



## BUKIDNON TRIBAL LEADERS AND AGRI-BUSINESS LEADERS EXPLORE PARTNERSHIP

On April 9, the Talaandig tribe, representatives from the Office of the President on Political Affairs and the top executives of Unifrutti Group of Companies joined together to dialogue, tell their stories, share their aspirations and search for healing for their wounded past. Unifrutti Group of Companies (UGC) is one of the major corporations operating in the Bukidnon region and employs members of the Talaandig and Manobo tribes. Recently, UGC has begun a "Rainforestation" campaign, looking primarily to the Indigenous tribes to be the "guardians of the mountain." This sparked the initiative for the groups to gather together, address the wounds of the past and begin working together towards the future.

Datu Victorino Saway introduced the Talaandig ritual invoking the spiritual world and Magbabaya to be present in the dialogue. "Our ritual is really a peacebuilding ritual, we are reconciling the good and the bad and invoking the keeper of the balance of negative and positive in order to find harmony." The dialogue began with the Talaandig elders and mothers for peace guiding the traditional ritual. As the prayers came to an end, the dialogue began, initiated by three guiding questions: "who we are, where we are, where we are going." The conversation began with four Talaandig tribal women explaining who they were, the pains they have suffered over the years and a desire for those grievances be addressed. One of the main issues the Talaandig expressed is the challenge



(L-R) Assistant Secretary Rolando Cucio (Political Affairs, Office of the President), Datu Migketay Vic Saway (Chairman, Council of the Seven Tribes of Bukidnon), and John Perrine (Chairman, Unifrutti Group of Companies) led the initial peace and reconciliation conversation among Bukidnon's First Nations, the national government, and agri-business corporate leaders.

of having an oral history – their laws are unwritten and therefore not easily recognized. One leader shared his desire for the culture, history and laws to be written so that it is more fully understood by those outside.

As the microphone circled the room, the participants all laid forth their primary issues, grievances and hopes for the future. Datu Vic then began by explaining that for the Talaandig, identity is centered on self-governance and customary law, stating cultural integrity as his primary concern. He also brought forward the historical injustices suffered by the Talaandig tribe and the First Nations of the Philippines – injustices which began in 1591, undermining the cultural integrity of the indigenous

[Continued on page 2]



## BUKIDNON TRIBAL LEADERS AND AGRI-BUSINESS LEADERS ... from page 1



*The process is as important as the end result. All people in the room were given the chance to share their story even if it means taking a long time for the introduction.*

*The Mothers for Peace showed the valuable contribution of women to peacebuilding as they actively participated in the event.*

tribes of the Philippines. Though the Talaandig are the guardians of the mountain and of the forest, they and their land became victims of big agriculture. Today, they are actively working to preserve, promote and restore their cultural identity and integrity – including ecological and environmental protection as part of their role as guardians of the mountain. Datu Vic explained that his main issues were the following:

1. Need for mandatory recognition of the customary rights for Indigenous tribes
2. "Development" that is *prescribed* rather than coming from within the Talaandig community – a prescription, that without input and leadership from the tribes themselves, has begun to "destroy our culture."
3. Cultural identity. Datu Vic reiterated that his primary concern is the preservation of their cultural identity and integrity and that they will not participate in programs or partnerships that compromise their identity as a people. He said that they cannot compromise their cultural identity as people. "This is who we are, these are our dreams, we are just leading the way as our elders before us."

When Datu Vic finished sharing, John Perrine, the CEO of Unifrutti began to explain who he is and what inspired him to join the dialogue, namely environmental conservation and reforestation to restore the forests of Bukidnon. John explained that today the water levels are 25% of what they used to be 30 years ago because of deforestation. Though he did not start out as a conservationist (to the contrary, he was a hunter) he has now become a passionate conservationist. He admitted that his and the company's understanding of the Talaandig is still lacking and their desire to increase their understanding and build a strong partnership with the Talaandig tribe is a primary reason why he brought his team to Sungko for the dialogue: "to listen, to learn and to strengthen and rebuild the relationship. That is my commitment to you." He also wants to bring a reforestation project to Bukidnon, which he already has the financial backing from a grant from Europe. John said that "prior projects have failed because of the exclusion of the Indigenous voice. So we need to involve the IP, they must lead the reforestation of their land, we want to work together." John also asked for forgiveness for harms caused by his company and committed, once again, to strengthening the relationship with the Talaandig tribe so that those harms will not be repeated.

Finally, he offered any of the participants interested, Unifrutti's own legally certified surveyor to walk with the IP's on their ancestral domains and determine the boundary lines.

