

October 2015

Bendum News

Think Globally, Act Locally

By: Cherrydyn Miguel



Some of the Grade 7 students share their sketches of their understanding of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals

APC is taking an active participation in this global movement, particularly in SDG Target 4.7 on quality education which states:

“by 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyle, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”

During the UN Summit held in New York last September 2015, the world leaders agreed to adopt the post-2015 Development Agenda, consisting of 17 goals, which is designed to tackle the three pillars of sustainability: environmental protection, social development and economic growth. With the adoption of the goals is the hope that political policies worldwide will set their direction towards the achievement of these goals.

Through [Project Everyone](#), a UNESCO-supported global campaign, the 17 sustainable goals reached the *Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center (APC)* prior to its adoption. In collaboration with [World’s Largest Lesson](#), which provided various alternative lesson plans, the goals were introduced to the students. The lessons help the students understand the issues around the world, how these issues affect them and how they can respond.

There is now a shift in the understanding of ‘development’ from what has been portrayed by the mainstream society, which only profits a few, into that which is sustainable and inclusive. The students are seeing that their local efforts have global impact. The protection of their forest is valuable not only to their community’s sustainability but to the rest of humanity and earth as a whole.

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Lucía is a young professional from Spain who volunteered in Bendum last July 2015. She shares her reflections in [Ecojesuit](#) about her brief engagement in Bendum .

Sustaining Peace

By: Lucía Cervilla

The Island of Mindanao is often seen today as a place of conflict. The discussions are all about armed groups and encounters but little attention is given to how people build peace on a daily basis. We need to realize that peace is generated within people and not given to them from a power outside, and we need occasions to highlight and give substance to local peaceful initiatives.

Various traditions have emerged and it is clear in Bukidnon's history that the Pulangiyan, now often amalgamated into a broader culture of Bukidnon, has a particular tradition of peace-making. The culture has a process of "*pulang*" based on a willingness to sit each other and listen to the conflicting responses. Peace is often established by leniency and a quiet recognition, in the spiritual context of an ancestry that is shared and connects us with the same Creator.

We have suffered much conflict passing through the Upper Pulangi over the years. We have shared with all groups that we are poor and we have chosen a response to this condition at the margins without arms of any kind. To sustain dignity and basic rights, we look more to the education of our children and importance of cultural ways that existed long before even colonial powers.

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Indigenous Youth Education Towards Sustainable Development

By: Gloria Amor Paredes

For the Pulangiyan people of Bendum in Bukidnon in northern Mindanao, Philippines, their land is their life. This is why their *gaup* or ancestral domain is at the core of all their efforts to sustain their indigenous way of life.

Through a classroom art activity, the Grade 7 students expressed their views on the value of the 17 proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their lives and how, as young people, they can contribute. The students conveyed their hopes for a life free from hunger, inequality, armed conflict, and climate disaster. These hopes are accompanied by a recognition of their responsibilities to take care of the environment and its natural resources and to value lifelong education to attain their dreams and for the life of their community.

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Amor is a junior staff at the Environmental Science for Social Change (ESSC) and she is currently assisting APC in developing the high school curriculum.

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Teaching children about SDGs is essential so that they understand the challenges that confront them in their daily life. Giving them a voice is crucial in the process of attaining the goals for sustainable development as they seek to share their knowledge with other youth.

In particular, the Grade 7 students, under their Natural Resource Management subject, deal with forest restoration through the program on assisting natural regeneration. They plant seedlings near water sources especially to maintain the water quality.

They study the native species of plants and animals so that they can strengthen their local knowledge of ecosystem sustainability. These are only some of the many things the Bendum youth are doing to protect the beauty and bounty of their environment.

When we educate the youth in managing the ecological services of their land, we also empower them to become leaders who are capable of making positive change. In moving towards the sustainable development path, an active participation from the youth is certainly one of the most fundamental things we need.

