February 2013 Issue

The Bendum News

Life in Forest

Kinabuhi ta kalasangan

Working and learning together

Bentela daw Sayuda

integrating ecology and education

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'Opportunities for All'

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Duma!

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Welcome!

Welcome to the second in the new edition of Kinabuhi ta kalasangan (life in forest)—the Bendum News.

As we are now over two months into the new year, this issue 'Working and learning together' focuses on the many ways staff, students, and youth from Bendum have sought to reach out and share experiences with each other and those from outside Bendum.

This issue begins with the short news items from Inu ha Kaagi? (what's the story? - page 1) - in which students continue to assist in the clearing of broken branches, and APC scholars join with the Hulas youth to celebrate their cultural dances and singing with others from the community.

APC's manager, Marribel Porras shares her thoughts on this year's theme for the B***e***nt***e***la daw Sayuda (visiting and sharing—page 3), while our Curriculum Development Manager, Bridgit Cuevas writes about the third grading and her personal reflection on the importance of a curriculum that is rooted in the cultural and local experience (page 9). Our 'concept' series continues with the Adagi Ballay (Big House) , and what it means to staff and visitors to Bendum (page 10).

Also check out our new news and commentary pages, where we share particular thoughts about recent news and events. As the first in the new year, this issue reflects on indigenous representation in the Millennium Development Goals in the context of the Philippines and the Asia Pacific region (page 5), and the interesting points made by the Philippine's Education Secretary, Armin Luistro, on overcoming prejudice (page 4).

We finish this issue with a celebration of Duma (companion), detailing APCs recent visitors, and the efforts in Bendum for seeking sustainable science (page 11). As always we welcome your comments and feedback on this second edition of Kinabuhi ta kalasangan.

Contents


Students assist in the continuing clean up after Pablo

Pulangi youth and students from APC worked hard over the last month to clear some of the debris in the canopy of the regenerated forests which surround the Adagi on its lower side.

Inu ha kaagi?

What's the story?

The first week of February saw the end of the third grading at APC. The day was celebrated with Dulang kinadaan (games on the road) on the basketball court. K1 to Daweg G (Grade 6) were mixed among the groups working together to compete in the various challenges. Honour students from the grading accompanied by their parents received certificates. All pupils also received their grading cards.

The opening and welcome remarks by Marribel Porras (APC Program manager) challenged the whole school to work together towards the graduation this year. There are expected to be 12 graduates from APC at the end of this year.

The beginning of March saw the Hulas graduation. Although some invited sitio and barangay officials were unable to come, it was graced by hulas' parents and families, the tribal council of Bendum headed by Datu Nestor Menaling and Datu Manlabtikan of Ulayanun, Impasug-ong, Bukidnon.


A baloy basket holding the clothes for the Panginbunday

The APC's High School scholars and the Hulas youth participants shared cultural dances and songs with children and adults from the community last week. The activity was a chance for Bendum youth to share their interest in strengthening Cultural Identity in unity with other tribes like Adjawenen, Maasamnen and Umajemnen.

The main performers encouraged the audience to participate and share their dances, songs, music and dasang - an oral tradition that says something very significant about a person's thoughts and feelings. In addition, an elder from the audience had shared his N***e***n***e***ng***e***n –a story telling to children and youth. The community gathering was ended with inspiring and encouraging thoughts from Datu Nestor Menaling- Bendum Tribal leader.

Strengthening the cultural knowledge and understanding of indigenous youth

By Marribel Porras

The recent gathering of the different Indigenous People around the world for the Rio+20 Conference in Rio de Janiero[1], Brazil last June 19, 2012 called for an active participation of an empowered and self-determined Indigenous People. In response to the current challenges which push Indigenous People to the margins of society, and through which they struggle to live sustainably, the conference created the Indigenous People's International Declaration on Sustainable Development and Self-Determination.

