



BENDUM NEWS

The rains have long come to Upper Pulangi steadily these past two months. It seems like we have already forgotten El Niño that happened earlier this year when we last wrote. Much planting is underway with corn, ginger, cassava, and sweet potato. People are also planting rubber and falcatta, The nights are cool at 18°c, but days are warm whenever the sun is out. The full moon has been beautiful lighting up the nights and things are peaceful. There is still an excitement and novelty with having Grades 7, 8 and 9 and with so many youth from the collection of villages in the area.

With the rains we started planting bamboo, primarily giant bamboo, and have planted out over 500 thriving well-rooted cuttings. There is talk of being able to set up a bamboo preservation initiative that would allow the use of bamboo for long-term construction.

There was a gathering last June of people working for environmental action across Asia Pacific from the Jesuit Conference. It gave us incentive to energize each other's work in many initiatives of care for creation.

The Hulas training program brought back old and new faces, enriched relations and the youth found new capacity within and technical and social skills without. Their engagement with local government strengthens their sense of participation in society and develops their capacity as young leaders of service.

We have in addition to the teachers and trainers the great diversity of youth with two volunteers from Jesuit Volunteers Philippines, Wen and Jeb, and two Year of Service volunteers, Mayang and JB.

Relating the story of water in the village and how community has protected the area to different visitors gave reason for writing up the story to share with others.

DepEd has granted the permit to the high school and we are grateful for the acknowledgment and this helps us continue with the struggles and setbacks that we have.

Hopefully these different stories help us stay connected given the long pause in Bendum News. We thank you for your interest and support and hope you will join us along the way.

With prayers and thanksgiving,
Pedro

Growing bamboo, sustaining indigenous communities



The forest plays a significant role in the life of the indigenous communities. It is where they get food, materials for shelter, and sources of livelihood. They need to learn how to sustain their resources not only for the present but also for the generations to come.

In pursuing sustainable living, the youth volunteers under the forest management group are already in the process of managing resources in a way that sustains the forest. The group has bagged 622 giant bamboo or *buntung* cuttings. This is one way of making sure that we do not run out of bamboo because of its many uses.

There are three techniques in bamboo planting: bagging, bedding, and direct planting. However, the technique that gives most successful bamboo growth is the combination of direct planting of cuttings followed by bagged cutting that are well-rooted which can be used to fill in for those cuttings that were planted directly but did not take root.

When a bamboo is bagged and placed in a nursery, it is given ample time to root and establish a good growth before it is transferred to the forest edge where it also acts as a buffer. The time in the nursery usually takes eight months and during this time, the bamboo is watered and maintained. Only those that are healthy enough are transplanted. As soon as they are transferred, watering is twice a week when there is no rain.

As of the moment, *balakanas*, *dalamuan*, *buntung* and *kawayan tinik* (a species of bamboo that does not naturally grow



in Upper Pulangi) were bagged and are now cared for at the nursery.

With every bag of bamboo comes the hope that it will grow healthy not only to produce good quality bamboo for construction but also to protect the forest from degradation and soil erosion, so that the generation to come will experience the beauty and bounty of the uplands.



Renewing ecological life and mission

Our Culture and Ecology Center in Bendum hosted the Jesuit Conference Asia-Pacific -Reconciliation with Creation (JCAP-RwC) Workshop from June 06 to 10, 2016 with the theme: "A Call to Share Transformed Lifestyles for Action."

Thirty-five delegates from ten member countries of JCAP participated in the said three-day workshop. Delegates from Australia, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam were welcomed by the Pulangiye community represented by Datu Nestor Menaling, who held a welcome ritual for the visitors called *pandawat*.

Bendum's morning forest clouds inspired gratitude and depth in daily reflections on *Laudato si'*. Engagements with the children in their simple classrooms, with the youth in the regenerating forest, and with farmers on their degrading land reminded all of the complex social and environmental realities. The Tribal Council's message of peace and the children's gifts of *salay*, *luko* and *bukana* opened participants to "draw courage and strength from those who suffer yet live with hope."