When John Perrine concluded sharing, the other members of Unifrutti also shared their desire to continue building and strengthening their relationship with the neighboring tribes.

**[Continued on page 3]**



## The Tri-People for One Goal Cross-Culturally Effective HealthCare Volunteers

Lake Lahit, Lake Sebu; South Cotabato— The tri-people of Mindanao, Christian Migrants, Muslim Maguindanaon, and the Lumads of Lake Sebu (T’boli and Ilonggos) came together for one initiative – to address healthcare issues.

The Peacebuilding HealthCare Program, as implemented by the partnership of PeaceBuilders Community, Inc. and Care Channels International held its monthly HealthCare Outreach last February 24 in Lake Lahit of Lake Sebu, South Cotabato as per the invitation of the local Christian churches. This town is predominated by the T’boli Tribe, a highland group of people rooted in South Cotabato.

The activity served as a *cross-cultural* experience for all the participants. The trainers and hosts—local Christian churches from Polomolok City and Lake Sebu and Registered Nurses from Davao City and Quezon City, the Medical



*Cross-cultural healthcare in practice. A Bangsamoro woman trained in the healthcare program of the PBCI and Care Channels Int'l helps treat a lumad. This proves that cross-cultural initiatives are effective and doable . The tri-people of Mindanao has been at odds with each other in history.*

**Photo and report by Mei Solocasa**

Doctor from Municipality of Pikit, the Dentist from General Santos City and the Medical Technologist from Municipality of Esperanza worked with the Muslim Maguindanaon HealthCare Volunteers of the Municipality of Dalican to serve the T’boli and Ilonggo people of Lake Lahit.

These are three of the objectives of the program; to not only equip HealthCare Volunteers who are knowledgeable and skillful of primary healthcare but to have a team that is also *cross-culturally effective* in addressing healthcare issues. To have a team that is sensitive to the *context* where the healthcare program is implemented.

The HealthCare Outreach activity served 247 medical patients, 52 dental patients, and three minor surgical patients.

There are five sessions more to go and the whole team is excited to learn more, serve more, and grow more.

### **BUKIDNON TRIBAL LEADERS AND AGRI-BUSINESS LEADERS ... from page 2**

Finally, Assistant Secretary DC Cucio from the Office of the President on Political Affairs shared. He explained that his primary role is to listen, bridge understanding and take the stories of Bukidnon back to Malacañang so that the President can make wise, informed decisions: "I believe and the President believes that peace can be achieved as long as we talk, dialogue and increase our understanding. You are the victims of a corrupt past. We need systemic change, we must start with the corruption first so that there is at least a system in a place that diminishes or ends corruption." Instead of the government dictating change, they want the people to have agency, to offer solutions and work towards understanding. The challenge is to eradicate

corruption so that people have real voice in the process.

Dann Pantoja summarized the primary learning’s brought forward from the dialogue, highlighting that Unifrutti asked for sincere forgiveness, committed themselves to strengthen the relationship with the Talaandig as partners and committed to not repeat the wrongs of the past; Datu Vic expressed a desire for the Talaandig tribe to enter into a relationship with Unifrutti as full participants, with voice, while also upholding and promoting their own cultural identity and integrity; ASec DC Cucio emphasized that he came to listen and learn from the participants so that government policies reflect the true voice and experience of the people.

**[Continued on page 4]**



## BUKIDNON TRIBAL LEADERS AND AGRI-BUSINESS ... from page 3

Datu Vic thanked ASec Cucio for "recognizing that we need to be part of the implementation process, that we are key agents in carrying out the programs and for coming to be with the Talaandig, to *listen* to us." Datu Vic also expressed gratitude to PBCI, "thank you to PBCI, we are here healing the wounds, we are all equal with our Creator. Thank you for joining with us." Many of the tribal elders expressed excitement and gratitude for the possibility of the Unifrutti surveyor so that they can begin the process of identifying and registering their Ancestral Domain territories.

Datu Vic concluded the day with a song and words of gratitude: "Today is the most blessed day, God has sent these people to our community to answer our prayers – the bright morning has arrived and it is very hopeful and promising.

We were living in grief and now finally our brothers and sisters have come and it is a blessed day, a blessed event."