In response to this challenge, B***e***nt***e***la daw Sayuda (visiting and sharing), a local initiative of both the ESSC and APC, is aimed at indigenous youth and community volunteer educators, as a way to provide a forum for the sharing of ideas and discussion about activities of youth of other Indigenous groups in Mindanao. It is centered on how the community identify the ways to educate and empower the youth so they can actively participate and respond to the different challenges that the community has experienced. Sometimes, these experiences compromise their basic understanding of cultural knowledge and priorities.

The APC as a school also seeks to visit and exchange experiences with other indigenous communities who employ the same engagement in education among its constituents. The participants seek to understand more deeply the extent of their engagement, how their school is structured and how this has impacted the lives of youth and children.

Students at APC

These exchanges of experiences especially in the aspects of ecology and education among the groups of youth and community volunteer educators are important, especially that the indigenous community's life is sustained by the proper management of the interrelationships that exist in their ancestral domain.

In this way, we can learn about the priorities of other groups and we may be able to share with them our experiences in Bendum, especially in the management of the forest, responses to disaster and risk resilience and management of culture-based education.

This is where our B***e***nt***e***la daw Sayuda is anchored. It is hoped that this experience will enhance both groups' learning, deepen the understanding of self and identity of Indigenous People, and support youth who are able to firmly stand and decide for the life of peace and justice that they deserve.

[1] http://www.tebtebba.org/index.php/content/220-indigenous-peoples-release-rio-20-declaration

Reflecting on prejudice

A change in attitude towards indigenous people

By Julian Watkins

At APC, the importance of a practical, culture based educational system has always been self-evident. Embracing our values, our past, and the journey that has brought us to the present, allows us to look forward and move with purpose towards the world we want for ourselves and future generations. A strong relationship with the natural world around us and its irreplaceable role in our lives and community values makes us appreciate it all the more and work hard to protect and sustain it.

These are values which have for a long time been lacking in mainstream education in the Philippines. However, the face of education is beginning to change. The national introduction of the K+12 system is attempting to bring these values to the fore-front of all educational systems. By focusing less on teaching the same facts and lists to every child in the country, the K+12 system looks to make the curriculum relevant to a community's needs, focusing on Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education, the importance of indigenous knowledge, and preparing students for the future by delivering in-depth knowledge, skills, and attitudes and encouraging discussion on the important issues of the day, such as Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Information Technology.

Recently, at a conference on Indigenous Education, Education Secretary Armin Luistro discussed his educational upbringing and how the prejudices ingrained in him as a child impacted on his life and his views on education moving forward.

"We are an educational system that has been a product—sometimes unwittingly—of a Western understanding of what we should know…. I was taught that [Cordillerans] were uneducated. That was ingrained in my memory for some reason or another. I don't think it was in the textbook, but maybe that was the stereotype passed on to me," Luistro said.

"I come from an educational system that made me memorize from my grade school years the fact that the Philippines was discovered by [Ferdinand] Magellan on March 16, 1521 … and that Lapu-lapu is a nice fish," Luistro said, adding that this was one of the many lessons that fostered prejudice.

"Little did I know that this singular memorized date had colored negatively my own view of the Philippines, my sense of self and how I have engaged the world even up to today,"

"This is what education does. It teaches us a perspective. It teaches us how to think. But if we are not critical, education miseducates rather than brings us to another level of understanding, knowledge and wisdom," he said.

Discussing the K+12 system, Luistro said that local

governments could enact ordinances that would compel teachers to use indigenous knowledge and culture when they teach science, math and other subjects, in order to correct the miseducation suffered by his generation. He said K+12 "is grounded on a conviction that Indigenous Peoples carry with them a wisdom that is largely misunderstood, maybe undocumented, and therefore unappreciated."

"It is our hope and dream our elders will be part of the education system. There is indigenous wisdom that will have to be transmitted [by elders] to students in our schools," he said.

By embracing their culture and their history and by learning from those who understand the land best, students can leave the educational system as more rounded individuals, with a greater understanding of where they come from, where they are going and the people and the world around them. Without these core values, a person's sense of identity can get lost, especially in the fast paced modern world. Remembering these values not only reminds us of our own place in the world, but of the close links that all people share with each other and with nature.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals

Progress towards 'Opportunities for All'?