For three days with no Internet, email, and cellular phone signal, participants from Jesuit social, pastoral, and education apostolates, the local diocese and archdiocese, and a local community group of teachers and youth took part in the local

exchanges and four workshop sessions – acting as one. The search for peace and human development in the Philippine Province "Roadmap of Mindanao" helped all connect.

The modest venue allowed for hearty and practical discussions of challenges in constructing new buildings and common experiences of sharing designs with ecological accountability, as well as the importance of a green building code that allows for simple yet functional infrastructure.

The delegates also prepared brief presentations about the ecological challenges and efforts being made in their home countries. This exchange of knowledge and experience was instrumental in sharing global strategies on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) of COP 21 Paris.

As a step towards nurturing a community of practice for reconciling with creation, delegates were able to come up with 60 action points for Asia Pacific, visually depicted in a JCAP map of ecological concerns, and ten environmental commitments.

Fr. David Andrus, SJ, one of the delegates from Micronesia, described Bendum as "a living example of what Pope Francis wrote in #10 of *Laudato si'*" – an inseparable bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace. *This story is also available on Ecojesuit.*

Hulas batch 14 completes skills training, youth formation courses



The two-month Hulas (training) program on carpentry, sewing, herbal making, and youth formation was concluded last July. Families of all the 19 participants who came from Barangay Sila-e, Mapulo, Nabawang, St. Peter, Miaray, and Sitio Bendum attended the closing program or *aldaw hu kalampusan*.

During the closing program, finished products created by the group of young women were presented through an exhibit at the livelihood center. There were bed covers, pillow cases, pot holders, shorts, and rugs. Ointments and *lagundi* and ginger syrup that were done during the herbal-medicine course are also displayed.

The participants then accompanied their family to the Dalepaan 4 to show the three extension rooms where high school students will stay. These rooms were constructed by the young Hulas men.

This Hulas program aims to equip participants from indigenous communities with technical skills such as civil works that they can use and share when they go back to their respective communities.

Further, the knowledge, self-realization and experience gained during the formative sessions are hoped to contribute to participants' holistic personal growth and even strengthen their cultural identity and their leadership potential as being part of the indigenous youth in Upper Pulangi.

This year's Hulas program focuses on hands-on carpentry, sewing, and herbal making training, with formative sessions on culture of peace, leadership, gender roles, and psycho-spiritual growth. The young men attended the carpentry training while the young women attended the sewing and herbal making training. –May Anne Krissanta Caduyac



Understanding environmental reality through field visits

Hulas program participants visit government agencies in Malaybalay and Maramag

From August 15 to 17, 2016, the youth of Upper Pulangi under the Hulas program visited government agencies in Malaybalay and Maramag, Bukidnon. The field trip aims to provide a better understanding of the environmental reality in the province and inform the participants on how the actions of people living in the uplands affect those in the city and vice versa.

The importance of taking care of the forest and planting trees was also emphasized in the lecture given by the resource persons from City Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO), Bukidnon Environment and Natural Resources Office (BENRO), and National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR).

Forester Carlos G. Sioquim from the BENRO gave an orientation on watershed management where he discussed how they are able to determine as from which watershed water from the uplands flow.

Engr. Noel Villela and Engr. Alvin Asuncion of NAPOCOR showed an audio-visual presentation on how the Pulangi IV hydropower plant in Maramag, Bukidnon operates.

During the open forum, the significance of a healthy forest



specifically the trees was reiterated and the importance of what the youth in Bendum are doing with assisted natural regeneration.

It was shown in the presentation how soil erosion caused the buildup of silt which already seemed like a small island in the basin of the hydropower plant.

In his parting words, Engr. Villela encouraged the youth of Upper Pulangi to come together and work with their community in rehabilitating the forest in Upper Pulangi not only for their generation but also for more generations to come.

