



Bi-Annual Narrative Report (January-June 2019)

Family Home,
Community Assistance
and EACY programs

Family Home Program

There were 13 boys staying in the Family Home Program (FHP) for the first half of the year. Throughout this period, all kids were physically healthy based on appearance, behavior and regular medical assessments. They continued to grow in height and gained weight. No one among them had any dental issue. Appropriate medical attention was provided whenever needed. All the boys were physically active and practiced good grooming and hygiene. They were using organic soaps that they themselves made with different natural ingredients like citrus, aloe vera and papaya. They recognized that this soap is not only better for the skin but also better for the environment.

During their schooling at the center, the boys' classes were divided into four academic categories. Eight of the boys were included in the basic level with lessons focusing on reading, writing and comprehension. Despite their relatively low level of academic competence, five boys were offered to take the acceleration test under the Department of Education. Unfortunately, none of them passed the test. Two of the boys who passed the acceleration exam last year took a customized module that will prepare them to enter formal schooling.



The group of boys in this batch all came from the same government “rehabilitation” center and brought with them deep-seated dynamics acquired from several years of confinement. One 14 year-old boy had spent his past seven years in the center and displayed a rather extreme behavior of discomfort and even fear to engage into new challenges. At one point, he expressed a desire to return to the center he came from, which we have never experienced from any other child in all of the years we have been running our family home program. The good news is that the boy reached a point where he came out of his shell, became active, and clearly appreciated and absorbed all the stimuli he was surrounded by.

In general, the past batch was rather challenging, which forced us to be more self-critical and re-assess our approach all around. This has been a healthy process strengthening the entire Family Home Program team and preparing them for the next group of kids coming in.

Despite our challenges with the boys, they all completed the basic literacy and elementary level classes. They all underwent life skills sessions focusing on building healthy relationships, active listening, decision making and goal setting.

The days and the weeks of the children were filled with the traditional Stairway activities ranging from academic classes in the mornings and sports, nature, livelihood and creative expressions in the afternoon. Classes included drama/theater, visual arts, music, wood workshop, recycling, repairs and upcycling, making of bracelets and dream catchers, baking and cooking. On the sports side they engaged in swimming, snorkeling, sailing, basketball, football, table tennis, chess and more.





A friend working for Google USA provided us with a Google Expeditions Kit (Virtual Reality) to help the kids learn in a new way. We had a full time volunteer who facilitated the Google Expeditions classes in lieu of the absence of the computer class teacher, who took a maternity leave.

The children also enjoyed a music, movement and meditation workshop facilitated by an acclaimed American professional musician and entertainer.

The Youth for Change Camps including four international schools with 150 participants offered an opportunity for the boys to be exposed to and interact with other children and youth from all around the world and with very different cultural backgrounds. The line of Youth for Change camps was concluded with a Deaf and Hearing Camp with 60 participants, where our boys learned basic sign language.

Sessions on Online Safety and Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) were conducted towards the end of the program. The issue of lowering the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 15 to 9 years old has been pushed as a legislative agenda by the current Philippine administration.

Upon graduation from the program, five children were reunited with their families, seven children were placed in long-term residential care centers for continuous case management, and one child stayed at Stairway for further case intervention.



Education and Health for Indigenous Children and Youth

We expanded the provision of meals to Indigenous People (IP) beneficiaries enrolled in three satellite schools of Puerto Galera National High School (PGNHS) and in San Teodoro High School since the start of school new year 2019-2020 in June. There are now 77 children provided lunch meals. Majority of students receiving lunch meals are still from Baclayan community (49 students) who are currently enrolled in the main campus of PGNHS.

Last school year, we observed that Indigenous students enrolled at the main campus of PGNHS are eating lunch at 10 o'clock in the morning. We found out that they don't normally eat breakfast at home. They consider the lunch meal provided to them as both their breakfast and lunch. Indigenous students who were enrolled in San Teodoro high school also related that they also don't normally eat lunch.

This prompted us to provide lunch to all high school Indigenous beneficiaries. Last school year, fifty one (51) students were provided lunch. Lunch meals usually consist of rice, meat and vegetable. Among 51 beneficiaries provided with lunch, 49 finished the school year and 2 stopped schooling due to health reasons and academic challenges.

