



peace and reconciliation journal



Mennonite Church Canada
WITNESS

A MONTHLY PRAYER LETTER PUBLISHED BY DANN & JOJI PANTOJA
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Working with PeaceBuilders Community, Inc., Republic of the Philippines

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REFLECTIONS ON ORGANIZING RANAW HEALTH CARE TEAM

Time flies so fast.

It was May, 2009 when the team had the first hike in the mountains of Poona Piagapo and July, 2009 when the team reached the coastal area of Kolambugan. More than a year had passed and what the team had started has now brought fruits of two teams of healthcare volunteers who are committed to make a difference in the healthcare needs of their armed-conflicted communities.

It all started before the team ever reached these areas, it all started when these communities were confronted with atrocities. August 18, 2008 when armed groups attacked these Municipalities simultaneously, houses were burned, people were killed, evacuees flee to the nearest and safest refuge they could reach, children were deprived to go to school or play in their own front yard, mothers were having hard time looking for food to feed their families, and men cannot continue their farming due to fear of being caught in between cross-fires. How could we respond?

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Top: Poona Piagapo Team of Healthcare volunteers who graduated after ten months of training.
Bottom: The muddy terrain in Poona Piagapo that the team faced every time they conduct their trainings.

TRAINED IN JAPAN: A REPORT



Training Program for Young Leaders in Japan-participants from the Philippines.
Upper leftmost: Mei Solocasa, R.N., PBCI Healthcare Training Specialist.

PBCI staff development includes sending our staff to different training opportunities that will further increase their knowledge and experiences that will later on be applied in peacebuilding in our country.

On November 8-25, 2010, our Healthcare Training Specialist, Mei Solocasa, attended the Training Program for Young Leaders in Japan, which was sponsored by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). She enrolled on the course "Maternal and Child Health Program Management." There were 16 participants that came from the Philippines, consisting of six (6) doctors, five (5) nurses, two (2) midwives, one (1) nutritionist, one (1) economist, and one (1) dentist. Among the participants from the Philippines, Miss Solocasa is the youngest, and yet she managed to cope with the rest of the participants during the training.

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The team is composed of three partnering organizations; Reach Int'l. Healthcare Training and Services, Peacebuilders Community, Inc. (PBCI), and ECOWeb. The three-organization team decided to start the 10-month healthcare program to equip the healthcare volunteers on how to respond to crises in terms of healthcare needs.

For more than a year, these three organizations learned valuable lessons from the field, from the people, and from each other. In a partnership, each organization is considered to be a unique unit that has a unique and significant role to play, remove one unit and the difference is evident. With the networks I've established for more than a year, I've realized that more than the partnership, relationship has to be deepened. It is during the worst and best times that real partnership could be defined, and there emerges a relationship built from understanding, respect, and the unity to achieve the common goal.

There were months that the team has to cancel the trips going to the area for security issues, for clannish conflicts, or family feuds. It was at first a big adjustment on understanding this cultural issues since people from the big cities, people who live in an individualistic era, and people who are time-bounded cannot just easily waste time because of the conflict issues which are unfamiliar to them. After more than a year, I've finally learned to recognize that fear to be caught between two families in conflict, I've learned how to adapt in a culture that safety is more important than time, I've learned how to be more sensitive to stay awake for longer hours because you have to join the late evening conversations with the community people. I've learned how to adapt their traditional beliefs in cooking, and just look for a scientific explanation at the back of my mind. I've learned how to respect the vast differences of the community's concept of time, concept of relationship, concept of identity, and concept of the creator. God, Allah, the Creator has made these communities unique, different from the community where I came from. And amidst the difficulty to adjust, understand, and adapt, harmonious relationship is possible. I don't have to argue when I disagree, I just need to respect. I don't need to say other's ways are wrong just to prove mine is right. I just need to love the community, to love the culture, to love the people. As it is written in the Bible, "For God so loved the world..." And this means, me and those who don't believe in such a way I believe, we are all loved by the Creator.

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Mei Solocasa enjoyed her exposure to the Public Health Center facilities during her training in Japan



One of the lecture sessions during the Maternal and Child Health Program Management course

Mei Solocasa enjoyed the different Japanese delicacies during her vacant times



TRAINED IN JAPAN...

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During the training, there were lectures and facility exposures, wherein the participants saw the Public Health Center facilities. The Filipino participants saw the big difference between the Public Health Centers in Japan compared to the Philippines.

As an action plan, Miss Solocasa proposed a project on "Strengthening the Collaboration between Maternal and Child Healthcare Providers". The project's objective is to: Improve Maternal and Child Health in the armed-conflict areas through the collaboration of the Local Government Units, Non-Government Organizations, and Community-based Healthcare Volunteers. This action plan was based on her own observation of the Maternal and Child Health System in Aomori City. 🌱

We welcome your contributions for our support and invite you to send these to:
MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA, 600 SHAFTESBURY BLVD., WINNIPEG, MB R3P 0M4
 Please designate to:
Dann & Joji Pantoja, PeaceBuilders Community, Inc., Philippines



The team held classes in various places. It could be in "Madrasa" (Arabic Schools), unused classrooms, waiting sheds, or houses, depending on the weather, peace situation, and other factors.

The Healthcare Volunteers are trained to perform basic healthcare skills such as Blood Pressure taking, using thermometer, and basic assessment with patients using "SOAP Notes" (Subjective-Objective Assessment, Analysis, and Planning).



REFLECTIONS...

