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Bendum News

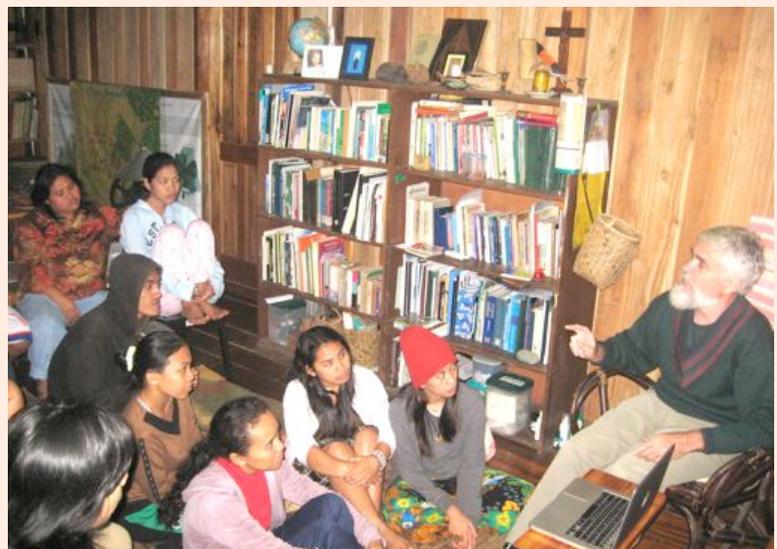
Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center, Sitio Bendum, Barangay Busdi,
Malaybalay City, Bukidnon

Pulangiye children are back to school

A new school year is underway for Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center starting last 6th June 2011. With 116 students enrolling across 6 grade levels plus the two kinder levels in the main school in Bendum, nearly 30 of these students have come from neighboring communities and are staying in the school dormitory. The extension school in Sitio Nabawang has 73 students for the kinder up to Grade 2 levels.

APC continues to use its Culture-Based, Multi-Lingual Education (CB-MLE) curriculum, which uses the local language of the Pulangiye, as the main medium of instruction. Filipino and English languages are slowly incorporated and used in class beginning in the upper classes of Grades 3-6. Subjects on culture (Sa Batasan Day) and traditional livelihood (Sa Panginkauyagana) are still being taught in all year levels.

This school year, three new teachers join APC: Juvy Ann Dueño, Jociel Tindoc, James Timbangan. The two women are from the nearby barangay of Zamboanguita while James is a native of barangay Kulaman, across the river. Two new volunteer teachers are also assisting in the classes in Nabawang. They are Christina Lucio and Nerlyn Balio. A volunteer, Cherry Mae Cabarros, from Jesuit Volunteers Philippines (JVP) is also with APC this year to teach English.



Meeting with the new teachers in Bendum.

The teachers and the staff had a series of workshops and trainings during summer, mostly provided through the assistance of Ateneo de Davao University (AdDU) Grade School and High School departments, in preparation for this school year. Ms. Eufemia Foller, a full time faculty of AdDU is assigned to APC to assist teachers in improving current teaching methods and strategies to help them in providing the specialized multilingual and culture-based curriculum of APC to the children of Upper Pulangi Valley, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon.

We can do much more in seeking quality life with Indigenous Peoples

Recently in the APC/ESSC office in Malaybalay, we shared on the Jesuit ministry to Indigenous Peoples. Many people are new while others have been long at the work; but the depth of human engagement and simply the love of experienced with the Pulangiyan community have moved all.

Grace Duterte has worked with ESSC for over six years and shared her insights during the discussion. Grace saw the neglect of the local culture and our role in alleviating status of Indigenous Peoples and supporting them in their desire for equality and integration with broader society. This is a whole new dimension to her work, which she is not previously engaged.

“I saw the presentation on responses to indigenous community needs and it opened my eyes; I realize that we can do much more in seeking quality life with Indigenous Peoples. It is a great challenge for me to find out how am I going to love the culture and understand further these people. By ethnicity, I am one of them, but in my thoughts, deeds, and acts are not as theirs. Getting to know their language would be my goal now so that I may be able to relate with them. Not even a single word can I speak and understand. My grandmother is a pure Lumad "Bukidnon tribe" but she didn't even bother though she had quite some time, to teach us about the language. Maybe that was the effect of society on her; she thought it is better not to even talk of her life and her people even to her children.

Over the past decades, these people are often times the discriminated ones. They are not given any importance or place; they are deprived of benefits that they ought to have. They are treated as unequal and so they do not have life they might be longing for, a life that anybody longs for. It is as if they do not belong to society; it has been too hard for them to attain, and it has gone too far out of their reach. They seem to be "kawawa" (unfortunate). Why have we done this to them?

I have come to realize how much time I have wasted in not making the effort of knowing more deeply what and who I am. I never thought of the people and the culture as important for me to know. Or maybe because I also do not have the will to know it since we were not taught of their culture, practice and tradition. If I could only bring back the time, when my "lola" (grandmother) was still alive, then I could ask her these important facts and realities.

Deep in my heart, I feel for these people. But I have never been able to understand the true value and meaning of their life, as I have never known how it feels to be one of them. It is not about who has done any good to them but it is all about valuing, respecting, understanding, and treating them the way we wanted to be treated. Pedro said that the work in Bendum is not about him or other Jesuits, it is not about the organization; but it is about the willingness and courage to do good and help Pulangiyan and others alleviate their status and with equality they engage in society.

