

Life in Forest

KINABUHI TA KALASANGAN

Typhoon Pablo special issue

Welcome!

This is a special issue of Bendum news. It comes as a response to the many kind words and wishes we have received from friends of APC. This issue therefore takes its name from our headline article *Diary of a Typhoon*, in which Pedro Walpole vividly recounts his experiences in Bendum as the centre of Typhoon Pablo (Bopha) passed through the village.

In this issues we also include the other key events which have marked this December; the renewed expression of the community's will for peace and the forging of new links with teachers and community organisers from the Diocese of Ipil, Zamboanga, as part of APC's recent recognition as a centre for culture based education.

We welcome your comments and feedback on this first edition of ***Kinabuhi ta kalasangan***.

Reflection

As part of the last mass held among the staff of APC and ESSC, Pedro Walpole spoke about how many of the actives we hold in Bendum ask others to reflect on their sense of identity and purpose. With so many activities going on, it is important at this time of year for all of us to take stock and reflect on our own lives, sense of identity and purpose.

At this time, when students are travelling home, often on long and insecure journeys through the forest, while the community seeks to renew a dialogue for peace, and other groups remind us of what important services we protect as part of the land management practices in Bendum, the question Pedro asks is a poignant one. In our lives, are we searching for quality of life or quantity? In the search for peace amongst ourselves and in our relationship with the environment, there is value in identifying what it is that gives us a sense of prosperity and a good life, and to discern when we stop pursuing this and are just chasing the better life.

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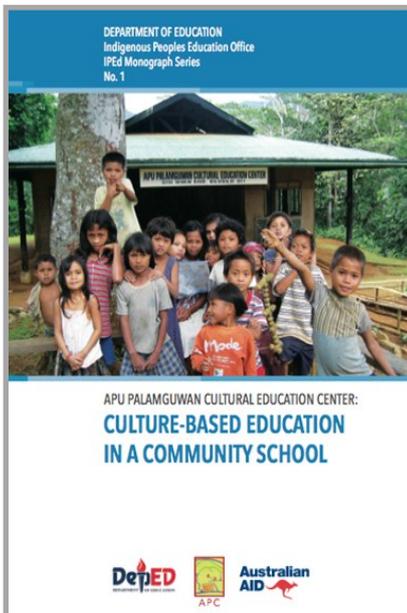
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Members of APC's board met this month, visiting Bendum in the wake of Typhoon Pablo. Mr. Robert Ansaldo and Mrs. Evelyn Clavo joined Pedro Walpole in discussions about the impact of Typhoon Pablo on the community of Bendum. They also visited the school, met new staff and visited the new infrastructures at APC. Discussions covered new developments in APC's operations for building management capacity and the centre's recent visit from the Diocese of Ipil.

Board members welcomed the upcoming release of the **APC's monograph on Culture Based Education** in cooperation with the Department of Education, which will be published by the Indigenous Peoples' Education Office, and will be available from the APC website in the following year.. Plans were also laid for APC's upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM), which will be in the New Year.



Mrs. Clavano and Mr. Ansaldo visit the school during their walk around Bendum.



APC's monograph on Culture Based Education, in cooperation with DepED.

Ino ha kaagi? *Whats the story?*

In Bendum this weekend Marvin Limbago, one of ESSC's Youth Assistants, and his new wife Joy-joy were blessed by Fr Walpole. Staff and students gathered to sing and eat in **celebration of their marriage**. We all wish them happiness in their future.

Staff both new and old **celebrated Christmas** this week. As part of Misa De Gallo, Fr Pedro Walpole held an evening mass for Bendum staff and community, which included APC high school girls welcoming all with a *dugso*. This is a dance with intricate footwork that begins by drawing in the calm of the moment, and ends in a crescendo of sounds, intended to dispel any bad spirits. Voices of the choir could be heard across the village, as all joined together to give thanks for life and the forest and to reflect on the value of peace.

Environmental Science for Social Change (ESSC) has also welcomed **new staff** who will be based in Bendum; Edwardo Campus is taking over Production Management, and Marlon Makilan is managing the youth formation programs.

APC was delighted to welcome **new staff** to the school this quarter. Brigit Ann Cuevas has already begun work as Curriculum Development Manager, and Kay Pitman has returned to volunteer with school. They also recently welcomed back Zarmin Garcia who returned to APC to teach science and take on the role of School Assistant.

Assistance from many friends has been used by the Bendum youth to coordinate repairs and replacement of roofing materials to those worst hit in the community. Ten families have been provided with corrugated sheets for better roofing, and we are grateful that from this sadness, we can work together to provide better quality materials to families than those available before. Thanks so much to all.