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So what would be the next step? When I first coordinated the healthcare program, my question was, "what would be my first step?" And now that the healthcare volunteers have finally graduated from the first stage of their training and I am asking of what's the next step. Now that they are equipped with the basic healthcare knowledge and skills, the next move is to equip them of peacebuilding, leadership, and management skills.

As Dr. Sam Evans had told me two years ago, "it's not your stethoscope that makes you a Nurse" and from that point I gradually discovered things that really make me a Nurse, and hopefully the healthcare volunteers would as well discover these things. It's not the stethoscope, it's not the degree, it's not the certificate, and it's not the first-aid kit. It's the mind that has the knowledge, the hands that have the skills, the feet that have the courage to go forth, the ears that listen intently, the mouth that speaks with confidence, and it's the heart that has a genuine compassion to become a healthcare volunteer. It could be anybody. It could be everybody. 🌱

Reflections of Mei Solocasa, Mindanao Peacebuilding Coordinator and Healthcare Training Specialist

For more information, visit our website at www.peacebuilderscommunity.org

PRAY FOR THE PBCI STAFF



Dann Pantoja. Pray for spiritual joy and deep sense of happiness as he terribly misses his children and grand-children this Christmas Season.



Joji Pantoja. Please pray for creativity and wisdom as she continues to manage Coffee for Peace efficiently, and as she gives advice to PBCI staff about the many different aspects of life.



Bennette Tenecio. Pray for wisdom on synchronizing her tasks in support ops and field ops for year 2011.



Kriz Cruzado. Please pray for wisdom as she faces new challenges in life. Also pray for good health and strength as she continues to train in becoming the next Director of Field Operations.



Mei Solocasa. Pray for wisdom as she prepares for the PAR Operations for the year 2011



Regina Mondez. Pray for wisdom as she helps translate a book about Annabaptist Christians. Also pray for her adjustments as she goes back to Luzon and applies everything she has learned in Mindanao.



Matt Tiessen. Please pray for strength as he misses his family and friends back home. Pray for their safety as they travel to and from school during the slippery snowy season.



Arjay Freg Balabag. Please pray for wisdom and creativity as he continues working on PBCI's comic book about Fair Trade Coffee Farming.



Joy Betios. Please pray for renewed strength for her work from day to day, as she and her family also struggles from injustice in their local community.



Freddie Abelitado. Please pray for energy and strength as he continues to be a good member of PBCI family. Also pray for his health and his family's needs.

INTERACTION WITH SOME AFP OFFICIALS

As part of Peacebuilders Community, Inc. (PBCI)'s Peace and Reconciliation (PAR) ministry, we are engaging the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in discussing the issues on Respect for Human Rights (HR) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

On December 6, 2010, PBCI was invited to witness the Change of Command Ceremony at the 1003rd Infantry Brigade (10th Infantry Division) of the Philippine Army at Sto. Tomas, Davao del Norte. During this ceremony, we were able to interact with the New Commanding Officer, Col. Lysander Suerte. We were also able to interact with the outgoing Commander, Col. Domingo Tutaan, Jr., who is now the new Chief of Human Rights Office at the AFP General Headquarters at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

As a result of this interaction, PBCI was invited to be part of the first AFP conference on HR and IHL, which was held at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City on December 17, 2010.

Col. Tutaan described this conference as a "paradigm shift on how AFP views its mandate of protecting the people and the state...a shift from predominantly militaristic solution to a people-centered security strategy". He even calls the new "AFP strategic intent" as "WINNING THE PEACE". 🌱

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AND <http://peacebuilderscommunity.org/2010/12/afp-institutionalizes-hr-ihl/>



(L-R): Bennette Grace Tenecio, PBCI Director of Support Operations; Regina Mondez, PBCI Church Resourcing Coordinator, Luzon; Col. Lysander Suerte, CO 1003 IB, 10ID PA; Dann Pantoja, PBCI President; Matt Tiessen, PBCI Technical Assistant and Transporter.



Left: Dann Pantoja, PBCI President with Col. Lysander Suerte, New Commanding Officer of the 1003rd Infantry Brigade
Right: Dann Pantoja, PBCI President with Col. Domingo Tutaan, Jr., New Chief of AFP Human Rights Office

PBCI FAMILY'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

PBCI and Coffee for Peace family held its Christmas party together last December 18, 2010 at the Domicillo Apartelle, Davao City.

This celebration was spiced up with the presence of the staffs' family members and PBCI's closest friends. The evening was filled with much fun and laughter, gift-giving, karaoke singing, and delightful foods.

Our president, Dann Pantoja, inspired us with his message about the essence of Jesus' sacrifice by limiting himself when He came to earth. From being an omni-present God to becoming human, we should all be thankful that Jesus Christ himself demonstrated how we should not be weary even if we have limitations and cannot do everything we want to do. 🌱

Regina Mondez, Development Communication Specialist



PBCI and Coffee for Peace family while having fun and enjoying the games during the Christmas party.



Left: On our exchange gift, Kriz, PBCI Director of Field Operations, got Cogs
Center: Cogs was surprised and overjoyed because he got a remote control for a TV, which was the only gift he put in his wish list
Right: Cogs immediately shared his joy with his niece, Monaisa, which was the reason why he wanted to have TV badly. Monaisa will no longer have to watch TV at their neighbor's place.
This became the highlight of our evening-- "how giving sacrificially gives joy to another family"

For more information, visit our website at www.peacebuilderscommunity.org

