



APU PALAMGUWAN CULTURAL EDUCATION CENTER: *Advancing Education in the Margins*

The Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center (APC) is a culture-based, Jesuit-supported organization that sustains indigenous schools in the uplands of Bukidnon in northern Mindanao, Philippines.

The Pulangiyan, an indigenous community in the village of Bendum, expressed a desire for a school and welcomed the opportunity to work with an organization that could help them with their efforts. An initial literacy program in the 1990s developed into a full-fledged elementary and high school curriculum that educates Pulangiyan children within the context of their language and culture and prepares them for life in their *gaup* (pronounced ga-op), the domain in which they live.



APC students on their way to plant seedlings in their ancestral domain

Formally recognized by government, the APC schools provide a multi-lingual culture-based education from Kinder to Grade 12 for indigenous youth. Curriculum development in the APC schools integrates community and land concerns, and the output is called a culture-based curriculum, one that integrates traditional knowledge and practice and responds to the growing needs of the local community. Four connecting APC schools in neighbouring upland villages provide Kinder to Grade 3 education in these indigenous communities that are located far from the nearest public schools.

This school year, the APC schools are providing education to around 400 students, accompanied by 40 teachers who mostly come from the local communities as well. There are great challenges in this education in the margins and also great opportunities to contribute to and learn from the margins.

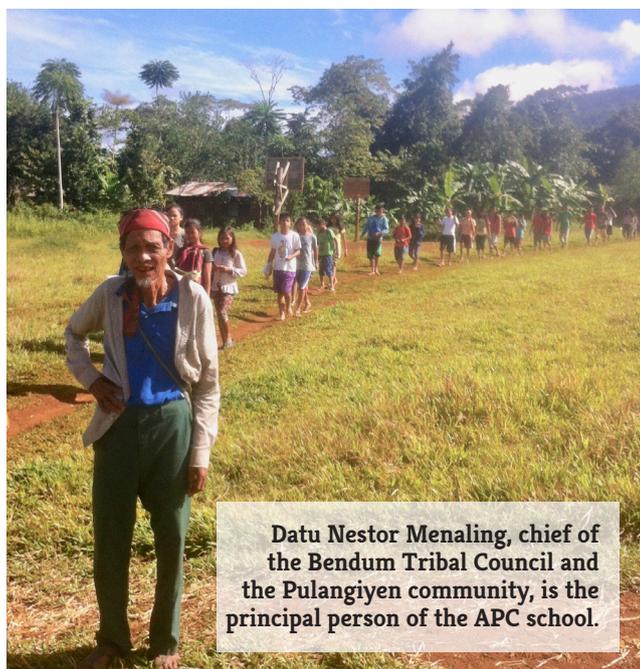
For the Pulangiyan community, their gaup refers both to the community and the land, and it is the gaup that is the context of learning. Its effective self-management is the goal in education, along with the relations that sustain the management. Living in the broader margins of society, the Pulangiyan community offers a cultural learning program that emerged from their way of life and the need for greater sustainability and opportunity.

The APC culture-based education offers three main programs:

