



**Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive  
and Integrated Delivery of Social Services**

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## **Kapayapaan, Kaunlaran, at Kapangyarihan ng Komunidad sa Kalahi-CIDSS**

**Stories on how Kalahi-CIDSS helps support  
community peace and development initiatives**





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## **About Kalahi-CIDSS**

Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (Kalahi-CIDSS), aims to have barangays/communities of targeted municipalities become empowered to achieve improved access to services and to participate in more inclusive local planning, budgeting, and implementation.

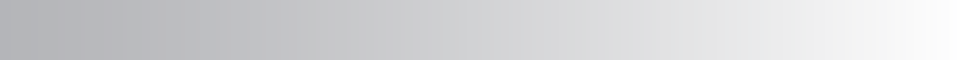
Using the community-driven development (CDD) strategy, it helps barangays in poor municipalities identify challenges around reducing poverty and make informed decisions on a range of locally identified options for development, gives control of resources to address local poverty to communities, and builds the capacity of both state (including local governments) and civil society stakeholders in providing assistance and responding the calls for support of poor communities in the implementation of development initiatives.

## **About PAMANA**

Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA) is the Philippine government's program and framework for peace and development.

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# Message

DSWD Secretary



*The resolution of conflict is not just a peace issue, but also of poverty. In fact, we can liken conflict and to a chicken-and-egg situation, as one directly affects the other. Those who resort to violence often do so because of their lack of access to even the most basic of resources: food, water, shelter, and security. In a way, those who are involved in conflict are victims in themselves, because the situation they are in forces them to seek justice for the inequalities and inequities they suffer.*

*Kalahi-CIDSS helps conflict-affected communities gain a more lasting solution to peace by empowering them so that they can act more positively to find solutions to their problems. This support is in the form of grants and capacity building, which they can use to gain year-long access to basic services, improve their means of livelihood, and their sense of community.*

*What makes Kalahi-CIDSS an effective program for helping resolve poverty and conflict situations is that it fosters inclusion and participation. The activities in Kalahi-CIDSS attempt to dissolve partisanship and exclusion of vulnerable groups. In community-driven development (CDD), in the people themselves are the drivers for the improvement of their lives.*

*Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that".*

*This statement cannot be truer, especially in the context of peace. As the stories in this compendium will show, people who were directly involved in and affected by conflict pursue the path of peace by working with the local governments to strengthen the foundations for genuine peace – people coming together and implementing solutions through projects that build stronger social cohesion and address their local poverty issues.*

*We hope that through these stories, love will also rule in your heart so that you can help drive out the darkness that is conflict.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corazon Juliano-Soliman'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

**CORAZON JULIANO-SOLIMAN**

# Message

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process



*When we embarked on this journey in pursuit of peace, we did not just intend to eliminate armed conflict and hostilities. Our goal was much bigger than that. We wanted to build resilient communities wherein people can afford to dream without fearing for their lives and properties. Some would say that our dream was too grandiose. But when it comes to peace and justice, I know of no other way to dream.*

*And thus we trudged. To complement peace tables for the different armed groups, we initiated the Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan or PAMANA. Its mission was clear-cut and exact: for government efforts toward development to reach every Filipino, particularly those in hard-to-reach and conflict-affected areas. We all made sure that those efforts were designed and delivered in a manner that was both conflict-sensitive and peace-promoting.*

*Fast-forward to the present: we now have before us the Peace Compendium. I would like to describe it as a collection of inspiring stories gathered by our community volunteers and field implementers from regions covered by the Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS). I would like to portray it as an assortment of narratives on how our volunteers' and implementers' lives were transformed by peace. I can do that but we all know that this Peace Compendium is much more.*

*As I flipped through its pages, I stumbled upon experiences recalling how increased livelihood and job opportunities in vulnerable communities renewed hope in the people. I came across accounts of how communities became active participants, and not mere bystanders, in pursuing peace and development. I read through the Peace Compendium's pages and I found what could be if we are to realize fully our goals and dreams.*

*Our job is far from over and there is so much work to be done. However, do not let this lessen our past triumphs. Let this book, this Peace Compendium, be a constant reminder that we are fighting the good fight. I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the making of this book. My heart goes out to you and my interminable gratitude for your dedication to the pursuit of peace for the country and every Filipino.*

*Padayon!*

*Teresita Quintos Deles*  
**SEC. TERESITA QUINTOS DELES**

# Message

Assistant Secretary for the Operations and  
Programs Group – Promotive Programs  
Deputy National Program Director for Operations  
Kalahi-CIDSS



*Much has been said about the cost of war, with the armaments and ammunition, damage to infrastructures, and casualties on both sides of the conflict as part of the items being accounted.*

*In the discourse on war and peace, less is said about the people who are directly affected by this – families, which include children, and communities who are caught in the crossfire, are displaced and who struggle daily just to survive.*

*Indeed, one of the outcomes of war is worsening poverty. At times, the story almost seems like a neverending cycle of violence, with more and more people becoming poor or sinking into even deeper poverty with every war that breaks out.*

*In Kalahi-CIDSS, we seek to help change that by building up the capacities and confidence of people who are living in conflict-affected areas. This book shares the amazing stories of men and women whose burning spirits waged war in a different way – by working together to ensure that they and their fellow villagers will finally have access to basic services.*

*Conflict is a complex issue and no single agency or stakeholder holds the solution to its end. However, this program is a good avenue to reach out to those whose participation and decisions can make a difference to addressing poverty and conflict at the roots – right where the grassroots are.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Camilo G. Gudmalin'.

**CAMILO G. GUDMALIN**



# Message

National Program Manager  
KALAHI CIDSS-NCDDP



*KALAHI-CIDSS works in some of the poorest communities in the country. Around 68 municipalities our current coverage have also become, in the more recent pass, the battlefield of state and non-state rebel force.*

*In such conditions, the works of development for programs like Kalahi-CIDSS becomes a challenge but a great opportunity as well. Conflict is often rooted in deprivation, marginalization and injustice and thus it is not surprising that Kalahi-CIDSS areas also have histories of conflicts. It is nonetheless undeniable that a community-driven development program like Kalahi-CIDSS, when properly facilitated, can create avenues to address issues that foment conflict.*

*Social processes in the program enable communities to collectively analyze their situation as springboard for identifying local solutions. Within these processes, communities learn a number of skills – how to make good plans, how to find resources, how to engage their local leadership, how to do quality implementation of the project they have chosen to build. They also get the chance to interact with one another more frequently and meaningfully around shared tasks and goals.*

*These opportunities are important for communities that have experienced violence. The confidence that grow from being able to solve simple problems through peaceful means can help them solve issues in a similar manner later. The participation of citizens ensures that decisions carry the voice of those who might have been involved in conflict or have been historically marginalized by traditional decision-making. Resources provided to communities fund projects chose through a participatory process and which enable them to have the wherewithals to live more decently thru better access to services.*

*By restoring to people the power to shape the **what, when** and **how** of their future, communities can also be helped to cope, recover from and pursue more lasting peace. The stories featured in this compendium help us better understand those invisible dividends that come about when people are able to take part in finding solutions to their problems excluding those that exacerbate or cause conflict. They offer a clue on how citizen and government partnership can bring two important parties to dialogue on how development can be achieved in a way that is responsive and empowering for the poor and marginalized.*

*Benilda E. Redaja*  
BENILDA E. REDAJA

## About the Theme

It seems fitting that the theme of this compendium is “KKK”.

The first known KKK of the Philippines is the “*Kataas-taasan, Kagalang-galangan, Katipunan ng Anak ng Bayan*” (or *Katipunan* for short), a group led by Andres Bonifacio that sought to combat the reign of the Spaniards and give freedom back to the Philippines.

This KKK seeks to reflect the continuation of this fight. This time, not through armed struggle and not against a foreign conqueror, but to something more intangible yet at the same time even more powerful: poverty and conflict. This compendium of stories seeks to show how Kalahi-CIDSS, in close partnership with communities and other partners, seeks to combat these elements by empowering communities and helping them gain access to basic social services and opportunities to attain more meaningful development.





# **KAPAYAPAN (PEACE)**







*Barangay Chairman Macabato showing his organic farm products.*

## From Arms to Farms

By Luis Arquiza

**L**anao del Norte - *“Aduna gihapoy pag-asa para sa mga komunidad Lnga anaay kagubot* (There is still hope for armed-conflict communities),” declared Malik Macabato, barangay chairperson of Tingintingin, Municipality of Kauswagan.

In 2008, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) attacked the 4th class municipality that affected hundreds of families in various barangays, including Tingintingin, a community 12 kilometers away from the center of the municipality, with an impossible terrain. Public transportation is only available once a day because of the difficulty of access.

### **Former combatant puts faith back in government programs**

Malik, a husband and father, is also a former combatant. He is known to be influential by his neighbours who, like him, held defiance and distrust against government interventions.

Malik and the rest of the community used to think that going against the government is the only solution to solving poverty, a belief assumed by their group for generations.

*“Ang akong huna-huna sa una, sirado na gyud, nagtu-o ko nga ang pag gamit sa armas mao ra gyud ang rason nga mahimo kita nga gamhanan isip usa ka lider (I was close-minded, and I believed that the use of arms or guns makes you a powerful leader),”* Malik said.

People in the community think the same way as Malik. Sarah, one of the volunteers, said that many of them believed that there is no more chance for peace and development in their community.

However, this started to change when the Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA) was introduced to their community.

Malik said that the community is thankful to the government because their programs have made them realize that insurgency is not the solution to their community problems. Instead, they have learned that by just cooperating and involving themselves in community activities, peace and development is attainable.

### **Shifting Paradigms**

When Malik was elected barangay chairman in Tingitingin, he was able to attend capability building trainings related to community development and genuine peace and development facilitated by the Department of Interior and Local Development (DILG). These sessions eventually gave him a different perspective.