Establishing programs and activities for the purpose of the community in developing their potentials, skills, knowledge, abilities and capabilities to be productive individuals – fully alive and sharing their lives – is what it is about. It is about bridging the gap between the IPs and local society. Thus giving opportunity for them to be emotionally, physically, mentally, spiritually, economically stable for them to be confident and relate with society; this allows the community to be also good citizens. With the close coordination, participation and engagement of different individuals, organization, this human development has been realized. It's a matter of getting involved and living within their means.

This could be the way that I may be able to grasp a better understanding of why I need to belong and be part of a culture. It doesn't matter who and what we are but how we can be of help in attaining the goals of human development. It is a challenge in me that I should take much more consideration of as a new beginning and examine my values and attitudes towards these people.

The institute has done much in accompanying them as they develop their potentials, gain an education and safeguard their rights. Despite our differences, our perceptions, attitudes, values, character, religion, thoughts and ideals, we could still be one working in harmony for peace, prosperity and equality with the intention of total human development.”

Eight points about education in Bendum

In the course of my engagement with the Pulangiye youth, I have learned that to be an effective “teacher”, I have to accompany the youth with their dreams – to learn and be able to act together and decide like adults. Educating the youth challenges us to engage sharing aspirations. To do this, we must have hope – hope that allows the youth to accept their selves and the environment they lived in with gratitude.

1. **“Goodness of today”**. To convey that the present context is good and not communicate it as if it were someplace that we want to get out of quickly. Each child is respected for who and how they are as they engage in the community, while their expectations are focused on the basic and attainable. Life is not too quick to change here, but to learn of “who and where I am?” in relation to the community we live in allows for surprising change.
2. **Development of concepts in “two cultures”**. Above average students will succeed in mainstream language, but this is a community school focused on children belonging and sustaining community in transition. Mother tongue is used by the local culture as the medium of instruction. Filipino is thought as a subject and though the students may be initially slower in speaking the language, they have a stronger learning commitment and endurance in high school.
3. **Teenagers are a new village group** that emerges with education. They want to act together, want to decide like adults. Traditionally by 14 or 16, they make life decision, now they want to keep and active participation in community. They need to learn to act out roles and actions; and the best way to do this is by staging events, collecting cultural knowledge, stories, and songs from elders.
4. **Education is for community** and not simply for top students to excel. With the use of mother tongue as the basic environment of learning community is involved in development of materials and being a source of knowledge – all knowledge does not come from outside – neither all development. More students go to high school as they feel part of a group and can survive better. Graduates return to the village as they feel they have a place and see a role to play in their community and what they have learned can be integrated.
5. **Identity and dignity is the primary strength** of what community shares with this young generation. They have a sense of belonging especially needed when they leave. They do not view themselves as less than others and carry with them self acceptance and the ability to share and engage with others.



Children slicing bamboo shoots for a meal.

6. **They have strength in using their culture**. Culture has a role in many community actions, more deeply accepted, like in conflict management and land allocation for better resource management. Knowledge of the local environment, resources and uses can be more responsible.
7. **Ability to organize events in their communities** and to give them roles and skills training where youth can excel. This allows them to have new level of participation.

8. **Hope that helps the youth restore their energy** and teaches them that sometimes things do not work, as they wanted. Hope that allows them to look at their self with acceptance and go forward with others.

The above points are based on the sharing of Pedro Walpole with the sisters and volunteers in Lufeng dormitory of grade and mid school in China last 29th December 2010.

“Galing Mason” awardee teaches Pulangi youth in Bendum

Julie Gallamaso is the mason instructor for the *Hulas* (training) program of indigenous youth in Upper Pulangi. He is one of the six, TESDA¹-certified masons in Bukidnon province.

Julie started his mason work in 2001, where he worked as construction foreman at the city government of Bukidnon. Prior to this, he worked as a construction laborer or helper in different projects in the province. In 2007, he enrolled to TESDA mason training program and got his national licensure after completing 300-hour work training, which include the construction of the Bukidnon Provincial Capitol building as his actual training-ground.

In 2008, TESDA-Bukidnon enlisted him as one of the representatives for the Regional “Galing Mason Award”² in Cagayan de Oro (CDO) City. During the competition, he completed a housing unit for Gawad Kalinga³ in Bogo-CDO. The competition calls for “perfection” in executions, starting from laying of concrete hollowed-blocks (CHB), to plastering, and flooring. Among the participants, he was named as the regional winner and became the first Bukidnon “Galing Mason” awardee.

Last February 2011, Julie joined the 2nd batch of *Hulas* team in Bendum. He teaches the youth with what he has learned and uses the TESDA mason training manual as guide for his students. Now moving into the 4th *Hulas* batch, Julie sees the value of improving the course by allotting time for the youth to learn more the theory and basis for calculation and estimation. This he believes will give them more edge and increase their capacity as they go back to their communities and try to look for job.

“Teaching the indigenous youth of Upper Pulangi gave me a new sense of direction. I studied masonry so I can go abroad – just that. I did not realize this will lead me to a more meaningful work that is to be able to share my knowledge and skills on masonry to the indigenous youth of Mindanao.” – Julie Gallamaso, 2008 Regional Champion of Galing Mason Award – Region X, Northern Mindanao.



Julie, with the cap, is overseeing the youth if their plaster is applied well.

- 1 Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is a government agency tasked to manage and supervise technical education and skills development in the Philippines. It is the leading partner in the development of the Filipino workforce with world-class competence and positive work values.
- 2 Galing Mason Award is an annual event sponsored by the Holcim, leading cement company in the Philippines, in partnership with TESDA and Gawad Kalinga, to treat the country's hardworking masons who strive to improve their knowledge and skills, show pride and dedication in their work, and who are responsible members of their family and community.
- 3 Gawad Kalinga is a Philippine-based poverty alleviation and nation-building movement that seeks to end poverty for 5 million families by 2024.