

Para sa Aton  
For Us

# 1. our story

Para sa Aton (For Us) is a project made by us and for us, the people of Madridejos, Bantayan Island, The Philippines. Para sa Aton is an art project that uses a new media campaign to tackle social, economic and environmental issues.

The Para sa Aton team, came together after Martha Atienza's previous project, Gilubong ang Akong Pusod sa Dagat. We are making use of the strong social ties that this project built among the participants and newly gained insights to work on finding a way to respond to the community's needs and find solutions to the issues facing them.



Madridejos is a town located in the northern tip of Bantayan Island surrounded by the Visayan sea. It has a population of almost 35,000 people and its main source of income and food is the sea.

Gilubong ang Akon Pusod sa Dagat

My Navel is Buried in the Sea

Can art trigger empowerment and collectively tackle social, economic and environmental issues?



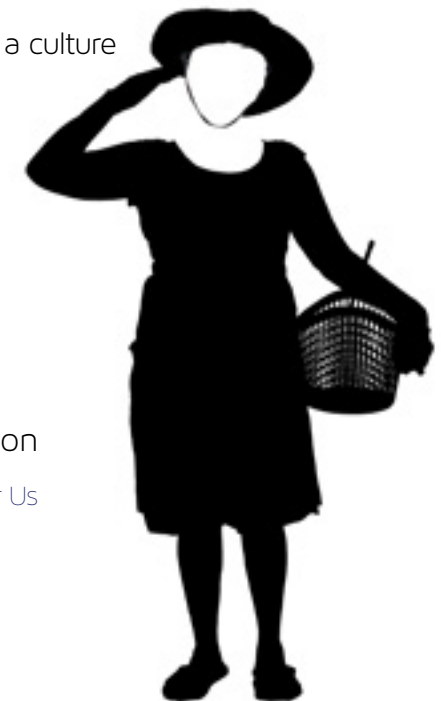
Art is proposed to become a contributor to social, economic and environmental sustainability by giving people the tools to create sustainable livelihood, conducting workshops and dialogue sessions and creating a new media campaign that builds on the idea of engagement.

Through arts we hope to encourage people to dream, unite, see what they do individually and collectively. People can see how they affect each other and look differently at themselves and each other so that they can appreciate who they are. This will empower people and encourage them to take action and control of their future in the hope that they can do something about the extreme damage to their sea, land and culture.

By doing so, we have the opportunity to redefine a way of living and a culture and establish a future together rather than being dictated by circumstances and external forces.

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## 2. why?

The sea surrounding Bantayan Island has been so greatly damaged by illegal, over-fishing and global warming. As a result most fishermen have resort to compressor diving. They dive up to 40 meters deep using homemade and primitive devices to pump air through plastic tubing to breathe. Very common is decompression illness that leads to paralysis and even death. In a span of 3 months 2 divers have perished because of this in Madridejos alone. It is not only dangerous for people but also harmful to the sea. It is a vicious cycle wherein the environment and the people are both the losers.

Like the rest of the country people want to work overseas because of the lack of opportunities at home. Which result in dislocation within the family and the community structure because of a great gap in income, one-parent households, lack of educated people, et cetera.

Development should mean an improvement in a quality of life. People should have a choice to be able to work at home in the place they are from. Ultimately, people want to stay together and provide for their families and live a healthy life.

We believe that by focusing on our community and finding ways to solve our problems the solutions can be applied not only in the rest of The Philippines but in many other countries internationally. The issues of income, migration, environment and culture are all too familiar.

After Typhoon Haiyan the need to for self-sustainability and environmental protection is necessary. We need to understand why nature is so terribly unbalanced and what we, the community, can do about this. We not only need to be able to provide ourselves with food and shelter but we need to be creative and find alternative solutions to the many issues facing us.





# 3. what we want

## Short Term Goals

- Use alternative livelihood, biointensive agriculture and environmental sustainability to combat poverty, hunger and a quality of life.
- stimulate the use of visual arts as a tool for creative solutions
- Educate about the notion of sustainability.
- Engage in communal discussions.
- Trigger curiosity and a sense of ownership.
- Build a team that can manage the activities.