Malik recalled that he learned a lot about good governance and how a community can attain genuine peace and order. *“Ug ang pinaka importante sa tanan, nahibaw-an nako nga ang gobyerno naglihok lang man diay para sa among kaayuhan (The most important thing is that I realized that the government was only doing its job to the best interest of our welfare),* he said.

### **Regaining confidence in government**

When Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA was presented to their community in 2013, Malik led the community by personally adopting and conveying to his neighbours the concepts and strategies of Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA, particularly in guiding the community to development.

Through the modality using the Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach, the community started to participate in barangay activities and increased their knowledge in poverty alleviation in their society.



*Barangay Chairman Malik Macabato led his fellow volunteers in the construction of their Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA peace center*

*“Tungod sa Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA daghan mi nahimo nga mga proyekto sama nalang sa dalan gikan sa umahan paingon sa merkado, panubig, bularanan sa mga produkto, ug para pud sa lugar sa panglawas ug kahusay ug kalinaw (Because of Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA, we were able to construct several sub-projects such as Farm to Market Roads, Water Systems, Solar Driers, Health and Peace Centers),”* according to one of the volunteers who worked closely with Malik.

Further, Malik managed to convince his constituents to practice organic farming since he himself practiced the same. And because his neighbours saw the positive side of the technology, the people willingly accepted the system.

*“Nalipay gyud mi nga gitudlu-an ug gi ingganyo mi ni Kapitan mag tanom pina-agi sa maluntarong agrikultura, nga diin daghan ug mas dako among kita ug dili lang ana, labaw na gayud dili siya maka daut sa atong kinaiyahan (We are happy that Barangay Captain Malik taught and encouraged us to do organic farming. The technology has helped us to have better income. Not only that, it has a great impact to our environment),”* shared Noreen, one of the volunteers.

Malik said that the community is thankful to the government because their programs have made them realize that insurgency is not the solution to their community problems. Instead, he added, they have learned that by just cooperating and involving themselves in community activities, peace and development is attainable.

*“Gikan sa pakig batok paingon sa pagpalambo sa umahan (from arms to farms),”* Malik concluded.#





Virgilio M. Tengogue, a former New People's Army (NPA) member and now a Kalahi-CIDSS volunteer, regained his trust in the government and became its partner in building the one million peso-worth potable water system in Barangay Kingking.

## Fresh water, Fresh start for Pantukan villagers

By Julie Ace Brandon Ramos

**P**antukan, Compostela Valley – *“Ang pagpagahum sa katawhan pinaagi sa pagsalmot diha sa mga proyekto mao ang kabagohan nga akong gihandum ug kini akong nakaplagan diha sa Kalahi-CIDSS (Having a vision of empowering communities through enhanced participation in their projects, Kalahi-CIDSS is the change that I longed for when I searched for reforms from the government),”* former New People's Army member Virgilio M. Tengogue declared.

The construction of a Php 1,162,749.00 potable water system sub-project in Barangay Kingking through Kalahi-CIDSS (Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan–Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), changed Tengogue's perspective on government's sincerity.

“The project, aside from providing access to clean and safe water to over 26 thousand residents, prevents insurgency and promotes peace in the area,” said Tengogue, now a Kalahi-CIDSS volunteer.



*Virgilio M. Tengogue, a proud Kalahi-CIDSS volunteer, never thought that he will be one of the co-implementers of DSWD. He shares “ everyone can be united for as long as the government and the community will find their common goals in combat to poverty.”*

Known to many as Kuya Chikee Tengogue, 56, admitted he joined the militant group after he experienced brutal extortion during the Marcos regime. He was with the NPA (New People’s Army) for 27 years.

In 2012, the tides changed for him. He regained trust in the government and decided to be its supporter when Kalahi-CIDSS entered their barangay.

### **Conflict-ridden**

Barangay Kingking, a two-hour ride from Davao City, is one of the villages of Pantukan where the NPA operates. Socio-economic development here was stalled since the government had a hard time delivering basic services to the community.

Tengogue said the people in the outskirts of the city felt neglected and had started losing trust in the government. *“Wala na maabot ang mga proyekto sa komunidad, mao nagtuo sila na gipasagdan na sila sa gobyerno* (Projects did not reach the community. People thought government abandoned them).”

It was a wake-up call for Tengogue to take a leap of faith. “Breaking the neverending cycle of dispute [by fighting] is futile. The community will always suffer if the government, the armed rebels, and the community will not find common goals.”

## **Trust regained**

Tengogue and the rest of the villagers unified and became partners in building the potable water system sub-project in their barangay.

“The people attended barangay assemblies organized by the Kalahi-CIDSS area coordinating team. They underwent capacity building activities on how to effectively implement the potable water system sub-project,” shared Quillano Sabello, Barangay Sub-Project Management Committee (BSPMC) chairman.

Now, people enjoy clean, drinking water, and a more stable water supply for all their household needs. This changed a lot of lives in the area.

Sabello happily added, “We are thankful Kalahi-CIDSS granted us sub-projects like this. The villagers, especially children, will no longer walk miles to reach the nearest source of water.”

DSWD came to the barangay starting in 2012, ushering Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA sub-projects such as a multipurpose pavement, a school library and a drainage canal.

Tengogue added, “I am truly grateful to the government for this project. Even if our community is far-flung from the city, they attended to our needs and made sure we had enough to get by. I now believe that there’s hope in combatting poverty as long as we unite ourselves in helping our communities.”

Tengogue and several residents also reaped benefits from Pantawid Pamilyang Pipipino Program (Pantawid Pamilya) and Sustainable Livelihood programs, two of the poverty reduction programs implemented by DSWD.

To date, there are a total of 5,163 beneficiaries from 4Ps and 295 beneficiaries from SLP in Patukan, Compostela Valley.

## **Support**

“Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA supports peace-building efforts and addresses the needs of people including peace concerns,” said Rhona Theresa Siojo, Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer.

In Barangay Kingking, Community Facilitator Mark Anthony Bacus said, PAMANA projects became the instrument that restored the community’s trust in the government.

He added, “The community felt their importance because the government gave them the opportunity to lead the process of the project implementation.”

The local government unit of Pantukan shelled out a local cash counterpart of Php 174,914 for the water sub-project, that now benefits 5,920 households.

Kalahi-CIDSS is a community-driven development project of the Philippine Government that aims to empower communities through their enhanced participation in local governance and poverty alleviation projects.

PAMANA or PAyapa at MAsaganang PamayaNAn is a Kalahi-CIDSS modality that aims to improve access of conflict-affected areas (CAAs) to quality basic social services and responsive, transparent and accountable local governments.#





*According to the General Luna Barangay Council, reports of crime have lessened after the street lights were set up*

## **HINGYAP PARA HA KALAMRAGAN\*:**

# DSWD program lights up Lope de Vega spirit

*Hope for Light:*

By Jennifer Caspe

The nightfall in General Luna, the farthest barangay of Lope de Vega, has been the cause of terror in almost every home. Normally, children are the ones who are terrorized by darkness, provoking scary night creatures to haunt their pleasant sleep. But in Gen. Luna, it is the grown-ups who are most frightened whenever the sun disappears.

The place is located in the most interior part of this Northern Samar town, hence, distance from the poblacion area makes it difficult for the locals to access basic social services. In order to reach the center of Lope de Vega, one must brave a risky boat ride for a maximum of three hours or otherwise endure a perilous four-hour hike in the mountains. Most of the families in the community earn their living through abaca fiber (kigi) production, copra, root crops and vegetables and thus, community folks find it hard to transport their goods because of the barangay's location.

With only a population of 281, composing of 69 families and 56 households, the barangay is the smallest community in the municipality where every resident knows everyone. Being the remotest area of the town with a poverty incidence of 87.7%, Gen. Luna has become vulnerable both to conflict and poverty.

For almost 72 years now, Warlita Agte would fear for her family's safety whenever dusk would cover the skies of Gen. Luna. For the small Lope de Vegan community, the night elicits fear of the unknown especially when there are no lamp posts to light their streets.

*“Kun gab-i, nababaraka kami, kay diri namon naiimdan an mga nagkakasulod sa barangay, labi na gud kon nakabati kami hin storya nga may ginpatay na sasapi tnga barangay (We get scared whenever night falls especially when we hear rumors of killings from the next barangay),”* she said.

Nanay Warlita recalled the anxiety she and her family felt when news of murder in the neighbouring barangay reached them. She stated that it would help if they have streetlights so they could keep watch of people who enter their community.

According to Brgy. Captain Liberato Victoriano, crimes occurred more often in the dark street corners of Gen. Luna, like rampant thefts of domesticated fowls. There was even a reported incident in their own place where a man was beaten by an unrecognized group during the middle of the night.

The disturbing increase in the crime rate prompted residents of Gen. Luna to choose the establishment of streetlights in their



*Before a Kalahi-CIDSS Community worker gets to Brgy. General Luna, one must brave a risky boat ride for a maximum of three hours or endure a perilous four-hour hike in the mountains.*

community as their sub-project, through the Kalahi-CIDSS or Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services, a program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) that seeks to help alleviate poverty using the Community-Driven Development (CDD) strategy.

To some people, the installation of 25 units of streetlight from a modest amount of Php 317,111.00 is just an ordinary project from a little sum, but to Gen. Luna residents, it is the greatest and only project they could have in order to liberate themselves from the fear that confines them.

The sub-project is undeniably the community's own initiative to prevent and deter crime. Through the CDD approach, residents of Gen. Luna are empowered as they are given the opportunity to identify their most pressing needs in the community and come up with solutions corresponding to the issue by choosing the type of sub-project that will answer the problem. Surprisingly, all families implemented the said project. Today, they still come together to maintain their precious lights, making it sure that it is a shared responsibility to sustain peace in the area.

Captain Victoriano reiterated that after the street lights were set up, crime incidence such as theft and physical assault have lessened. He remarked on the significant improvement of their locality's peace and order state. *"Yana mahangaturog na kami hin waray nakahadlok [Now we can sleep sound at night without fear]"*.