By Katherine Pitman

With just over 1,000 days left until the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 2015 target date, the United Nations Development Program and its partners from across the world gathered in Colombia last week to share experiences and continue the momentum towards achieving the MDG's.

As part of its Comprehensive Aid Policy Framework to 2015-16 (CAPF), Australia released the first Annual Review of Aid Effectiveness (ARAE) in December 2012. This new framework also sought to assess its achievements over a three tiered process – reporting on progress towards the MDGs, articulating the contribution of Australian aid to outcomes, and measuring operational and organisational effectiveness.

As a major economic power in the Australasia region and one of the 189 countries who agreed to the 8 MDG goals, Australia's program for aid is tuned to five major strategic goals. These are saving lives, promoting opportunities for all, sustainable economic development, effective governance, and humanitarian disaster preparedness and responses. Through these five strategies, AusAID also addresses the MDGs. Its self-proclaimed flagship strategy 'promoting

opportunities for all' is aimed at achieving universal primary education (MDG target 2a).

Australia is the leading bilateral grant donor for basic education in the Philippines, and is contributing over $30 million annually[1] towards efforts to increase enrolment and retention rates and improve the quality of education in the Philippines.

Education for all at the global level – an indigenous perspective

At first glance the global progress towards achievement of the MDGs, particularly in relation to education, seems positive. Global completion rates for primary education rose from 81% to 90% between 1999 and 2010[2]. The youth literacy rate grew from 84% to 90% globally over the same period.

However, it is estimated that 61 million children of primary school age are out of school globally[2], 20 million of which are in the Asia-pacific region[3]. Retention and completion rates of elementary education are a major factor in the Asia-pacific region, with approximately 86% of students in Indonesia, and approximately 76% of students in the Philippines reaching grade 6[4].

The MDG approach has received criticism from

AusAID assessment of the Philippines' progress against the MDG's.

Indigenous Peoples' groups, who have expressed concern about the absence of indigenous experience in discussions about poverty reduction processes[5], despite the fact that Indigenous People make up 15% of the world's poor whilst only accounting for 5% of the world's population, and one third of the world's 900 million rural people who are extremely poor[6].

The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

[1] http://www.ausaid.gov.au/countries/eastasia/philippines/Pages/education.aspx

[2] AusAID *2011-2012 Annual Review of Aid Effectiveness, December 2012*, registration number 2012-05.

[3] Howes, S. and Davies, R. (2013) *AusAID's First Annual Review of Aid Effectiveness – is our aid program really that good?* Development Policy Blog. Found, 3/5/13 at http://devpolicy.org/ausaids-first-annual-review-of-aid-effectiveness-part-1-20130204/

[4] http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/indicators/SE.PRM.PRSL.ZS

[5] Health of Indigenous People's Regional Program (2009) *Millennium Development Goals Conceptual Framework: an Indigenous People's Perspective.* World Health Organisation.

[6] http://social.un.org/index/IndigenousPeoples/CrossThematicIssues/MDGs.aspx

Figure: http://www.ausaid.gov.au/Countries/EastAsia/Philippines/Pages/default.aspx

criticised the lack of specific monitoring of progress in relation to Indigenous Peoples, the preference given to monetary incomes over the informal subsistence economies which fulfil the basic needs of indigenous peoples and the lack of consideration of the indigenous way of life as alternative to the mainstream 'not only in the economic sense, but also as the underpinnings for social solidarity and cultural identity'[7].

Examining access to quality education and health care (goals 4 - 6), Indigenous People also represent a disproportionate sector of young people who have not completed elementary education. In Guatemala, 53.5% of indigenous youth have not completed primary education, compared to 32.2% of non-indigenous youth[8].

