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Clean Seas and Healthy Communities as a Manifestation of Sustainable Management with the Goal of a Maritime Future in Malacca, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT: Marine and coastal health are critical to the environment and well-being of communities that depend on these ecosystems. This study describes a community service initiative conducted by Mahsa University, Malaysia, and Universitas Warmadewa, Indonesia, aimed at cleaning up Klabang Beach in Malacca. The activity involved over 300 participants from various backgrounds and included education on the impacts of marine pollution. In addition to the cleanup, the event also hosted workshops to raise community awareness on the importance of sustainable practices, such as recycling and waste reduction. Survey results showed an increase in community knowledge about marine pollution from 40% to 80%. The mangrove planting activity also succeeded in planting 1,000 seedlings with a survival rate of 85%. Through this collaboration, participants not only contributed to environmental cleanliness but also strengthened relationships between communities. This initiative is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 14 on life below water, and supports the blue economy through sustainable practices that improve the quality of life for coastal communities.

KEYWORDS: Blue economy, Community service, Environmental awareness, Marine cleanliness, SDGs.

INTRODUCTION

The health of our oceans and beaches is vital for the environment and the well-being of communities that depend on these ecosystems. Coastal areas are often the heart of local economies, providing livelihoods for fishermen, tourism operators, and many others. However, these areas face increasing threats from pollution and waste, which harm marine life and diminish the quality of life for those who live nearby (Sungkawati, 2024). The consequences become increasingly evident as litter and plastic waste continue to infiltrate our shorelines. Marine animals often mistake plastic for food, leading to ingestion and entanglement, which can be fatal (Atanasova et al., 2021). Moreover, polluted beaches deter tourists and locals, affecting the economy and community spirit. This underscores the urgent need for collective action to protect our natural resources. (Koerniawaty & Sudjana, 2022)

In recognition of this pressing issue, Mahsa University, Malaysia, in collaboration with Universitas Warmadewa, Indonesia, is organizing a beach cleanup event at Klabang Beach in Malacca, Malaysia. This initiative aims to unite students, local residents, and environmental advocates in a collective effort to clean and restore the beach while raising awareness about the importance of environmental stewardship. The theme of our event, "Clean Seas, Healthy Communities: Together for a Sustainable Future," embodies our commitment to fostering a sense of responsibility toward our environment. By engaging in this cleanup, participants will not only help remove debris but also learn about the broader implications of pollution and the importance of sustainable practices (Laksmi et al., 2024). Participation in the beach cleanup will involve students from both universities, local community members, and volunteers from various environmental organizations (Darmawan et al., 2023). This collaboration aims to strengthen ties between different groups, promoting an exchange of ideas and fostering a spirit of teamwork. Together, we can create a powerful movement dedicated to the preservation of our coastal environments (Saputra & Jayawarsa, 2023).

In addition to the cleanup activities, the event will feature educational workshops and discussions. These sessions will focus on topics such as the impact of waste on marine ecosystems, the importance of recycling, and practical steps individuals can take to reduce their environmental footprint (Watto et al., 2020). By equipping participants with knowledge, we aim to empower them to be environmental stewards in their own communities. The beach cleanup is not just about removing trash; it is also about fostering a sense of community and shared purpose (Manurung et al., 2022). By working side-by-side, participants can build lasting

9064 *Corresponding Author: Putu Ayu Sita Laksmi Volume 07 Issue 12 December 2024

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www.ijcsrr.org

friendships and connections, reinforcing the idea that protecting our environment is a collective responsibility. This camaraderie will extend beyond the event, encouraging ongoing collaboration and initiatives to keep our beaches clean (Jayawarsa et al., 2025).

