

Final Report

Environmental Education for the Children and Youth in the Municipality of Asuncion, Davao del Norte leading to Reforestation and the Establishment of Arboretum (Ref. 06.07.05)

The project in the Municipality of Asuncion, Davao del Norte, Philippines has facilitated two (2) Environmental Art Workshops recently, participated in by a total of eighty-five (85) children whose age range from seven (7) to fifteen (15) years old. This had been held in two (2) barangays of the Municipality of Asuncion: Napungas and Buan.

The Kinaiyahan Foundation, Inc. (KFI) uses Art Workshops as one of the methodologies in raising environmental consciousness not only among children but also for interested adults. It challenges not only the mental skills of the participants but also its motor skills. Usually, it becomes fun activates, thus, learning becomes easy and experiential. It also makes the participants more sensitive to the details of his / her surroundings, e.g. How a leaf looks like --- the details of each leaf, or bark or grass, etc. (See attached pictures)

Mr. Ricardo Obenza, Jr., one of the known artists in Davao City and the Vice Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of KFI, had facilitated the Art Workshops.

Some of the pictures of the trees planted last year are also shown here. These were mostly the trees planted by students near the Buan Elementary School. The trees planted along the Saug River did not survive because of the presence of animals like caribou and goats. There is a need to put stronger tree guards.

Saug River whose pictures are also shown here is an important body of water traversing a number of barangays in the Municipality of Asuncion. It is not only a place for washing clothes for many families but it has also facilitated the travel of many upland dwellers from one place to another using rafts. However, because of siltation, brought about by deforestation, the picture would show, a very low level of water, as this picture was taken before the rains came in the latter part of December, 2006.

KFI is trying to plant trees along the riverside to protect it, particularly in Barangay Buan. Unfortunately, during rainy season, when the water level of Saug River is high, it is also used to transport logs cut from the remaining forests in the uplands. Rafts are used to transport logs by local people to the downstream where these are sold to businessmen. While the country has imposed the log ban in some parts of the country, including Davao del Norte, enforcement of laws is something that is very poor in relation to environmental protection in our country. What is worse is a number of government officials and military people and other armed groups are behind these illegal activities.

This is one of the reasons, why KFI targets the youth. Ideal as it may seem, perhaps there is more hope in developing new breed of leaders, starting while they are young.

In November 2006, KFI was asked by another organization, the Upland Development Programme, if we can help them facilitate the formulation of a Land-use based Barangay Development Plan for two (2) barangays in Asuncion: Napungas and Sonlon.

KFI agreed, as we thought this will help in the institutionalization of tree-planting activities at least in these barangays. The said Barangay Development Plan of the two (2) barangays has facilitated the identification of watershed areas in each of the two (2) barangays, areas prone to erosion, floods, etc. Since it was only good for two barangays, KFI thought the process would also be very helpful, if this can be duplicated in other areas in Asuncion, too, like Buan, for example.

Some of the strengths of the project:

1. It has opened the eyes and minds of the target areas for the need to do reforestation in their respective areas. In the past, tree-planting has been left to the concern of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the government agency tasked to protect the environment.
2. It has facilitated the involvement of the youth and children in environmental concerns. Environmental work has always been seen as the task of the adults. KFI believes in the importance of developing environment-friendly values starting from an early age. In addition, experiential method of learning for both adults and children has always been more effective.
3. Support of local government officials to the project, although to a very limited extent. At the very least, the local government units (LGU) of barangays Buan and Napungas had identified tree-nursery areas. Barangay Sonlon is also in the process of doing so. At least two (2) barangays more would like us to go their place.

Barangay Napungas has included in their LGU (local government unit) budget an amount of PHP 5,000 for its nursery every year (!). Although it is very small, KFI would like to appreciate the gesture, rather than the amount. We hope, with a continuing advocacy, we can increase the budget allocation in the coming years.

KFI considers that the LGU support very limited yet, because, if the KFI staff does not come, they will not also start the work at the tree-nursery. We are hoping we can develop more initiative and a deeper sense of ownership of the project, although this is really taking time.

4. With the advocacy of KFI, the road to Buan (the video we sent Rufford earlier showed VERY bad roads), is a little better now (at least for Philippine standards!). The big holes were filled up at the very least. (In a country like the Philippines, we cannot always hope for big changes, thus, we really celebrate even just the small improvements!)

Some weaknesses:

1. Very slow development of sense of ownership of the project in the local level. There is a tendency to see the project as KFI's. We are not happy about this. But perhaps, the reality is, if KFI did not initiate this intervention, e.g. establishment of tree-nursery, tree-planting, environmental education activities, they could not have been done anything related to it. So, at the early stage of the project, they still consider the project as that of KFI's. We hope we can change this in the near future.
2. Corruption and looking at every initiative as an opportunity to earn for oneself or family. When KFI started the tree-nursery at Buan, the late Barangay Captain asked the KFI staff, if his family will be paid if they did the bagging (putting soil in the seed bags). When we

explained that the project is theirs and not really KFI's and thus, there is no budget for labour, he seemed to understand, but he did not really initiate for more people to get involved.

When he died due to massive heart attack, we learned that the other leaders of the barangay thought, the Barangay Captain was receiving some money from KFI.

Since KFI is the first NGO to work in this barangay, they thought that KFI works like other government or business entity, i.e. giving money or bribe for people to work.

One contributory factor to this, is the poverty in the area. Partly this is brought about by lack of support for farmers in terms of appropriate farm implements, planting materials and access to environment-friendly technology in agriculture. There is so much land which is idle. If this could be maximized by giving people access to support services for people to be engaged in environment-friendly agriculture, perhaps people will have other options and thus, put less pressure on the forests.

3. Involvement of political groups. KFI would like to stress that it would not like to be identified with any political groups, armed or not armed. There are some political groups inviting KFI to initiate intervention in their barangay--but we would like to be very selective-- as entry in areas controlled by any political group might mean control for KFI and that would limit its capacity to implement its project in line with its Vision, Mission and Goals.

Projections/ Recommendations:

1. Continue the project specifically in three (3) barangays yet: Buan, Napungas and Sonlon before expanding to other barangays.
2. Continue with advocacy with the Department of Education to allow tree-planting activities as required for graduating students during the beginning of the school year (June-August) rather than towards the end of the school year (February-March). This will give the students a chance to take care and nurture the trees they planted. If they plant towards the end of the school year, it becomes more compliance.
3. Develop a core of leaders who are young in Asuncion to help coordinate the project.
4. Tap interested groups coming from different sectors that are based in Asuncion for more support; business sector, professional groups, church groups, etc.
5. Include in KFI services support for livelihood, e.g. Environment-friendly agriculture and basic services for health.

May we take this opportunity to thank you, Josh and all at Rufford for the support. For our next proposal, can we still tap Mr. Ben Simmes of OIKOCREDIT and Ms. Christine Vertucci of the Mennonites to endorse us or do we have to look for NEW referees?

We are also attaching our financial report. If you have any question for clarification or even suggestion, since you have been here, we will be very glad.