## Long Term Goals

- Community to get organized and work on solutions together.
- Create Third World solutions using alternative livelihood, biointensive agriculture to be self sustainable in the long-term.
- Create employment, a sustainable livelihood that would greatly benefit the environment and the people.
- Let art take a leading role in the community. Integrate creative solutions in daily life. The people's Do-It-Yourself methods are positive and nothing to be ashamed of. They can use this to find solutions.
- Have knowledge as a base for sustainability and empowerment.
- For the next generation to feel empowered, responsible for one another and their environment.







## 4. what we have done?

Gilubong ang Akong Pusod sa Dagat (My Navel is Buried in the Sea) is a three screen video installation featuring men from Madridejos, Bantayan Island onboard international container vessels, underwater, on local fishing and transport boats.

Having grown up with a seafaring father from Madridejos, Martha Atienza started filming the seafarers at sea trying to understand what these men go through, dream and think. It was a search that she did together with her brother Jake, her family, the wives of the local fishermen, international seafarers and the community of Madridejos. It is a portrait of a people. The project ran from 2010 to 2012.

Since its initial screening on the island, it has received the 2012 Ateneo Art Award along with four residencies. Shared through screenings and exhibitions worldwide.

The project had a direct impact on its participants. This project succeeded in:

- using art as a platform for dialogues
- using education and self-discovery as a tool to empower and equip people to find creative solutions to the serious issues they are facing
- depicting local Lawisanon (people of Madridejos) culture.

We intend to further this strategy for Para sa Aton, only this time we are focusing on **solutions**.





1. Through **art**:

Explore the communicative possibilities of visual arts and new media locally and through online means as a basis for achieving and creating a platform for dialogue within the community, a sustainable livelihood, women involvement, empowerment, ownership and create environmental responsibility for the fishing town of Madridejos, Bantayan Island.

With the help of images introduce the community to the arts by seeing themselves from a different point of view. This can trigger dialogue amongst each other about the nature of their work and the many issues they face.

Use as a tool to communicate and share thoughts, ideas and knowledge accumulated through what they have learned in the activities.





## 2. Through **dialogues**:

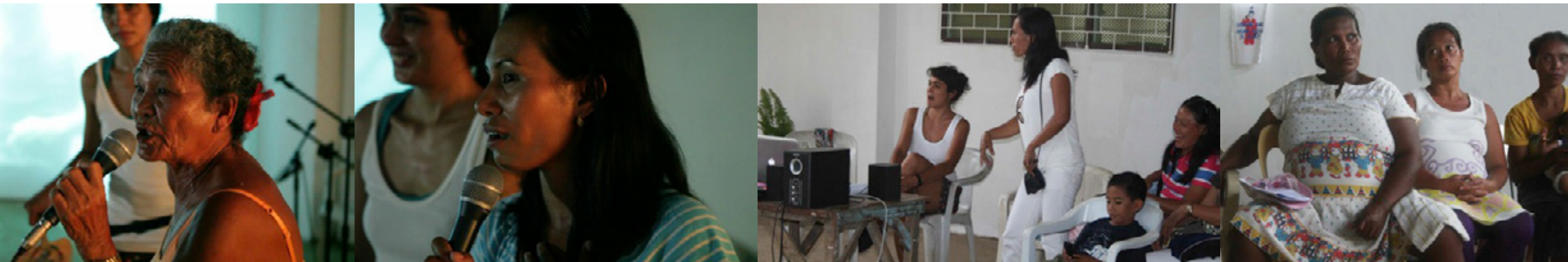
- Further reduce social dislocation because of the growing income gap brought about by the exigencies of migration and underdevelopment and the dilapidation of natural resources.
- Stimulate community involvement, awareness and ownership.
- Bring the community closer together.
- Have people learn from each other so that they may be better informed and make long-term decisions in regard to themselves and their family's future and not just to survive the day.

## 3. Through **sustainable livelihood**:

- Look into an alternative source of income and/or consumption.
- Give women the chance to be the breadwinners as well.
- Through the campaign we will be able to advocate the idea of ownership.  
The participants can decide how to develop a new livelihood.
- Live healthier lives through healthier food production and clean environment.