Based on the most recent report from Lope de Vega local Police, the reports of felony significantly lowered after the establishment of the streetlights, with 100% eradication of criminal acts.



*“I no longer fear for the safety of my children whenever they go out of our house at night.”*

--- Jenalyn Espelimergo



*“We are very thankful to DSWD, Kalahi-CIDSS, and PAMANA for giving us the chance to be included in the project, providing us a secured community that leads to our peaceful living. The program did not just light our streets, Kalahi-CIDSS and PAMANA also illuminated our hopes.”*

--- Brgy. Captain Liberato Victoriano

*“Nagpapasalamat kami han DSWD ngan Kalahi-CIDSS ug PAMANA san paghatag sa amon sin higayon nga matagamtaman an masuna nga komunidad ngadto san mahimyang nga pamoroko. Diri la niyo ginpalaga an amon dalan, ginpalamrag gihap niyo an amon paglaum (We are very thankful to DSWD, Kalahi-CIDSS, and PAMANA for giving us the chance to be included in the project, providing us a secured community that leads to our peaceful living. The program did not just light our streets, Kalahi-CIDSS and PAMANA also illuminated our hopes),”* he added.

Jenalyn Espelimergo, a mother and a PAMANA volunteer, expressed her gratitude toward the completion of the sub-project. She said she is not afraid anymore to allow her daughter to visit a classmate in the next street during the evening for school-related queries. *“Yana diri na ako mahahadlok kun nagawas it akon mga anak kun gab-i. no longer fear for the safety of my children whenever they go out of our house at night.”*

Aside from the restoration of peace and order in the community, Kalahi-CIDSS and PAMANA have also restored the power of women to participate in the community. Today, housewives in Gen. Luna are no longer confined within their houses. Ninety percent of these women are already part of the decision-making process in the community as they are given the chance to speak their thoughts. The emergence of women’s involvement is a positive response owing to the program’s initiative to mainstream gender equality.

With the scaling up of Kalahi-CIDSS into the KALAHÍ CIDSS-NCDDP or National Community-Driven Development Program, the women of Gen. Luna are already enthusiastic about the expansion and the opportunities that will be given to them.

*“Tungod sa Kalahi-CIDSS ngan PAMANA, nagkamay-ada kami aram sa pagpadalagan san proyekto sa barangay. Masisisring namon nga bulig kami siton nga streetlight. Diri la ngay-an kami pan-balay la. Akos ngay-an namon an pagbag-o! (Through Kalahi-CIDSS and PAMANA, we learned how to implement projects in the barangay. We can say that we are part of those streetlights. We thought we are just bound to be housewives. We can make a change!)”, Jenalyn proudly declared.*

The PAMANA or the PAYapa at MASaganang PamayaNAn which is under the KALAHl CIDSS-NCDDP, is the government’s framework for peace and development funded by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP). The framework follows a converged strategy of resource allocation and utilization, and aims to sustain all ongoing governance and development initiatives in communities affected by past or ongoing conflicts.#



*Maritess Tumacas and Leticia Hernain knew what it felt like to fear for their lives prior to the construction of the pathway*

## Dalan sa kalinaw\*: The tri-people's legacy

### *\*Pathway to Peace*

By Lei Madeline Mohammad

The thing that Maritess Tumacas hates to do every morning when she goes to the office is to pass by the deserted flea market in their village where four people were shot to death one fateful day in August 2012. The reason: everything was still fresh in her memory.

*“Naa’ay gisulud mga bayntika armed men sa barangay Sulo, didtu sa baligyaan, sa merkado. Dayun gi tulisang mga tawu, mga nagbaligya ug isda, goma. Nag cause nah sya ug upat katawu namatay kay gipangpusil man sila (Around 20 armed men entered our village, particularly through the wet market. The people were robbed. Four people were killed in that incident),”* Maritess started.

It was three years ago when the bucolic town of Naga was stunned by the cruel and still unsolved murder of some residents. However, Maritess recalled the incident with fear still evident in her eyes.

Naga, an interior municipality found in Zamboanga Sibugay province, is considered to have frequently pressing humanitarian concerns





*The pathway to peace in Barangay Sulo in Naga, Zamboanga Sibugay, constructed through Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA*

because of the prevailing climate of distrust and fear among its residents caused by peace and order threats. A home to tri-people - the Christians, Muslims and the Lumads - Naga has been continuously struggling to be able to shake loose the stereotypical impression of the outsiders that their town is a conflict torn and affected community.

*“Tungud sa mga katung panghitabu, naalang gihapun nga mga barangays nga hadlukang mga tau adtuhun. Pero as much as possible gusto na gyud namu mawala ang kanang konsepto nga chaotic ang among lugar. Gusto namu iprove nga maskin lain-lain nga relihiyo ug tribo ang nipuyo diri, naghiusalang gyapun mi* (Because of what happened, there are still villages where people are afraid to go. But we really want to lose that perception that our place is chaotic. We want to show them that we are still united despite the fact that the residents here differ in religion, culture or tribe),” Maritess added as she opened up about their situation.

Maritess, or simply Tess, is a 42-year old native of barangay Sulo in Naga serves as a barangay secretary and a Procurement Team Member of Kalahi-CIDSS Barangay Sub-project Management Committee. She has been actively participating in the different development efforts in the community, including the construction of the 395 meters concrete pathway, a project which they hoped would end their struggle and will prevent the same incident from happening again.

Tess was in the town of Sulo that day when saw her neighbors rushing to a school located in Bulansing (an isolated sitio in barangay Sulo) to fetch their daughters and sons.

*“Nagchaos ang mga tawu, nanagan mi. Nakit-an naku ang uban gahilak gadagan padung sa skwelahan didtu sa bulansing. Layu-layu man pud tu, mga upat ka kilometro gikan sa sentro. Dili man sya accessible by vehicles, maskin kanang single motorcycles, kinahanglan pa baclayun. Mao tu naglisud ang mga parents kuha dayun sa mga anak (Everyone panicked. We ran, and I saw some of our neighbors were crying, rushing to school to fetch their children. The school was four kilometres away from us and it was not even passable for vehicles making it difficult for parents to get their children immediately)”.*

Tess also recounted that the police struggled to respond because they still had to walk through the narrow and hilly trail to get to the crime scene. The same incident transpired after a few weeks and this prompted the community members to act upon the situation.

*“Bahinatu, nakadecide mi kay concrete pathway gyud ang among kinahanglan ibutang sa sitio Bulansing. Nakit-an namu kay dakug kaayuhan gyud nin gihatag. Una, easy and safe access para sa tanan, ang pagresponde sa pulis kung nay mga panghitabu, human narealize pud namu kay kini pud ang mahimung bridge sa mga lain-lain nga tribo (Because of that, we saw the need to construct a concrete pathway. We saw that it was the best project for all. Aside from it can give us easy and safe access for the residents, most especially for the police whenever something happens, we also realized that it can serve as a bridge between our people),”* Tess recounted, referring to the Subanens who live in Bulansing.

*“Kami isip myembro sa komunidad, gi-konsider namu sya kaayuhan pud sa mga Subanen tribe. Ang nigawas man nga murag sa centro lang ang natagaan ug project kung asa ang mga kristyano, syempre lain pud nang feeling murag nabiyaan sila. So gusto pud namu participate pud sila kay para sa ilaha man pud nang dalan (As a member of the community, we also considered the welfare of the Subanen. Because when we were given the first project of PAMANA, it seemed that they were left behind. So we wanted them to participate because the pathway was for their own good),”* she continued.

Through the 300,000 cash grant from KC-PAMANA, the construction of a concrete pathway was implemented in Sitio Bulansing, Barangay Sulo, Naga in September 2013. The implementation of the sub-project followed the Kalahi-CIDSS Community Driven Development approach which gives opportunity to the community members to participate in the entire process through volunteerism.

Volunteering together with Tess, was Leticia Hernain who served as the Bangay Sub-project Management Committee Chairperson. Like Tess, Leticia was also at first cynical about the possibility of getting the project.

*“Sa primero dili jud mi mutuu, kay wala bya na sukad sa una nga ang tawu mauy mudecide sa project, gikan baya sa national ang project ihatag na lang sa imuha, misan dili demand sa community, itukud na lang, whereas karun kami ang mag decide unsa among kinahanglan (We didn’t believe it at first because since before never did the people decide what project to get, it would always come from the national (level), even if it’s not what the people actually wanted. Whereas this time, it is the people who decided what project they need),”* Leticia disclosed.

Despite their own disbelief, Tess and Leticia decided to step up and rally for change.

*“Akung gihuna huna, maskin wa ku kahuman, kulang yung kaalaman ko, pero para man sa tawu yan, then ang mga makabenefit isa ang akung mga anak, akung mga pamilya, bisan na sa akung kaugalingun, amu na sya nahimu kug interesado mu volunteer (I thought to myself that my family will be one of those who can benefit from the project, even myself. So that’s what really made me interested to volunteer even though I didn’t finish my studies and have limited knowledge about everything),”* Leticia spoke zealously.

While Leticia was motivated by the benefits that the sub-project can bring to her and her family, Tess on the other hand thought more of volunteering as an opportunity to share her knowledge as a public servant.



*The police had a difficult time responding to peace and security issues in Barangay Sulo in Naga, Zamboanga Sibugay*

*“Maskin wala compensation nga madawat okay lang basta duna pud mi ikashare nga kahibalu. Kay anytime mawala ta sa kalibutan di natu madala. So karun that’s the time na itodo na (Even we don’t get any compensation, I just wanted to share my little knowledge because anytime we might just leave this world, we cannot bring this with us),”* Tess stated.

The completion of the concrete pathway came in no time because of the determination, unity and cooperation among the people of barangay Sulo, regardless of religion, tribe, age and gender. Everyone took part to ensure there is security and peace in the community.

Leticia even shared that all her family members were volunteers in their own little way.