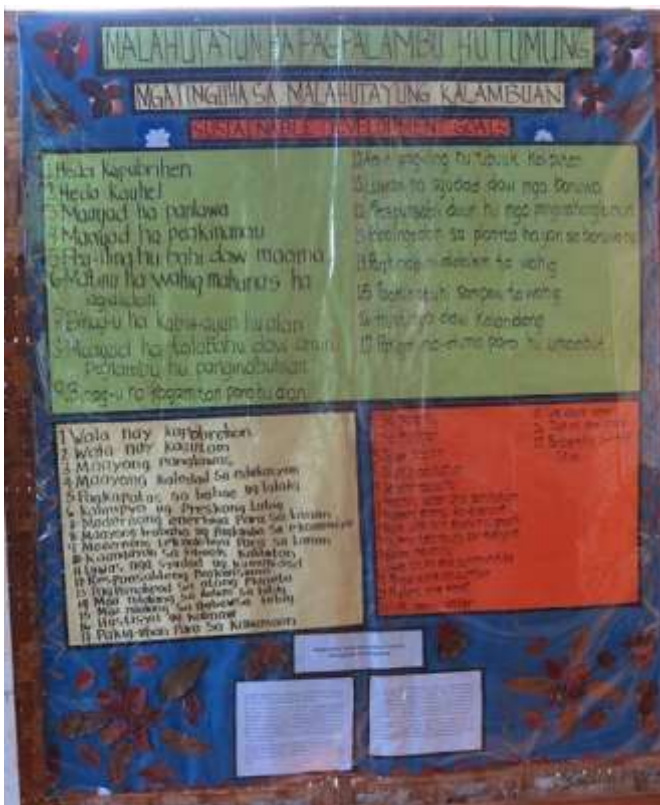
Bendum Reflection

By: Akihito Ikegami

What impressed me most in Bendum is the deep commitment and dedication of the youth to their community. On the second day of the fieldtrip, I engaged in planting bamboo with the help of the local youth who are very knowledgeable about the local bamboo and responsible for their assigned task in the field. I could sense that most of the youth were very proud of their jobs and community, and so they would not leave their community behind in their lives. This is also the case with the school teachers, with some of whom we exchanged our experience and stories. What struck me is that teachers in Bendum are so young that some of them are still in their early twenties but they all looked very confident and proud of their job, sharing their particular concerns related to the community. I understand the local teachers are driving force to bring about community development, playing critical role in teaching students community-based values and leading other community members to being united.

When we visited the local school in Bendum, I witnessed many teachers as well as students enthusiastically engage in their teaching, enjoying their jobs at school. Through teaching, the teacher must have felt satisfied with their contribution to the community development, which is probably what I was looking for as a teacher in Japan.

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SDGs translated into *Pinulangiyan* and *Bisaya* which brought discussions as to what is being done and how to move forward.

REFLECTION cont. from p.2

Although I graduated from teacher-training program in college, I did not want to be just a teacher as my lifetime job. I wanted to find out something more than teaching, with which I could contribute myself to the better world.

However, studying abroad about a various types of education in Costa Rica and the Philippines, I was finally able to realize the fact that **teaching is one of the most meaningful and influential jobs to bring about transformation in existing society.** My observation in Bendum made me reconfirm my passion and commitment to improvement of school education in Japan after the APS program.

In addition to the teachers' commitment to the community development, what impressed me is the development of indigenous education school on their own without much of the governmental support. In order to maintain the community-based cultural values, teaching and learning with their own indigenous language is indispensable because language and identity are intimately-connected with each other. As one of the elderly member of the community council spoke of, losing their indigenous language is one of the main concerns in the community we visited in Bendum. Given the globalizing situation of the Philippines in which being able to speak English is the bottom line to continue one's education and accordingly improve one's livelihood, the **social demand for appreciating indigenous languages has yet to be shared broadly in the society.**

My concern on the issue of language in education is not only based on rights of indigenous people to preserve and claim their traditional culture, but also for the significance of the first language as medium of instruction, which is proved very influential to students' understanding. Using the indigenous language as medium of instruction at school, more and more students would be able to enjoy learning, which would definitely help build capacity among human resource in the community, leading to accelerating community

development. As a matter of fact, in most classes I observed at the school in Bendum, the teachers were teaching challenging contents for each grade, but students were learning very hard and catching up with the contents. According to one of the teacher, students' academic performance is very well established. I assume that this can be mostly attributed to the indigenous language as medium of instruction. Another factor is probably the fact that most of the students in the school are boarding student and so they study even after school back in the dormitory house. Given the fact that though the boarding students are very young in their teen, they are staying far away from their family, it seems like very sad for the students, but the truth is that this boarding schooling system helps guarantee those students opportunities to engage themselves in the learning materials even after school. This boarding schooling system in combination with the indigenous language education play an important role in the community's future development.

