



Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center

Bendum News

February 2019



High school students of the Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center (APC) main campus in Bendum went to the APC connecting school in Sitio Nabag-o to lead tree-planting and gardening activities and share their knowledge in forest and water management and organic agriculture to community members.

Indigenous youth action for Mindanao forests, farms

by Gloria Amor Paredes

Community spirits were high at Sitio Nabag-o, a village in the Upper Pulangi area in northern Bukidnon, Philippines, as *gulang* (high school) students from the Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center (APC) school in Bendum led tree-planting and gardening activities during a *Tapok* (youth summit) on 13 February at the APC Nabag-o school.

This was a different *Tapok* from previous ones because the event was also a *Bentela daw Sayuda*, a Pulangiyan practice of visiting and sharing knowledge or information. *Gulang* students shared with members of the Nabag-o community their knowledge about forest and water management and organic agriculture learned during their Natural Resource Management subject.

The morning was a celebration of Pulangiyan cultural values as the entire community in Nabag-o enthusiastically participated in the fieldwork. Fathers helped Grades 7 and 9 students as they plowed the area at the side of the school for conversion to vegetable garden plots. Mothers and their children accompanied Grades 8, 10, and 11 students in carrying the bagged seedlings and planting these in

different areas around the school. The younger children helped collect dried leaves for composting and listened intently to their *Ate* (older sister) and *Kuya* (older brother) as they explained the value of waste management.

The vision is a future under the forest canopy

In the afternoon, APC *gulang* students held a plenary session with community members where the students shared methods and practices in organic farming and in assisted natural regeneration (ANR), an approach in forest and water management that allows natural forests to regrow with assistance.

Gino Suldahan, a Grade 10 student, explained the step-by-step process in ANR from area clearing, to mapping, to making a management calendar. Grade 11 student Edward Walo talked about their technical subject on Bamboo Production and Processing for Sustainable Construction. He shared the cultural value and uses of bamboo as well as its role in improving the infiltration along water recharge areas.

Finally, Marjohn Linggay, from Grade 9, explained the value of organic farming. He said that while inorganic practices in agriculture

do lead to faster and easier crop production, community members should also look at the impact of chemical-based farming to the environment and to the health of people. Marjohn emphasized the value of organic agriculture not only to food security and health but also its role in the management of the forest and waters.

In deepening the inputs of the students, Jason Menaling, Forest and Gaup Management team leader and NRM teacher, added that Indigenous Peoples need to continue to reflect on their own understanding of the interconnectedness of forest and water to their cultural identity.

“Our landscape is connected to our source of livelihood. We need to look for sustainability more than anything for the future generation, not only for ‘myself’ but for ‘all’,” he said.

He further pointed out the need to slowly understand and learn natural resource management as a process of accompaniment, to live sustainably with other creations and as an expression of gratitude to the *Migtanghaga* (Creator).>>>

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Indigenous youth action...

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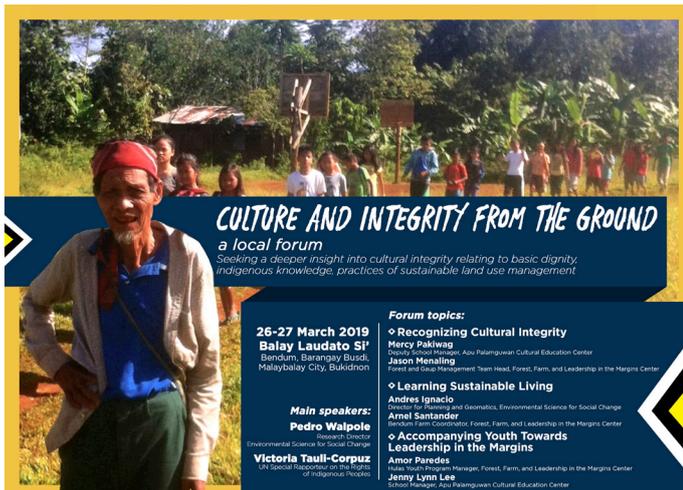
Afterwards, the *gulang* students facilitated a workshop with the community members to develop management policies and a calendar of activities for the new ANR and garden areas. The community members then identified key people who will lead the monitoring and implementation of their policies and scheduled activities in the calendar.