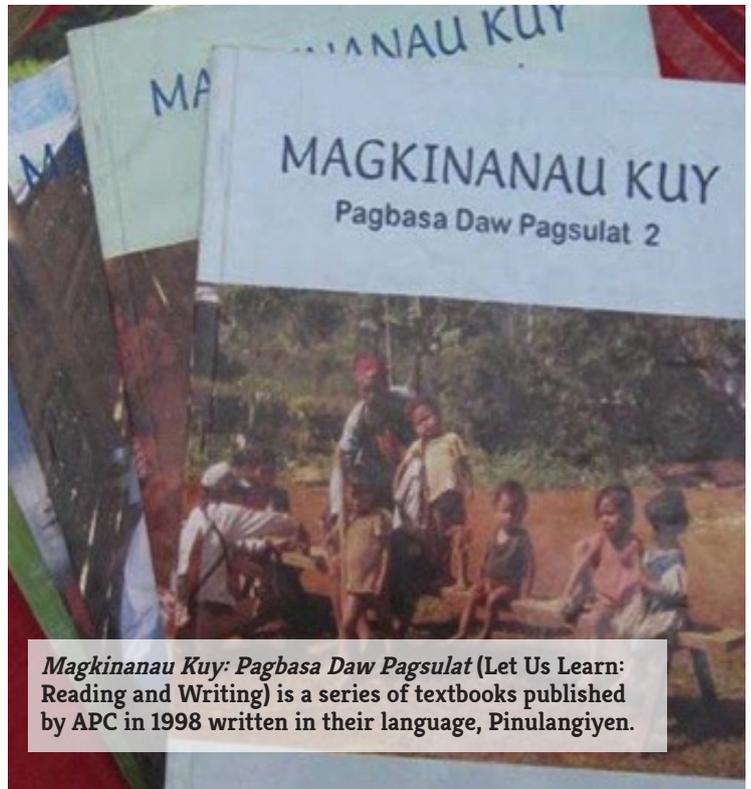
1. K-12 education at the APC schools

The school's curriculum is comprised of Communication Skills (in Pinulangiyan, Filipino and English), Mathematics, Science, *Sa Batasan Day* (Our Culture) and *Sa Panginkauyagana* (Our Livelihood). The surrounding culture and language of Bisaya is incorporated and several migrant children also study in the school. The schedule of classes takes into consideration the farming cycle throughout the year so that the children may help in their families' livelihood activities.

Recognizing and utilizing the role of indigenous language in the process of learning is proven to be instrumental in developing the youth's communication skills. APC's mother tongue-based multilingual approach in education helps the youth reconnect with their cultural identity as their indigenous language is reinforced and that has a broad understanding of cultural heritage and wisdom. This approach begins by teaching the child's own language then uses the mother tongue as a framework in learning additional languages. The four connecting schools introduce the English subject to Grade 3 students.



Datu Nestor Menaling, chief of the Bendum Tribal Council and the Pulangiyan community, is the principal person of the APC school.



Magkinanau Kuy: Pagbasa Daw Pagsulat (Let Us Learn: Reading and Writing) is a series of textbooks published by APC in 1998 written in their language, Pinulangiyan.

What is a culture-based curriculum?

1. The curriculum begins with the culture and teaches through the culture

Students begin their education through the local language and culture, which serves as foundation before moving on to other languages and knowledge. This approach especially applies to Science and Social Studies.

2. Cultural knowledge is integrated in the curriculum

Students listen to cultural and local stories instead of fairy tales.

3. The people's life circumstances are the context and goal of learning

In Social Studies, cultural history, identity and way of life are taught, discussed and reflected on.

In Science, local knowledge about the forest, farming and use of natural resources are taught and compared with lowland knowledge and practices.

Mathematical operations are applied to situations in the community.

In Science, the curriculum is geared towards teaching students to manage and care for the land, water, and resources in their ancestral domain.

In Social Studies, local concerns, issues and responsibilities affecting Indigenous Peoples are discussed and reflected on.

“We never teach anything that is different from our way of life. Our culture is the foundation of our curriculum.”

-Thelma Compade,
APC Teacher



2. Learning at the Dalēpaan: An education outside the classroom

Dalēpaan is a Pulangiyan term that is equivalent to a long house for youth who wish to study in the APC school in Bendum but whose homes are a four-hour to a day's walk away. These youth come from different indigenous groups in the area which share traditions. Physically, different groups of students stay in the dalēpaan, sharing in activities and in relationships that span their families' ancestor. Some of the teachers and staff also stay and serve as older brothers and sisters who supervise and care for the children and youth in their home away from home.

Currently, APC has four dalēpaan that provide occasion for the youth to learn to live together and acknowledge differences. Students meet their neighboring community counterparts, related through marriages and broader historical past. They make friends and manage difficulties, recognizing their commonality and learning to work

out differences.

These structures hold great cultural value as the youth practice their cultural traditions together and learn how to negotiate and resolve conflict. They also learn household responsibility in the dalēpaan and they bring these new skills and attitudes when they go back to their families and communities. Living with other students also provides opportunities for learning teamwork, caring for others, and negotiating relationships.

The dalēpaan is where life skills are learned as they join in the cooking and share a "hearth." These life skills include food preparation, distribution and management, household management, teamwork, vegetable gardening, relationship building and respect for elder brothers and sisters, how to present their concerns, regular study sessions, formative sessions, among others.

3. The Forest, Farm, and Leadership at the Margins: Learning technical skills and strengthening cultural identity

The Forest, Farm, and Leadership at the Margins (FFLM) is a unit that offers a cluster of training courses designed for youth who are unable to take part in the formal school but aspire to develop their technical competencies and sense of identity and leadership. This is done through Hulas courses.

Hulas is a youth development program that provides eight-week technical training courses such as carpentry construction, civil works, masonry, bamboo production and processing, and organic farming, and has a major role in capacitating the Pulangiyan community in the sustainable management of their gaup. Hulas is implemented with support from the Environmental Science for Social Change (ESSC), a Jesuit research and training organization in the Philippines.



The FFLM also provides some culturally specific courses for the Senior High School such as organic agriculture, forest and water resource management, and bamboo production and processing. At present, the unit is coordinating with related government agencies to establish a farm school and a farm learning site.