The idea of school education is still very worthwhile for the community development.



Aki is a mathematics teacher in Japan and has a master's degree in Mathematics Education. He visited Bendum last July with about 30 other students from various Asian countries taking up peace and development studies under the Asian Peacebuilder Scholarship program of the UN-mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica and Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines. Bendum is a learning place for their course in human development and natural resource management.

PEACE cont. from p.1



A children's poster that sketches Pulangiyan's value for peace which is symbolized by the Jar of Peace (*Kabu ha Paglinawan*)

There was a period some years ago when many groups use to pass through the area and people lived in fear of what would happen next. Fear silences and divides people so we asked how we could find the trust again and live a freedom from fear. The young and the old talked about how things could be and the old process of *kalandang* emerged. We had often sung the songs of old "Kalandangan...."

This led the community to start the development of a peace policy. The Environmental Science for Social Change (ESSC), the Jesuit research organization accompanying the Pulangiyan community for the last 20 years, proposed to the Tribal Council the idea that the policy be developed as a formal agreement. The Tribal Council developed the peace policy and presented it to the community. A series of discussions, gatherings, and meetings followed that helped and led to the implementation of the peace policy.

The peace policy is clear in asking all arms to stay away as the presence of one armed group draws other arms into the area. We have so many

children in the middle that there is a heightened chance of a miscalculation and crossfire. We ask that no interviews are carried out by anyone without community presence.

In the school that the Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center (APC) operates, there had been a sense of insecurity amongst the children and teachers, and their fears and anxieties are reinforced by a limited expression of ideas. The peace policy restored the sense of calm and security among people, especially the children.

This process of developing and implementing a peace policy helped in Bendum for several reasons. Children can continue their studies without fear and parents are confident that their children are safe while going to school. Children develop a sense of rhythm in the school and in their dormitories in an environment where all relations are open and more tolerant, and the community lives together with a shared sense of hope. People know how to gather when there is the possibility of conflict coming from other areas. All members of the community are asked to actively share in this process as there are children coming from many villages and securing their safety is primary.

This peace process is accepted and respected within the community and also by the other communities and armed groups for the sake of education. As the community cares for the land and all life, there is a deep sense of humble gratitude that they can continue in peace and find integrity of action.

THINK cont. from p.1

As a further step towards education for sustainable development, APC recently opened its high school education program with innovations in the curriculum. Courses such as **Natural Resource Management, Local Economics** and **Formative** are inspired by the needs expressed by the community during their gathering, *Kaamulan*, last December 2014.

APC education maximizes the use of *gaup*, the ancestral domain, and serves as its primary source of learning. Through experience, they learn about *assisting natural regeneration (ANR)*, *agroforestry*, *organic farming*, *hydrology*, *biodiversity* among others.

“The grade 7 class are assisting the regeneration of the forest and planting seedlings under shade. They know this will take 60 years to come to maturity - their lifetime - for the generations to come.” Pedro Walpole, SJ



Solar panel installation in the Pangamo *dalepaan*

APC utilizes renewable energy to provide electricity to its *dalepaan* (closely translated as dormitory). A mini-hydro generator provides electricity to four buildings while two other buildings have solar panels. The set-up allows the students to experience an alternative source of energy. Given the limited source, it also educates the students to become responsible consumers.



A Forest Management class in Grade 7 to assist forest regeneration with their teacher, Kuya Arnel

Healing Earth, a living textbook from the International Jesuit Ecology Project, will soon be used as resource material. This material provides a unique approach of transformative education by putting together science, spirituality and ethics. It provides holistic formation that helps the students understand the value of simplicity and living harmoniously with each other and with the environment.



Students planting Citronella, a mosquito repellent, as part of their livelihood class with their teacher, Kuya Ed. The students can then bring home some to plant around their houses