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Bendum Year-end Update

By: Pedro Walpole, S.J.

The biggest advance is another year of peace in the area and where community grows in stability and strength. We have not been affected adversely by typhoons while drought is still a possibility this year in the coming months.



As students graduate from grade school increasing numbers are entering especially from neighbouring villages where we have assisted education up to third grade so we had to enlarge some classrooms.

Events of the year have been the curriculum development in the early part and the teacher training program during the summer.

(continuation on p. 4)

APC Kalasungay: A Story that Inspires

By: Chiqui Aljas

APC opened a new extension school in Sitio Kalasungay, Brgy. Balagnan, Esperanza, Agusan del Sur in January 2014. Upon the appeal of Datu Man-isyo, the tribal chieftain of Sitio Kalasungay, APC opened Kinder 1 up to Daweg A (Grade 1).

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Conclusion for the 4th Batch of Hulas 2014

By: Arnel P. Santander

BENDUM, Mindanao - 20 youth from different indigenous communities in Upper Pulangi of Bukidnon and Agusan del Sur successfully completed the two months HULAS course on Carpentry, Masonry and Welding last December 6, 2014. The output of the students included construction of Hulas Training Center in Malaybalay City, crop planting and making chairs for the computer room.

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APC Opens Three New Extension Schools

By: Chiqui Aljas

The APC continues to respond to the indigenous peoples' appeal for a positive change through education. This year, the school opened three new extension schools in far-reaching villages in the Upper Pulangi area of Bukidnon, Mindanao. These appeals came from the communities, through their tribal chieftain, who genuinely desire to bring advancement to their people.



New two-room school building

Ranging from a two-hour to a two-day arduous walk from the village of Bendum, where the school mainly operates, teachers and staff, as well as community members brave steep slopes and snaking rivers to engage with and be of service to these communities. Thus far, all of these three new sites are managing well albeit being fledgling areas. This is being owed to competent staff and teachers and unwavering support of the management.

APC – Nabag-o

Sitio Nabag-o, Brgy. Busdi, Malaybalay City



Kuya Jundrey, Daweg A teacher, explains to eager pupils

Nabag-o is the next door neighbor of Bendum, being only separated by the Pulangi river. In January, the tribal council's strong and unwavering stand to have their own school in the community, despite being repeatedly challenged by the barangay local government, proved to be an inspiration not only to the community members, but also to the teachers in Bendum. At present, the community showed their initiative in sustaining their dream by locally sourcing materials to build their own classrooms. Now the 15 kinder and 11 Daweg A (Grade 1) pupils, being led by two committed teachers, already have a sturdy roof over their heads and will no longer be drenched in rain while striving hard to learn.

APC – Mindagulus

Sitio Mindagulus, Brgy. Indalasa, Malaybalay City

The Mindagulus site is the newest extension school being established. Formally opened on August 4, 2014, the site immediately enrolled 22 kinder and 22 Daweg A pupils. Some of these pupils have transferred from the government school located five kilometers away. Out of compassion for their little children walking 10 kilometers everyday back and forth, the parents decided to transfer their children to this that is right at their doorstep. Establishing the school has been very advantageous to the children. Most parents commented that their kids are now able to read



The school building in Mindagulus



and write after only one or two months comparing to a year under other conditions. This is sobering and inspiring to the two capable teachers who are taking care of the children. In addition, despite being new, the community members showed their initiative by ensuring that their children have proper places of learning. By securing locally-sourced light materials, the two classrooms, serve the children better and help them concentrate well on their studies.

APC – Kalasungay

Sitio Kalasungay, Brgy. Balagnan, Esperanza, Agusan del Sur

Getting to sitio Kalasungay is a challenge that teachers and staff need to go through. On rugged terrains and rushing rivers, the teachers hike, clamber on huge tree roots, and spent the night on rocky banks to get to their destination; which was never put to waste, because the tribal chieftain was very grateful that they would finally have their own school in their village January of this year after years of sending their children to Bendum, an area so far away on the other side of the mountains even for their standards. Why go to all that trouble? Datu Man-isyo would just say that they see the value of the education their children receive from APC that even distant, they would not hesitate to send their children to Bendum. Now that they have their own school, the younger children would have a better start at cultural education being administered by two teachers in Kinder 1, Kinder 2, and Daweg A levels. Currently, there are 24 kinder and 14 Grade 1 pupils studying in APC Kalasungay.

December 2014

Bendum News



*Water diversion jet
hydropower, Ben-
dum*

UPDATE cont. from p. 1

There was also and the community's interaction with the University for Peace students where the Bendum youth showed their aspirations and were encouraged by the visitors. The students from the University for Peace Program that focuses on leadership is a good experience for all as these very different groups of youth and young professionals have many experiences to exchange while together working on the land. While these activities give a new impetus to culture based education the holding of a meeting on "Transformative Land and Water Management" brought us clearly back to our cultural relations with the land. This meeting raised in broad discussion with neighbouring communities the impact of the expanding production of hybrid and roundup-ready corn for animal feeds. More research is needed to investigate the impact on food security, land rights and market practices.