Weekday tutorials were conducted for twenty five to thirty (25-30) Indigenous scholars from Monday to Thursday after school classes in the afternoon. One teacher volunteered to be in charge of managing the sessions. During tutorials, Internet connection and printer is provided for research projects.



Student mentors and mentees attending the weekday tutorials joined the annual Sports Camp in Baclayan last March. The Sports Camp is a team building activity that aims to develop cooperation and camaraderie among mentors and mentees and break ideas and bias about being Indigenous Mangyan. The camp activities were run with the help of volunteer teachers and volunteer youth facilitators.

Thirty-two (32) students regularly attended the weekend tutorials. Aside from Math and English lessons, life skills sessions were conducted to holistically develop their capacity. Identification of the needed life skills session was based from an assessment previously done. During the closing of the tutorials, awards were given to all IP beneficiaries recognizing their individual strength, positive characters and academic capacity.

Academically challenged IP beneficiaries from Dulangan and San Teodoro high school also attended remedial classes in Math and English last summer break at PGNHS-Dulangan campus organized by Stairway.

Weekend tutorial of IP beneficiaries for the new school year 2019-2020 started last June 15, 2019, while weekday tutorials will start on July. We will focus the weekend tutorials to grade 7 and Grade 8 beneficiaries. Selected academically challenged grade 9-10 students will also join weekend tutorials.



Elementary Feeding Program

It is remarkable to note that the participation of parents in the feeding program is higher from January to April as compared to last year.

An average of 164 pupils was served breakfast and lunch from January to March. The highest number of students served breakfast and lunch was 202. The lowest was 59, which happened during the Christmas break.

Parents with high participation in the feeding program were given tokens of appreciation for their active support. We hope to encourage more parents to be diligent of their responsibility in the Feeding Program.

We will focus on serving more vegetarian dishes for the new school year 2019-2020. Parents will be taught to prepare more vegetarian dishes. Basic hygiene and proper sanitation for parents on kitchen duty will be improved for the next school year through the conduct of several awareness sessions and provision of proper cooking attires such as hair nets and apron.

An annual planning with Baclayan teachers and their school head was conducted last May. We reached an agreement to improve the system in getting the attendance of students and to achieve higher participation of parents. Stairway and the school also agreed that the parents will be provided orientation on health and hygiene. The school will organize the parents and Stairway will conduct the orientation.



Children Health and Education Center

The medical clinic served 274 patients from January to June. Most of the illness encountered are common colds, cough, headache, toothache, abdominal pain, diarrhea, loss of appetite, wounds, skin rashes, ear pus, body weakness, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, back pain, flank pain, fatigue, high and low blood pressure. Medicines and multivitamins were given to patients during the bimonthly consultations. Pain relievers and multivitamins are the commonly used medicines.

Health awareness sessions were discussed to patients during the medical consultation. Topics discussed were family planning, basic hygiene and nutrition to pregnant women. Majority of the patients are mothers and their children.

In the four sessions conducted, a low number of participation from men and fathers was observed. Thus, most of them lack awareness on the importance of family planning and how it affects the lifestyle of their family.

For the first time, we conducted a circumcision operation to 22 boys from the community. Circumcision is customary practice in the Philippines.

Our experience taught us that not all graduates at Baclayan elementary school are academically and socially prepared for high school. This prompted us to hold tutorial classes to grade 6 students. Thirty seven (37) Grade 6 students took up an academic assessment that showed eighteen percent (18%) or six students cannot read and write. The said students were offered reading sessions and Math tutorials every Thursday and Friday from 3:00-4:00 in the afternoon. After three months of intervention, all the six students learned to read and write. Weekend tutorials for grade 6 students were also conducted twice a month. Thirty to thirty seven grade six students regularly joined the weekend tutorials. Among the 37 grade 6 students, 22 were admitted in Stairway's educational assistance for high school this June. They took a two-week reading and math tutorial at the main campus as a preparation of their high school education along with the weeklong computer class at Stairway during the summer break.





Forty (40) grade six students from Baclayan participated in two Youth for Change Camps last February and last March. One of the grade 6 class advisers expressed the impact of the participation of grade six students in the camps of Stairway. She had seen significant changes with the students' self-esteem, communication skills and motivation at school after attending one camp at Stairway.