Moreover, this initiative aligns with global efforts to combat ocean pollution and promote sustainability. Events like these are crucial in raising awareness and inspiring action at the local level. By participating in the beach cleanup, attendees will contribute to a larger movement to preserve our oceans for future generations. As we prepare for this event, we invite all stakeholders to join us in making a difference (Oleśniewicz et al., 2020). We believe every small action counts, and together, we can create a ripple effect that leads to significant change. The beach cleanup at Klabang Beach is just one step toward a healthier environment, but it is a step that can inspire many more. In conclusion, the beach cleanup at Klabang Beach is an opportunity for students, local residents, and environmental advocates to come together for a common cause. By uniting our efforts, we can raise awareness, promote sustainable practices, and foster a strong sense of community. Together, we can protect our oceans and beaches, ensuring a cleaner, healthier future for all.

Objectives of the Activity

The primary objective of the beach cleanup activity is to enhance environmental awareness among participants and the local community regarding the impact of pollution on marine ecosystems and the significance of maintaining clean beaches (Saputra & Jayawarsa, 2023). By educating attendees about the detrimental effects of litter on marine life, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of environmental stewardship. Furthermore, the event seeks to promote community engagement by instilling a sense of responsibility and ownership among local residents toward their natural surroundings. Through active participation in cleanup efforts, individuals will recognize their role in preserving the environment and the importance of collective action. Strengthening inter-university collaboration is another key goal of this initiative (Smith-Godfrey, 2016). By bringing together students from Mahsa University and Universitas Warmadewa, we aim to encourage teamwork and shared learning experiences. This collaboration will not only enhance the educational experience for participants but also build lasting relationships between the two institutions. In addition to fostering collaboration, the activity aims to encourage sustainable practices among participants. By inspiring individuals to adopt environmentally friendly habits—such as reducing waste, recycling, and practicing sustainable consumption—we hope to create a ripple effect that extends beyond the event itself (Chowdhury et al., 2021).

Empowering local communities is also a crucial objective of the beach cleanup. By involving residents in the cleanup process, we seek to empower them to take initiative in protecting their environment and advocating for sustainable practices (Hamimah et al., 2022). This empowerment is vital for promoting long-term change in community attitudes toward environmental protection. The event will also facilitate knowledge sharing through educational workshops and discussions. These sessions will equip participants with valuable information about marine conservation, waste management, and the importance of biodiversity, thereby enhancing their understanding of environmental issues (Morán-Ordóñez et al., 2017). Creating a lasting impact is a central goal of this initiative. We aim to instill a sense of duty in participants, motivating them to continue advocating for clean oceans and beaches long after the event has concluded. This commitment to ongoing environmental protection is essential for fostering a culture of sustainability within the community (Morán-Ordóñez et al., 2017).

To document and share the experiences from the event, we will capture photographs and compile reports that highlight the collective efforts of all participants. This documentation will serve not only to celebrate the success of the cleanup but also to inspire future initiatives aimed at environmental conservation (Khan et al., 2021). Encouraging volunteerism is another important objective. By cultivating a culture of volunteerism among students and community members, we hope to motivate individuals to engage in future environmental initiatives and community service projects, thereby reinforcing the importance of active citizenship. Finally, the beach cleanup aims to celebrate community spirit by fostering a sense of pride and collaboration among participants. Through shared experiences and collective efforts, we hope to strengthen the bonds within the community and emphasize the positive impact that united action can have on the environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Coastal Ecosystems and Community Well-Being

Coastal ecosystems, such as mangroves and coral reefs, serve as essential buffers for coastal communities, providing protection against natural disasters, supporting biodiversity, and facilitating fisheries (Bilbao-Terol & Bilbao-Terol, 2020). In Malacca, these ecosystems are vital for local fisheries, which are a primary source of income and food for many residents. Studies have shown that

9065 *Corresponding Author: Putu Ayu Sita Laksmi

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www.ijcsrr.org

healthy marine environments contribute to improved community well-being through sustainable fishing practices and tourism (Buonomo et al., 2020).

Pollution and Its Impacts

Pollution poses a significant threat to marine environments in Malacca. Industrial discharges, agricultural runoff, and urban waste contribute to water quality degradation, affecting both marine life and human health (Singh et al., 2022). A study by Saputra and Widiansyah (2022) found that high levels of heavy metals and nutrients in Malacca's waters have led to declines in fish populations, directly impacting the livelihoods of local fishermen. Furthermore, the contamination of seafood poses health risks to consumers, creating a cycle of environmental and public health concerns.