## 4. Through **environmental responsibility**:

- Create not only awareness but the chance to do good instead of harm to the environment
- Keep the sea a source of livelihood and food for future generations.
- Start living in harmony with the environment.
- Make people feel that their actions make a difference, because it does. Creates pride in their actions and surroundings.



## 5. activities

5. Having **women** involved:

- Empower women
- Women are capable of involving everyone around them; their husbands, children, in-laws, neighbors and more people. They instinctively harmonize the people around them and tend to want to work together.
- When women make choices they tend to choose for the future of their children. Hopefully this would mean that they stimulate their children to get an education, be responsible citizens, to dream, and to make a difference.
- Encourage them to save money to invest in what they find necessary.

As part of Para Sa Aton, several activities will be implemented alongside initiatives that provide common ground for the community to collaborate, exchange ideas, bring out their best strengths/skills and act as actual participants and not just onlookers. These initiatives are being implemented through:

### — Workshops

Throughout the project duration, workshops will be held with a focus on sustainability through Aquaponic setup and community/ household farming . The workshops are attended by the project team who bring and prepare Evaluation Forms and Surveys.



The bio intensive farming and marine sanctuary will serve as the livelihood arm of Para Sa Aton, to provide an innovative alternative and sustainable source of food for selected families, and with success, an eventual replication of more set-ups and thus a source of additional income to the community as a whole in the long run. This provides families with potential entrepreneurial opportunities. The potential of this alternative livelihood is dependent on the participants initiatives. It will also help the environment by understanding nature and by working with nature for the next generation.

**Bio intensive Farming**

A group of mostly women are learning bio intensive farming. Bio intensive farming is an inexpensive and easily sustainable organic agricultural system. They share 400m2 land in the center of the town where



they learn how to work together on growing vegetables to eat and sell. They learn the importance of chemical free food, using the land to its maximum without harming the environment, understand the importance of the ecological system that naturally exists, and it is an exercise in working together and enjoying direct results together.

**Marine Sanctuary**

A group of fishermen are rebuilding their marine sanctuary. The marine sanctuary is 72 hectares. In the process they are building artificial corals and experimenting with a possible immediate livelihood source. The sea has been greatly damaged by man. By going through the steps together and documneting this we can as a community understand what we are doing and how to live from the sea and protect it at the same time.



