

Abstract

Many people are not aware of what coral reefs contribute to the environment. Just like tropical rainforests' role on land, they support a phenomenal diversity of species and provide irreplaceable sources of food and shelter. Reefs are key sources of coral and fish larvae, seeding the fisheries in surrounding areas. At least 500 million people rely on coral reefs for food, coastal protection, and livelihoods. Also, many coral species have been used in the treatment of cancer, HIV, cardiovascular diseases, ulcers, and other ailments. These are to name a few of what coral reefs contribute.

Being an archipelago, the Philippines is very lucky to be surrounded by large body of waters inhabited by diverse marine species, especially the Tubbataha Reefs. The 97,030 -hectare is one of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites and is home to no less than 600 species of fish, 360 species of corals (about half of all coral species in the world), 11 species of sharks, 13 species of dolphins & whales, 100 species of birds and also nesting hawksbill turtles & green sea turtles which are now endangered.

Unfortunately, the reefs being blessed with such resources make it a vulnerable target for exploitation. Early 2013, two major foreign ships was stuck in the reefs which caused to more than 4000 sq. m. of healthy corals. Even though Tubbataha is located a hundred kilometers away from the nearest inhabited island, illegal poaching and fishing also is continuous since the late 21st century. These are serious issues that could take away the reefs' outstanding value and more importantly, the livelihood of the neighboring coastal areas that rely on Tubbataha as the breeding area that seeds their fishing communities.

Given the global significance of the Tubbataha Reefs, the managing arm of the reefs which is the Tubbataha Management Office needs support facilities and a major boost in revenues to sustain its operations throughout the whole park. With this study, a conservation complex is being proposed that aims to help the current problem of the Tubbataha Reefs and its stakeholders, a bigger venue to cater a wider audience for its educational and conservation efforts, a new and more accessible attraction for a boost in revenues, and new technologies and facilities for its enforcement operations.