

Learning While Diving

A Portrait of Environmental Education Based on Local Content in Tanah Merah Bay, Papua

Presenter

Elisabeth Holle, LMMA

Minee Wally, Principal of YPK Tablasupa Primary School

A. Ramandey, Education Department, Kabupaten Jayapura

Minee Wally, the principal of Yayasan Penabur Kristen (YPK) Tablasupa primary school, smiles as she looks at the ocean view of Tanah Merah Bay, Depapre, Jayapura. Her gaze is caught by a group of children swimming and playing in the ocean. These are the children of YPK Tablasupa primary school.

That day is special for them. While having fun swimming, they are also completing an assignment from their teachers to identify types of coral they find and observe and report what sort of condition they're in. The teacher, Ibu Naomi, is swimming and free diving with them. She is showing the children of Grade 5 how to identify coral and assess the condition. They then loudly discuss it with each other as they paddle to stay afloat.

After they exhausted themselves diving and identified the condition of the coral and marked the coral based on their characteristics, they got back on their small boats and went back to the beach to report on their findings. "We know what's under our sea now, there's coral, fish, sea cucumbers and sea snails," said one student. On the way to the beach one of the students recorded the findings of the others before they made a report to their teacher and the other village youths who were attending a training regarding basic marine conservation.

When they made it to the beach, each group formed a small circle. On the white sand they sat together and in turn told of what they had seen to the other groups. The discussion was held in a dynamic and happy atmosphere.

In direct contact with their environment, that's how the students learn about the environment in Depapre sub-district, Jayapura district. Local content is also incorporated in the formal environmental education to increase their feeling of ownership and build environmental awareness from a young age in primary school students.

Even though environmental education is implemented now based on the ability of teachers and students, the idea did not come about easily in the area. Before the 1980s, the Tanah Merah Bay, Depapre, was an impressive area. A number of different types of coral grew and different colored aquarium fish swam between them. Unfortunately, the beauty of the region was disturbed by fishermen using bombs. A great amount of coral was destroyed and a number of fish species disappeared. The fishermen had to face the scarcity that followed because their catches were reduced and they had to go further into the ocean to get a good catch.

However, now, with a new spirit and awareness of repairing the environmental conditions for a better future, the teachers of YPK Tablasupa primary school have developed a School-based Management and Curriculum Program (KTSP). These two programs open opportunities for each school administrator to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate education programs, especially in terms of developing learning material based on local content. Led by Minee Wally, the principal, and supported by the Education Department in each place and other stakeholders, the teachers have made this program part of the strategy to increase the quality of learning for Papuan children.

The effect of environmental education is widely felt. Environmental education is not only a lesson for children in school, but also for the wider community who are also beginning to contribute. Traditional leaders provide inputs in identifying types of coral and fish in the local languages. Traditional laws regarding environmental management and regulations regarding fishing are beginning to be taught again to the children, implemented again in villages, and strongly upheld. Church leaders are also raising awareness in adults through sermons.

A movement has begun in the community to clean up the garbage in the ocean and around the villages. This routine activity takes place when the tide is low and is done voluntarily by all community elements with no exception. Awareness that their lives are dependent on preserving the ocean encourages all stakeholders to protect the ocean from fish bombers.

Teachers in the primary school in Tablasupa have succeeded in creating a new generation to carry on traditional knowledge to love and protect the marine environment. Even if the benefits are not enjoyed immediately, they are reassured by the growth of new and beautiful coral and know that the next generation will enjoy a better environment and life.

Contact Detail

Elisabeth Holle
Yayasan Pengelolaan Lokal Kawasan Laut
LMMA Indonesia
Mobile **0812480504**
Email **elisabeth_holle_2004@yahoo.com**