



# OMEP Summer Workshop

## Balagawan, Silago, So. Leyte

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- When: May 12-17, 2008
- What: 6-day summer workshop
- For whom: 8 children (ages 8-12)
- Where: Brgy. Punta, Balagawan
- Teachers: Grace Quiton and Lorina Toyhacao
- Workshop lesson: "My beautiful and fragile environment" crafted by Sholeh Villoria
- Purpose of workshop: to raise awareness and appreciation of marine life among children, determine the feasibility of on-site activities, the level of support of the community, and the level of interest among children.

# Notes of Experience from OMEP-Summer Workshop

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- Despite that most children were already in Grades 5 and 6, they still needed to be familiar with basic environmental concepts.
- A common misconception among children was about corals, which they initially thought to be rocks or plants. To correct them, we made the subject of corals the key lesson of the workshop. Using egg trays to illustrate the hard skeleton of the corals helped them see how corals can be animals.



# Notes of Experience from OMEP- Summer Workshop

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- Within the 6-day (half-day) workshop, we covered only two basic marine ecology concepts: the importance of coral reefs and the different types of trash that pollute the ocean. The rest of the lessons were devoted to introducing basic environmental concepts.
- Children had to be provided with art materials. Almost everyone did not have any crayons, scissors or even pencils.



# Notes of Experience from OMEP- Summer Workshop

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- No amount of description or drawings can match the power of colored photos and videos to get the children interested in marine life. Most of the children had never seen what's under water. It was necessary to show them photos and videos of corals, fish and sea animals before proceeding to art activities.



# Notes of Experience from OMEP-Summer Workshop

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- The highlight of the workshop (where children had most fun) was the snorkeling session in Calag-itan Marine Sanctuary.
- Balagawan is a good jump-off point for such on-site activities as it is strategically located near marine sanctuaries in San Pedro and San Pablo islands (10 minutes by pumpboat) and Calag-itan (10-minute jeepney ride from Balagawan).



# Notes of Experience from OMEP-Summer Workshop

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- Most children had not used a mask and snorkel before so a practice snorkeling session was in order. The practice proved to be very useful. Children need to be comfortable with the gear before they swim in marine sanctuaries; otherwise, they might, in panic, trample on the corals.



# Notes of Experience from OMEP-Summer Workshop

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- More insights from the snorkeling activity:
  - no use of fins for kids to avoid disturbance of marine life
  - to ensure safety: 1) only two kids at a time for every adult guide, 2) adult guides must be good swimmers and, at least, one of the adults should know basic emergency response and must act as “lifeguard” of the group, 3) wearing life vests must be required, 4) always remind kids to just “look, don’t touch”
  - to make the snorkeling activity enjoyable for kids, one must invest on life vests and masks that fit right and don’t leak