### ● Student Thesis

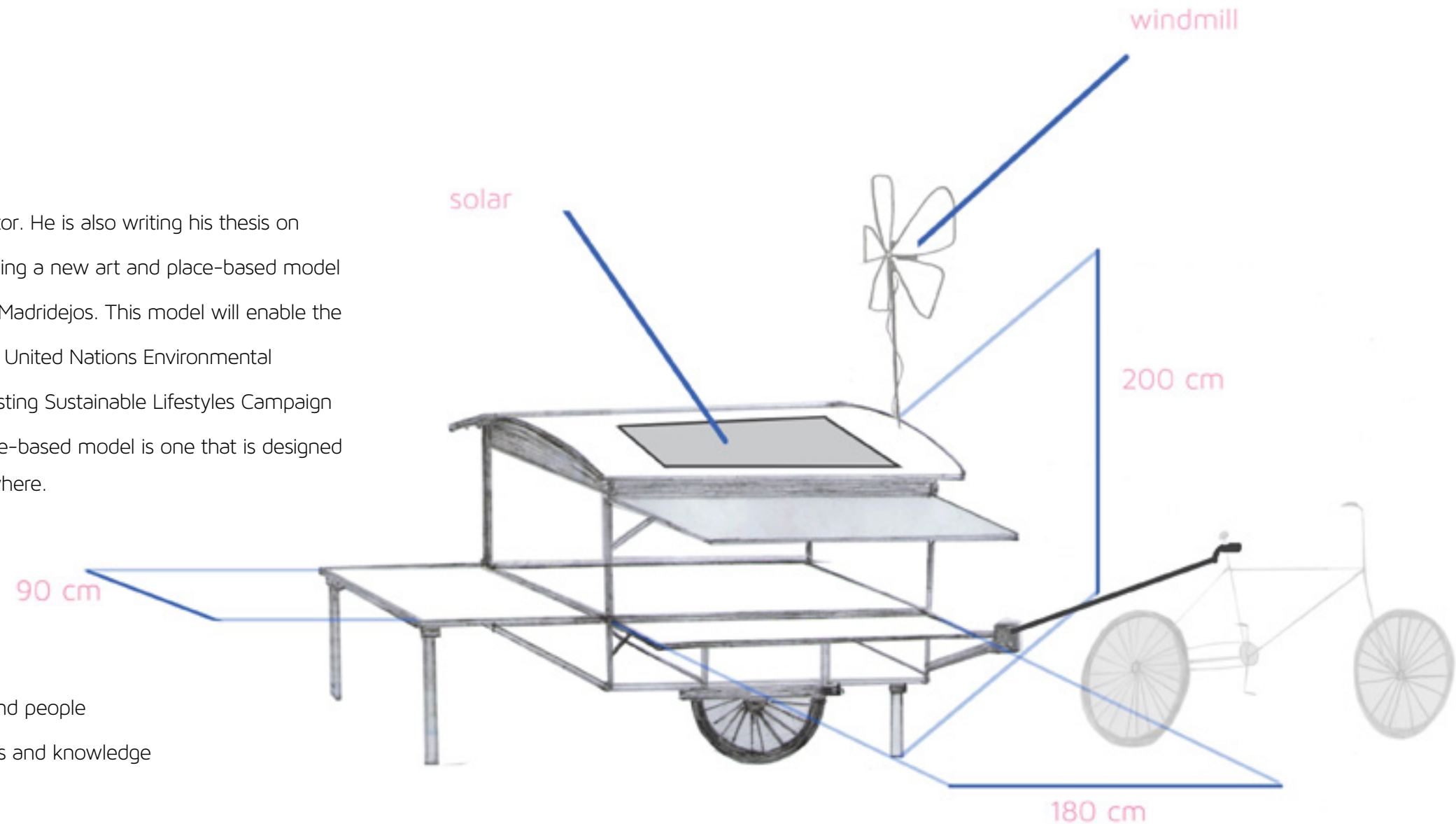
Anthony Jake Atienza is the Para Sa Aton project coordinator. He is also writing his thesis on using the Para Sa Aton project as a case-study for developing a new art and place-based model for communicating the Sustainable Lifestyles Campaign in Madridejos. This model will enable the Para Sa Aton partner and subsequent thesis subscriber the United Nations Environmental Program-YAFE YouthExchange to initially implement its existing Sustainable Lifestyles Campaign in Madridejos based on the Para Sa Aton. The art and place-based model is one that is designed for Madridejos but may also be used as a case study elsewhere.

### ● Mobile Working Station

The mobile working station is a mobile studio that makes it easy to share what has been learned by the bio intensive farming and marine sanctuary. Through videos and people themselves speaking it can create a platform to share ideas and knowledge with their families, friends, neighbors and community.

Students, scientists, environmentalists, artists etc. will have the chance o share knowledge, have dialogue and help create sustainable livelihood.

It's aim is to aid in long term solutions to the many issues facing areas such as Madridejos. By getting the community together and uniting them through visual images and starting



livelihood projects. People can be empowered and can help each other find their own solutions and be self sustainable.

With the partnership with the United Nations Environmental Programme-YAFE Inc.

YouthExchange workshops will be given to the community on sustainable livelihood and environmental responsibility. Locals with specializations will also be given a platform to share their knowledge and ideas such as the local farmers and fishermen.