A basketball clinic was held for the first time last summer. Twenty five children from primary and high school level (16 boys and 9 girls) from Baclayan regularly participated in the sports clinic. In the Philippines, there is a cultural notion that girls don't play basketball. Girls are not provided opportunity to play basketball. We want to change this usual practice and see girls enjoying and gaining skills in playing basketball. We plan to conduct regular basketball clinic at Baclayan for once or twice a week during school days. Boys and girls from Grade 4 to Grade 6 will be encouraged to sign up.

One of the challenges of students at Baclayan is the lack of support from their parents in doing their homework. Many parents themselves have low literacy and are unable to provide academic support to their children. Thus we initiated an adult literacy class for adults and parents from August last year to March this year. Seven adults attended and finished the once-a-week class. Parents expressed their need to develop their learning and would like to attend more classes this school year. We plan to increase the number of adults to enroll in the literacy classes.

To help the community people at Baclayan improve their socio-economic condition and to avoid dependency, there is a need to seriously embark on sustainable livelihood program. Small steps had been undertaken towards this direction. Skills training sessions on virgin coconut oil making, bath soap, candle and coco sauce making were facilitated this semester. Fifteen parents participated in the trainings. Stairway Foundation will expand its services to the community by providing livelihood training to enhance opportunities for skills development and earning additional income.



Baclayan Farm



Over a thousand kilos of produce have been harvested from the farm for the first six months of the year. These vegetables and crops were mostly delivered to the Baclayan Elementary School feeding program that serves an average of 160 pupils daily, while the rest of the high value crops, vegetables and fruits went to the Stairway Center. The surplus was sold to the nearby resorts and restaurants.

The farm team's exposure and visit to an established organic farm school in the South of Mindoro last December had inspired the team to carry out enhancements and add more elements to the farm, like:

- Re-plotting of the Greenhouses, from 2 plots to 3 plots inside to maximize the space.
- Installation of more water sprinklers as a preparation for summer.
- Installation of fences for the area where the horses and carabao can feed on grass and stay safe. This was also done for the area where the native hogs stay.
- Clearing and planting of indigenous rice varieties in a slope.
- Revival of the fish pond area to raise tilapia and other fresh water fish.
- Clearing and preparation of the area for herbal and medicinal plants.
- Maintenance of organic supplements and fertilizers.
- Installation of additional solar panels and batteries to be utilized for camp activities and for storage facilities of vegetables/crops.

Perhaps the biggest element added in the farm is the opening of the area for school gardening for 41 Grade 6 pupils. As mentioned before, this project aims to teach school children how to grow common vegetables, to appreciate the nutritional value of vegetables and learn to like to eat vegetables and to hopefully replicate what they learned by developing their own organic vegetable gardens at home.

Parents of the Grade 6 students have voluntarily offered their labor in preparing the garden plots for their children. They have been working on a series of half-day shifts to clear, dig and toil the area to create plots.

The school, the farm team leader and the program coordinator have already mapped out syllabus and inked a memorandum of agreement. This will be the pilot year for Stairway to run a project of this kind and may eventually be replicated to the lower year levels in the next school year.

Farm Team Evaluation

Together with the farm enhancements and expansion is the enhancement of the farm work force as well. A series of team evaluations were held last May to assess the capacities, strengths and weakness of each member of the farm team. As a resolution after the evaluation sessions, capacity building activities were planned to address the challenges of each member of the team and the farm in general – literacy and numeracy sessions, organic farming techniques, and personality development. These challenges were identified especially because all of the members of the farm team are part of the Indigenous Mangyan Iraya who had less opportunities of formal education when they were young.



Environmental Awareness for Children and Youth (EACY)

Sea Adventure School

After a record breaking year of the most number of trips, the floating classroom had to undergo some minor repairs, replacement of damaged wooden parts and repainting at the onset of 2019 before embarking on another year of Sea Adventure School.

