows several brown chickens, and the bottom one shows a group of people sitting around a table. At the bottom of the poster, there are three logos: 'SCHMITZ STIFTUNGEN' with a green tree icon, 'CoMSCA' with a black hand icon, and 'BRIDGING CONSERVATION' with a globe icon.

**ORC** wrote this proposal in recognition of the reality that conservation will remain the vision of the few if vulnerable populations have the constant pressure of basic survival limiting their energy for lifestyle changes and conservation lobbying, especially when their day-to-day subsistence depends on environmentally unsustainable practices. The five POs will take part in fun conservation education experiences with ORC during the course of the grant; we hope to connect the dots between organic livelihoods, money management, and love of nature for people in our local communities, who we can work with again in the future.

To train and manage the five new **COMSCA** groups, we had the lucky task of picking five of our neighborhood PO's local leaders to become **World Vision**- certified COMSCA trainers. Ates **Rosa, Villa, Tata, Remy-Ann,** and Manung **Jill** have become talented group facilitators, not only for COMSCA, but for the development of the PO as a whole.



*CoMSCA training with Mercedes Women's Association.*



*ORC's CoMSCA trainers on their way to Mercedes.*



The COMSCA trainers have been participating in a more in-depth ORC workshop series for nature exploration and sensitization, including group discussions on community relationships with nature, basic coral reef ecology, and even communication/mediation training and arts-and-crafts! It's been incredibly fun and rewarding. We hope to make the door to action more accessible for this talented team.



*CoMSCA trainers during "Nature Lovers Workshop" series.*



*World Vision is conducting a training for CoMSCA trainers at ORC.*

On July 31, we had the pleasure of meeting Mr. **Wolfgang Deppen** from the **Schmitz Foundation**, our contact for this grant. We lunched together at ORC, toured the **BALIKAT** seaweeds farm and learned a lot about the Schmitz Foundation's inspiring and much-needed mission to provide small grants for projects that are limited in scope but high on community training and facilitator-beneficiary interaction, which they and we both believe leads best to success.



*Wolfgang Deppen's visit at BaLiKat's seaweed farm.*



### 3) Volunteers at ORC

In July, videographer and masters student **Paola Ceriola** (Ola) came to stay at ORC to take part in our community organizing and education programs, make an ORC video, and...learn to dive! This last task was no small undertaking, given that Ola arrived here afraid of the water. However, through perseverance and passion, she achieved a PADI Scuba Diver license and continued her journey deeper into the world of marine conservation.

During the same month, Ola and ORC were lucky to have **Yvonne Gliz-Vanilla**, one of our go-to neighborhood volunteers for conservation education presentations, join in. Yvonne is a busy teacher-in-training, but took the time out of her study schedule to join Ola's program in coral reef ecology and nature exploration. The conversations and realizations that emerged from these sessions were very valuable, and we hope to continue investing in young leaders like Ola and Von, those who have a connection to nature that can grow into a sustainable conservation movement.



*Ready to jump into water! Ola at her first Open Water course day.*



*Jackie's makes Ola and Yvonne experience their first "environmental massage".*





*Ola and Yvonne enjoying the beautiful reef of S.Pablo MPA*

#### **4) More volunteers! Hannah and Fleur**

Our ORC volunteer family is growing even more! Hannah from England and Fleur from the Netherlands joined us beginning of August. Hannah is studying Disaster Risk Management and came to ORC to discover the world of marine conservation. After she succeeded in becoming a PADI Open Water diver, she also gained her certification as an official Eco-Diver by taking the Reef Check course.

Fleur came to ORC as an intern, and will stay with us until the end of this year. But let's see what she has to say herself:

*My name is Fleur and I am from the Netherlands. I am currently studying Coastal Zone Management and I am doing my internship with ORC where I am helping out with the development of the educational programs. I am a huge fan of marine life and I love to dive. I especially enjoy showing others how cool the underwater world is!*



*Hannah and Fleur on their first dive together in Balagawan's MPA.*



## 5) Balagawan MPA Youth Signboard Competition

On September 12, ORC facilitated a youth competition in the neighborhood “covered court” (basketball court) to design an informative and inspiring signboard for the Balagawan MPA (marine protected area), which is currently unmarked. After playing our MPA games, watching presentations, and even viewing videos and photos of the Balagawan MPA underwater, the three youth groups were ready to make a mock signboard on paper, along with a slogan that summed up their feelings about the MPA. The winning design was chosen by the Barangay Council, and will be painted on a big billboard by a local community artist!



## 6) Curriculum development

We are busy working on enhancing and extending our existing **Coral Camp** lessons into a full module that can be shared with other marine conservation organizations. This module, as well as Grace's **MPA Module for Teachers**, and one or two other modules from our conservation partners here in Southern Leyte will hopefully be displayed on the **CONNECT for Conservation Education** online platform that we're also starting to design... keep posted for the launch!



## 7) Thank you Alix and Alison!!!

Our friend **Alix Green** from England, former project scientist with Coral Cay Conservation, a partner organization of ours, organized an incredible fundraising event for ORC in her mother **Alison Green's** beautiful garden grounds. As their friends and family celebrated a moment of summer weather in their fairly rainy county, they raised a whopping 160,000 pesos (almost 3500 dollars) for ORC to use in our most pressing infrastructure and program development needs. To Alix, Alison, and friends- we can't express how grateful we are. You're the best!