*“Volunteer pud ang akung bana. Hasta akung mga anak muapil-apil pud sa pagpahina. Basta nagkasinabut lang mi kay para sa kaayuhan ni sa tanan (My husband is also a volunteer, even my children helped out in the manual hauling of materials. We just made sure that everyone in the family understood that what we’re doing was for the good of everyone),”* Leticia proudly shared.

Though they don’t share they share the same religion, Tess and Leticia, as Christians, expressed their gladness on how the project has paved the way for the Lumads to establish a better relationship with them since the pathway serves as the connection between the town of Sulo and Sitio Bulansing.

*“Pagkakakaron dunay na syang linkages, nagmingle na ang mga Kristyano, Muslim ug mga Subanen nga nipuyo sa Bulansing. Ang ilahang gibati kay ang centro gane naka avail sa pamana, kami pud naka avail so na feel na nila kay part pud sila sa community, sa paglambu/nibalik ang ilahag pagsalig sa gobyerno, walay rejection, maskin unsa ang lahi, sa Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA, tanan gitrato as Kalahi (The project also serves as a linkage between Christian, Muslim and Subanen. It made them feel that they were part of the community because they too availed of the Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA project. They now feel that they are part of the progress, they gave back their trust to the government, no more rejection, regardless of religion, tribe, culture, with Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA, everyone is treated the same).”*

An IP resident of Bulansing also expressed happiness over the pathway project: *“Lingaw gyud mi. Kay di na mi maglisud sa dalan, labi na ang mga estudyante. Human, murag nagkahiusa na gyud ang mga taga Bulansing ug Sulo (We are really happy because we will no*

longer have to put up with a difficult pathway, especially the students. And it seems like the people of Bulansing and Sulo are now united).”

Then Tess finally added how the project made them feel safe and secure above all. *“Labi sa tanan, di na mi kabalaka kay kabalalu mi, wala na isolated nga community, nga bisan unsa mahitabu, ang mga pulis makaresponde dayun sa maong orasa. Di na mi mabalaka kay kabalalu mu, di mi biyaan sa gobyerno kay gihatagan nila mig dalan padung sa kalinaw* (Most importantly, we do not worry anymore, because whatever happens, the police can immediately respond at the right time. We now feel safe because we know the government will never leave us because they’ve bequeathed us a legacy---a pathway to peace).”

The PAMANA implementation of DSWD is nearing its end in 13 municipalities in Western Mindanao. In its wake, it has left behind 107 community infrastructure projects like roads, schools, health stations and livelihood enhancers that immediately address the needs of the communities. But more than just concrete structures, PAMANA has left some more important legacies – peace, unity and a progressive community.#



*Brgy. Kagawad Napoleon Pura regularly checks the footages generated from the CCTV if for violence-related activities.*

## Villagers come together for sustainable peace **[Peace of mind through CCTVs and street lighting]**

By Jesseshan Marbella

**M**any people face different threats to peace and security. This is true for Pinontingan, a poblacion barangay of Gubat, Sorsogon which is home to 1,342 residents. This place has frequent visitors since the parish church, plaza and two big schools are located here, thus, making it more difficult to secure the area.

According to Barangay Kagawad Nicanor Ermino, Peace and Order Chairman, they recorded 46 criminal cases in 2012 and 2013; theft was committed more often.

His two fighting cocks worth Php3,000.00 were taken by minors who allegedly came from another community. Liberata Esquijo, another resident, claimed that her child's six-month old bike was also stolen in 2012.

The barangay council admitted that their eight barangay tanods, who go on rotation schedules, only report for duty from eight in the





*A student of Gubat North Central School passes by the CCTV installed outside their school.*

evening until midnight. The daily honorarium of Php27.00 is a meager amount commensurate to their functions to keep peace and order in the community.

However, the construction of 12 units of street lighting this year and the installation of four units of closed-circuit television (CCTV) last year lessened criminal activities in Pinontingan.

The streetlights were evenly distributed in the darkest areas of its four puroks while the CCTVs were placed in the most critical areas namely Bicol University-Gubat Campus, Gubat North Central School and the streets of Burgos and Rizal which serve as the entry and exit points of Pinontingan.

According to Brgy Captain Ramon Farenas, the CCTV records evidences especially when violence happens in the dead of the night. He appreciated the solar-powered streetlights because it illuminates the community even during brownouts.

*“Nakadanon sa peace and order (It contributed to peace and order),”* Carlos Estrellado, a community volunteer who helped in the construction of the abovementioned projects, said.

Estrellado and the residents got what they wanted through their participation in the identification of projects that would minimize and solve theft and other crimes.

## Shared responsibility

The barangay council of Pinontingan allotted Php10,000.00 annually for the operation and maintenance of the CCTV and street lighting. They also provided a total counterpart contribution of Php180,000.00 for both projects.

Through these projects, there was an increase in people's participation in community activities and they are now helping.

*“Naging cooperative na ang mga tao ta naimod na ninda ang mga benepisyo na makukua (The people became cooperative because they can see the benefits from the projects.)”* Estrellado added.

Napoleon Pura and Romeo Estera, who go on rotation, are assigned to check and monitor the recorded footages weekly from the CCTV for any violence-related activities.

## Realizing development through new learnings

The community volunteers are members of the Barangay Subproject Management Committee (BSPMC), elected through the barangay assembly to lead and manage the community projects to address the needs of the people.

The CCTV and streetlights were one of the development projects of Kalahi-CIDSS under Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA), which ensures that peace is maintained in the community through greater community participation.

Marites Real, another community volunteer in Pinontingan, said that she will never forget the new learnings she reaped as a volunteer.

She became the Procurement Team member in the construction of their community projects. Her main function was to facilitate the canvas of the materials and equipment needed for the CCTV and streetlights and serve the purchase order to the lowest responsive bidder.

Apart from that, she was delegated to take the minutes of their meeting to record all the agreements during the procurement of the projects.

Real was challenged by this new task assigned to her because she had no background in doing this task. She was left with the choice to forcibly learn the skills of writing the document that will be part of the project's completion.

Even though she disliked writing, she realized that she can do it for the benefit of their community.

*“Dati di ako maaram pag minutes, pero at least niyan may idea na ako (I have no idea in [writing] minutes [of the meeting] but now at least I have an idea),”* she explained.

She was able to improve her skills along with the other volunteers through the training in minutes writing which was conducted through Kalahi-CIDSS. She kept the training materials for her future reference and guide that became handy during the actual application.

*“Daghanon ang mga naaraman ko sa mga trainings and seminars bilang volunteer (I learned a lot from trainings and seminars as a volunteer),”* she said.

She attested that the residents like her are truly involved in all the processes of implementing their community projects.

Active citizenry and the support of the barangay council to the project resulted to a safer Pinontingan where the residents can enjoy a lasting peace brought by the projects and its sustainability.#



**BRIDGE OF UNITY** – the Bandila hanging bridge symbolizes the trials and triumph for community volunteers in realizing the project

## From Guns to Spades

By Maricar M. Calubiran

A hanging bridge now serves as a monument of progress, unity and collective participation of the community and the government in a town constantly threatened by the activities of the rebel group New People's Army (NPA).

For Lt Col Efren Morados of the Philippine Army (PA), the construction of Kalahi-CIDSS-funded structure in Barangay Bandila demonstrates the active participation of the government in uplifting the lives of impoverished Filipinos, particularly, those in remote and hard-to-reach areas of the country.

Morados was referring to the first public-private partnership endeavor in Western Visayas, where the DSWD, Philippine Army, local government unit of Toboso and barangay local government unit of Bandila, worked with the community under the Kalahi-CIDSS program.

The Philippine Army chose Barangay Bandila after the conduct of the Municipal Inter-Barangay Forum of Toboso. Barangay Bandila is a remote area wherein the implementation of any infrastructure project will entail the community additional cost for the delivery of construction materials.

The Philippine Army is part of the Municipal Inter-Agency Committee (MIAC) Technical Group which reviews the proposed projects of the community for prioritization.

The army official notes how the NPA - the armed group of the Communist Party of the Philippines, successfully recruits “cadres”, particularly in the remote areas in the country where government help is not readily available. He says with the living conditions in these areas, the rebels can easily convince people that there is “little



*WHILE working at the construction site, soldiers carry both their rifles and sacks of stones to be used in constructing the bridge's approach*

progress” under the democratic government. Thus, the completion of a hanging bridge that now plays an important role in the lives of residents in Bandila, showed the community that the government is taking active steps in helping the disadvantaged sectors, he added.

### **Dangerous Road Often Traveled**

Bandila is more than five kilometers from Crossing Cabalas which is located in the nearest village of Tabun-ac. Despite the short distance, the difficult terrain prolongs the travel between the two villages to up to 20 minutes.

The road is rough, and the daily commute would make one closer to all saints one has ever known. Rains make the road practically impassable. Adding “adventure” or risks to the travel is the cliff on one side of the road. One wrong move and commuters would definitely have that plunge in the river below, when swelling is deep enough to drown even the bravest but most unfortunate of souls.

Despite of the danger posed by the river, children have no choice but to travel the road in their rubber slippers. Only when they arrive in the Bandila Elementary School could they change into shoes and clean uniforms.

## **Persistent Souls**

While the difficult situation required the construction of a bridge, not a lot of residents in Bandila showed their support when Kalahi-CIDSS was introduced to them.

According to Marbeleth Dueñas, chairperson of the Barangay Sub-Project Management Committee, the residents discouraged them from pursuing the project as early as the social preparation stage.

*“Ang hambal nila mapudpud na lang amon tsinelas sa pabalik balik sa pag attend sang barangay assembly kag paghanas apang wala sang hanging bridge nga magatindog (People tell us we’ll worn out our slippers from attending barangay assemblies yet no hanging bridge will be built),”* she said.

The teary-eyed Dueñas narrates they had received a lot of discouraging words from the residents at the time when they were working hard to bring realization to the project.

She related that even the barangay officials opposed the project because they felt their authority as elected barangay leaders were circumvented by community volunteers through the Kalahi-CIDSS process. Barangay officials wanted to implement the project themselves without the participation of the community.