Part of forest rehabilitation is the selection of tree species and diversity. Species and diversity have to be considered as only some species enable local forest to expand and regenerate. For instance, mahogany, falcatta and rubber trees have their place in the local economy but do not sustain the environment the way natural forest does.

With this initiative, the indigenous community in Bendum continues to contribute to the ecological services of the Pulangi watershed and sustain the forest.

ESSC hosts three YOS volunteers under the XU Peace Program

In collaboration with Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan, three young volunteers joined ESSC for 10 months from July 2016 to April 2017 to contribute to and learn from ESSC's work activities in Mindanao.

May Anne Krissanta Caduyac and Jose Bonifacio Sibayan are assigned in the youth and education work in Bendum, while Noelen JC Kristy Abaday is assigned to the Mindanao geomatics work at ESSC's Malaybalay office.

May Anne helps in the documentation and module development for hulas, a training and formation program for young adults, while Jose teaches mathematics at the APC Junior High School and

also assists in curriculum development. JC is learning basic GIS and other open source software that ESSC uses and is helping in the preparatory work for ESSC's five-year research program with the University of Namur which aims to analyze the social justice implications of intensive GMO corn agriculture in the Philippine uplands.

This partnership is under the Year of Service (YOS) volunteer activities of the XU Peace Program that continues to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in Mindanao under the auspices of the university's Social Development cluster.

Sustainable water as a goal for every rural community¹

How can we talk about the gift of water in a meaningful way today? We need to know the science of water and the stories that make it real. The water cycle we learn about in school: how water evaporates as morning mist and under the heat of the sun, how it rises and flows over the earth as clouds, how it descends in thunderstorms and drizzle. And then for a moment it seems to disappear, reappearing as streams and rivers, giving life as it flows to the ocean.

Our story begins at the Pulangi River in Mindanao, Philippines, a most beautiful and vibrant tropical landscape. The village of Bendum is on the east side of the river, on the land given by the ancestors of the Pulangiyan who in turn had received it from the Creator. This land is precious to the daily lives of the people. Logging companies came many years ago and built roads, which were good, but cut the trees and left many poor workers behind who also wanted to till the land. So much land was tilled that even the community's water source got ploughed up. Then the water collected by open bamboo pipes was not always clean and the children were often sick.

The community had to agree first where they would draw their water from, so that no one would dirty the area with animals. We looked at all of the springs where water comes out of the ground and the Kias-u Spring looked good. So all agreed not to open the soil above it or put animals in the area. We built a cement box over the hole in the side of the hill, about 3x3 meters and one and a half meters tall, with a manhole on the top and piped the water to four places in the community.

It was wonderful, cool, clean water and so near the house, getting water was not drudgery. The biggest difference was that all of the 53 children who had bad stomach-aches came back to school! We have planted trees around it that are growing well and sometimes enter the spring box to cult the roots in the water so they do not clog the pipes. No chemical, no cooling just great water on tap! Even in the last El Niño the stream never gave up on us and continues to support a micro-hydro giving electricity for the school and long-house.

Why did this work? People agreed there was a common problem and met several times to talk about it

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and seek action. The tribal council called for an agreement that the land to be allowed grow back as forest, technical assistance was found and the community dug the pipeline. Most important was someone learned how to repair the pipes and change broken taps (this happens all the time) and the tools were kept with the community to do this. If something goes wrong, the community talks again in earnest. We do not want to lose good water again. This is a community practicing by taking care together. And now, the youth are asking if they can do this for other streams and other communities.

That is why water is a gift, and a right for all people, it is not to be polluted or rationed, but should even in our cities be available free, not to waste but to sustain the humble life of all. From Bendum our water flows clean down to the Pulangi that others may use it, a gift freely received must be shared with the same freedom and joy.

¹If you read this story carefully you can open a window of conversation on all of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations that we need to give life to in our own actions and communities.

