

## Week 1: Tulamben & Nusa Penida | Bali, Indonesia



### ***WHAT WENT WELL?***

I successfully completed my open water scuba diving certification and was able to participate in coral restoration site visits for monitoring!

Pictured are me and my instructor, Darta!

On the first day of completing my certification (which was *needed* for me to carry out the coral restoration part of my LiA work), I had serious doubts. Darta helped me realize that 90% of my doubt and delay in completing skills for certification was a result of a mental hesitation.

I was relatively confident going into this certification, as I was a synchronized swimmer at a high level for 10 years. However, a 10m deep pool is nothing compared to what appears as a bottomless ocean, and understanding breath control in a swim stroke is simple compared to staying calm while relying entirely on your oxygen tank—especially during an unexpected emergency or at an extreme depth, where knowing how to manage your gear becomes a lifeline. So, I was very proud to have overcome subconscious fears and complete the program!



This is me on my first monitoring dive, where I am scrubbing algae off an artificial structure while the rest of the team monitors growth and marine life surrounding the site! I learned that coral attach and grow best on clean surfaces.

*Sidenote: The underwater life we saw was insane! I will be sure to include pictures in my final LiA report.*

## WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE DIFFERENTLY?

Looking back, I realize I could have been more proactive in moments where I hesitated to join the conversation. Because my Indonesian understanding is very limited, I often chose to remain silent during group discussions or planning sessions where the team was speaking in Indonesian. At the time, I interpreted the language barrier as a signal that those conversations weren't meant for me, even when we were all gathered in one space for a group discussion. I defaulted to waiting until someone addressed me in English or translated something directly, rather than signaling that I wanted to participate.

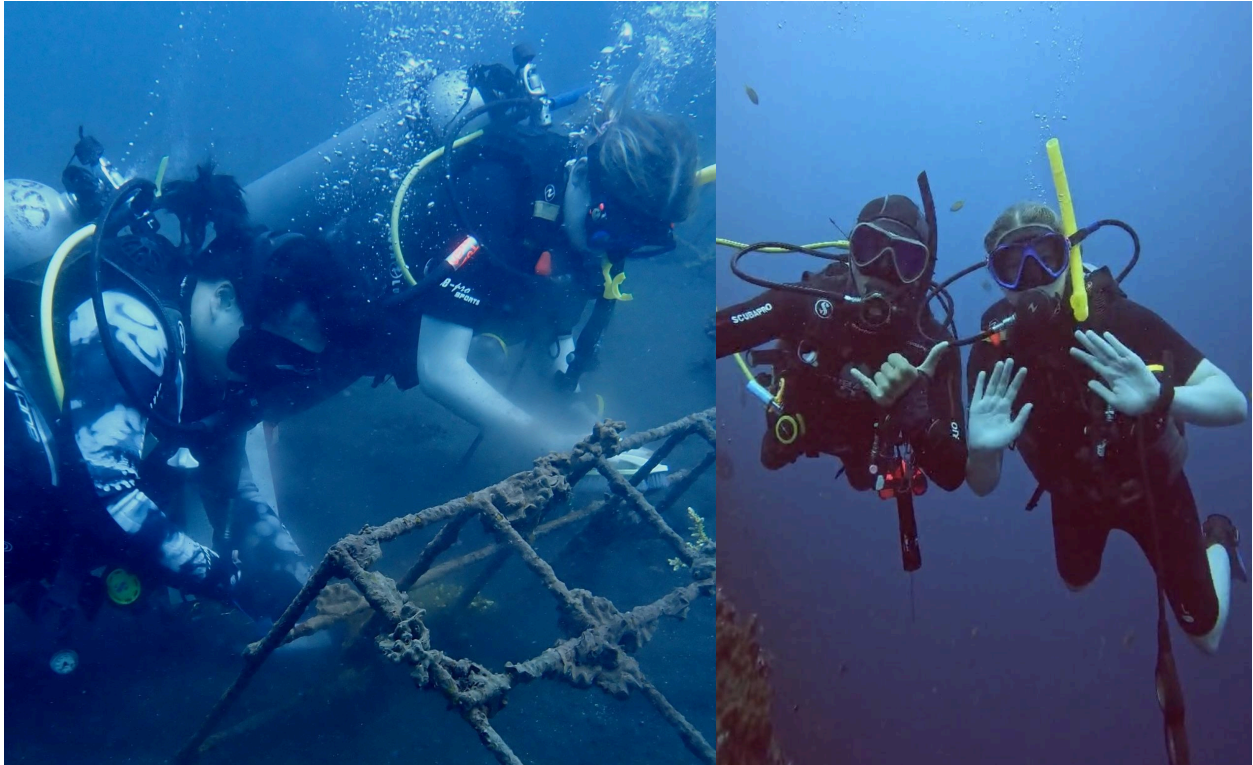


What I now understand is that my silence may have unintentionally reinforced a sense of separation or shyness, when in fact I was eager to contribute. When I raised this to my main coordinator, she reassured me that I didn't need to wait for an invitation to speak up; I could always raise my hand or ask for clarification, and that doing so would not be disruptive, but welcome!

*Pictured is the entire team, who have been so kind and welcoming toward me!*

## WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT MYSELF WHEN WORKING WITH OTHERS?

In my first week, I learned that effective communication doesn't always rely on spoken language. While I initially worried about the language barrier on land, underwater divers are united by something remarkable: everyone, regardless of background, relies on the same set of universal hand signals. It struck me how seamlessly we coordinated, checked in, and supported each other without saying a word!



*Pictured are me and Brigitta (Diverseas Founder) on the left, and Dart (my scuba instructor) on the right.*

This prompted me to realize that being part of this community of divers meant more than just learning technical skills; it meant tapping into a deeper connection with the ocean, with each other, and with the surrounding environment. Even in silence, we can find shared purpose and trust with our diving buddy. In those moments, I discovered a more expansive definition of communication rooted in attentiveness, empathy, and collective awareness. In terms of Laidlaw scholar values, it pushed me to be more **curious** about how people connect beyond words, and more **brave** in embracing unfamiliar ways of working with others.

## WHAT DID I Learn ABOUT LEADERSHIP?

This week showed me that leadership often starts with presence rather than direction. In environments I am familiar with (at school or work in Canada), I observe leadership as taking charge or offering solutions, but in this new and unfamiliar setting, I learned that leadership can also look like listening closely, observing how others operate, and showing humility. Whether it was checking in with dive partners using hand signals or taking initiative to understand planning discussions on land, I learned that strong leaders adapt their communication, earn trust through consistency, and do it all quietly. It reminded me that being dependable and self-aware is just as important as being assertive or vocal!



*Pictured here is me and Brigitta before diving & snorkeling at a site with manta rays!*

## WHAT DO I WANT TO DEVELOP OR FOCUS ON NEXT?

I want to focus on becoming more open and engaged in group settings, especially when I feel out of my depth. In my first week, I noticed that I tended to hold back from sharing ideas or reflections, not out of disinterest, but because I wasn't sure whether my contributions would be relevant or valued. Much of the work around me was grounded in marine biology, which is not at all my background. I come with academic foundations in climate politics and environmental ethics : )

What I'm learning is that unfamiliarity doesn't mean irrelevance; that offering a different perspective is sometimes what's most valuable. Moving forward, I want to practice contributing even when I'm unsure how my input will land. I would like to be in spaces having more confidence in myself, be willing to think out loud, and allow curiosity—not hesitation—to guide how I engage.



**That's all for this week!**

*(here's me on my day off exploring Nusa Penida — featuring my wide smile for how grateful I am to be here!!! 😊)*