*“Siling ko, ‘Lord, bahala ka na basta ang akon pag seminar dili para sa akon personal nga interes kundi para sa katawhan’ (I said, ‘Lord, it is in Your hands, since we are doing this for the people and not for ourselves’).”* People did not value what we were working for, she lamented.

*“Halos pila ako ka gabi nga dili kapuli sa amon panimalay tungod sa project kag magagmay pa mga anak ko. Sakit sa buot ang ginhatag, wala nila na appreciate ang obra ko (I did not go home for several nights because of the project and my children are still young. They gave us heartaches, they did not appreciate our work),”* added Dueñas.

She dreamt that development will come to their community one day--by having a safe passage. This will make it easier for them to bring their produce like bananas and other root crops to the market. *“Wala ko ya galantaw lang sa akon kaugalingon nga kaayohan kundi sang*



bug-os nga barangay (I do not think only of my own good but of the entire community),” Dueñas said.

While some laughed at what they were doing, she said there are those who believed in her and the project, like Barangay Kagawad Ernesto Bulanon.

*“Gapasalamat ako ug daku kay gin-encourage niya ako nga kaya ko kag magpadayon bisan lisod (I thanked him for encouraging me to continue the work even if it is hard),”* she said.

Dueñas noted how the residents adopted a “wait-and-see” attitude if not complete indifference to the project.



*“BAYANIHAN” works between residents who put stones in the road to help the military truck loaded with construction materials pass*

With regards to working with the members of the Philippine Army, Duenas was not bothered at all. *“Imagine, gabulig sila sa amon bayanihan wala sweldo. Daku savings namon sa barangay”* (Imagine, they helped us in our bayanihan without wages. We have lot of savings in our barangay).

She says they felt safe with the presence of the army especially at night time. Though, there are some villagers who questioned the army’s participation.

*“Ginahambalan ko lang sila ang Philippine Army partner namon sa proyekto. Wala sila dapat kakulbaan. Indi gamo ang ila pangita kundi gusto nila kalinaw (I told them, the Philippine Army is our partner in the project. They need not fear. They are not looking for trouble but to help bring peace),”* explained Dueñas.



*SOLDIERS and villagers pile the stones near the construction site*

Today, things have changed a lot since then. People and the current barangay leaders appreciate her efforts and the rest of the community volunteers.

“When the project was first conceived, everyone thought that it was not going to happen,” confirmed Morados.

### **‘Bayanihan’**

Under the Internal Peace and Security Plan (IPSP) or “Bayanihan,” the 62nd Infantry Division of the Philippine Army, headed by Lt Col Eduardo Gubat and Capt. Joeter Doctolero, the unit’s former Civil Military Operations Officer and Lt Leo Zaleta, company commander, inked an agreement with the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the town officials securing the Army’s help in the implementation of Kalahi-CIDSS projects in the villages of San Isidro, Magticol, Bug-ang and Bandila.

“It is our thrust to look after the community. Our work is not only to secure the community from the NPA’s lawless activities but also promote services of government,” says Morados.

Major Enrico Ileta, spokesperson of the 3rd Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army, confirms that it is part of the Armed Forces of the Philippines’ thrust to bring social services support to the community.

“The soldiers are in full support of the implementation of different projects crafted by the government, civil society organizations, and non-government organizations,” Ileta says.

“Bayanihan is now the ‘Bible’ of the soldiers in contributing to the attainment of internal peace and security. They will give all the sectors a helping hand,” says lleto.

The IPSP states that the soldiers shall provide assistance especially for individuals and communities affected by armed hostilities and those groups who are vulnerable to calamities.

Under the agreement, the Philippine Army will provide a work force during the construction of the subprojects three days every week and will make available 6x6 trucks for the hauling of aggregates and other construction materials to the said barangays.

The changes in the hierarchy in the Army did not affect their commitment to the people of Toboso. When Gubat and Zaleta were replaced with Col. Jose Ely Alberto (who is then replaced by Lt Col Efren Morados) and Lt. Zoe Galido respectively, their replacements continued the initiatives started by their predecessors.

Galido designated Lt Hugh Wilson Jalago as officer-in-charge of the subprojects in Bandila and San Isidro.

### **Using Spades instead of Guns**

Soldiers turned construction workers became a common sight in the village. They came armed with spades and buckets while clad in fatigue uniforms and combat boots as they dug holes for the bridge posts.

The army’s provision of a labor force lowered the local counterpart contribution the village needed to shoulder, covering 19 percent or equivalent to P39, 900.



*SOLDIERS dig holes for the bridge’s posts*

The total project cost of the hanging bridge is P1.19 million, with the Kalahi-CIDSS grant amounting to P980,000 or 70 percent, while the remaining 30 percent came from the local counterpart contribution, amounting to P210,000.

The soldiers brought their own food and their dedication in completing the project pushed the villagers into finally believing that their dream of having a hanging bridge will be realized.

But the construction was not without danger. There were instances of “exchanges of fire” between the rebels and the soldiers, prompting some members of the Army to carry their guns while working on the site.

Despite of these dangers, the soldiers continued to allot their time and effort in making sure the bridge will be completed even as some of the volunteers were forced to flee for their own safety.

PFC Jason Abata recalled at first there was a gap between the army and community. People were then not used to see the army working with the villagers. The community always saw them as the one running after the rebels in the mountains. This has changed. The army is also into community service and wants to help the community, said Abata.

*“Subong hindi puro away. Kundi ang sundalo para man sa serbisyo sa tawo. (It is not all battle now. Soldiers are also for the service of the people),”* he says.

He said that the community's anxiety was addressed when they saw the sincerity of the soldiers in helping them complete the construction of the bridge, whether by hauling the construction materials or digging foundations.

Lt Hugh Wilson Jalago said one remarkable lesson he learned while working in Kalahi-CIDSS is that “development should be a concerted effort among the different stakeholders.” It should not only be the concern of one person or organization but everyone else. In Kalahi-CIDSS, the importance of community empowerment is underscored, he added.

### **Call for Continued Support**

Morados notes the relevance of the bridge, particularly in easing the hardship experienced by students and teachers when going to school. He called on the community to continue supporting the government and the Kalahi-CIDSS.

“Everybody is happy because the project is completed and functional. Everybody wants to get the credit. I hope next time villagers who were half-hearted in helping the project will give their hearts and mind to advance similar projects,” said Morados.

The hanging bridge is only one of the 1,274 completed subprojects that serve as silent witness to the trials and triumphs of Kalahi-CIDSS in its nine years of implementation in the region. Moreover, the participation of the army opened a new chapter in the Kalahi-CIDSS in Western Visayas.

The barangay’s completion of the hanging bridge reminded the community that the government, the Philippine Army and the people can work together and share the same aspiration to confront the issue of poverty, said Morados.

“There were lots of trials and lessons that happened before the project was completed. The over-all lessons from the project showed that nothing is impossible if everyone helps,” Morados explained, likening the trials experienced by the community and local government to a hard rock. But “Even the hardest rock would not be able to withstand constant water drippings.”

Morados also stressed on how peace and security are tied with improved lives: “We believe that the key to development of the barangays is peace. There is no peace when there is no good governance. There is no good governance when there is no security. Good governance, security and development are closely interrelated.”#



# **KAPANGYARIHAN (Empowerment)**

GO EDUCATION







Lagunde Women during one of their meetings

## The Cry of the Daughters of Pikit

By Hilbert Estacion

**P**IKIT, North Cotabato---As Saida Salaban, 45, hurried off to their farm, the sun's powerful rays flooded over the landscape, reluctantly making way for a new day in the beautiful village of Sitio Kadingilan, Barangay Lagunde, some 10 kilometers away from town proper of Pikit, North Cotabato. The earthly feeling of quietness and coolness of morning prevailed in her while she strolled along the muddy road of the place.

Suddenly, a loud crack in the silent air reached her ears, as if she was right next to a fireworks display. Then, like a scene in a movie, everything seemed to move in slow motion as she found herself on the ground – stumbling, crawling, gasping – in the middle of crossfire.

*“Hindi ko alam kung ano ang gagawin nang mga oras na iyon (I didn’t know what to do that very moment),” Saida recalls. “Bigla na lang lahat nagsisipagtakbuhan ngunit di alam kung saan patungo (In a short time, people were running but didn’t know where to go),” she added.*

To make matters worse, Saida was crushed in agony seeing her 12-year-old nephew Ruben sprawling beside her, whom she realized had saved her life, for it was the boy who sustained the bullets that were supposed to have hit her.

Saida was left with no choice but to witness the agony of Ruben struggling to survive. Unfortunately, the boy died minutes later after suffering fatal gun shots.

*“Gusto ko siyang tulungan, pero hindi ko alam kung papano kasi nagkakaputukan pa (As much as I wanted to help him, I could not do it because we were in the middle of crossfire),”* she sadly recalled.

When she got a chance, in state of great remorse, she ran to a place she thought was a safer one and started looking for her children.

It was back in January 2000, but Saida could not contain her tears every time she recalled that event in her life.

### **Transit point**

Pikit was always in the eye of the storm, dragged into conflict since 1997 because of the warring factions and the armed conflict in place that seem to erupt every three years.

Among the major armed conflicts include the all-out-war declaration in 2000, waging of war in 2003 after series of bombings in Mindanao and the declaration of MOA-AD as unconstitutional in 2008, prompting some groups to stage attacks on various civilians after.

In Lagunde, because it is one of transit points of both combatants and government army forces, the villagers were always left with no choice but to get caught in the crossfire.

*“May mga panahon na bago pa man magkaputukan, nakaalis na kami, pero may panahon din na bigla-biglaan lang darating na hindi inaasahan mangyari (There are times that before the conflict erupted we already left the village but there were times that it unexpectedly came),”* said Tarhata Sulaik-Karim, 45, mother of two and the village chairwoman.

For barangay captain Tarhata, the images of conflict continued to run across her mind, especially the struggles of women.