### *Other Issues Raised and Addressed in the Open Forum*

1. Taxes from companies should go straight to the Barangay so that the money is seen in the actual communities.
2. CMU submitted a title for land on ancestral domain, but is acting as if that title has been granted to them (it has not yet). The Talaandig-Manobo allowed CMU to use that land in the midst of dire need and they feel that the land is now being taken from them. CMU has stated that if the tribe does not begin leasing the land by May 30<sup>th</sup> they will be kicked off.
3. Manobo and Talaandig requested Unifrutti to survey his land. He will send a petition for this to happen. ASec Cucio will meet with chairman of NCIP.
4. A complaint was brought that pine trees were planted on Ancestral Domain without consent. Unifrutti will investigate to see if they are responsible and proceed from there.
5. The Mothers for Peace expressed a desire to be registered with DSWD's education programming and to have the School of Living Tradition registered. Until now, they have been left out of the government program. They agreed to write a letter with their grievances, register the school

*"...to listen, to learn and to strengthen and rebuild the relationship. That is my commitment.*

**-John Perrine, CEO of Unifrutti**

*"...we are here healing the wounds, we are all equal with our Creator. Today is the most blessed day, God has sent these people to our community to answer our prayers – the bright morning has arrived and it is very hopeful and promising.*

**-Datu Migketay Saway of the Talaandig Tribe**

and ASec Cucio promised to follow-through. He reiterated that the IPs should be the first priority of the program. Unifrutti agreed to airmail these letters through their company's planes so that they reach Malacañang in a timely fashion.

6. Bae Liza thanked the group for the beautiful process and said that only 10% of the IPs finish college and asked for scholarships that go directly to the tribe instead of going to the offices. Unifrutti agreed to support two scholarships a year to any university in Mindanao.
7. One participant explained that the private gate at the Manolo Fortich farm makes it difficult for people to pass onto their own farmland. John Perrine said the gate was installed for wildlife protection, but will make sure that all farmers can pass without a problem.
8. Mark, a Community Organizer among the IPs wants to collaborate with the rainforestation project so that all of the programs are synchronized on the ground. John Perrine said that once the funds are worked out from Europe they will really work with the tribal communities because they are the real implementers of rainforestation, Unifrutti is just a conduit.

All agreed to meet again on May 14<sup>th</sup>. Before the meeting, leaders will offer a proposed Memorandum of Agreement and on May 14, will come together again to finalize their partnership and strengthen their relationship. As the day's events came to a close, Datu Vic reminded everyone present that this is "just the beginning." **Photo and report by Angela Lederach**



## VALENCIA CITY PASTORS AND CHURCH WORKERS UNDERGO PAR TRAINING



Harmony with God



Worship Time



Kuya Dann and Ate Joji with PAR Valencia and PAR Lantapan.

Valencia City, Bukidnon - - -"I have been much aware of the evil spirits in the mountains but I failed to see the evil in the malls," a participant to the Peace and Reconciliation training said as they recapped their learning from the Book 1 session.

leaders and members of the Council of Evangelical Churches of Bukidnon and Valencia City Ministerial Association started the PAR training on April 20-21, 2012. It was hosted by the Lord Jesus our Redeemer Church at Valencia City, Bukidnon. PBCI President Luis Daniel Pantoja and PBCI EVP Joji Felicitas Pantoja led the seminar on the theological foundation of peacebuilding.

At the start of the session, participants said they wanted to see Jesus Christ in the activity itself and in the peace work. They also desired to be peacebuilders in their ministry and in their work.

As the seminar finished,

participants are one in saying that they wanted to "go onboard the ship" using the ship as analogy for peace and reconciliation ministry.

Their learnings include a broadened view on indigenous cultures and respect for the Muslim. "As evangelicals, we don't have to erase the customs of the people we go to. We need to listen and respect the culture. Some of the aspects might have to be cleansed but we ourselves should be cleansed first," a participant shared. "I learned that we have to be open with our Muslim brothers and sisters. If we show them the love of Jesus daily, then maybe, the Body of Christ we preach will be more appreciated," another one said, a view, which is shared by the other participants. "Doing what we preach is the very meaning of peace and reconciliation," a pastor seconded.

With a hopeful outlook, the participants scheduled the second PAR training on May 14-16, 2012.

## PAR LANTAPAN HOLDS MARRIAGE SEMINAR

**Lantapan, Bukidnon - - - 30 purok officials of Barangay Bugcaon underwent a marriage counseling on April 14, 2012 following a workshop among the barangay officials.**

**It has been determined in the workshop that the most pressing issue in the place is marriage conflicts.**

True to its mission of having a contextually-sensitive peace and reconciliation community, husband and wife tandem PBCI president Luis Daniel Pantoja and PBCI EVP Joji Felicitas Pantoja conducted the seminar with emphasis on listening to the participants.