# For Us



## New Media Campaign

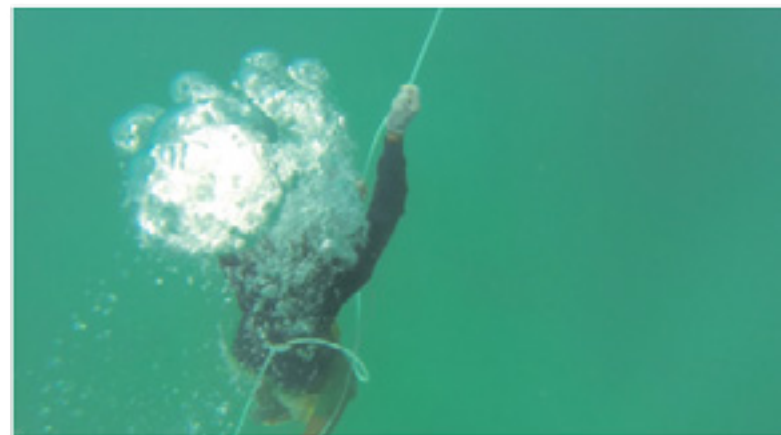
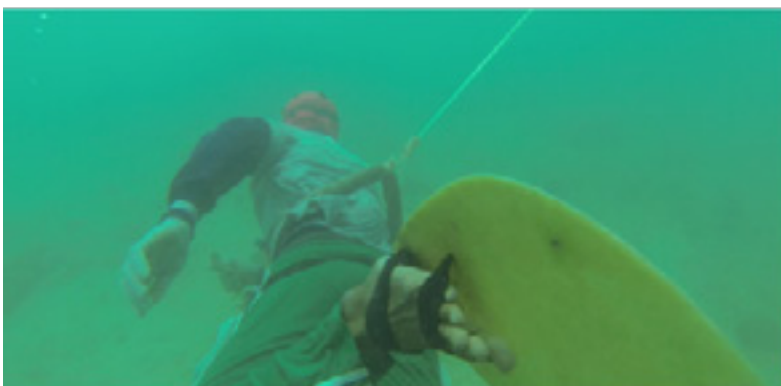
By using advertising tactics of popular western imagery to sell a product, we want to use imagery as a means for people themselves to sell their own ideas in the developing world and among each other. Art is a means to communicate - to tell a story. This campaign allows us to tell a story. Art often has had an important voice in the public sphere to fill the void left by politics. The campaign tells the story of Para sa Aton.

### • Video

Though Para sa Aton focuses on bringing solutions to the community together with that very same community, the heart and the glue of the activities is video art. Video as a format can provide self-critique and question oneself, others and the process of engagement. It is also a strong educational tool that communicates directly and can be used by all.

### • Website and Social Media

By creating a website and engaging in Social Media, the capacity to facilitate engagement and discussion increases. The progress of activities and the ideas and stories of the project and people will be documented and make its way to the website. As the island now has internet and people are using facebook and such, the website will be a good exercise in the use of the internet to its potential. The participants will be the one's to upload, share, research and communicate through the net.



## Video Installation

There will be an exhibit with the project team in a public space. The idea is to invite the general public to the exhibition where we can continue our discussions and share the project with others. This will be an extension of previous project activities, including the New Media Campaign.





## 6. our planning

Para sa Aton commenced in June 2013 and will continue until February 2015. By then we want to have achieved and have implemented a range of outputs.

- We will have our own food production that either supports single household systems or large scale.
- We will have a marine sanctuary that can be used as a model for others to follow and protect the whole region against illegal and over fishing.
- We will be going around the island with the Mobile Working Station sharing knowledge, experiences and ideas. Specifically knowledge accumulated from bio intensive farming and the marine sanctuary.
- We will have a fully functioning New Media Campaign that adequately reflects the spirit of Para sa Aton.
- We will have built a video installation with dialogues sessions to end the project.

The exciting part will be what the participants decide to do with new insights and knowledge beyond this project.



## 7. a few participants

merley duay

— wife of international seafarer

— mother of three

— has a little piggery with 5 sows







Lucille Araújo

she and her husband sell aquarium fish, chickens, spiders, etc

mother of six







merely mulle

— wife of a compressor diver

— mother of six





[www.gilubongsadagat.tumblr.com](http://www.gilubongsadagat.tumblr.com)

under construction:

[www.parasaaton.com](http://www.parasaaton.com)

## Partners

National Commission for Culture and Arts, The Philippines

Centrum Beeldende Kunst Rotterdam, The Netherlands

United Nations Environment Program/ YAFE Inc. / YouthXChange

Mir and Ryvi Home of Organics

Municipality of Madridejos, Cebu, The Philippines