Diary of a typhoon

On November 23rd 2012, a moderate atmospheric circulation developed over Marshall Island, part of the Micronesian Island chain in the Northern Pacific region over 5,000km to the east of the Philippines. By 9.00 pm on the 25th, both the Joint Typhoon Warning Center (JTWC) and the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) classified the system as a tropical depression. It reached tropical storm intensity by the following day, and was named Typhoon Bopha (Pablo in the Philippines).

By 5am December 4th the typhoon made landfall over Baganga, Davao Oriental as a category 5 Super Typhoon², with winds over 200 kph and a well-defined eye. Public storm warning signals were issued in Mindanao on December 3. Storm signal 3 was raised over Bukidnon and schools and offices were closed.

By the 5th of December, over 800 people had been declared missing, with 620 confirmed dead. More than 300,000 people were forced into evacuation centres² as floods and landslides caused destruction across Mindanao.

The super typhoon's eye passed directly through Bukidnon, moving up the Pulangi River and passing over Bendum. The following is Fr. Pedro Walpole's account of Typhoon Bopha as he experienced it, together with the Pulangiyan community in Sitio Bendum.

Monday 3rd of December

The rains started during the afternoon planning meeting for Kaamulan, the annual cultural gathering. ESSC staff warned that storm signal

number 1 had been raised, so I decided not to push through with previous travel plans. I told those present at the meeting that a typhoon was set to hit northern Mindanao and we needed to consider what to do. In the previous year, Sendong brought heavy rains but not much wind, and this was going to be a different kind of storm.

The light rains continued with some breaks during the night.

Tuesday 4th December

By breakfast, the rains were continuous and Mercy, one of the local teachers, came to say they wanted to send the children home from school, as some had arrived in wet clothes. Information from staff in Manila reported that storm signal number 3 was now raised. At this point, communications ended. We were prepared to open the school where there was water and sanitation and to cook together in the outside kitchen by Adagi Balay³.

Winds began to gust from the north by 9am, and dorm kids were sent to study in the dining room of Adagi Balay. Soon, trees were cracking and though some branches came off, none hit the house. People from the village were gathering in the livelihood building because it was a cement structure. But because there were few rooms there and access to the kitchen was difficult, we decided to move people to the school.

By 10:30 am, the winds grew very strong, over 100kph.

The winds began to subside, and more people

¹ NASA (2012) 'NASA satellites see Bopha fizzle over weekend'. Found, 20/12/2012 at: http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/hurricanes/archives/2012/h2012_Bopha.html#1

¹ Relief Web (2012) 'Typhoon Bopha strikes the Philippines – CBM providing access to basic needs'. Found, 20/12/2012 at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/typhoon-bopha-strikes-philippines-cbm-providing-access-basic-needs>

³ Literally, "big house". It is used to welcome visitors and for community gatherings.

gathered in the livelihood building from the north and western parts of the village. Some houses had already lost their roofs. Fallen trees hit some houses, including those of local teachers and Datu's *tulugan*⁴, but there was minimal damage and no casualties. Behind the school library, a fruit tree had fallen, but the damage was minimal and the school building was still easily accessible from the front.

Power lines came down in a few places, although power had already been cut off from the local service provider. Rather than cook in the dirty kitchen, we moved the cooking inside, as the trees around the house were breaking up. More trees had fallen near other houses in the community, and I was unable to reach people as winds were rising again and roofs flapping. The returning winds started this time from the south, and I realised we were in the eye of the typhoon, and it was coming back to hit us again.

We tried to move more people to the school from the livelihood building; a few more had arrived. The path to the livelihood building was difficult however, as a tree had fallen on the power lines and the bamboo had cracked all over the path. There were no leaks in the dorm, but the children there were frightened.

The wind finally died down by noon, and everyone was out assessing damage. Many had lost their bamboo roofs, and whatever they had not bagged was wet. Most did not eat until past 1pm; rice was continuously being cooked and handed out, although a few had cooked their own food and brought it to the school. By early afternoon, people felt safer, and although they were tired they were easier of heart. Later, it became clear that many were not going home and 21 families set up in the school for the night.

On the way to the hydropower house, some logs had washed down the side stream coming from the road and the water was very red. Power from the micro

hydro system was down, but once the grill had been cleared of leaves and the tank washed out, the generator started without trouble, restoring power to the school and the dorm, where families from the village were staying.

That evening, people gathered at the school and enjoyed being together, despite the circumstances. We cooked rice for about 70 that evening, but it did not seem to be enough. We also had a mass in the school; people sang and were generally at ease for the night, as the situation was no longer threatening.

Wednesday 5th December

Early in the morning, people began returning to their houses. People from the village contributed their share to the breakfast, although we ate late due to the time it took to cook and distribute so much rice.

We learned that three houses in Brgy. Busdi has been swept away by the expanding river going to the Pulangi. Later, people went down to Busay⁵ on the way to St. Peter where six trees had to be cleared from the road. The logs laid down for the road used by the logging companies had destroyed the spillway, and shale had slid down the hillside, blocking the access road completely. Motorbike owners worked *pahina*⁶ on road clearance, and opened a narrow path across the shale.