*“Sa sobrang taranta, hindi na namin inaalintana ang dilim, lamig at pagod habang dala-dala ang aming mga anak at alagang hayop (In our haste, we were heedless of the dark, cold and tired while carrying our children and domestic animals),”* barangay captain Tarhata said.

Every time conflict occurred in town, Lagunde became a ghost village, with people leaving the place, bringing something that helped them survive in the evacuation center.

### **Unmatched struggle**

As observed, women and children carry a great burden in times of war.

Moslina Solaiman, 32, was six months pregnant when conflict happened in 2003. The unbearable trouble she experienced while escaping in war, exacerbated by the chaotic situations in the evacuation center prompted her untimely delivery. Sadly, the baby died in the evacuation center.

*“Walang kapantay na sakit at hirap (It was of unmatched pain and struggle),”* Moslima said as she describes the feeling of a victim of unfortunate circumstances.

The food rations and other aids were usually not enough. Sometimes, in the absence of men, women must take care of their children while also making a living.

*“Minsan isa, dalawa o tatlong buwan, minsan abot ng taon, depende sa sitwasyon (Sometimes one, two or three months, sometimes one year, depending on the situation),”* Moslima said as she recalls how long they stay in the evacuation center in times of conflict.

### **Stealing crops**

Sarah Usman, 36, the president of the women’s association in the village, said that there were instances when the food rations and aid were not enough and the only option they opted for was to go back to their villages to forage for food or something to sell.

*“Naging magnanakaw kami sa sarili naming mga sakahan, ng aming mga alagang hayop (We became thieves in our own land and domestic animals),”* she said.

Sarah said that in times like these, despite the warnings not to go back in their farms, they still did it for their children. Usually, according to her, they went to their farms at night, risking their lives in the process to salvage anything that will enable them to survive in the evacuation center.

*“Kung nakikita mo na nahihirapan at nagugutom ang mga anak mo, lahat gagawin mo kahit na minsan ikamamatay mo na (Seeing your children in difficulty, in hunger, you will do all everything even if it means it will take your life),”* Lina said.

Sarah said that they saw the government and non-government efforts to help those who were displaced. Still, the number of affected families remained huge every time armed conflict occurred. According to her, it meant, understandably, that individual needs cannot be provided to all families in the evacuation centers in time.

### **Peacebuilding mechanism**

The government, through the Department of Social Welfare and Development started the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services's (Kalahi-CIDSS) implementation of the PAlapa at MAsaganang PamayaNAn (PAMANA), the peace framework of the national government through the the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), in mid-2012 in Pikit.

Through Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA, various community projects were identified and considered as the most pressing needs of different villages of the town.

As part of the peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts of the government to villages of Pikit, the town underwent several processes including series of barangay consultative assemblies, trainings, participatory conflict analysis, identification of community projects, its implementation and sustainability.

The government has poured some P37.8 million pesos from 2012 to 2014 into the three cycles, to finance various Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA community projects to provide better access to basic social services, while at the same time supporting peace-building efforts.

Each cycle, Lagunde and other forty-one barangays of Pikit received P300, 000 as a grant for each cycle.

### **Empowering community, women**

According to barangay captain Tarhata, Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA urged villagers to unite as they discussed root causes and drivers that fuel the prevalence of conflict in their community. Along the way, they determined their needs and priorities, as well as their proposed mechanism to address their identified concerns.

It was then that Lagunde women were given the opportunity by the villagers to show what they've got. Various activities were women-led like barangay assemblies, orientations, and identification of community projects up until the implementation.

Far from the old mindset that women were confined to menial tasks at home, Lagunde women became an active sector that fosters peaceful relations between and among communities and address the root of conflict.

In February 6, 2014, Saida, Tarhata, Moslima Sarah and the rest of the women in Lagunde gathered in Sitio Kadingilan, not to evacuate but to inaugurate a new building, symbolizing a new chapter in their lives.

A Community & Peace Learning Center with basic amenities worth P645,800.00 was constructed and turned over to village's women association as the fruit of their collaborative efforts.

*“Bilang mga anak ng Pikit at biktima ng kaguluhan ay hindimaging basihan kung ano ang hindi at kaya nating gawin para sa pagbangon sa anumang pagsubok (As daughters of Pikit and victims of conflict, we should not define what we cannot and can do as we rise above the challenges we encountered),”* barangay captain Tarhata said.

Saida, Tarhata, Moslima Sarah and the rest of daughters of Pikit, are praying and crying for a permanent closure of internal armed conflicts in town and in the whole country. #



*Janita P. Acuña, a community volunteer in Tagbina, Surigao del Sur, shares her story.*

## Peace and development projects ease mothers' anxieties

By Eunice G. Montaos

**I**f there is one person who wants a peaceful community for children, it would be a mother.

In Villa Verde, a small barangay in the municipality of Tagbina in Surigao del Sur which can be reached through an hour of habal-habal ride from the national highway, some mothers primed the peace and development initiatives for their community, and for their children.

Janita P. Acuña, Lyra Vee A. Vigonte, and Desideria T. Rarasonabe, have proven through their firsthand experiences that even ordinary citizens in a community can be agents of positive change.

### **Her strength, her motivation**

Knocks in the middle of the night, fox holes under their house, and her father's sudden casual disappearances – these were some scenarios that were experienced by Janita in her younger years when their community was still a den of insurgency. Peace then was but a luxury for the residents of Villa Verde.



These dreadful experiences while growing up were her strong motivation to maintain the peaceful community their village has become.

At 42, she is a mother of six (6) children whose ages range from 5 to 18. They had to be away from her husband, Francisco, 42, who works hard as a security guard in Cagayan de Oro.

Because of the distance, Francisco could only afford to visit them in Villa Verde only thrice a month. This proved to be challenging for Janita, especially in taking care of their children.

In late afternoons and early nights when her children walk towards home from their school, Janita sometimes feels anxious about having no lights in the streets to guide her children's paths towards home. Some of her neighbors even experienced being robbed upon passing through those non-lighted areas. The culprits were not captured because they can easily run away and hide.

This was her reason for volunteering in the PAYapa at MASaganang PamanayaNAn (PAMANA) project implemented under the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (Kalahi-CIDSS) program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). As a poverty alleviation program, it uses the Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach, which engages ordinary citizens to take active part in development works.

Janita was hesitant to join at first because she is toothless, and because she thought she had no pleasing personality. But for the sake of the safety of her children, she volunteered in Kalahi-CIDSS so that the solar streetlights to be realized in her community.

*“Dili na gusto nga ang mga kahadlok nga akong nabati sa una mabati pud sa akong mga anak karon. Di pud ko gusto nga ang akong mga anak manginabuhi pud sa kahadlok, (I don’t want my children to feel the dread I felt when I was young. I don’t want them to live in fears either),”* Janita emotionally opened up.

### **Her story, her PAMANA**

Meanwhile, Lyra, 42, tearfully shared her disappointment that she was not included in the engraved list of names of volunteers for the health station sub-



*Lyra Vee A. Vigonte tearfully discloses her disappointment when her name was not reflected on the markers of their implemented sub-project.*

project during the Kalahi-CIDSS: KKB in the early 2000s. In spite of this, she still volunteered in the implementation of PAMANA projects. As a mother, she longed to leave a legacy for her only child. She, like most mothers, wanted her child to be proud of her.

Serving as the chairperson for the Project Preparation and Operations and Maintenance teams during the implementation of the water system sub-project in Villa Verde, Lyra shared that she did not want her child to question her why she did not participate in putting up the said sub-project.

The water system in the village eventually solved the need of Lyra's family for enough water supply and to the 453 households in Villa Verde.

*“Kahinumdom pa jud ko sa una atong wala pa ang proyekto, mubangon ko ug alas-kwatro sa kaadlawon para magpila mangabo ug tubig unya makauli ko sa among balay alas-kwatro na pud sa hapon (I can still remember before the project was put up in the village, I will have to wake up as early as 4 o'clock in the morning to queue for the water and I went back home as late as 4 o'clock in the afternoon),”* shared Desideria, 54, a resident of Villa Verde.

Tears flow down her cheeks as she recalled the times when the residents, including herself, shouted and mocked each other, claiming the right to every ounce of water in their village's well – their only source of water in the past.



*Kalahi-CIDSS volunteers installed their solar streetlights to lessen the incidence of crimes in their community*



*Community volunteers with the barangay council happily show their sustained sub-project.*

*“Sa una, pila na ko ka oras gapila, tapos muhawa lang ko kadali ibilin lang ang mga galon. Pagbalik nako, wala gayud musibog ang akong linya, daghan na pud makasingit (Back then, I queue for many hours, then I sometimes leave my containers unattended and my neighbors will cut in),” related Desideria.*

Punong Barangay Alejandro T. Panamogan added that the problem of the lack of enough potable water supply once challenged the peaceful situation of their community as it created conflicts between the residents, who all badly need water, and the local barangay council.

There was even an issue on the council’s setting of priorities since the residents in Poblacion were always given priority, what with the water source located in the vicinity.

*“Gubot jud kaayo ang mga katawhan, tungod lang sa tubig mag-inawayay, ug permi pud mabasol ang council (The people were in conflict before, and they even blamed the council for the water crisis),” he said further.*

### **Their achievement**

The conflict which was caused by the problem in water was solved through the funds made available from the combined resources of Kalahi-CIDSS Makamasang Tugon and PAMANA Cycle 1, and realized after various community consultations and bayanihan/pahina activities, and with the active participation of volunteers.

These mothers in Villa Verde found an avenue to develop their skills and to learn significant things through the Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA project. They all recognized how distinct the CDD approach incorporated by the Program as it promoted understanding and unity between and among the residents and the local barangay council.

Apart from motherhood, they found themselves as project implementers and peacekeepers in their own simple way.