At the end of the day, the engagement between the APC *gulang* students and Nabag-o community members resulted in six garden plots prepared and 192 pillar species and 12 giant bamboos planted.

In their closing message, the students of APC Bendum expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to visit and learn with community members in Nabag-o. They shared their hope that what they started are not just the seeds planted, but also the sense of solidarity and interconnectedness in their relations, so that these may grow and be sustained.

In thanking the APC students in return, the parents in Nabag-o shared that they recognize the drastic changes in their landscape brought about by corn farming and how this has affected their land and river, and, consequently, their way of living. They are striving to build a better future for their children. With the new ANR and garden areas, they see a new source of hope and energy in seeking a more sustainable way forward that is grounded on *gagaw hu mga pigtanghaga* (love for creation).

The Tapok and Bentela daw Sayuda are part of the Hulas youth training activities of the Forest, Farm, and Leadership in the Margins Center, one of the programs of the Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center. ◆



CULTURE AND INTEGRITY FROM THE GROUND
a local forum
Seeking a deeper insight into cultural integrity relating to basic dignity, indigenous knowledge, practices of sustainable land use management

26-27 March 2019
Balay Laudato Si'
Bendum, Barangay Buda, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon

Main speakers:
Pedro Walpole
Riverside School
Environmental Science for Social Change

Victoria Taull-Corpuz
APU Palamguwan Cultural Education Center

Forum topics:

- ◆ **Recognizing Cultural Integrity**
Mercy Pakiwag
APU Palamguwan Cultural Education Center
Jason Mensling
Forest and Local Management Team Head, Forest, Farm, and Leadership in the Margins Center
- ◆ **Learning Sustainable Living**
Andres Ignacio
Center for Planning and Geomatics, Environmental Science for Social Change
Arnel Santander
Bendum Team Coordinator, Forest, Farm, and Leadership in the Margins Center
- ◆ **Accompanying Youth Towards Leadership in the Margins**
Amor Paredes
Forest, Farm, and Leadership in the Margins Center
Jenny Lynn Lee
APU Palamguwan Cultural Education Center

APC invites you to join the Pulangiyan community in **Culture and Integrity from the Ground, a Local Forum**, 26 and 27 March 2019 at Balay Laudato Si' in Bendum, Malaybalay, Bukidnon.

With this local forum, deeper insight into cultural integrity is sought as this relates to basic dignity, indigenous knowledge, and practices of sustainable land use management.

For more information on the APC forum, please send an email to sylviamiclat@essc.org.ph.



APC school manager Jenny Lynn Lee (third from the left) and APC academic coordinator Rhea Rabin (leftmost) with officers from the Department of Education who visited the APC school in Bendum

DepEd grants senior high school permit to APC

The APC school recently obtained permit for its senior high school program from the Department of Education (DepEd). The senior high school program offers the Technical Vocational track in the following areas:

- Home Economics (Dressmaking NC II, Tailoring NC II, Handicraft Non-NC)
- Industrial Arts (Electrical Installation and Maintenance NC II, Carpentry NC II, Masonry NC II, Furniture Making NC II)
- Agri-Fisheries (Organic Agriculture NC II)
- Animal Production (Swine) NC II
- Animal Production (Poultry-Chicken NCII)

APC is also currently seeking accreditation for its Bamboo Production and Processing for Sustainable Construction and Forest and Water Management courses, which are responsive and relevant to the needs of the Pulangiyan community in taking care of their ancestral domain.

Along with the granting of permit to the senior high school program, the DepEd monitoring team also visited the APC schools as part of a series of inspections done annually with non-DepEd schools.

The DepEd monitoring team observed APC's intervention programs for academically-challenged students, such as the literacy program for non-readers and struggling readers. The DepEd visitors also visited the organic farming facility as well as the bamboo processing facility, where the traditional and chemical-based means of treating bamboo for construction is taught in the bamboo production course. ◆

Related: Hulas youth obtain TESDA certification in masonry [page 4]



APC holds a quarterly recognition ceremony for students who exemplify Pulangiyeen values identified through the guidance of the Bendum tribal leaders. (Photo by Jenny Lynn Lee)

Keeping Pulangiyeen values alive

by Rhea Christina Rabin

The Pulangiyeen of the Upper Pulangi River in the eastern valley of Bukidnon, Mindanao, Philippines, take pride in their values rooted from the way of life of their ancestors. Children grow up to stories of how their people practiced *pakipit-kipita* (providing support to others), *pakibentel* (checking up on others to see how they are), *pakisayud* (coordinating with others and sharing correct information) in the olden days.

