



BALAY LAUDATO SI' *Living Laudato Si' in the Heart of Mindanao*

A 2019 Activity Report



The cross depicts the Pulangiyen gaup in the Balay Laudato Si' chapel, where youth from the community also come to visit and where culture is shared such as the "sinabaang," the traditional wear of the Pulangiyen.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Culture and Ecology Center in Sitio Bendum has always been the setting for broader sharing of values and reflections in understanding how we can live out integral ecology and how we can learn from the wisdom of Indigenous Peoples as we care for our common home.



In previous years, the research building located on the site of the first classrooms on the old log deck served as the venue for the Culture and Ecology Center. For years, the cultural knowledge of the different forest types and the species found there were discussed and documented; a herbarium was established here. Most of the hydrological research from 1992 to 2003 was based here.

Our Laudato Si' in 2015, Payag, Dalēpaan 4 was under construction

The launching of *Healing a Broken World* in 2010 under Fr Adolfo Nicolás SJ (who was the Superior General of the Society of Jesus at that time and who passed away on 20 May 2020) was celebrated here, along with the Environmental Way of Proceeding from the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP)-Reconciliation with Creation.

With the construction of Balay Laudato Si' (BLS) in 2017, the work of the center moved to this location. BLS opens a myriad of opportunities for connecting the vision of the Pulangiyēn people in Upper Pulangi with global development movements that include the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus.



Balay Laudato Si', December 2017; Balay Laudato Si' extension, February 2018

When the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* (from which the center is named after) first came out, youth leaders from the community were astounded to find themselves able to identify with the message of Pope Francis.

Laudato Si' writes, "Local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instill a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land. They are also concerned about what they will eventually leave to their children and grandchildren. These values are deeply rooted in indigenous peoples." (179)

This recognition of the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in making a difference in the world is a great consolation and affirmation for vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities who are not always heard.



Sustainable Development Goals

This reflection by community youth on key passages of Laudato Si' became the starting point for many more enriching activities and collaboration with different groups from all over the world. BLS became the link with others in deepening our understanding of our relationships with others and with the land, and how these relationships help us understand ourselves better.



Jesuits and scholastics from different countries such as Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Kenya, China, Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar, among others, visited and engaged with the youth in Bendum and found affirmation. They learn from one another and bring back these lessons as they return to their communities. These engagements are effective in facilitating an understanding that we

are all connected and that we need to draw inspiration from one another to move forward together.

BLS is venue for around 10 different events in a year. But these events are valued beyond a mere structured program. These events create a life that

allows the culture to blossom and for the youth to express their love for their land through art and music.



Students and other community youth are able to articulate their place in this world without losing their cultural grounding. And when visitors walk with them to the forest, they explain their role in water catchment area management and organic farming using the English language, even if greatly challenged to speak in English fluently.

The community has a greater understanding that they need to motivate each other to work hard in improving their skills so that they can use their own voice when they tell their stories.

II. OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN 2019

Balay Laudato Si' broadened its program of activities offered that reflect and sustain the ecological and cultural integrity sought in collaboration with the Pulangiyan community. These developments are categorized as follows:

A. Nurture the team

- Events Management and Communications
- House and Area Management

B. Nurture the land

- Pathways and parks
- Posters and noticeboards for communication and advocacy

C. Nurture the program

- Event design and planning
- Event program implementation
- Event documentation

III. ACTIVITY UPDATES

A. Nurture the team

A team composed of a program manager and an area manager under the supervision of the Research Director of the Environmental Science for Social Change (ESSC) currently manages BLS.

The program manager handles the design, planning, coordination, and implementation of different BLS events in close coordination with the Research Director. The program manager also coordinates with other units to

facilitate a collaborative dynamic in running the various events and in integrating BLS into the broader vision of the community.

Meanwhile, the area manager oversees the maintenance and management of the physical house. This includes also the pathways or the forest walks that are critical features in any BLS event. This person also looks after art production for BLS and ensures that the house is in order before visitors arrive.

This team works together to create not just programs but an experience for all visitors who come.

B. Nurture the land



The management and maintenance of pathways, trails, and different areas for reflection require coordination with other units such as the Forest and Water Management Office and the Ecoagri Office to make sure that the areas are ready to be used for different activities in BLS.