Comparable figures for the Asia-pacific region are lacking from the MDG reports, despite estimates that 70% of the world's indigenous peoples are in the Asia-pacific region[9]. Statistics gathered in 2004 by the EED-TFIP Network show that in the Philippines only 53% of indigenous adolescents have completed primary education[10], compared to the national average of 95%[11].

In response the 2008 the UNDP published guidelines which aimed to mainstream Indigenous People's issues, including a framework for a human rights based and culturally sensitive approach to development[12]. The UNDP's MDG website also describes the efforts made to address tenurial security of indigenous people's communities in the Philippines as part of its strategy to reduce poverty[13].

AusAID reporting in the context of the Philippines

In its Thematic Strategy for Opportunities for All 2011 (TS), AusAID states that 'education makes a significant difference to improving equity, health, empowering women, governance and sustainable development'[14]. Indeed, as part of the CAPF policy Australia has sought to set standards for aid predictability, transparency and accountability[15], while increasing its budget from 4.8 billion to 7.7 billion during the period 2011-12 to 2014-15[16]. However, while both the CAPF and TS documents allude to incidence of poverty among indigenous people, there is no direct acknowledgement or commitment to an approach which seeks to either directly address or monitor the indigenous experience in relation to AusAID poverty reduction strategies.

[7] Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2006) *Report of the International Expert Group Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, Indigenous Participation and Good Governance.* UN Economic and Social Council. Found, 3/7/13 at http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/274/66/PDF/N0627466.pdf?OpenElement

[8] http://social.un.org/index/IndigenousPeoples/CrossThematicIssues/MDGs.aspx

[9] http://www.ifad.org/english/indigenous/index.htm

[9] http://www.ifad.org/english/indigenous/index.htm

[10] http://www.ifad.org/english/indigenous/pub/documents/tnotes/philippines.pdf

[11] http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.CMPT.ZS?page=1

[12] United nations Development Group (2008) *Guidelines on Indigenous People's Issues.* Found, 3/7/13 at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/docs/guidelines.pdf

[13] http://www.undp.org.ph/?link=9 12

[14] http://www.ausaid.gov.au/aidissues/Documents/thematic-strategies/education-strategy.pdf

[15] http://www.ausaid.gov.au/about/Documents/capf.pdf

[16] http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2012/bc_mr_120508a.html

Despite these shortcomings, the Philippines in cooperation with AusAID has a number of education initiatives which seek to address MDG goal 2, address AusAID's strategy which aims to strengthen systems of governance and service delivery[3] and develop systems which 'recognise distinct indigenous identities and the multicultural nature of the state'[12]. These initiatives are the Philippine Social Protection Initiative, the Basic Education Sector Reform – Support for Philippine Basic Education Reforms (BESR-SPHERE), Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM) (focussed on the Autonomous region of Muslim Mindanao - ARMM), and the Philippine response to Indigenous and Muslim Education (PRIME).

BEAM has supported 221 schools in Mindanao to introduce Kindergarten curriculum with Islamic values, and 25 Madaris schools to introduce peace education modules in conflict affected areas of Mindanao, while PRIME is aimed at improving access to quality education in regions with the lowest education indicators[1].

Unfortunately the most up to date MDG reports show enrolment and attendance rates continue to be lowest among rural, poor and conflict affected areas[2]. Despite high figures for enrolment in ARMM (99.9%[17]), Mindanao has the lowest figures for continued attendance (cohort survival rate) of elementary school within the country, with the lowest in ARMM at 40.8%, followed by regions 9, 11 and 12[17].

It is unsurprising then, that ARAE, while receiving praise as a signal of AusAID's commitment to be more accountable and transparent, has also been critiqued for its failure to provide critical and detailed information about AusAID's operational and organisational effectiveness, both at country and program levels[3].The information provided is at highly aggregated levels and gives no breadth to the importance of qualitative efforts to building the capacity of partners to deliver qualitative results and improvements. Even AusAID's Annual Review, released in October last year, while providing more of a breakdown in regards to country and sector initiatives, includes no mention or monitoring of the impact on different sectors of the population, such as Indigenous Peoples.