As part of their culture-based education, students of the Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center (APC) school regularly hear and listen, discuss, read, and write about these values, starting from the early grades.

While Pulangiyeen values are often referred to as “the old ways,” these are not just treasures kept alive only in memory and passed down to the next generations through stories. APC students also keep these “old ways” alive through practice and in how they relate with each other, with their family, with their community, and with their land and resources.

A recognition ceremony was held 12 September 2018 for students who exemplified Pulangiyeen values identified through the guidance of the Bendum tribal leaders. These values are key in the formative curriculum and are integrated into various subjects. The recognition ceremony is held every quarter to establish the critical importance of cultural values in sustaining peace in the community through the youth.

“Here at the APC school, the teachers recognized me for my leadership among my schoolmates and my respect for teachers and elders. These are important Pulangiyeen values – the capacity for leadership and respect for parents and elders,” said Angelo Loquindo, Grade 7, one of the most-awarded students in the first quarter.

“The Pulangiyeen are peace-loving and respectful. We give great importance and respect to our biodiversity, how much more then for the people?” Grade 10 student Gino Suldahan, a *dalepaan** leader, added.

APC teachers also visit neighboring villages to speak about these values with the students’ parents and to partner with them in teaching these values to their children. This led to the discovery that Pulangiyeen values are also treasured among other various tribes, albeit termed differently.



APC students study their lessons and do their assignments together at the *dalepaan*. (Photo by Raiza Javier)

Tribal leaders and parents appreciate APC’s effort to strengthen the values they hold dear and held a ritual to guide APC teachers and staff in ensuring these Pulangiyeen values stay alive in the youth.

**Dalepaan* is a longhouse where students live and learn to build a sense of community life and connect with one another through their ancestry and cultural practices. ◆



Hulas students underwent assessment of their technical skills in masonry and acquired NCII certification at the TESDA Bukidnon Provincial Training Center.

Hulas youth obtain TESDA certification in masonry

by Gloria Amor Paredes

For many young people in Bukidnon upland communities, obtaining a National Certificate from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is more than just getting another piece of paper to add to their job application folder. There is a sense of pride and validation that they are capable and worthy to be included in the greater economic system of society.

Through Hulas, the youth-development training program of Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center – Forest, Farm, and Leadership in the Margins (APC-FFLM), 10 Pulangiyen youth underwent an assessment for NCII Masonry at the TESDA Bukidnon Provincial Training Center in Hagkol, Valencia, February 4.

This is a major milestone in the decade-long history of Hulas as the program moves towards building stronger relations and partnerships with government agencies, particularly with TESDA.

Mindanao indigenous youth are eager to express their integrity and dignity deeply rooted in their relationship

with their ancestral lands. However, livelihood options accessible to them pose threat to this very relationship that defines their sense of identity and belonging.

One need not look far to see the massive change in the landscape. In Bukidnon, the forests have become corn farms or plantations. The surrounding rivers and streams are polluted with chemical-based agricultural by-products among other kinds of household and industrial waste. What do all these mean for the youth? Job opportunities are mostly limited to poultry farms in the lowlands, in plantations, or at gasoline stations in Cagayan de Oro city. These options take them away from their culture and expose them to serious health hazards and risk of employment exploitation.

The challenge is to enable the youth to access better and more sustainable livelihood options. This means capacitating them to acquire technical skills that are matched with market demands and are acknowledged by national standards and also, to enable the communities to create livelihood opportunities from within their gaup or ancestral domain.

Crucial to the response to this challenge is the support from TESDA. Currently, APC-FFLM is pursuing various processes with the said agency that include program registration for carpentry, masonry, bamboo production and processing, organic agriculture, and forest and water management.

APC-FFLM is also awaiting the granting of Farm School status from Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Training Institute (DA-ATI). Thus, the Provincial Director of TESDA Bukidnon, Dir. Kotie Bax, visited the training site in Bendum on February 13 to gain a better understanding of the learning context in the area and to discuss collaboration opportunities with APC-FFLM management team.