BLS area is now considered as Campus 3. The other campuses include the elementary school and *dalēpaan* (the youth community house) near the *barrio* called Campus 1, the high school area called Campus 2, and the headquarters of the Forest, Farm, and Leadership in the Margins (FFLM) Center, which is called Campus 4.

BLS is situated in an area just before the slope change that shifts into pre-montane forest that is regenerating. It is a critical location that connects the forest areas that the youth manage with the campuses and other centers in the community. BLS activities that nurture the land:

1. Balay Laudato Si' Walks

Because it is located within the forest area, BLS is the starting point for many of the forest walks for local engagements that include the following:

a. *Regeneration Walk*

This walk shares the story of the Pulangiyēn people as they recover from the damage brought about by intensive logging activities in the past decades and how they are coming together to sustain an integrated management approach to regenerate their *gaup*, or their ancestral land.

This walk starts from BLS and moves through several farmlands and their different practices, arriving at the spring box where visitors learn about the

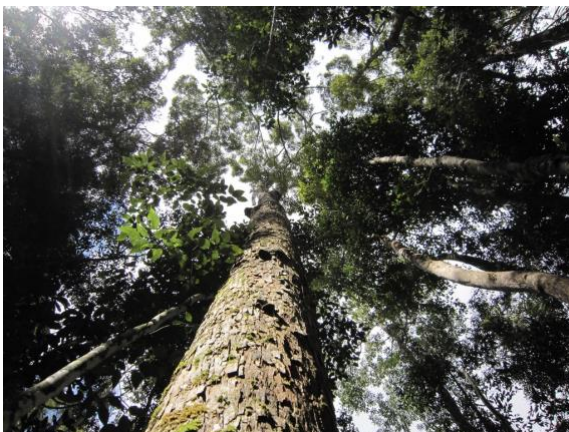
history of the water system that the community manages. This walk also goes to the powerhouse (30-meter drop) where the mini-hydro generator provides electricity for Campus 1 is explained. The walk usually ends in Adagi Balay, an important cultural center that houses some of the youth and staff. This walk sometimes extends to include the Campus 1 area where the elementary school is located.

b. *Canopy Walk*



The youth call this the Canopy Walk or the Generation 2050 walk because it represents their hope and vision for the future. This portion of the land used to be a rubber farm.

As one goes around the area today, the youth explain the different pillar tree species they planted and the self-generating pioneer species.



One can see why they are called pillar species

Both these tree species play key roles in realizing the youth's hope that in the future, come 2050, they will be looking up to a closed forest canopy above them, rather than the tops of trees as they see them now, below their own height. The youth know that it will take a generation for the trees to grow and form a forest canopy.

This walk hopes to share the vision of the Pulangiyen youth as they nurture their land with love, patience, and care to make their vision under the forest canopy a reality that will serve the next generation of their people.

This is a good area for quiet reflection on the day and the Jesuit practice of *examen*, as there are over 30 boulders to sit on in the shade. During reflection sessions in BLS, it is good to come out here and see what one might discern as one commits to a better future for all.

c. Reconciliation Walk

This walk invites visitors to learn from the experience of the youth in establishing an organic agriculture farm and in sustaining a bamboo production, processing, and construction facility. During the walk, the youth explain to visitors how they are able to contribute to food security and climate change adaptation and mitigation through their work in the farm. They explain the importance of organic farming, not only for the land but also in sustaining their indigenous way of life, as organic farming mirrors some of the key features of traditional farming that hold profound value for Pulangiyen identity.

d. Gaup Walk or Field to Forest Walk



This walk starts from the open field in Campus 2 and enters a regenerating forest along the Pangamu River. Here, the youth explain the different methods of replanting indigenous species to optimize the natural regeneration of the forest.

The walk also leads to a spring box in Pangamu that provides the water for Campus 3. Depending on the weather or

flexibility in the program, the walk at times could extend to the forest line, which is a very important area for community forest management.