For the first half of 2019 from January to June, 31 trips were held covering various local as well as international groups:

No.	Date	Group	No. of Pax
1	2/9/2019	Sea Adventure School Educators Workshop	13
2	2/14/2019	International School of Manila and Family Home Program Kids	47
3	2/15/2019	Puerto Galera National High School- Dulangan Extension	18
4	2/19/2019	Puerto Galera National High School- Dulangan Extension	22
5	2/20/2019	Singapore American School and Bacayan Elementary School	43
6	2/21/2019	Puerto Galera Academy (PGA)	30
7	2/22/2019	Puerto Galera Academy	30
8	2/23/2019	Puerto Galera Central School	41
9	2/25/2019	French School of Manila w/ FHP Kids	21
10	2/26/2019	Puerto Galera Academy	28
11	2/27/2019	Puerto Galera Academy	29
12	3/2/2019	Shanghai American School and Bacayan Elementary School	52
13	3/5/2019	Puerto Galera Academy	29
14	3/6/2019	Puerto Galera Academy	30
15	3/7/2019	Puerto Galera Academy	30
16	3/8/2019	Puerto Galera Academy	27
17	3/11/2019	Acasia Waldorf School	21
18	3/20/2019	PG Tour Guides and Tour Operators	21
19	3/26/2019	PG Tour Guides and Tour Operators	22
20	3/28/2019	PG Brgy Sabang, Sto Nino and San Antonio	20
21	4/2/2019	PG Small Boat Operators (Habal)	26
22	4/3/2019	PG Small Boat Operators (Habal)	23
23	4/10/2019	PG Mun Office Staff	26
24	4/11/2019	PG Mun Office Staff	20
25	4/14/2019	Internet Mobile and Marketing Association	13
26	4/24/2019	Girl Scouts Oriental Mindoro Council	66
27	4/26/2019	PG Brgy Sinandigan, Poblacion, Balatero	23
28	4/27/2019	Deaf Camp Participants	46
29	5/9/2019	Department of Education with Kuya Ace	9
30	5/11/2019	New Galera Businessmen Multipurpose Cooperative	26
31	5/31/2019	Divine Word College-Masters in Education Students	25
TOTAL		31 trips	877

Eight groups paid in full for their trips. (Indicated in colored font above.)

A total of 817 participants were given the opportunity to explore the intricacies and inter-relatedness of mangroves, sea grasses and corals within Puerto Galera and understand how human activities affect these marine ecosystems. The participants for the first half of the year come from three local schools in Puerto Galera, four international schools that joined Stairway's Youth for Change Camps, a college in Calapan City, groups within the Department of Education National Office, and various partners of the Municipal Environment and Natural Resource Office (MENRO).

The annual workshop of local high school science teachers who regularly facilitate SAS trips with their students was held last February. During the SAS Educators' Workshop, several enhancements were identified and mapped out and it was agreed that environmental education through SAS trips will be linked to EACY's campaign on climate crisis and plastic pollution.

Furthermore, it was also resolved during the workshop to localize environmental education, updates regarding Puerto Galera as a UNESCO-declared Man and Biosphere Reserve will be added as well as updates on the inventory of Puerto Galera's mangroves, sea grass and corals. To add more fun to the trip, new games and activities were also introduced.

Along with the reproduction of 3,000 new copies of Sea Adventure School Learners' Guide, the materials of the games used in the activities were also enhanced and remade.





Before the school year ended last March, we gathered the evaluation results of the students from two schools that joined the SAS trips for the first quarter of the year:

SAS Evaluation Questions and the Students' Answers

1. Did you feel safe throughout your trip? Yes 100%
2. Did you think the trip provided you more awareness about the marine environment?
Yes 99% Same 1%

3. Please rate the activities of the trip according to your enjoyment/fun.

0 = none, 1 = low, 2 = medium, 3 = high

Mangrove exploring	2.61
Trash clean-up	2.59
Sea-grass snorkel	2.62
Coral snorkel	2.88
Lunch & Snacks	2.72
Learning guide activities	2.75
Being on the boat	2.56
Overall day on the SAS trip	2.86

4. Please rate the topics of the trip according to impact they had on you.

0 = none, 1 = low, 2 = medium, 3 = high

Seas and Oceans	2.82
Sea-grass	2.60
Marine ecosystems	2.83
Marine importance to humans	2.89
Mangroves	2.70
Coral	2.91
Environment protection	2.80
The Coral Triangle	2.47

5. Before the SAS trip, had you ever really explored or looked closely at:

Mangroves	Yes 81%	No 19%
Sea-grass	Yes 68%	No 32%
Coral	Yes 88%	No 12%

6. After the SAS trip, do you feel you now know more about:

Mangroves	Yes 86%	No 5%	Same 9%
Sea-grass	Yes 86%	No 5%	Same 9%
Coral	Yes 87%	No 5%	Same 8%
Seas & Oceans	Yes 81%	No 3%	Same 16%
Marine importance to humans	Yes 85%	No 0%	Same 15%

7. Are you planning to join EACY Club? Yes 81% No 19%

As can be seen above and as expected, the SAS trips got high remarks from the participants. The suggestions of the students were noted and discussed during the SAS Educators' Workshop and is now being carried out, like adding more time to swim and snorkel and have more games.

