

In struggle of new life

Fransiska Prihadi-architect, living in Bali. Photograph: FP; W

There is a wistful myth that if only we had enough money to spend, we could do anything we want (as a so called sea-environmental lover), wipe out all destructive fishermen, reverse decay coral reef in to great beautiful living ecosystem, and perhaps solve all the environmental problems throughout the world.

But no money can really buy it all; it's the thought and the people who carry out it all that count.

Here's one case for example. I'll say it straight up, Les Village is not the best beach place that I've ever been, but it's the most special one. Situated around 70km north of Denpasar, Bali, Les is just a small beachfront village among plenty of other attractive place in Bali. But it's just the right ample size that one can enjoy.

What make it so special to me are the people and the story behind the beach of Les Village.

And so here the story goes.

The men of Les Village have generally become fishermen ever since they remember.

They catch everything that has economical value, whether they're eatable fish or ornamental fish.

What they don't remember is since when have they used potassium cyanide as the 'official' tools to catch their fishes. Obviously that it is not a wise heritage of fishing culture seeing the defect result on the sea.

It destroys almost every living corals on their coast until one day they realize that they might end up with nothing left to catch in the sea if they're still using the same fishing method.

Of course it's not as romantic as a 'one clear day' decision to leave the hazardous materials. In fact it's more than one day effort to fully use a non-destructive fishing method.



Les Village coast, 70 km north Denpasar. A just enough special piece of beach. (Photo FP)



Here's where they filter ornamental fishes once they've caught it with the non destructive method (Photo: FP)

Begin with a concern about Bali sea destruction problems, a local NGO- Yayasan Bahtera Nusantara- learn that Les Villages has the most ornamental fisherman in Tejakula (North Bali) area. Supported with the social study that

Les is in fact considered as a homogeneous Balinese village (which supposed to make it easier in the term of same mother-language user, community leadership), the eco-friendly fishing method idea infiltrated the community slowly but sure.



Les coral farm nursery . (Photo: Wayan)



Les coral farm nursery . (Photo: Wayan)

Feeling the spirit

Among the main revolutionary changes of this Village, perhaps those that go deepest are the changes of the mental methods. After succeed with using non-destructive fishing method, they try to mend what's once broken. It's the coral reef. Apparently there's not much coral reef that one could see after years of using potassium /cyanide, that's why Les' fishermen (which also divers) made a coral farm nursery to bring back what once alive down there.

It's now the year of 2004, almost four years since the people of Les first try to stop the destructive fishing method. At this point, they can't rely on the fund support that once came from the NGO nor GEFSGP (Global Environment Facility Small Grant Program). It's about time for a further development of their now positive eco-friendly attitude. They're at the moment developing a coral farm nursery with the hope of more tourist divers to come and help them out 'planting' corals while having fun diving in crystal-clear water. Well, who knows the next time I stop by Les Village I might find a nice small just enough scale budget 'resort' run by the local Les' villagers. It's indeed a struggle of new eco-friendly life. Such an enviably interesting way of life and wonderful communal spirit that deserves striving to exist. (FP-June,21.2004)