

the Bendum News

Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center, Sitio Bendum, Barangay Busdi,
Malaybalay City, Bukidnon

Learning to speak, read, write and count in the local environment strengthens Pulangiyan culture and ecology.



Pagnau

The school in Bendum is a source of great pride to the community and increasingly to the Department of Education. Like any school, it has its difficulties and part of the reality is absenteeism and dropout. While there are 145 children in school learning with the majority of them are residents of Bendum, about 20% have left the school to find a job or help in the farm to support their parents and siblings. Others have lost their interest and felt they lacked support from their parents.

Absences are common in the kindergarten and in lower *daweg* (grades). Students may not be encouraged to go to school, while others who are older need to take care of their younger siblings, or they are ill. Sometimes, during the harvest period of corn and ginger, some students are off from school to work as labourers in the field.

Bendum is a beautiful landscape yet people are living at the margin, where most of them live by subsistence. As we provide basic education in the Upper Pulangi, we are challenged to not just 'nourish' their minds but also establish an education that sustains their culture and values towards a more sustainable life in the valley.

Pagnau is a Pulangiyan term for to teach.

“First-Language-First”

Adagi Balay - Pondering quietly at the veranda, Ma'am Jonah, as we fondly call her, speaks about her appreciation of Multi-lingual Education or MLE.

Jonah has been with us for six months. She is coming from a history of teaching in a public school in Iligan City (1971-77). In the 1980s, she transferred to private schools to teach high school and college students. Later in 2008-09, she volunteered as a teachers' trainer at the Training Institute of Teacher's Education in Pakistan.

In her more than 15 years of experience in teaching, she is used to having materials and set guidelines to follow. Lesson plans are set while learning materials are readily available. Now, as she worked with APC, she humbly admits the struggle in not having lessons in place; visual aids need to be searched for and often having to be drawn from the life around. Her experience gives her newfound learnings and she realizes the value of using mother tongue as a mode of teaching:



“With MLE teaching non-readers is easy; very quickly all become readers. I appreciate MLE now; I see the

Jonah Galupo is not only committed to teach the Pulangiyan, but more importantly, she is willing to learn and embrace this new culture she is living with.

children are better and are able to understand lessons. I think it is true about mother tongue being taken first as they can easily make sentences and describe pictures. Accents are affected and learning of sounds and emphasis occurs clearly in one language and then in another.”

From Garbage to Garden

A group of elementary school children staying at the dormitory in Bendum are managing a series of vermicompost beds. Marzon Limbago, an OJT (On-the-Job Training) student from the Bukidnon State University (BSU) who is also a resident of Bendum, assists these children in setting up the vermiculture.

When we are feeding thirty people in the house, we generate a lot of vegetable waste along with other biodegradable material that has to be disposed well or soon we'll have a mound of wastes out at the back. Composting is the most obvious approach where in we have to be well organized so as not to attract vermin. We do this by mixing the waste with materials gathered from the garden, animal dung, and earthworms collected from previous compost bed. Vermiculture is an artificial rearing of earthworms; the worms used in Bendum are known as the African Nightcrawler, which are different from the local species.

The rate of decomposition and multiplication of worms are fast. The benefits are significant, if this practice is optimized. Earthworms convert kitchen waste, paper and other organic material into valuable compost that improves soil and landuse practice. Letting the earthworms decompose (recycle) our organic wastes, saves the children from turning over the compost to keep it aerated for many months. The areas around the house are also 'free' from organic wastes thus keep the environment healthy. With the significant amount of earthworms produced, added value may be optimized for animal food and not just a supply for the occasional fishing line.



Ricky, one of the Adagi kids, fills the compost bed with organic materials.

Bentela daw Sayuda



The youth engage in game of careful planning, teamwork and camaraderie. In the end, all 50 participants were able to cross the "spider web," safe and without going through the same holes.

It is not often that the youth of Bendum are given an opportunity to meet and engage with their peers from outside of Bukidnon. Often times their friendships and discussions are limited to their relatives and to the youth of the neighboring barangays. On 17-18 Dec 2010 however, the Pulangiye youth were given the rare chance to welcome guests, their age, in their community.

Bendum became a host to the 21 Manobo, Mamanwa, Subanen and Maguindanawen youth during the *Bentela daw Sayuda*: a Pulangiye practice of visiting and sharing information, aiming to provide participants learning through experiences of the host community.

During this event, the youth got to know each other through games and small group discussions. They talked about how similar and how different their lives are as indigenous youth. The Pulangiye youth also took them around the community, explaining the various activities of the people and of the two organizations assisting the community. The visitors got to know more about the culture-based education in Bendum. As most of Bendum youth were graduates or students of APC, they got to share their education experience and how different it is from mainstream schools. Visitors also learned how the people of Bendum take care of their environment including their careful management of their water source.

It was the first time for Hanifa Nanding, a Maguindanawen visitor, to see a forest and a community that lives by it. Having lived all her life in a 'marshland' area, she only knew of forest through books and pictures. At the end of the visit, she said she not only found new friends but also gained a deeper understanding of the relationship of people to the environment. This became real for her with her short engagement with the youth of Bendum.

Bentela daw Sayuda is the Pulangiye value of visiting and sharing information; it is part of the Bridging Leadership in Mindanao (BLM) project of ESSC. BLM is an engagement with the youth of Mindanao, especially young adults in Indigenous People communities that aims to help in the stability and sustainability of Mindanao youth's culture, the environment and their resources.

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