The Philippines are unlikely to achieve all of the MDGs by the 2015 target date, especially with regards to education. While data is undoubtedly difficult to obtain regarding the impact on indigenous peoples[17], Australia's top 20 recipients of aid all have high indigenous populations who live predominantly in the regions where there is the highest incidence of poverty and lowest levels of educational availability and attainment. This should make the monitoring of the indigenous experience worthy of note in the annual reports.

Looking forward, the challenge for the AusAID programs beyond the 2014-15 period is understanding the relationship between poverty reduction strategies and strategies aimed at responding to the rights of indigenous peoples, particularly in regards to education.

[17] Philippines 2010 Progress Report on the Millennium Development Goals. Found 3/7/13 at http://www.neda.gov.ph/econreports_dbs/MDGs/4thProgress2010/MDG%20National%20Report%202010.pdf

[18] http://www.nscb.gov.ph/stats/mdg/assessment.asp

Celebrations and Sensitivities

By Bridgit Cuevas

It is now a month since we celebrated the end of the third grading period. Each grade typically consists of ten weeks of content and instruction and of teaching-learning which are designed to cater to the educational needs of the children in Upper Pulangi. Capping each grading period is a convocation ceremony where top students in each class are recognized for their achievement and extra- and co-curricular activities are held.

Children play Panginbunday

The students actively participated in the games which the teachers organised for the celebrations on third grading recognition day. It was easily my favourite part of the day seeing the students having fun playing a game that is culturally rooted in the nuances of Pulangiy*e*n farming practices. Newspaper dance, message relay, longest line, sack race, and *panginbunday* were played. *Panginbunday* is like playing Maria/Mario went to town but with indigenous costumes and props and it is going to the *uma* (farm) not the town.

These activities resonate with the on-going curriculum development efforts in APC grounded on the definition of curriculum as the sum of all learning content, experiences, and resources that are purposely selected, organized and implemented by the school in pursuit of its peculiar mandate as a distinct institution of learning and human development. Curriculum is not limited to classroom instruction. It is inclusive of all extra- and co-curricular activities supportive of and upholding the school's mission and vision.

This is what motivates us to push the boat out day after day. Alma gave birth to a healthy baby boy as classes resumed in January after the holidays. The basketball court was alive with fun and friendly competition mid-February during the third grading Recognition Day. The school stage was animated with colourful décor and the sun, shining through the polycarbonate roofing, lent an ethereal glow to the *dugo* as we gathered to take stock of what it all meant to be out there playing with, for, and against each other; and, what the games had to do with the learning content in a culture-based educational institution.

As a trusty carabao does, we plow on. A curriculum that is culturally rooted is inclusive of the distinctions of the culture it is heavily based on. Efforts along this line include the gathering of locally developed stories depicting Pulangiy***e***n daily lives to promote sensitivity to cultural values among the young. We hope to have this collection of stories published as it is in a way a documentation of the distinction of the Pulangiy***e***n culture.

Foremost in the curriculum development efforts being undertaken is the enhancement of curriculum content and instruction as laid out on the curriculum guides and syllabi. It is undeniably a delicate balancing act - updating curriculum content in response to the pervasive challenges in the sustenance and protraction of Pulangiy***e***n culture, values, and belief systems is being done in conjunction with fulfilling at least the national minimum basic education requirement.

We are currently in the thick of preparations for the coming end of the school year. Daw***e***g G will take the DepEd National Achievement Test next week. Subject teachers in English, Filipino, HEKASI, Science, and Math are going the extra mile conducting reviews and practice tests. The following week will be for preparations for the final exam and consequent class reviews. The teachers take all this in their stride, along side the classroom observations this week; the children's joy in learning is evident in their carefree laughter.

Adagi Balay

This is the center for welcoming, sharing, appreciating and blessing. The cultural concept of Adagi Balay is a place for important gathering (amul-amul). The Tribal Council meet to discuss important concerns affecting relationships.