Expected Outputs from Participants of SAS Trips

We always encourage SAS trip participants to pay it forward to the environment --- that their awareness should translate into action and hopefully translate further into an advocacy that they will spread to others.

During the summer break when the schools are closed, we shift the focus of the SAS trips from younger audience to adult groups, whose jobs are related to the sea.

This summer, nine SAS trips were offered to MENRO partners that work in the barangays and the tourism sector. At the end of each of their trip, their ideas were discussed on how they can help address environmental issues. Here are some of their proposals:

- Each tour guide will bring his/her own trash bin for their tourist clients
- Create infographic slates to be used as visual guides to inform tourists about environmental marine ecosystems
- Create environmental video “infomercial” to be shown in Batangas Pier and inside ferry boats for incoming Puerto Galera tourists/visitors.
- Test items regarding SAS trip will be included in the licensing exam to ensure and check if the tour guides learned from the SAS trips.
- Remind tourists to use coral-friendly sun blocks
- Inform tourists not to collect marine life souvenirs
- Regular coastal cleanup by tour guides in assigned areas.
- Remind passengers not to step on corals and sea grasses.
- Enforce “No fish feeding.”
- Bring garbage bins per boat.
- No fishing inside the Marine Protected Areas.
- Install one ladder per small boat for tourists in order to avoid the practice of letting the passengers step on hard corals to get back to the boat.
- Install more visual reminders/signage per area.
- Install more mooring buoys.

Stairway facilitated a dialogue consultation with MENRO, Tourism Office, Bantay Dagat, Tour Guides, and small boat operators and it was proposed that Stairway will help create a campaign video regarding plastic pollution and proper waste disposal to be shown in Batangas pier, Balatero and Muelle pier, as well as in ferry boats of Batangas to Puerto Galera trips. Also, Stairway will create a draft infographics regarding marine ecosystems and marine conservation to be brought and explained by tour guides during their tours.

As the new school year opened this June it was proposed that all student groups that join SAS trips are encouraged to submit creative and innovative project ideas and activities related to what they have learned from SAS trips. Stairway will select from among these proposals and support its implementation.

Dr Seus' The Lorax Performances

Dr Seuss environmental classic, "The Lorax" has been brought to life again on theater with the current batch of boys from the Family Home Program. Despite some challenges in fitting the schedule of the performances with the busy end-of-the-school-year schedule of the elementary students as target audience, the show was performed 7 times to about 400 spectators coming from various partners of Stairway:

Date	Name of Group	Number of Audience
2/13/2019	International School of Manila	35
2/20/2019	Singapore American School and Baclayan Elementary School	50
3/2/2019	Shanghai American School and Baclayan Elementary School	64
3/15/2019	Propeller Club	31
3/16/2019	Puerto Galera Academy	76
4/11/2019	Municipal Office Staff and Computer Camp Participants	60
4/18/2019	Earth Week 2019 Participants	40
	TOTAL	356

The performances reverberate the message of caring for the environment with the former street kids themselves delivering the message to the audience. The performances and the rehearsals also prove to be effective forms of creative therapy for the young performers.



The Growing EACY Community

EACY's 4R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Refuse) campaign continues to spread to various parts of the locality and gaining more and more allies.