Community Engagement and Education

Community involvement is crucial for achieving sustainable management of marine resources. Programs aimed at raising awareness about the importance of clean seas have been implemented in Malacca, focusing on education and engagement (Buhalis et al., 2023). These initiatives encourage local communities to participate in conservation efforts, such as beach clean-ups and sustainable fishing practices. Research indicates that communities with higher levels of environmental awareness are more likely to engage in sustainable behaviors, further supporting the health of marine ecosystems (Buhalis et al., 2023; Koerniawaty & Sudjana, 2022).

Sustainable Practices and Policies

The Malaysian government has recognized the importance of sustainable coastal management through various policies and initiatives. The National Policy on Climate Change emphasizes the need for integrated coastal zone management, aiming to balance ecological protection with economic development (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, 2018). In Malacca, local authorities have initiated programs to promote sustainable tourism and responsible fishing practices, fostering a sense of stewardship among residents (Arnold, 2015).

The Role of Technology and Innovation

Advancements in technology offer new opportunities for monitoring and managing marine environments. Remote sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are increasingly used to assess water quality and track changes in marine ecosystems (Mohamed et al., 2021). In Malacca, local universities and research institutions collaborate with government agencies to develop innovative solutions for pollution control and sustainable resource management. These partnerships enhance the capacity of local communities to respond to environmental challenges.

Challenges to Sustainability

Despite efforts to promote sustainability, several challenges remain. The rapid urbanization of Malacca has led to habitat destruction and increased pollution (Tan et al., 2020). Additionally, the effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels and increased storm intensity, exacerbate existing vulnerabilities in coastal communities. A study by Kamarudin et al. (2023) highlights the need for adaptive management strategies that consider the socio-economic factors influencing community resilience.

METHOD

The community service approach with Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an approach whose process aims to provide learning in overcoming problems and fulfilling the practical needs of society, as well as the production of knowledge, and the process of socio-religious change (Laksmi et al., 2024). Therefore, this approach is a means to raise critical awareness collectively of the shackles of neoliberal globalization ideology and the shackles of normative religious paradigms that hinder the process of socio-religious transformation (Saputra, 2021). Community service with this approach can be said to be Transformative community service. This is because it is a research process that is oriented towards empowerment and change (Farr et al., 2021). This argument is based on the fact that the transformative research process means: 1). A process of growing the power and self-ability of poor/weak, marginalized, and oppressed community groups. 2). A process from, by and for the community. The position of the community is assisted/facilitated in making decisions and taking the initiative to be more independent in developing the quality of their lives. 3). Placing society and its institutions as the basic force for economic, political, social, cultural, and religious development. 4). Efforts to release various forms of cultural domination, political pressure, economic exploitation, and the hegemony of religious institutions that shackle and hinder society's efforts to determine their way of life and improve their quality of life (Sjögren Forss et al., 2021).

9066 *Corresponding Author: Putu Avu Sita Laksmi Volume 07 Issue 12 December 2024

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Volume 07 Issue 12 December 2024

DOI: 10.47191/ijcsrr/V7-i12-45, Impact Factor: 7.943

IJCSRR @ 2024



www.ijcsrr.org

The choice of research aimed at social transformation, then the more familiar term PAR is used, so the research process is carried out with systematic, collaborative, and sustainable efforts in order to create social transformation (Sancaya & Saputra, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The level of community participation in this activity is very high. The beach cleaning activity that was held successfully attracted more than 300 participants from various groups, including students, college students, and local residents. This shows the increasing public awareness of the importance of maintaining the cleanliness of the sea. This activity arouses the passion for Education and Awareness Building. Through workshops and seminars, more than 500 people have been involved in the education session. Before and after surveys showed an increase in public knowledge about the impacts of marine pollution from 40% to 80%. One of the activities carried out was Mangrove Planting. A total of 1,000 mangrove seedlings were planted in critical areas that had been degraded. Post-planting monitoring showed the survival rate of seedlings reached 85% after six months.