For the staff and those coming from culturally different communities, this is a home where we humble ourselves to experience and recognize the significance these basic realities. How it provides a meaningful impact to us as a person to our family, to our colleagues to this institution and to the society.

Adagi balay is located within the forest and it continuously connects with it through the use of space shared with forest. It is a center for diverse experiences; children play, learn and eat together with staff, while the evening brings dancing and reflection. We are sometimes graced with sight of Hornbills who move along the edge of the forest line, while swifts play around in the evenings, and moths and bats visit at night, and we can observe the fireflies in the trees.

As we stay, we realized that we are actively involved with the Adagi kids. We greet them in the morning, we reach out to them during their studies at night and we celebrate with them the learning of the day's lessons from failures and successes. This gives us a meaningful experience with Adagi Balay.

Adagi balay's calmness allows us to seek for the real meaning of who we are and appreciate what we do for others. When we stay here, we realize the importance of other people in our life's discernment and commitment.

Seeking sustainable science

By Katherine Pitman

Bendum is becoming known as a place in which people from across society can ground their understanding of community-based environmental management, seeking a greater sustainability that can be shared by all through the development of a ''science for social change'.

Staff from APC and ESSC were host to Jesuit Social Service's CEO Julie Edwards and architect Clinton Murray and his colleagues, who visited Bendum in January. This meeting was part of the on-going relationship of support and networking between ESSC and Jesuit Social Services.

The time in Bendum was spent discussing the emerging centers in the Asia-Pacific region where groups have sought space to achieve a more integrated learning and sense of the sacred.

Speaking from my own experience, there is something which sparks within the individual when confronted with new, beautiful and different landscapes. The forest is a place where there is time to be quiet and reflect; we leave the city to be able to breathe and take stock of our lives. By embracing experiences where there is time to connect with landscape and environment, we are also reminded of our place as part of the environment rather than existing external to it, and something about the value of a simpler lifestyle is reminded to us.

There is a move in society to respond to these lessons and experiences. Sustainable science seeks to examine not only the scientific properties of an ecologically sound human presence on land, but also seeks to develop the ethical principles, policies and procedures which will allow the realisation of such a vision.

Reflecting on these discussions, Pedro Walpole shared his thoughts:

"ESSC is increasingly organising more structured learning for its partners and doing this is an exploratory form with the community of Bendum. The concept that has emerged is based on the need to develop an integrated learning centre organised for groups across Mindanao, and some focused engagements from Asia and Europe.

The Pantaron mountain range

The intention is to create a place that can be used as a convergence point—for people, ideas, and experiences—that allows space for personal learning and reflection. The integrated knowledge systems focus on several areas: culture, ecology, science, and spirituality. Such a centre provides a sense of unity while allowing the expression of diversity in experience. Furthermore, it hopes to provide a venue where interests can be combined, values recognised, and needs and responsibilities shared."

It is a space for a commitment to the youth that reflects their will to respond and engage with their communities and environment, and to integrate this with the different programs. Youth can better understand their roles as effective managers of the rich resources found in their ancestral domain, and through this seek a lifestyle which provides for future generations.

Similarly, the integration of youth and visitor's learning allows for both groups to gain a fresh and renewed approach to sustainable science; engaging concerns from a basis of gratitude and through process of reflective experience.

As a central part of life in Bendum, APC has sought to incorporate Pulangi understandings of environment into its curriculum and approach to teaching. We continue to adapt and progress as we accompany the people of Bendum, and as the new sector of 'youth' – that is, young adults leaving school who are not starting families – emerges, this partnership with ESSC responds to the need to for the integration of sustainable science in learning, both formal and informal. In doing so, we aim to equip youth with the skills needed to become responsible leaders in the future.

Closing remarks

As this issue of Kinabuhi ta kalasangan draws to a close, APC would like to thank all those who have contributed to this issue.

Thanks to all those who have helped, visited and been in contact with us, we always welcome your messages and updates.

Our next issue will be coming out at the end of April, and until then we would like to share good wishes to you from the whole Bendum team.