



YAF KERU - A REEF RESTORATION PROJECT BY THE SEA PEOPLE

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1) To contribute to the restoration, maintenance and conservation of the reef systems and the services they provide.

Nearly 10 years after the designation of Marine Protected areas within the region, the scars of dynamite and cyanide fishing still remain, and are clearly observable on reefs. With rapidly increasing tourism to the area, and the influence of climate change, coral conservation and management tools are needed now more than ever. With Yaf Keru, we are aiming to create local 'coral gardeners' who are capable of mitigating past, present and future degradation of coral reefs.

2) Directly improve livelihoods of local community members by providing employment opportunities.

Reef restoration is essential, not only for its ecological benefits but for the socioeconomic lift it provides to local communities. Within Indonesia, 25.1 million Indonesians live below the poverty line, whilst data from March 2019 shows approximately 20.6% of the entire population remains vulnerable to falling into poverty (Data source: The World Bank).

Yaf Keru aims to provide alternative livelihoods to the local community to reduce the existing environmental pressures and replacing extractive behaviours with practices that enhance local ecosystem services. To date, our coral gardeners originate from local villagers, and having grown up in Raja Ampat rely on fishing as the main source of sustenance for them and their families. As per many locals in the region, during an era when dynamite fishing was prominent (late 90s – early 2000s), during their youth either witnessed or participated in destructive fishing practices, yet now are responsible for restoring degraded areas.

3) To raise awareness and educate local & international communities about coral reef ecology, and the functions and services they provide

Education is a fundamental component in our quest to contribute to the conservation of the Dampier Strait and wider Raja Ampat region. Our Coral Gardeners all serve as ambassadors for coral reef conservation, capable of raising awareness within their communities, as well as the international community through tourism related activities. Yaf Keru also serves as an educational platform used to give hands on experiences to local youth, and interested visitors to the region.

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4) To re-establish the traditional marine management practice of “sasi” within a 500Ha reef complex in the heart of the Dampier Strait, Raja Ampat.

‘Sasi’ is the ancestor of a Marine Reserve; a traditional practice for managing natural resources by regulating access and use. In this instance, under common agreement within the community, an area is declared as closed, and as a ‘no-take zone’ for a given amount of time, allowing fish and reefs to recover from exploitation. To officialise a sasi, a traditional ceremony occurs, where the area is blessed by local elders following traditional rituals. Ensuring these traditional practices are upheld and continue in parallel with socio-economic development is a central aspect of our conservation approach.

5) To learn more about the resistance, resilience and regeneration potential of Raja Ampat's healthy reefs.

Yaf Keru provides an ideal natural laboratory that can be closely monitored to help us better understand coral’s response to changes in environmental conditions. It has been recently observed that corals in Raja Ampat display a remarkable resilience and resistance to environmental stresses (ie: climate change, El Nino). During a time when reefs the world over are degrading more rapidly than any other period in history, it is extremely important to understand the regeneration potential within Raja Ampat’s ideal conditions. Over the next 3 years we hope to learn more about coral growth and natural recruitment, as well as their ability to resist, adapt and cope with current climate change dynamics.

6) To develop a sustainable and replicable model of conservation tourism, in direct collaboration with local stakeholders.

Yaf Keru provides a multi-purpose platform where Marine Park stakeholders can meet and exchange through coral conservation. Trained local coral gardeners can in turn offer Raja Ampat visitors a unique opportunity to get involved with hands on restoration, learn about the reef and contribute to its management and conservation during their stay, turning a simple holiday into a mutually enriching experience.

7) To rehabilitate 1 hectare of degraded reef slope in 2020. 5-10 hectares within 3-5 years

Unfortunately the Covid-19 crisis has delayed initial implementation. However, pending funding, our intention remains the same in restoring approx 1 hectare of degraded reef per year. It is at this scale that the benefits of coral rehabilitation can become ecologically significant for the region. Restoration work of this size will also provide full time employment opportunities for 10-20 coral gardeners further supporting the livelihoods of their families.