Last January, a group of intern Senior High School students was transformed into what we call "EACY Brigade", campaign teams that went house to house in various barangays (villages) to check how EACY Club member households segregated their garbage, clarify the importance of proper segregation and discuss the effects of plastic pollution to the sea. The result of the survey showed significant improvement from the previous survey done during the last quarter of 2018:

Survey Result (January 21, 2019)

		Segregate		Recyclable Bin		Residual Bin		Compost Pit		Burn Garbage	
Barangay (# Respondents)		Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Aninuan (9)		9	0	9	0	7	2	6	3	2	7
Aninuan (9)		8	1	9	0	9	0	7	2	0	9
San Isidro White Beach (15)		13	2	13	2	9	6	14	1	15	0
San Isidro-Minolo (17)		12	5	12	5	10	7	14	3	3	14
Balatero (19)		17	2	19	0	15	4	12	7	6	13
Poblacion (22)		17	5	17	5	17	5	11	11	5	17
Tabinay(19)		18	1	19	0	18	1	14	5	5	14
Baclayan(13)		9	4	13	0	9	4	10	3	3	10
Palangan(14)		14	0	14	0	14	0	12	2	0	14
Total (137)		117	20	125	12	108	29	100	37	39	98
Current --->	Overall Percentage (January 2019)	85%	15%	91%	9%	79%	21%	73%	27%	28%	72%
Base Figure -->	Overall Percentage (September 2018)	78%	22%	82%	18%	65%	36%	55%	43%	35%	65%

The EACY Brigade culminated their two-week internship program with a river cleanup and a house to house campaign along Aninuan River to remind the residents not to throw their garbage to the river as it eventually goes out to the seas and never go away. The group was able to collect 11 sacks of plastic garbage during the cleanup.

Meanwhile, the EACY Club members carried on their Eco Bricks project that they initiated on the last quarter of 2018. An Eco Brick is a plastic bottle packed with used plastics to a set density to create a reusable building block.

Certified trainers from the Eco Brick Alliance were invited last February to conduct an Eco Brick Starter Workshop that was participated in by 55 EACY Club members and parents representing chapters from various barangays. The workshop clarified the standards and the proper way of making a unit of Eco Brick. More importantly, the workshop taught the participants how to make use of Eco Bricks and how to construct various products utilizing these bricks --- various furniture, garden spaces and even full-scale buildings.

On April 22 Earth Day, along with the simultaneous cleanups for each barangay, the EACY Club chapters presented their Eco Bricks projects at their programs in their respective barangays.

Summing up the outputs from all EACY Club chapters, a total of a thousand Eco Bricks have been created since November last year until April this year. Each Eco Brick is contained within a 1.5liter soft drink container and weighs at least half a kilo of soft and hard plastics, making a total of 500 kilos of plastics saved, recycled and prevented from being dumped anywhere into the environment.

The Eco Brick project has attracted support from the local government units. Some of the barangay councils have contributed both in cash and in kind to the adhesive materials needed in order to attach each Eco brick unit and form any usable Eco Brick product.

Even the MENRO saw the potential of the project and took some of the Eco Brick products as a model to be replicated in other barangays. The office is currently lobbying that the Municipal Government allocate a budget to the proposal to exchange one 1.5 liter Eco Brick unit to a kilo of rice, in order to encourage more people to create Eco Bricks. The EACY Club is also looking into the possibility of selling Eco Bricks to major resorts and restaurants in Puerto Galera.



Earth Day and World Oceans Day, Celebrated

Together with the issue of proper waste management and plastic pollution, the EACY program this year embarked on popularizing another pressing issue of global concern--- the Climate Crisis.

Stairway celebrated Earth Week in a rather quiet and meditative manner with the Climate Crisis as theme. The activities introduced to the local audience the issue and some practices that can help mitigate it – meditation, yoga and turning towards a plant based diet. Various films were shown regarding climate change and its effects on our oceans. EACY Club teams were dispersed to various public places in Puerto Galera to explain the issue of Plastic Pollution and give out Eco Bags for free.

It was another fun-filled learning day as Stairway joined the international community to celebrate the annual World Oceans Day for the second time. Grade 6 pupils from two local schools flocked to Stairway to learn more about the beauty, the wonders, as well as the pervasive issues facing this gigantic body of water comprising 70% of our planet's surface.

The Stairway compound was transformed into an ocean-themed park decorated with glass mosaics of various marine species and a marine art sculpture made of plastic debris collected from cleanups at a nearby beach.







Like schools of fish swimming together with their own kind, the pupils of the two schools were separated and aloof of each other at the onset. The first group came from a nearby school in the village of Aninuan where the Stairway Center is located. The second group were indigenous children from Baclayan. But this invisible wall slowly shattered as they were mixed and grouped together to work as a team.