With their experiences in the intervention of the Program, some anxieties which were but innate to every mother were all alleviated through the peace and development efforts of the national government.#



*The school building constructed by Kalahi-CIDSS in Barangay Talisay in Calatrava, Romblon*

## Breaking barriers, building a community

By Xel Roxanne Ancheta

From above, the MiMaRoPa region is a picturesque canvass riddled with islands – a culture-soaked beauty where islands are scattered in random perfection forming a panoramic view of landmasses atop the blue ocean. The region is undoubtedly blessed with magnificence but is also punctured with poor communities distributed across its islands. Its geographical structure poses a welcoming challenge – how does one develop and binds communities that sit far apart?

### **Fusing an island-barangay**

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is one of the leaders in helping effect change in poor communities in the country. In Calatrava, Romblon, over 600 households were recorded poor, 133 of which are located in barangay Talisay. Development programs are laid out to improve the living conditions of five island-sitios that consist barangay Talisay.

The Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Community Integrated Delivery of Social Services (Kalahi-CIDSS), one of the department's core programs, allows communities to identify and prioritize an area for community development. It was introduced to barangay Talisay in 2012. Part of the program's premise is to conduct regular barangay assemblies for decision-making and alignment of plans.

The sitios are separated by water that requires boat rides to get from one place to another. During the wet season when the ocean is filled with waves, residents find it difficult to cross to another sitio causing a shift in their daily routine. This forces barangay assemblies to be conducted only twice a year, and only officials are able to attend due to the costs of boat fare and the risks of traveling between islands. Information is disseminated only through word-of-mouth within barangays and nearby neighborhoods.

### **The Kalahi-CIDSS Experience**

At the onset, Kalahi-CIDSS received a less-than-warm reception from the residents. People were nonchalant about the program. To a community that is already divided into islands, a great binding force is needed to cause a shift in perspective.

Resty Mantes, 42, from sitio Aguada was among the first volunteers of the program. Her voice, along with fellow volunteers concretized a proposal for a one-unit one-classroom community project. She went around selling stories of possibilities of creating a positive change, but not all were interested. *"It is unfortunate that some already accepted defeat at the early stage of the project,"* said Resty.

As the community moved forward to implement the project, they religiously attended trainings along with barangay officials – basic project management, project proposal development, community financing, procurement, and operation, maintenance, and monitoring of projects—a refreshing break from a monotonous life the residents once lived.

The project slowly came into fruition. Every assembly became a platform for collective ideas from fisherfolks, housewives, and farmers. Volunteers, who appeared in assemblies came with an agenda – they interacted, argued, raised concerns—but ultimately they understood what developing a community is about. Each boat ride was a journey inadvertently shaping a sense of responsibility. Every member felt important, which became a foundation to a sprouting change.

On their way back to their sitios, they told stories of their experiences and new knowledge gained from partaking in community development. The volunteers became examples that formed a good sense of perception for the apathetic. People started asking. A deeper sense of involvement attracted new volunteers.

### **Changes in the Community**

The island-sitios became carpeted with people who commit to change. More people were now interested in initiating a new project – farm to market roads, bridges, more schools – they understood what they needed and how to satisfy it.

Apart from these, they created organizations such as Samahan ng mga Ulirang Mamamayan ng Talisay (SAUMATA). SAUMATA has 32 members who conduct joint community services, gives loan opportunities to members, and supports government and community projects.

Now, people are easier to gather. Information dissemination became easier. Residents started asking questions. They felt important.

The experience of becoming interconnected in a place that is physically divided was hard. Communication, however, became a propelling instrument that transcends differences –a linking agent, a driving force for a community that look forward to a developed life. #







# KAUNLARAN (PROGRESS)

DSWD  
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT ACTIVITY CYCLE

WATER SENSITIZATION &  
COLLECTION OF PROPOSED  
PROJECTS





Producers of development *Aside from bringing food to the table, the farmers of Brgy. Cawayanin Ibaba in Catanauan, Quezon also gave a bright future to their community. In 2013, they volunteered for the Kalahi-CIDSS electrification sub-project, which now brought light to 30 households residing in the area. These farmers-volunteers also tapped other government agencies to implement the Sitio Electrification Program in their community which aims to provide the whole barangay with complete electric supply this 2015.*

## Opportunities light up for the community

By Gabrielle Marian Teodoro

**A**s the sun starts to set, the farmers of Brgy. Cawayanin Ibaba in Catanauan, Quezon take off their hats, gather their tools, and hastily march towards home.

*“Lahat ay hinahabol ang liwanag hanggang makauwi sa bahay. Nakakatakot kasing maglakad kapag gabi na dahil sobrang dilim at wala naman kaming ilaw sa lugar (We strove to get home while there is still light. We were scared to walk at night because it was dark and there were no lights in the area),”* shared 64-year old Felix de Gala, a farmer and resident in the community.

More than half of the barangay has fertile land for rice, corn, coconut, and other agricultural crops. However, the farmers worry each night since stealing of agricultural products is typical in the area.

*“Dahil walang ilaw at madilim, madalas kaming manakawan ng ani. Minsan, kahit mga alaga naming baboy ninanakaw. Ang hirap na nga ng buhay, mawawalan ka pa ng pagkakakitaan (Because there were*

*no lights and it was dark, our crops often got stolen. There were even times wherein our pigs were taken. Life was hard enough without losing your means of livelihood),”* Felix shared in frustration.

But these occurrences reduced when the community began to work on an electrification sub-project in the barangay.

### **The light of hope**

For years, the upland barangay of Cawayanin Ibaba was not reached by electricity. Its remoteness made it hard for electricity distributors to install power in the area. That is why Felix, together with other farmer-residents, proposed for an electrification sub-project to resolve the problem and even improve their livelihood.

In 2013, the community worked under the DSWD program Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (Kalahi-CIDSS) to achieve this goal.

The Kalahi-CIDSS is a poverty alleviation program of the DSWD that aims to provide communities with access to basic social services. It uses the community-driven development approach which includes the community members in the planning, decision-making, and implementation of community projects.

Also, with the security issues in the barangay, the area is targeted by the Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA), which aims to hasten the delivery of social services in conflict-affected areas to normalize the community’s living condition.

As the head of the volunteers, Felix was determined to pursue the sub-project even when he was advised that it is hard to complete the permits and documents for it. He disregarded the distance of going to and from the distributor’s office in the municipality of Pitogo, 50 kilometers away from Catanauan, to finally address the community’s problem.

*“Minsan, dukot bulsa na talaga para sa pamasahe namin papuntang Pitogo. Pero iniisip ko na lang na malaki naman ang magiging kapalit nito sa aming barangay (We sometimes had to spend our own money just for fare to get to Pitogo, but we just told ourselves that the payback to our village will be huge),”* Felix shared.

Another challenge they faced is the availability of construction supplies in the municipality. They even went to other towns like Candelaria, Lucena, and Tiaong to canvass the cable wires, lamp posts, and other electric and construction materials.

*“Na-delay din kami ng halos isang buwan sa implementation dahil mahirap makakuha ng mga materyales na kailangan. Pero noong nakabili na kami at mismong gawaan na ng proyekto, marami ang nag-bayanihan para hindi na rin ito matagalan pa (Our implementation was delayed for almost a month because it was hard to get our needed materials. Once we were able to purchase the materials, there were a lot of people who helped out during the actual implementation so we would not experience further delays),”* shared Felix.

Despite all these challenges, what was really heart-warming for Felix was the high level of participation among volunteers in bringing power to the community.

*“Tulong-tulong kami sa pagbubuhay para maitawid sa mahabang palayan ang mga materyales. Lyon lang kasi ang daanan papunta sa sitio (We helped each other bring the heavy materials through the fields because it was the only road we could take to get to the sitio),”* Felix explained.

### **Brighter possibilities**

Through their collaborative efforts, the community was able to complete the Php366,371.00 worth electrification sub-project which supplied electricity to 30 households and installed seven street lights in the area.

The households were able to start new livelihood activities like selling ice, cold drinks, and other chilled products in their sari-sari stores. Poultry raisers also bought incubators for easy development of farm eggs and chicks.

Moreover, stealing was lessened as farmers put light in storage areas to easily watch over their agricultural products.

*“Laking kaginhawaan ng ilaw sa hanapbuhay namin (The lights were a huge relief for our livelihoods),”* Felix added.

Aside from addressing the community’s problems, Felix said that the Kalahi-CIDSS PAMANA enlightened them to work hard for their community’s improvement. They became active participants, more than mere recipients of community projects.

They coordinated with another government agency, the National Electrification Administration, to implement the Sitio Electrification Program (SEP) in their barangay. Through the assistance of SEP, Brgy. Cawayanin Ibaba is expected to have complete electrification and 31 additional street lights this 2015.

With the Kalahi-CIDSS sub-project now complete and a new one in the wings, Felix finally sees the change in their lives – from dark nights to lightened streets, from limited livelihood activities to more economic activities, from indifference to an empowered community.

Now, they have easier means to a brighter future.#



*The farmers and community volunteers of Brgy. Cawayanin Ibaba in Catanauan, Quezon*





*Millennium Challenge Account-Philippines Kalahi-CIDSS Program Manager Andy Moll hikes toward the water tank of the Level II water system in Brgy. Nagbinlod, Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental.*

## On the Road to Peace

by Cheryl Baldicantos-Boholano

**“U**bay ubay sad gyud ang mga encounter sa NPA ug army dinhi duol sa amo sa-una (There have been quite a number of encounters between the New People’s Army and the army here near us in the past),” said Flora Troza, a resident of Brgy. Nagbinlod in Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental.

Today, she is busy preparing for their regular meeting with Kalahi-CIDSS or Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan–Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services personnel of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) at the barangay hall.

Kalahi-CIDSS is one of the three core poverty alleviation programs of the DSWD. It helps empower and educate communities by sending personnel to guide them in achieving their area’s most pressing needs. In Barangay Nagbinlod, the Kalahi-CIDSS sent engineers and financial analysts to teach the community how to build their proposed water system.

Barangay Nagbinlod is perched on top of a mountain in the town of Sta. Catalina. Because of its elevation, water is difficult to obtain.