This activity found the importance of the Use of Technology in the maritime area. The mobile application developed to report environmental conditions has been downloaded by more than 200 users (Saputra & Jayawarsa, 2023). Reports through this application help in monitoring water quality and waste management. Finally, the results of this community service carried out an Awareness Campaign on marine cleanliness and sustainability as a form of supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Žalėnienė & Pereira, 2021). The social media campaign successfully reached over 10,000 people, with high engagement on posts related to marine conservation and community activities.

The results of this community service support several SDGs points, namely SDG 14 which focuses on Life Below Water, aims to Conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development. and its relevance to this community service Focus on reducing marine pollution, combating overfishing, and protecting marine ecosystems such as coral reefs and mangroves (Yang et al., 2020). SDG 11, namely Sustainable Cities and Communities, whose goal is to Make cities and settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Relevance, Addressing the problem of waste and pollution in coastal areas, and supporting effective waste management to maintain the cleanliness of the coastal environment (Khan et al., 2021). SDG 15, namely Life on Land, whose goal is to Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. Relevance, The health of terrestrial ecosystems contributes to the health of marine ecosystems, and mangrove planting and habitat restoration activities can support this goal (Chowdhury et al., 2021). SDG 12, namely Responsible Consumption and Production, whose goal is to Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. and, its relevance Reducing waste and pollution resulting from human activities, including the management of plastic waste that often pollutes the coast (Ilmi & Ambariyanto, 2024). In Malacca, the implementation of these SDGs can be seen through programs such as beach cleanups, mangrove planting, and community education on the importance of keeping the ocean clean. Through collaborative efforts, communities can contribute to achieving these sustainability goals, creating a healthier and more sustainable environment for future generations (Monroy-Rodríguez & Caro-Carretero, 2023).

Community service that involves training and education on sustainable practices helps coastal communities understand the importance of preserving marine ecosystems. With this knowledge, they can engage in blue economy activities, such as sustainable fisheries and ecotourism, that generate income without damaging the environment (Khan et al., 2021). Activities such as mangrove planting and beach cleanups conducted in community service programs support the blue economy's goal of restoring and protecting marine ecosystems. Healthy ecosystems support the sustainability of fisheries resources and increase tourism appeal. Community service that educates about plastic waste reduction and waste management contributes to the blue economy by encouraging responsible consumption practices (Schindler & Demaria, 2020). Reducing marine pollution improves the quality of marine resources and public health. By creating jobs in sectors such as ecotourism and sustainable fisheries, community service contributes to local economic growth. Revenue generated from blue economy activities can be used to improve the quality of life for coastal communities.

CONCLUSION

Community service in Malacca focusing on marine cleanliness and community health directly supports the principles of the blue economy. By empowering communities, restoring ecosystems and encouraging sustainable practices, the program not only improves local well-being but also contributes to broader sustainability goals, ensuring that marine resources are effectively utilized for future generations. The linkage between the SDGs focusing on maritime and coastal cleanliness with the blue economy

9067 *Corresponding Author: Putu Ayu Sita Laksmi

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Volume 07 Issue 12 December 2024

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IJCSRR @ 2024



www.ijcsrr.org

demonstrates the importance of sustainable management of marine resources. Through this approach, we can achieve broader sustainability goals, creating economic prosperity while maintaining healthy marine and coastal ecosystems. The results of this community service show that an approach involving education, active participation and the use of technology can significantly increase community awareness and action in maintaining marine cleanliness. This success lays the foundation for the development of broader sustainability programs in Malacca, with the hope of creating healthier communities and a cleaner marine environment. Collaborative efforts between the government, community and educational institutions are essential to achieving these sustainability goals.

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9068 *Corresponding Author: Putu Ayu Sita Laksmi

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9069 *Corresponding Author: Putu Ayu Sita Laksmi

Volume 07 Issue 12 December 2024