Zamboangita had no power and more importantly the water supply had been broken in several places. Water rose in the high school scholar's dorm, but there were no floods with strong current. Roofs were lost from the boys' house and kitchen, but people were fine.

Back in Bendum, the children were cleaning around the house, especially by the out-kitchen and main path. It was a sunny day, and at moments I would catch myself enjoying the activity and finding it hard to realize we were clearing up after a typhoon. As it was a beautiful day, I walked to the brow on the western side of the village to see the Pulangi. It was the reddest I had ever

⁴Tulugan is traditionally the datu's house, which is open to everyone who needs a place to stay

⁵This is a small waterfall.

⁶Community volunteer work.

seen it, with whole new gravel beds emerging.

That evening children studied until 7.45pm, and returned to the dorm very tired. There were still some people from the village in the dorm, and one extended family had returned to the school. There were some thunder bursts through the course of the evening as the day had been warm, and at night rain came again, but it was gentle.

Thursday 6th December

After a breakfast of *bingala* and *palao* cooked in coconut milk, the children went to school about 7.30am. Cleaning in the school went on until about 10am, when classes resumed, and a sense of normalcy returned.

That day we planned to assess the damage in the library and see what other reports the day would bring. Although the road to Zamboangita had been partially cleared, it would be days before vehicles could pass and there was still no electricity. We had water and access to food, if only root crops, but we were fine.

Friday 7th December

Upon revisiting Busay, we saw that not only was there

a landslide but the two small bridges were washed out. The road over the landslide is now very steep and narrow and in real need of reinforcement. The alternate route is to use the lower junction section through the mud. Since it rained for two nights, the Namnam River was high, but passable by the afternoon.

We only then heard reports of the devastation in Compostella Valley— of the great destruction and loss of life.

Sunday 9th December

Communications finally came back but were shaky as always. The extent of the damage was becoming clear: flattened crops, maize, rice, saging and gulay, cassava— all gone.

Despite the challenges brought by the storm, there is a deep sense of gratitude that Bendum was able to pull through and for the moments of joy in being together as a community. There is also a great appreciation for how the community, especially the youth, responded to the needs of those affected by the storm.



The road at Busay, completely covered by the landslide.

⁶ Bingala and palao are root crops.

Sitio meeting sees Bendum plan for disaster preparedness and peace

People from the community met this week in both debris and fallen trees, the pahina--the in response to the impact of Typhoon Pablo on community volunteer work—to open a narrow community infrastructure, and in preparation for motorbike path over the landslide at Busay, and the annual Kaamulan. the contribution of rice, medicines, roofing and clothing.

The meeting started with the community's agenda for peace. Talks affirmed the community's commitment to peace, stating the wish among people from the community not to accept arms within the area of Bendum, and its gaup, its recognised area of ancestral domain. Conversations highlighted the need for better systems of warning and preparation within the community, both to communicate and respond to signals, gather vital resources, and evacuate houses. Agreement was also achieved about what action was still needed to respond to the damage in the aftermath of the typhoon.

Discussions concerning Typhoon Pablo highlighted the positive action taken to clear the road of

People bring hope to Kaamulan

...and a renewed sense of kalangdang.

December is the time of year when the people of Bendum join among the clans and their extended families to talk about the year and their concerns and hopes iduring the annual cultural gatherinf, the Kaamulan. Elders, adults and youth join in amul amul to discus of important issues. This is also an occasion to celebrate their kagena (culture), their values concerning kinaiyahan (environment), join in the panampulot (feast) and share their knowledge and experiences from the last year. Talks during this year's Kaamulan affirmed the community's willingness for a renewed effort towards kalandang (peace) within the area of Bendum.

The amul-amul daw paglalang (meeting of tribal elders) extended over two days. Bendum community members led by Datu Nester. They were joined by elders from other communities both near and far; from Busdi, Mahagay, Magawan and Ulyanon, half a day's walk away.



After the pamuhat ritual people gather to eat at the start of the panampulot (feasting).

Recent meetings within the community have strengthened the determination of elders, youth and staff alike to seek that Bendum remains an area free of arms. All share the wish that Bendum remain a place in which children and youth can attend school, and stay in the Dalepaanen with freedom from fear.

The sense of kalangdang is a renewal of previous actions taken by the people of Bendum to express their wish for peace, drawn from long standing Pulanigyen traditions and values symbolised on the Kabu ha Paglinawan (Jar of Peace).

As the first day drew to a close, the evening was a time for cultural sharing in the Adagi, in which all gathered to dance, sharing laughter and giving thanks. A limbay (song of gratitude) was given by Datu Guilosan from Ulyanon, expressing his happiness and gratitude that his son was accepted into APC. Datu Nester also gave a dasang (ritual chant), and spoke about the need for continued cooperation towards kalangdan.