The common problems experienced by the families are lack of finances to support their basic needs, alcoholism, gambling and premarital sex among teenagers. Obedience of teenage children is also perceived as a struggle for parents.

Basing on the stories of the participants, Dann Pantoja shared the four biblical principles of families emphasizing values transformation as root solution of the problems. He gave tips on financial management saying that more money is not the answer to poverty rather, wise stewardship of available resources. He challenged the participants to go over their list of expenses and look for items that can be crossed out such as alcohol and gambling money.

Dann Pantoja also shared the ten secrets of happy couples. He said that peace in the community cannot start from outside the home but inside it. He said that sometimes, children turn to vices because they do not see peace in their parents. He commended the parents of showing patience and unconditional love to their erring teenagers whom they accept back even with grandchildren in tow.

The seminar ended with an evaluation among purok leaders led by Lantapan team leader Edmar Lorenzo.

## PLEASE PRAY FOR THE PBCI STAFF



**Dann Pantoja.** Please pray for Joji and me as we represent PeaceBuilders Community, Coffee For Peace, and Mennonite Church Canada to our sisters and brothers at the Mennonite European Regional Conference, May 11-28, 2012.



**Joji Pantoja.** Please pray for Dann and me as we represent PeaceBuilders Community, Coffee For Peace, and Mennonite Church Canada to our sisters and brothers at the Mennonite European Regional Conference, May 11-28, 2012.



**Bennette Tenecio.** Please pray for good health, wisdom and discernment in her work especially in evaluating and assessing applicants for the growing ministry of PBCI. Bennette is heading the Support Operations of PBCI.



**Kriz Cruzado.** Praise God for her being our Fair Trade Consultant. Please pray for her health as she trains new staff in the fair trade farming, as she travels to the field for visits and as she trains farmers in coffee planting.



**Angela Lederach.** Please pray for energy and wisdom as she faces a busy month. Angie is travelling all over Region 10 this month coordinating meetings, writing articles and training pastors in PAR.



**Jeff Yoder.** Please pray for energy and wisdom Jeff serves the people in Maguindanao, Iligan, CDO and other places that PBCI leads a healthcare program. Jeff is also celebrating his birthday this month. Happy birthday Jeff!



**Arjay Balabag.** Please pray for good health so that he can continue serving God. May his family always have protection from God and enough provision. Arjay is also praying that he be granted a driver's license.



**Joy Betios.** Joy is celebrating her birthday this month. She prays for blessings, wisdom and health as she welcomes a new chapter of her life. From the PBCI family, happy birthday Ate Joy! Thank you for your JOYful service.



**Fred Abelitado.** Praise God for his resourcefulness in maintaining our office furniture in good condition, roasting coffee, fixing plumbing and electrical problems and many other things. Pray for his health.



**Edmar Lorenzo.** Please pray for the success of the the PAR training of barangay officials and fundamental baptists. May God give us wisdom, strength and good health to do all things for His glory.



**Frances Marie Basa.** Pray that the gov't and NGOs, including us, will be able to attend to the needs of the survivors. May we all maintain a pure heart in helping the people and may we be blessed by God so that we can give more.



**Jeff Estallo.** Jeff is praying for the openness of the hearts of the pastors who are undergoing the PAR training. May we meet all the goals training. Please pray also for good health.



**Nenia Galanza.** Please pray that our training for the Coffee Fair Trade be fruitful and successful. I pray for wisdom and focus throughout the whole learning process. Nenia is assigned in Impasug-ong.



**Sherel Quider.** Please pray for the pastors undergoing the PAR Training. May they be able to apply it on areas where it is really needed. Sherel is also praying for wisdom, safety, peace and health to all PBCI staff.



**Twinkle Bautista.** Please pray for ears that listen and heart that understands the context of the people we are serving. Please pray also for my family's protection and provision as I live far from them.



**Gemwill Mendoza.** Please pray that all our efforts be a reflection of God's love. May we always have pure motivations and genuine compassion. May we be always united despite our differences and trials.



**Kaye Chanayee.** Please pray for the sustenance of the team. For joy in serving others, wisdom and knowledge. Please pray that we may all live in integrity and that we may all be assets to Iligan healthcare.



**Daphnie Derigay.** Please pray for our health and for the people working for the good of Iligan, the City Health Officers, the IEDCON, the Safer Homes Coalition and the people we work with on the ground.



**Alvin Ysulat.** Please pray for wisdom as we serve our people. For our government that it would truly be of service to the Filipinos and that it would pursue the good of our society. May our work be for God's glory.