Quietly moving along has been the Hulas program. During the year we have had 4 groups of youth learning different technical and psychosocial skills. This youth training and growth in capacity is developing an increasing number of youth who can engage in local government projects and in youth leadership roles.

The plan is to upgrade the program and extent of youth engagement in the coming year. This begins with further training in English language on the one hand and resource management on the other.

Bendum continues to be host to broader learning programs and ecological services studies. The Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific supports a program of Flight for Forest and this is thereby use employ the youth in role of forest management last year mounting over 2000 indigenous tree seedlings.

While much can be written about the advances made, they do not come easily.

The children have to struggle with many challenges and there are some unable to continue each year. The teachers have continued with great commitment and continue to hold up the ideals of community education showing the regional and nation offices of the Department of Education as to their dedication and capacity.

New teachers are past pupils in some cases, which is a very encouraging sign giving depth to the understanding that education is for the community and not simply self advancement.

Staff management has continued in sustaining ongoing work while at the same time taking up the strain of new initiatives like the curriculum development that have demanded much diligence in consolidating before coming to fruition. The youth themselves have also shown much commitment and initiative especially in the areas of water system management, reforestation and agroforestry.

The year ahead holds the opportunity for realizing the planning and design of further educational efforts for the Bendum community and communities in the Upper Pulangi that were laid out in 2014.



*Bendum forest
edge manage-
ment protection*

KALASUNGAY cont. from p. 1

In the past years, the children in Kalasungay community, including the chieftain's children, studied in APC, Bendum. Due to the long distance between Bendum and Kalasungay, which takes a day's travel on foot in the Pantaron Range, the students have to stay in *dalupaan*¹ in Bendum and only go home during school breaks.

Datu Man-isyo asked the local government to put up a school in their community. For a long time, the local government had been unresponsive and the chieftain had to seek other options. The chieftain directed this concern to Pedro Walpole.

As a response to the need for education of the indigenous children of Kalasungay and other neighboring community, Pedro, along with APC staff and teachers, visited the community and agreed to put up an APC extension school. The APC provided the teachers for Kinder 1 up to Daweg A (Grade 2).

The community contributed by constructing a school building and toilet facilities made from light materials. The school is catering to children of Pulangiyan, Higaonon, Adjawanen, Maasamenen, and other cultural groups. This not only redresses them the traveling to Bendum at an early age but both younger children and adolescence can also join classes at home. When the children finish Daweg A, they can opt to continue studying in Bendum or pursue other venues such as youth skills and formative training.



Kinder teacher, Ate Cecil, teaches spelling in Pulangiyan

Every month, APC Bendum teachers visit the APC Kalasungay as part of regular school monitoring and correspondence. The school has greatly improved, as reported by the teachers who recently visited, because the initiative and cooperation of the parents are greatly at work in the community. They also continue to make the area more conducive to learning by beautifying and directing runoff flows to avoid muddy grounds. Now, the school compound has become truly clean and green.

Like any remote area in the highlands, many valuable things still needs to be done in Kalasungay. The great value the community puts in education and the dreams they have for their children outweighs most of the challenges they face. They will continue to work for the education of their children and APC will be with them every step of the way.

¹ n. a place where people gather and stay for a short period of time



Kinder students learning to write in Pulangiyan

HULAS cont. from p. 1

Three females and seventeen males for this batch learned and developed their skills and values through technical training, formative classes and reflection sessions. A closing ceremony was held and attended by around hundred guests. The graduates performed drama, dance, monologue and sung to relay the message of gratitude and determination to pursue a better life ahead. Heartfelt performances brought tears to some of the audiences.

Jeneson Guinton, 18, from Sitio Nabag-o shared his words of gratitude for the hulas program. "*I am happy because I learned to write, read and understand numbers and distances by using tape measure,*" he stated. Guinton has not been in school for 5 years. He previously enrolled in *Daweg A* (Grade 2) at APC – Nabawang but dropped out due to lack of support. Jeneson is just one of the many youth who were given another chance to obtain life skills which will help them continue living a decent life.



Hulas Graduation Ceremony in Adagi Balay

The hulas encouraged the youth to dream once more just like Israel Menaling, 25, who hopes to become a youth leader in Bendum in the near future.

Parents were also amazed at the transformation of their children. Beyond having the technical skills, they were able to see how their children have developed the skills in relating with others, confidently talking to people, and being able to discuss concerns like forest regeneration and strengthening of cultural relationship.

Hulas brings hope, not only to the students, but to the parents as well. They have learned to not give in to poverty, rather, overcome it and dream once more. The ceremony is just the closing of Hulas but an opening to a brighter future ahead.



The 4th Batch of Hulas