## 8) Visitors

Mayor Francis (Tom) Tejano (blue shirt) from the municipality of Mapanas, Northern Samar, came for a one day visit to ORC, with Dr. Alvi, the head of the Mapanas RHU, as well as his grandma and all his bodyguards (see picture). Dr. Alvi was able to finish her PADI SCUBA Diver course, which we had started in Mapanas in May, and Mayor Tom and Alex joined in for an early morning dive in the MPA of Balagawan.



*Mayor Tom, Dr Alvi and friends before their early morning dive.*

Within the past three months we were also happy to welcome three friends from Germany at ORC, and Jackie's parents from New York!

Jackie's parents **Meggan** and **Ray** enjoyed their tropical sunrise view from the kubu they sponsored last year, and got to visit all the local sites where we go to relax... Mag River and Silago Beach, Mainit hot springs, Panas cold spring, Tres Marias waterfalls, and San Pedro Island just offshore. It was nice to vacation with them for a week!



*Jackie's parents visiting S. Pedro*

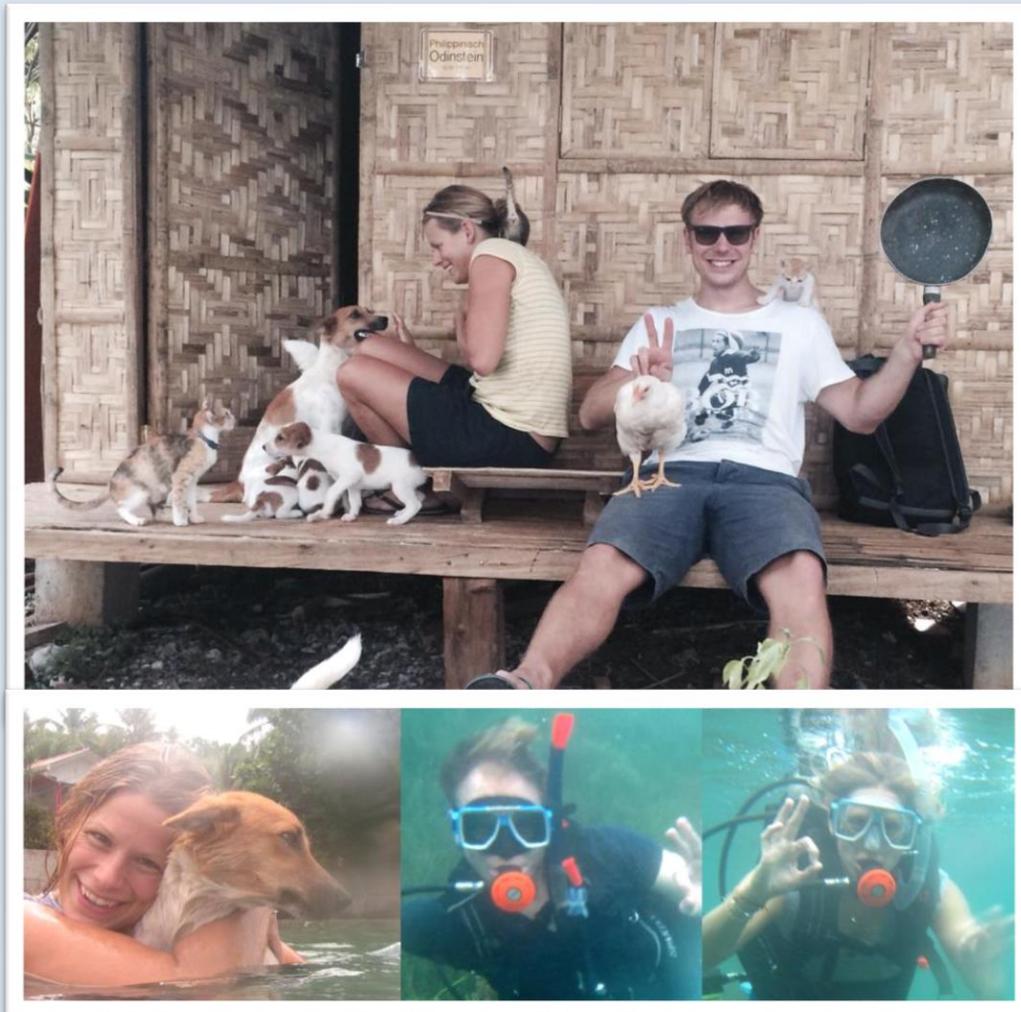
Then... congratulations to Thalea for becoming a certified Open Water diver, and thanks for the cooking, hammering, conversations and being Milo's stepmother.



*Thalea and Julia are getting ready for Thalea's last dive with ORC.*

Chris and Yella were unfortunately only able to stay with ORC for a couple of days, but the four puppies and four kittens ORC was housing during their stay made it a memorable week... the picture speaks for itself!





*Yella and Chris enjoying their vacation bungalow ("Phillipinisch Odinstein") and their first discover SCUBA dive.*