



The Philippines is drowning in pollution, and major water bodies, like Pasig River, as well as small canals and rivers are covered with plastic and waste. In line with this, we, The ProH2O group came up with the idea to take initiative and help our local community in our own ways, following the 6th Global Goal, Clean Water and Sanitation. We wanted to start with smaller water bodies in our area, and noticing the polluted canal that runs along our school, we had a definite place to start.

We are extremely thankful for being given the opportunity to participate in such renowned competition, wherein we were able to discover and pursue something we all now have such a deep passion for. Through our project, we were able to raise awareness about the current water situation in our country, and the possible ways to rehabilitate polluted water bodies in our area. With this, we presented our proposal and idea to start with small water bodies to the local government and informed local businesses about our project and the goals we hoped to achieve.

Our group consists of 7 Grade 9 students: Lea Gatchalian as the leader and Gabby Rosales as co-leader, Shana Lim as website and blog creator, Gaby Laogan as secretary of all events, Erica Cai as documentor and videographer, Tiffany Au-Yeung as our team treasurer and Arabella Ang as the awareness spokesperson.



We first raised over **£819.536** by doing a garage sale in order to fund our project. We also wrote letters to the local business asking for possible support they could provide. But most importantly, we've had many meetings with our local government to pitch our idea and share our process. They were very willing to listen, help, and collaborate with us.

We were extremely grateful to receive money for our workshop and food for our volunteers. Before our cleanup, we held a workshop, where members of **Asian Social Institute**, an environmental science association, taught us how to create "Mabuhay Balls" or "Bokashi Balls". We learned about these balls from a Grade 12 student we collaborated with, since it was her IB project. We decided to join forces with her, and it benefited the both of us, since we had a seemingly promising solution to these water bodies. Bokashi Balls are circular shaped balls made of mixed clay that when applied to bodies of water increases the growth of algae and dilutes silts, which would eventually result in clean water. By the end of the day, we made around **1800 balls**, enough to cover **1800 cubic meters of water**. Besides this, our local government donated **500 balls** to us. We thanked our volunteers with certificates of appreciation, and also thanked our sponsor, **Oriental Plate**.



We had our first water clean up in collaboration with the local government in our area and spent the day with over **40 volunteers** from our school. However, since it was an event that happened almost all over Metro Manila, over **1000 people** had collaborated on it in other water bodies around the city. We cleaned water bodies in our area like the Redemptorist Channel with other volunteers from





the event. At the end of the day, we were able to throw our Mabuhay Balls into the canal, excited to see the results. We identified the cause of the problem.

Our team is also planning to gather more funds through gathering old plastic bottles and newspapers and selling it at a nearby junk shop. We also gathered funds through making merchandise, selling it to our schoolmates. Aside from this, we requested monetary support from the local government, and other establishments Like **BPI** and **FasContrak Asia**. From this, we were able to earn **£296.97**.

Our team spent a total of **600 hours** on the project, which consisted of struggle, hard work, and perseverance. Through the entire process, we were all so happy to be able to make a difference in our area. Not only that, but people in our community started to believe that anyone, no matter the age, can make a difference in society. We believe that when the local government and people around us showed that they cared, not only for our cause but also about making a difference, it inspired us the most. It made us feel like we could do it because our entire community had faith in us. Letters and certificates were awarded to us in show of support and gratitude to our cause.

We experienced extreme hardships and challenges along the way. We often found ourselves stressed and unhappy with our progress. We all felt like we could have done more, however we pushed through and persevered. We used this as an opportunity to learn something about ourselves, about our community and about our environment. Through this project, we were able to realise that sometimes we must take matters into our own hands to see change and to make a difference. It was truly an amazing experience, though it was painstaking and an extremely difficult one. This project was extremely eye opening for us as we were introduced to the further extent of problems our country is facing.

In terms of sustainability, after clean up of the canal which runs beside our school, we will move to other water bodies. Maintenance of water bodies is a constant process. We hope to gain more attention and hopefully attract more organisations that would be willing to support our cause. As of the moment, we are in the works of collaborating with more organisations to create a natural filtration system for the canal beside our school, and possibly other waterways in the area. Although the competition has ended, we are still trying to do more for our community. The filtration system will help sort out trash, considering we belong in an area near the spill out, and our waterway is the runoff for a nearby district. We plan to further venture out into the filtration of water in our nearby waterways as a long term prevention of pollution. Through this, we will be able to sustain the water conditions. We are also currently in collaboration with another student led organisation, **H2GO**, which aims to bring environmental awareness in public schools around Metro Manila. We together with their team will work on having petitions signed

We are so proud of our team and our community. By setting up the most basic foundation, it inspired the beginning of an amazing change. The future is unknown, but all the progress we've made so far and the plans we have for a cleaner and clearer future makes the risk worthwhile.