**Accessing Safe Water.** This Kalahi-CIDDSS Water System in the Mountainous Nagbinlod Village in Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental brings joy to these little girls and to more than 2,000 residents. For 40 years, residents of Nagbinlod need to walk around 2 kilometers to an old artesian well for water.

Farming, which comprises most of the town's livelihood, is limited to planting root crops when there are no rains as this needs less water.

Together with her neighbors, Flora successfully installed a Level II water system in their barangay. This means having water faucets for every group of 4 to 5 families. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) funded this Kalahi-CIDDSS project.

*“Sa-una, magkaws ra mig tubig sa atabay. Kami nga mga di ka-afford og palit og mga mineral water sa lungsod, mupabukal nalang sa tubig aron mainom ni* (Before, we would fetch water from the well. We who cannot afford to buy mineral water in town just boil the water so we could drink it),” Flora recalled. This old artesian well is located near a river around 2 kilometers from home.

*“Dili lang mi nakapatukod og water system, na-edukar usab kami* (We were not only able to put up a water system, we were also educated),” Flora added.

She used to be a community volunteer of the program. According to Flora, she immediately volunteered to be part of Kalahi-CIDDSS since she wanted to learn new skills. Because of her dedication as one of the leaders in the building of their water system, the people have urged her to be the barangay secretary, which she is currently.

*“Daghan na ang nakakita sa mga proyekto nga nitubo sa mga komunidad dinhi. Basin usa pud ni sa mga rason nga mikanaog na og mipuyo og balik sa ubos ang mga naa sa bukid* (Many have seen

the projects that sprouted in our communities here. Maybe this is also one of the reasons why those in the mountains have come down and lived again in the lowlands),” Flora added.

For decades, insurgency has been a problem in Negros Oriental. For a long time, development in the communities was hard to achieve.

The 79th Infantry Battalion, which operates in the area, reports that from calendar year 2012 to February 2015, it had had a total of 16 encounters with suspected rebel groups, during which they recovered 27 assorted firearms and cleared 13 barangays that were either threatened with or influenced by the insurgency.



*One of the Kalahi-CIDSS tap stands in Barangay Nagbinlod in Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental*

“*Dugay napud gyud ang wala pagsinabtanay tali sa mga grupo* (The misunderstanding between the groups has gone on for a long time already),” Flora said.

Finally, on May 7, 2014, Department of National Defense Sec. Voltaire Gazmin formally declared the province as “conflict-manageable and development-ready”.

A suitable environment for economic development and growth has been reached by efforts of government agencies, local government units and the civil society over the past years. Today, residents do not need to fear being caught in the crossfire during encounters between the AFP and the suspected rebels anymore. The people are putting up projects like the water system with the assistance of different government agencies and civil society groups. Even the AFP is helping them build other infrastructure projects.

Current Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) records show that of the 25 cities and municipalities in Negros Oriental, 22 are now classified as “insurgent-free” while three others “manageable conflict-affected”.

“*Sa Kalahi-CIDSS, kaya diay nato ang kabag-uhan* (With Kalahi-CIDSS, we can have change)”, Flora smilingly said.#



*LISTEN TO YOUR HEART.* Area Coordinator Jun Balao reiterates to the community volunteers the need to look at the benefit of the greater public, not just for the few, in deciding which sub-project proposal they want to push through.

## Settling Differences, Catching Tomorrow

By Karlston Lapniten

**L**icuan-Baay is generally a mountainous town rich in gold and copper deposits with many of its residents engaged in bamboo by-products, small-scale mining, agriculture, and fresh water fisheries.

From Abra's provincial capital, Bangued, it takes around two to three hours drive to reach the town hall in Baquero, a sitio of Barangay Nalbuan.

For first timers, travelling to the upland municipality can be confusing without a guide or proper information about the town.

At times, one would encounter several residents who would point to Barangay Poblacion as the center of Licuan while they point to Baquero as the seat of Baay. They would also specifically defer their residence such that they would say "*taga-Licuan ak*" (I am from Licuan) or "*Idiay a ti Baay*" (Baay is that way).

Separated by a high mountain range, the two were actually two distinct municipal districts with separate town halls but were merged as one town in 1969. Currently, there are 11 barangays fused to

become the now distinct municipality of Licuan-Baay.

Although officially registered as Licuan-Baay, records show that at different times the name Baay-Licuan was used. Accordingly, the name that comes first depend on which side of the town the elected mayor comes from.

Despite admitting to trace their own roots as one Binongan tribe, the people in this fifth-class municipality have a peculiar difference as well. In Baay, many of the residents retained their native surnames while in Licuan, most preferred to adopt Spanish or Ilocano surnames.

Thus, one could easily discern which side of town a resident comes from by the person's last name.

## **Violent history**

Politics plays a significant role in the town's peace atmosphere.

For past decades, Abra has been tagged as the "Killing Fields of the North" due to the significant number of killings linked to politics and armed insurgents.

Licuan-Baay is not spared with politically-motivated assassinations happening even at the barangay level especially as elections draw near. Needless to say, firearms are a must for politicians gunning for high positions.

In 2013, Licuan-Baay was listed among the election hotspots in Cordillera police's watch list due to political turmoil. Caught between opposing politicians, most residents prefer to stay mum on issues related to politics for fear of their lives.

It is has been observed that a public official would give greater favor to either Licuan or Baay, depending on where the official comes from, according to a former public official who requested anonymity.

"It has seemingly become a culture, aglalo idi ngem haan met nga amin (especially in the past but not in general)," the ex-official said.

In this fifth class municipality which is also ranked among the poorest towns in the region, even the smallest economic development matters. Biased preferences of some public officials fostered animosity between the residents of Licuan and Baay, which total to nearly 5,000 combined, according to 2010 National Statistics Office (NSO) data.

The waning but lingering presence of the New People's Army (NPA) also adds to the tension with parts of the town known to be routes of the red soldiers going up north.



*BRIGHT TOMORROW. An optimistic smile emancipates from community volunteer Sharon Crisologo as she shares her community's outlook at the possible developments the Kalahi-CIDSS may bring to their lives.*

The town was last placed in negative limelight on March 2014 when the remains of former rebel Freddie Ligiw was uncovered in a shallow grave, with his brother Eddie and their father Licuben. Human rights groups point fingers to the government's Armed Forces as the assassins but the latter deny any involvement leading to the massacre.

Its rich mineral deposits have also sparked long-standing conflicts between small scale miners against giants companies and foreign capitalists. Since in 2007, cases of harassment, intimidations, and human rights violations lingered in Licuan-Baay mainly because of the abuse of Indigenous Peoples' rights and Ancestral Domain rights due to the exploration and exploitation of the land.

Although interventions by the Philippine National Police and other peace keeping agencies have reduced its once terrible identity, remnants of its violent past still hound Licuan-Baay.

The nature of its land distribution is no help either. As of 2010 data, only 1,087.89 hectares or barely five percent of its total land area of 26,609 hectares is considered agricultural land, severely limiting the municipality's sources of livelihood.

"People are poor here that they are driven to become rebels, paid goons or fight for a public seat because there is assured money there," admitted the former public official.

### **Optimistic for tomorrow**

In 2014, the town was amongst the areas targeted by the Kapit-bisig Laban sa Kahirapan – Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery



of Social Services (Kalahi-CIDSS), a program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) geared towards the alleviation of poverty.

The participatory feature of the program sparked an initial link to bridging the gap between the people.

The Community Enhanced Activity Cycle (CEAC) is the program's implementing tool which involves the community folks in planning and deciding on developments in their town.

"In the CEAC's initial stage, the representatives from the barangays started to communicate and come to terms with one another," Kalahi-CIDSS Area Coordinator Jun Balao said.

As of February 2015, volunteers finished their initial stage of the CEAC and are now preparing their detailed sub-project proposals according to Balao.

The gatherings of barangays became avenues for the people to thresh out their differences and discuss what is truly beneficial for the people of the entire town as a whole, regardless of which side of Licuan-Baay they came from, Balao added.

Even the community volunteers themselves were optimistic of their own progress regarding the program.

*"Idi una haan kami agkinaawatan ngem nakita mi nga awan mayat nga pagturungan nu kasjay (At first, we were at conflict but we saw that it will lead us nowhere),"* 33-year-old community volunteer Sharon Crisologo admitted.

During her first meeting with co-volunteers from other barangays, she said there was some tension as they all wanted their project proposals be prioritized over the others. Balao said, however, that it did not take long for the area coordinating team to ease the tension and make the people realize that they are after the development of the town as a whole.

Through several meetings, the Area Coordinator said they reiterated to the barangay representatives that the goal of the program is to work for the benefit of the entire population of Licuan-Baay, not for the solo gains of their own respective barangay.

"We understand where they are coming from because here, one sub-project can really make a big impact or even turn their lives around," the Area Coordinator explained.

Crisologo said the program made them realize that antagonizing each other actually leads them away from their common goal of deciding for the best interest of the greater public.

In the end, she said, their mission is to make Licuan-Baay more developed not just for the present times but also for their children's children.

Their proposed sub-projects such as retaining walls, farm-to-market roads, pathways, and other physical developments could translate to improvements towards stability of the people's source of livelihood and better access to delivering products to the market.

This in turn, can improve the income of the people which can stabilize their lives, eventually diverting them out of the gun culture and dirty politics.

*"Ti kapyá ket dayta maturog ka nga haan mun panunuten ti kanen intun bigat ta sigurado nga adda* (Peace is going to sleep without thinking of what to eat tomorrow because there surely will be something)," Crisologo asserted.

Indeed, genuine peace is not merely the absence of gunfight, intimidations, or political indifferences, but serenity within, knowing that a bright tomorrow awaits.

Licuan-Baay may have a marred history but through empowered persistent endeavors, one thing is certain—the future is no longer bleak.

*"Kaya mi daytoy* (We can DO this)," Crisologo grinned. #







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