Case Study: How BLS facilitates further learning for Pulangiyen youth through the APC Senior High School Internship Program

Kias-u Catchment Management Program of APC – Senior High School Internship as Response to Climate Change – Campus 3

The land where Campus 3 sits on is of an ultramafic soil type, meaning it was originally a rock formation that emerged from under the ocean. Over the years, this rock formation was broken down into soil by natural processes, facilitated especially by the growth of vegetation. Boulders and rocks present within the forest are remnants indicative of this origin. In the 1970s and 1980s, extensive logging significantly reduced forest cover in the area. This resulted in nutrients getting washed out, leaving poor quality soil unable to support sustainable food production.

When logging companies left, migrant farmers opened the land to grow their

crops, particularly corn and coffee for consumption. Eventually they also planted rubber. But because the soil lacked nutrients to generate good yields, these farmers had very little produce from their farms.



There are efforts to restore the land as it contributes primarily to the Kias-u and enhances biodiversity. In 2016, different pillar species were planted in an effort to regenerate the land. There are nearly 500 pillar trees and about 300 pioneer species that already started the process of regeneration. It will take many decades to regenerate this land.

The youth participate in the process of maintaining this area because this vision is of their generation. This is going to be a story of the land they will share with their children.

Planning for the Kias-u catchment



What the canopy will look like

Part of this area is established as a Canopy Walk 2050 and planted here are seven pillar species. Here, the focus is on today's generation who will be in their 60s by 2050 and what they can do. This is why it is also called the Generation Walk. As Pedro reminds the youth, "Do not plant a tree unless you are willing to look after it for the next 30 years. In turn, it will look after you for another 30 years." This is also called the Canopy Walk because in 25 years this area will have a canopy, so this is an area where one can see a canopy growing right before one's eyes.

A block for the seven species of bamboo culturally used by the Pulangiyen is also established in this area. This bamboo grove has botanical use, is a source of small materials, and a site for students to learn scientific names. Bamboo is also planted in this area because some species are grown as a commercial crop that government is increasingly taking interest to support for basic livelihood of people in the area. Some species are commercially viable and. Further up the slope, there is a block for the nine varieties of abaca used traditionally for cultural objects.

This is part of showing the value of protecting sloping land from seasonal

agriculture, which tends to cause leaching of nutrients, degrading of water quality, and soil erosion. This is important land to protect because it contributes to the northern stream of the Kias-u. This is one of the six streams or water sources that feeds the Kias-u. It is a water table source; a wet area that provides water to the catchment.

The process of regenerating the soil, the water, and the forest are all of direct benefit to addressing climate change. The youth's participation in sustaining this area is part of their contribution to climate action.

2. Art and Music in Balay Laudato Si'

Pulangiyēn women showcase their products such as mats, baskets, and soft brooms during BLS events. In the process, T-shirts depicting traditional values of the Pulangiyēn are also shared with visitors. A further addition is the production of beautiful artworks that add color and life to the house and serve as prompts for appreciating the rich tradition of the community and for the visitors to also share a piece of art from their own culture.



What integral ecology looks like; First Spirituality for Action workshop, January 2018

Music workshops with the youth are done to reinvigorate traditional songs and musical instruments that are key in the cultural expression of the Pulangiyēn. Nationally-renowned artists are invited to animate and train the youth especially in songwriting and playing instruments. *Tapok* or youth gatherings are developed to expand this experience with other youth in Mindanao, and also youth from Luzon and Visayas.

3. Other Knowledge and Art products in Balay Laudato Si'

- a. Spirituality for Action: Living Laudato Si' Workshop briefing kits and brochures
- b. *Indigenous Peoples and Laudato Si'* brochure (in English and Pulangiyēn)
- c. Pathway signages and notices for BLS walks
- d. Posters for the global youth climate action *School Strike For Climate*
- e. Wood carvings of indigenous birds for BLS rooms

- f. Frames for paintings and pictures
- g. Posters for *Culture and Integrity from the Ground: A Local Forum*
- h. Videos about various BLS programs available in different online platforms

C. Nurture the program

BLS holds around three Living Laudato Si' workshops in a year. There are also annual international courses, forum, and summits being held in BLS.