The youth have taken a particularly active role in this year's Kaamulan. The youth council discussed the issues of kagena (culture), kalangdang (peace) and kinaiyahan (environment). Youth expressed sadness about the continuing deforestation, the impact of Typhoon Pablo, particularly for those in other areas of Mindanao who lost friends and family. Sad thoughts were also expressed for those youth who shied away from their Pulangiyan identity and values, and for those whose parents struggle with gambling.

The youth expressed the need for peace to start within and among themselves, so that they can then advocate this sense to others. They celebrated the strength of those youth who take pride in their culture and identity despite external pressures to become part of the



The panampulot is laid out for all the clans; over 150 people ate together over 3 sittings.

Dalepaanen

This is one of the basic human needs and relations.

This is where the neighbouring scholars attending Apu Palmguwan Cultural Education Center and are staff coming from downstream are housed and may consider this facility a second home.

It is a cultural value of safety, comfort, love and care that is embodied in the place. **Dapela** is the sense of taking a rest during a long walk and this becomes a place of rest and refuge. The culture also puts a particular value on caring for those who have no security meaning orphans and widows. These values come together in as people living here; although coming from different places and doing different jobs we are united by the schedule and common understanding of daily life in the dorm. We become connected and show this connectivity by regarding each other as siblings. Students call the staff as *Ate* or *Kuya*.

Students who live in Dalepaanen come from villages a day's walk away and so stay here for the semester to learn. They are away from their family and for many months, and to keep them going in their educational pursuit, the staff guide and support them in their needs. The staff are also strengthened by the shared simple visions these children have for themselves, their families and their communities.

mainstream, and celebrated their role in continuing to protect and manage the forest. They expressed gratitude for this Kaamulan, which has given them the chance learn from their elders about their culture, and to celebrate their continuing relationship with ESSC and APC.

Duma!

APC welcomes teachers from the diocese of Ipil.

As the year draws to an end and people begin to gather with friends and family during this festive period, APC welcomed to opportunity to meet and share experiences with new groups engaging in education related to Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao. Twenty-four representatives from the Diocese of Ipil came to Bendum for a few days this month in response to renewed interest from DepED and other groups across Mindanao in APC's Culture Based Multi Lingual Education (CB-MLE) system.

The group was able to visit and observe lessons during both morning and afternoon sessions, and went on a guided tour of Bendum's gaup. The morning finished with two talks. The first was from Cecil Cabale who teaches Sa Panginabuhian Day (Pulangiyen Livelihood) and Maura Lipanda who teaches HEKASI (social studies) on their own experiences at APC, the Pulangiyen cultural values, and the history of APC as they experienced it. The second was an animated presentation on methods of lesson planning, use of language and traditional stories used to bring Pulangiyen culture to life in early childhood education. Mercy Pakiwag, who teaches Grade 1 and is also the school Administrative Assistant, and Thelma Compade who teaches kindergarten, gave this talk.

The afternoon included an open forum with the local teachers, Cecil Cabale, Maura Lipanda, Mercy Pakiwag, Thelma Compade. There were also talks from Zarmin Garcia on the importance of language to conceptual learning, James Timbangan who shared his use of concepts and examples taken from the gaup in math lessons, and Jovy Sagula, who presented the activities taken up in Panginabuhian (livelihood) classes.

The evening saw a cultural celebration and sharing, with guests singing and dancing their traditional Subanon war dance and songs. From the APC, high school youth opened the night with Dugso and a Pigagawan

(courtship dance), and the kindergarten students also gave performances.

Visitors expressed gratitude for the chance to visit the forest, to see hardwood trees growing, and drink the cool water from the community's managed spring! Reflecting on their experience in Bendum, they were particularly affected by the students who were so engaged and curious and teachers who were animated and dedicated to their culture and students' learning. Visitors expressed hope and were inspired by the community's dedication to protecting and managing the forest, and seeing that what was once a log deck was now full of trees. They were also impressed with the strength of the community particularly among the youth, to ensure the survival of their culture.

APC is grateful to all those who were involved in this first visit. We would like to express our thanks to all those who visited from the Diocese of Ipil with whom we wish continue a dialogue in the future. We also hope to welcome more groups to Bendum, to understand our ways of living and learning.

Closing remarks

As this issue of Kinabuhi ta kalasangan draws to a close and we look forward to a new year and new challenges, all that is left is to give thanks to all those who have helped, visited and been in contact with us over this year and during past times over the course of APC's history; we always welcome your messages and updates.

Our next issue will be coming out at the end of January, and until then we would like to share good wishes to you from the whole Bendum team for the Christmas season. See you all in the New Year!