Among the Hulas youth who passed the NCII Masonry assessment include Hulas Batch 17 graduates Reynaldo Cañete Jr., Dexter Sagula, Tulmie Lagti-an, Lauro Compade Jr., APC Gulang (Grade) 11 Rasel Guinton, EcoAgri youth assistants Rolly Namansulay, Sean Banahan, and Arman Sagula with EcoAgri Farm Coordinator Arnel Santander and Forest Management Team Leader Jason Menaling. ◆

Plastic wastes in APC reduced

When classes started in May 2018, plastic waste littered some areas of the APC school campuses 1 and 2 in Bendum.

At the end of the first quarter, a remarkable reduction in the volume of plastic waste was observed. In the elementary school alone, litter monitoring revealed that plastic garbage was reduced by up to 25 kg in a few weeks. How was this made possible?

Formative teachers teach about the value of taking care of the environment while Science teachers explain the damage of plastic to people and the environment. Particularly moving for the students

were videos of fishes and birds killed by plastic ingestion. Seeing the photos of the giant plastic gyre in the ocean in the videos educated them on the ecological problem the world is facing. A video on the plastic waste problem in Metro Manila, specifically in the rivers and estuaries, was also shown to students and their parents as a graphic example of what must not happen in Bendum.

Students are regularly reminded to keep their trash in their bags or pockets if there are no garbage bins around, and to dispose later in proper garbage bins.

Parents were also shown videos

on the consequences of plastic waste, as they are also active participants in APC's efforts to reduce plastic waste. The school also asked for the participation of the community stores selling plastic-wrapped food and encouraged the use of paper or banana leaves to wrap food products.

Plans are underway for a community-wide campaign related to plastic waste reduction and proper garbage segregation and disposal.

The goal is to make the whole community aware of the plastic problem and develop local solutions to achieve zero-plastic waste and proper garbage segregation and disposal in the APC school and in the Bendum community. ◆


 >Reflection<


Coming into focus: a reflection on my week in Bendum

by Maria Raiza Javier, ESSC

The idea of spending a week in the mountains at the start of the year was thrilling for me, to say the least. I thought it was an opportunity to discover myself, a chance to recharge, to take breathtaking photos, to explore and to collect memories that will forever change my life. And though the reason I was going in the first place was for an institutional planning, at the back of my head, I thought of it as an adventure I was so ready to take on.

But after hours and hours of travel along bumpy roads, layers of mud caked between my toes, and the mountain cold seeping to my bones, I soon learned I was gravely mistaken. What I experienced was so much bigger than I am.

Camera on hand, I spent the week walking around the main school of APC and, through the stories of students and teachers, understood what they meant when they say the Pulangiyan of Bendum are people of peace.

There was Ate Mercy, one of the first graduates of APC, who went back to her community to teach. She now serves as the deputy school manager and teaches values formation to young students. There was Gino, a leader among his peers, whose reason for studying is to protect their ancestral domain. Harold, a transferee from a mainstream school who admitted he used to be ashamed of his Lumad roots, but now learned to take pride in his culture. Beverly, who wishes to be a teacher so she could then teach her fellow Pulangiyan. Edroy, who misses home, but has learned to love his classmates as his family. Inay Grace, who makes the best ensalada out of every vegetable imaginable, and makes meals not only filling for the stomach but for the heart. And the list goes on.

It is true that the scenery in Bendum is nothing short of breathtaking, and one can never have enough storage space to capture the view of the mountains, the forest, the sky. But perhaps, the greatest beauty it holds is in its people.

They are at peace with themselves. They enjoy the simplicity of life. They respect and appreciate the gift of Creation and know what is enough. They dream not only for themselves but also for their community. They embrace their culture, and work their best to make sure it thrives for generations to come. They understand what most of us in the mainstream society tend to miss.

On the night we arrived in Bendum, I remember looking up and thinking to myself, “has there always been this many stars in the sky?” Looking back, that might have been the thesis of this whole experience. When you are faced with such tremendous magnificence, you realize that you are but a speck of dust in this universe. That there are billions of stories other than your own, and you are all part of the grand narrative of life. When you turn the camera away from you, that’s when everything comes to focus:

“The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God.” (Laudato Si’ 84)

Bendum made me see exactly that. 



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For general inquiries on volunteering, funding, and partnerships, please contact our Quezon City office:

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