**Julie Condino.** May God protect us, comfort us in our afflictions, give us healthy mind and body, assistance in our temporal needs, and blessings in all that we do. We also ask for strength and knowledge.



**Phoebe Gupana.** Please pray for the survivors of Typhoon Washi that they may have permanent shelters soon. May they not lose hope and not be afflicted by illnesses. May the children have safe env't.



**Mark Mercado.** Please pray for wisdom as we go through the training on Coffee Fair Trade. May we be focused in our learning so that it will be fruitful. Mark is celebrating his birthday this May. Happy birthday Mark!



### OTHER FIELD STORIES



*New home, new life. A father hugs and talks to his daughter after a heavy day's work.*

The father and daughter are survivors of Typhoon Sendong in Iligan City. The father earns money by gathering sand and gravel from the river. He can earn P250/day at the expense of his health.

Now, the logs that almost killed their family may be used to build a new home. The logs that once destroyed their lives are now a symbol of hope.



**Preserving the child in me. PAR Iligan team members play with the children survivors of Typhoon Sendong.**

The children described to us how high the water level was during Sendong and where they sought refuge . They shared that everytime the rain pours really hard, they get worried because of what they experienced in the Sendong. Despite that we could see hope in their eyes, that at the end of everything, life goes on.

It struck us seeing kids happily playing, showing great joy and calm despite the fear and trauma caused by Sendong.

**Photo and report by Alvin Ysulat**

### GOD IS GREATER THAN THE WIND AND RAIN Kamp-payaan 2012

Valencia City, Bukidnon - - - "Mamaaaa!" a young girl wailed as a tree fell with a thud on the roof. Other kids screamed and covered their eyes. 26 kids were huddled in the center of a wall-less hall as tree branches flew around due to the strong winds. The writing board and everything that is standing up crashed to the ground.

That is how the youth camp in Valencia City, Bukidnon opened. The youth camp that was held on April 25 and 26 was organized to minister to the kids and to encourage participation of their mothers. The team targeted children ages 10-15.

The participants all came from Purok 2, Valencia. The PAR team, in partnership with the Filipino Ambassadors for Righteousness, has been doing community services in the area every Saturday since November 2011. Tutorials and values classes are held for the children ages 4-15. Livelihood assistance and values transformation groups are done for the mothers.

It is an urban-poor area and the children often experienced bullying and discrimination in school. "Some teenagers call us *lapuk* (mud)," the children shared. Food is scarce and there were times that the children have not eaten lunch. Their academic performance is also very low with eleven-year-old kids not knowing addition and subtraction. Curse words and hitting each other are also common among the children.

The topics for the camp were initially planned to include understanding the meaning of a personal relationship with God, identity in Jesus Christ and respecting other people.

However, with the kids' experience on the abrupt weather change, the team decided to remove

**He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the LORD require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.**

**Micah 6:8**



Sketching and drawing lessons.



Guitar lessons.



Games.



Sharing time.



Swimming lessons.



Session on communicating gently.

Photos by Sherel Quider and Nenia Galanza

some topics. A debriefing through art and poetry and a Bible exploration on what God says about protection were inserted in the program. Lessons on swimming, playing the guitar and singing were retained.

During the debriefing session, all of the kids also expressed fear for their families' safety. Rizalyn, one of the older participants, said "I don't mind dying as long as my siblings are safe." She was seen hugging her two sisters close to her as the winds and rains raged. She was close to crying but she bravely bit her lip and comforted her sisters. That afternoon, the mobile phones of the staff were kept busy as the children frantically called home seeking assurance that all is well.

The kids have apparently experienced flood or have seen their neighbors affected by the Typhoon Sendong (International name: Washi) that devastated Mindanao last December.

Still, as the camp staff checked the kids after bedtime, they are heard singing with all gusto:

*Ginoo, Ginoo, hinumdumi ako*  
(My God, my God, remember me)  
*Ginoo, Ginoo, hinumdumi ako*  
(My God, my God, remember me)  
*Ginoo, Ginoo, hinumdumi ako*  
(My God, my God, remember me)  
*Sa Imong pagbalik*  
(Upon Your return)

The next morning, the children were asked, "What will qualify you to heaven?" ten year old Rhea answered simply, "Jesus Christ."

These kids may have experienced poverty at its worst but their faith has made them richer than most. The staff is praying that the Gospel preached to them through words and actions will not end but will continue to flourish as they mature in God.

*It is with hope that the concepts on peace and non-violence as described in the Bible will take root in their hearts.*

PAR JOURNAL:

General Editor: Twinkle Bautista