"As a product of APC, I am very grateful that I was guided well. I learned many things like assisted natural regeneration and how to be organized when working to protect and help our forest. We learned to see and understand how important the forest is in our lives."

-Jason Menaling, Youth Leader

Connecting with the world

Aside from its three main programs, APC offers three international collaborative programs to further accompany the community in connecting with broader society:

1. Global English Language (GEL) Program

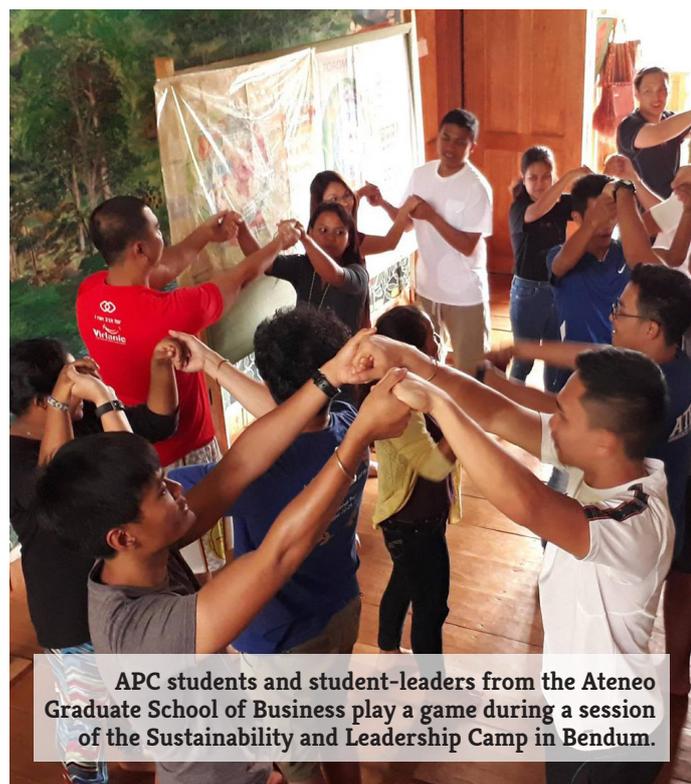


In collaboration with **Jesuit Worldwide Learning: Higher Education at the Margins**, APC is implementing the GEL Program for young adult students.

This partnership is the first implementation of the program in the context of a community school in the uplands as it was initially targeted for students in refugee camps. The program assists the implementing teacher through the GEL teacher toolbox that contains all physical elements needed to help students read, write, speak, and listen in English, both inside and outside the classroom.

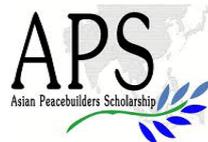


GEL students learn about countries and languages around the world.



APC students and student-leaders from the Ateneo Graduate School of Business play a game during a session of the Sustainability and Leadership Camp in Bendum.

2. Asian Peacebuilders Scholarship (APS)



APC students also learn with and impart their experiences and knowledge to students of the APS Dual Degree Master of Arts Programme, a shared initiative of

The Nippon Foundation, the University for Peace (UPEACE), and Ateneo de Manila University (AdMU). Annually, 30 master's students from around Asia hold their field work in Bendum as part of their course in Human Development and Natural Resource Management that ESSC facilitates.

3. Sustainability and Leadership Camp



The Pulangiye youth take an active part in the annual Sustainability and Leadership Camp for student-leaders from

the Ateneo Graduate School of Business (AGSB) and the Loyola Schools John Gokongwei School of Management (JGSOM), also facilitated by ESSC in Bendum, with an effort to engage other business schools in Asia to study alternatives to the present global economic model.

A message from the margins

APC hopes to form its students of all ages to be engaged members of their communities. In today's world, Indigenous Peoples need to be united as communities if they are to survive, retain their way of life, and participate equitably in Philippine and global society.

We understand that education should bridge relations and not just change a way of life for another with none of the past values and relations. We hope that the culture-based education undertaken in Bendum and in APC also addresses the sustainable development needs of the Pulangiye community and can be adapted by other cultural communities.

Indigenous identity and knowledge may not influence broader society, but do have some of the responses that modern culture must heed in its continuing re-evaluation of the world made in its own image.

Contact details:
Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center
c/o Environmental Science for Social Change

1/F Manila Observatory Building
Ateneo de Manila University Campus
Loyola Heights 1108 Quezon City, Philippines

Telephone: +63 (2) 4260554
Website: apupalamguwancenter.essc.org.ph
Email: pedro@apc.essc.org.ph