1. Living Laudato Si' Spirituality for Action Workshops



This involves a series of Spirituality for Action Workshops in collaboration with the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP)-Reconciliation with Creation and called as such because there is discernment for action on several levels not only for personal conversion but also for advocacy and global citizenship.

Listening, Discerning, Accompanying: JCAP-RwC Spirituality for Action Workshop

Access video at: <https://youtu.be/fHlxIV4Dd7A>

Description: Balay Laudato Si' is the Culture and Ecology Center in Bendum, Bukidnon, Mindanao, Philippines that provides time and space for a social and reflective process involving people from all areas of development.

2. Sustainability and Leadership Camp: Engaging Communities and Youth in Agriculture in the Margins



This is a field course for business students initially undertaken with the Ateneo Graduate School of Business. The course provides opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the lives of people in the margins, particularly that of the predominantly indigenous community in the uplands of northern Mindanao. This course critically analyzes the impacts of corporate practices in agriculture to

people and land and challenges students to contribute to a paradigm shift towards more just ways of proceeding in business.

Why the Margins Persist in a Growing Economy

Access video at: <https://youtu.be/d9TY1uUe3q4>

Published on 23 October 2019

Description: The existing business model demands unlimited extraction and consumption and burdens marginal communities with land degradation and debt while excluding them from many of their basic needs and services. While these communities sustain ecological services and resources for the benefit of all, the prevailing market system and government development programs do not benefit them.

How are we accompanying future business leaders and decision-makers so the system does not stay the same?

Through a field course in Bendum, Bukidnon, Philippines, business students have the opportunity to engage and listen to communities and youth in agriculture, learn about the growing vulnerabilities they face, and seek new ways of thinking and doing business that respects the dignity and rights of people and sustains the integrity of the landscape.

3. A Field Course: Natural Resource Management and Human Development

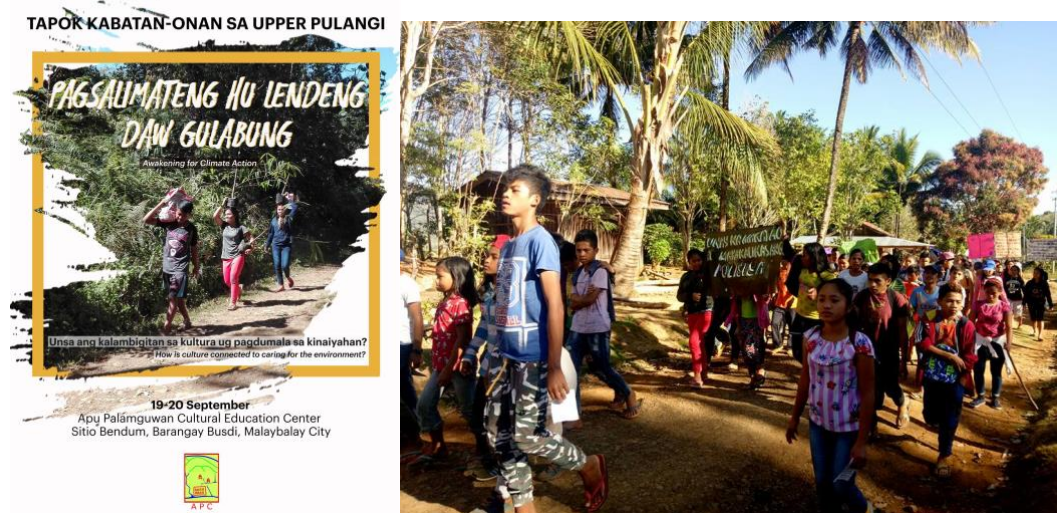


This three-week course enables students from the Asian Peacebuilders Scholarship (APS) program to assess the factors that affect natural resource management and the contemporary management tools used in addressing conflicts in resource use and management. Central to the course is a field-based

experience where students engage with local communities living out the resource-based concerns, adaptations to changes, and their relationships with culture, local government, and Philippine society.

This is a capstone course for APS students pursuing a Master of Arts degree in an area related to peacebuilding from the University for Peace in Costa Rica and a Master's degree in Transdisciplinary Social Development from the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines.