Ten stations with various fun activities that introduce and familiarize the students to information and issues about the ocean were set up – from bingo game, board game, VR goggles, to face painting, creation of buttons, sewing marine creatures, photo exhibits and even creation of jingles. After having gone to all of the ten stations, all of the 84 participants were given Lorax shirts as a token of appreciation for their active participation.

One of the campaigns last year in relation to World Oceans Day was the move to declare the beach across Stairway as Marine Protected Area. According to the Municipal Fisheries Officer, the proposal is now being discussed at the level of the Municipal Council, a good indication that it is progressing.

To sustain the campaign, quarterly coral cleanups were planned in various locations of Puerto Galera. EACY Dive School spearheads the coral cleanups together with partners in MENRO, the local schools and EACY Club members who have undergone open water dive trainings in the previous years. During the first coral cleanup last February at Aninuan reefs, a relatively minimum amount of trash was collected which is hopefully a good indication of raised awareness at community level.

Other Salient Developments in Collaboration with Various Partners

After MENRO's recommendation, Stairway was given one seat in the newly reconstituted Puerto Galera Municipal Solid Waste Committee. The EACY Program coordinator was asked to present its EACY solid waste management projects and initiatives to barangay leaders to be emulated. The barangay councils expressed their interest to collaborate with members of EACY Club in order to develop their barangays' waste management system.

For instance, the barangay chairman of the most populated barangay in Puerto Galera requested a copy of the 22-minute version of "A Plastic Ocean," (which we added Filipino subtitles to) to be shown in their community information campaign. He first saw the documentary when he was invited to join a SAS trip this summer.

Stairway also continues to be part of the Sabang Bay Water Quality Management Area Governing Board, particularly in the Information and Education Campaign Committee. It is expected that relevant information like how to maintain clean water quality in Puerto Galera's beaches will be discussed in EACY's activities like the Sea Adventure School.

The 22-minute version of the video documentary "A Plastic Ocean" with Filipino subtitle is not only utilized as a supplementary material to groups that join the Sea Adventure School in discussing the issue of plastic pollution. The De La Salle University School of Deaf Education and Applied Studies plans to create a version of the documentary for the deaf. Meanwhile another group requested a copy of the documentary and showed it to children in their community in Puerto Princesa, Palawan. They read about the documentary on the Stairway website. The group is keen in working with Stairway to create a Filipino-dubbed version of the film.

Last June, another group stumbled upon Stairway to solicit support for its project to gather and train high school campus journalists in Calapan City (Oriental Mindoro's Provincial Center) regarding environmental journalism. Their project was given support and is planned to be customized and replicated here in Puerto Galera. The idea is to gather young campus journalists for a workshop on the creation of environmental awareness campaign materials utilizing popular multimedia platforms.

In the coming months and years, as the EACY program continues to expand its reach, through word of mouth and through our online presence, we expect more groups who will express interest to collaborate with us and avail of our resources and experience in creating local campaigns for environmental awareness.

EACY Dive School

EACY Dive School is now established as an integrated part of the environmental program through the valuable link to the ocean and its underwater world. It is also the link to the dive industry in the area which is a part of the threats to the marine life. The dive industry in Sabang is undergoing a change from being a dive spot for enthusiast to mass tourism, mainly from Korea and China, bringing new challenges for the environment. We keep a close contact with MENRO and the fact that they became certified divers through EACY Dive School has given them the advantage of being able to monitor and evaluate the impact of the dive industry.

The dive school do regular cleanups at our house reef and the beach. The river is one source that brings plastic out to our reef so we try to influence the community through the EACY Club and continuous awareness campaigns in the settlements along the river. Some colleagues from a company in Manila contacted the dive school and wanted to do a cleanup and we focused on the lower part of the river during the dry season to prevent the plastic to be flushed out with the coming rains.

All the boys from the Family Home Program were offered to do a Discover Scuba Diving try dive before they were leaving the program. They were all extremely enthusiastic and enjoyed the amazing feeling of being one with the underwater world.

In June we held our first real Scuba Camp. 9 students from International School of Manila did their PADI Open Water course at Stairway and EACY Dive. It was a lot of fun but also a challenge since the time was limited. The students were highly motivated and they all got certified. With some improvements to the concept we are convinced that this can be a sustainable part of the dive school. We will offer the Scuba Camp to all our international schools that are already familiar with Stairway and our environmental program.