4. Tapok Kabatan-onan: Pagsalimatēng hu Lēndēng Daw Gulabung (Awakening for Climate Action)



This is a youth climate summit for Mindanao youth to deepen their understanding of the integral role of culture and youth in climate action. This is done in solidarity with the global climate movement called global School Strike for Climate led by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg.

Voices of Integrity: A Call to Climate Action

Access video at: <https://youtu.be/y-mi4cdiJ8U>

Published on 18 September 2019

Description: Indigenous youth in Mindanao, Philippines are leading the climate action in their communities using what they learned from the life stories of their elders, lessons in school, and their own experiences.

In solidarity with youth all over the world taking part in the global School Strike for Climate, these young people are leading a youth summit for indigenous youth in Upper Pulangi, Mindanao to discuss the role of culture in climate change mitigation, and to deepen their commitment to climate action.

A Prayer for the Earth (Laudato Si') - Bisaya

Access video at: https://youtu.be/o9W_BvIKyco

Published on 3 October 2019

Description: Pagsalimatēng hu Lēndēng daw Gulabung, a youth summit on climate led by indigenous youth in Upper Pulangi, Bukidnon, one of the first youth responses that officially started the #GlobalClimateStrike in the Philippines.

The youth opened the reflective process by praying “A Prayer for the Earth” from Pope Francis’ encyclical Laudato Si’ translated in Bisaya (their lingua franca). Students of the Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center in Bendum, Malaybalay, Bukidnon, Philippines led the process.

5. Social Justice Forum

This is a forum that gathers key stakeholders to discuss the current state of agriculture in Mindanao, with focus on upland smallholder corn farming, and seeking a dialogue for change. The Social Justice Forum specifically highlights the risks and trends faced by small-scale farmers within an unjust local economy. Community leaders, local and national government officials, NGO representatives, post-graduate students, and business sector representatives attend this forum.

IV. NEXT STEPS FOR BALAY LAUDATO SI'

A. Upcoming events

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, activities involving international and national visitors are being reviewed for possible resumption this year or even 2021, and with consideration of the health standards needed.

1. Music and Arts Workshop with Joey Ayala (scheduled in March 2020, postponed to a later date)

2. NRM and Human Development field course with APS students (scheduled in June 2020 and postponed to October 2020, but still subject to developments and advisories from APS officials and the University for Peace and Ateneo de Manila University)

3. JCAP-RwC Spirituality for Action Workshop (scheduled July 2020, postponed to a later date)

4. Integral Ecology Exchange: Connecting Houses to Care Together for our Common Home (scheduled in August 2020, now postponed to a later date) - a month-long youth camp that brings together global youth leaders from the Philippines, Portugal, Indonesia, and France to experience community building together. Participants of this exchange will gain fundamental skills in forest and water management, organic agriculture, and bamboo production and construction by accompanying some of the indigenous youth leaders as they manage the natural resources within their ancestral domain.

B. House management

1. New administrative office constructed for BLS operations

2. Maintenance of pathways and walks

3. Solar power source management and maintenance document and orientation for staff and visitors

C. Materials development and training

1. Workbook development for Living Laudato Si' workshops, Natural Resource Management and Human Development field course, and the Sustainability and Leadership Camp

2. Review *Indigenous Peoples and Laudato Si'* booklet in Pinulangiyen for possible publication and use in school

3. **Translation** of the APC workbook *Culture and Integrity from the Ground to Pinulangiyēn* for publication and use in school
4. **Translation** of some critical sections of the book *People of the Middle Ground: A Century of Conflict and Accommodation in Central Mindanao, 1880s-1980s* by Ronald K Edgerton (2008) to Pinulangiyēn – the book is a history of Bukidnon and there are 10 pages that are very relevant to the area and the culture that reflects more closely the experiences here rather than the popular stories from the city.
5. **Training** of youth leaders who will accompany visitors during walk
6. **Documentation and translation** of the annual APC internship program to Pinulangiyēn
7. **Develop** an art-log for all art works in BLS

D. Deepening reflection with the rest of the world

Reflection activity on Querida Amazonia

Balay Laudato Si' plans to develop a reflection activity on this post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis that is a personal document that speaks deeply of culture and rootedness and gives another way for Indigenous Peoples to share in a faith context as to the integrity of the way they live.