

A MONTHLY PRAYER LETTER PUBLISHED BY DANN & JOJI PANTOJA, MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA WITNESS WORKERS
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PBCI IS RESOURCING THE CHURCH FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

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On July 28-30, 2010 the Peace and Reconciliation Training of Trainers was held among Christian leaders in the Province of Nueva Ecija in the northern island of the Philippines. It was initiated by PeaceBuilders Community, Inc. (PBCI), in partnership with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the Integrated Mennonite Church Philippines (IMCP), the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), and the Asian Center for Leadership Education and Development (ACLEAD). It was held at Central Luzon State University, Munoz, Nueva Ecija. The training was concluded by a closing ceremony graced by the presence of Bishop Efraim Tendero of PCEC.

political-military fronts: the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The second concern is the Peace Process with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing—the New Peoples Army (NPA). Both the CPP and the NPA are part of a larger social-political coalition called the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). [Continue to page 2]

Last May 10th, 2010 the People of the Philippines elected a new President, His Excellency Benigno S. Aquino III. During his first State of the Nation Address last July 26th, he presented some challenging realities we are facing as a nation. Here are some challenges where PeaceBuilders Community, Inc. (PBCI) is positively responding:

PEACE CONCERNS. President Aquino identified two complex peace concerns of our country. The first concern is the Mindanao Peace Process. It is about a 100-year old land-based conflict involving the Indigenous Peoples, the Christian Migrants, and the Moro People. The Moro people are represented by two



FAMILY LIFE: WE'RE HAPPY TO BE BACK IN MINDANAO BUT ARE MISSING OUR CANADIAN FAMILY & FRIENDS

Our tightly scheduled 2010 North American Ministry is over. It was fun. It was very meaningful. It was exhilarating! We thank all our partners, friends, and extended family who have welcomed us into their homes, provided us transportation, fed us with their delicious cooking, gave us a treat in their favorite restaurants, and who embraced us with their love. May God bless all of you!

Joji and I are back in the Philippines with a larger peace-building network and are happy to be re-connected with our field partners—Indigenous People, Muslims, and Christians.

Lele—our first daughter, and her family, moved from Victoria to Yaletown in Vancouver. Allan, her husband, now manages a department at the Downtown BMW. Lele is happy to have a bigger market for her wedding planning business, www.lesoires.com. Joji and I miss their daughters, Kiana Gabrielle (4) and Kaya Sydelle (1).

L'nielle Joy—our second daughter, has a new job with HabourAir where Eli, her life-partner, works as an aero-mechanic. Joji and I miss their daughter, Elia Lynn (4).

Byron—our son, is back in Vancouver and got an office admin job in Richmond, BC.

PBCI IS RESOURCING THE CHURCH...

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PBCI is responding to this challenge by initiating a program, in partnership with the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) and the Integrated Mennonite Church of the Philippines (IMCP), to organize a Peace and Reconciliation Team (PAR-T) in each of the 82 provinces of the Philippines by the end of 2015. The PAR-Ts are composed of local volunteers from various communities who are partnered with international volunteers.

They are jointly trained for 8 months in the following areas: Armed Conflict Area Survival Training, Fact-Finding Missions, Conflict Transformation, Disaster Preparedness, Trauma Healing, Inter-Faith Dialogue, Medical and Relief Operations, Development Communications, Cross-Cultural Communications, and Personal Growth & Development.



Clockwise from top-left: [1] Kriz Cruzado (Interim Director of Field Operations) and Bennette Tenecio (Director of Support Operations) celebrate the birthday of Joy Betios (General Support Staff) with Joji Pantoja. [2] Mei Solocasa (PAR Team Organizer) teaches her healthcare volunteers in Ranaw Zone. [3] Arjay Balabag is our Technical Support Staff. [4] Regina Mondez (PAR Team Organizer in Training), here with Bishop Efraim Tendaro of PCEC, works with churches in Central Luzon. [5] University PAR volunteers work on peace communication materials for children.

The mission of the PAR-Ts are: (1) To promote peace and reconciliation in our land by giving skilled, courageous support to communities experiencing various conflicts; (2) To inspire various parties-in-conflict to discard violence in favor of nonviolent action as a means of settling differences; (3) To provide various churches and communities with first-hand information and resources for responding to situations of conflict, and to urge their active involvement; and, (4) To interpret a nonviolent perspective to the media and to our nation as a whole.

CALAMITY RISKS. The Philippine government's US\$ 44,234,000 Calamity Fund for 2010 was corrupted and politicised by the former administration. For example, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo gave US\$ 24,438,795 out

of this fund to her home province of Pampanga purportedly for the victims of typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng that devastated most of Luzon last August-October 2009. But the fund was released in May 2010, during the election month!

This is a major focus of PBCI's economic-ecological shalom-building in the Philippines. Susan Mae Granada, National Coordinator of PCEC's Peace and Reconciliation Commission, reports:

The Philippines is among the five most frequently afflicted countries on earth. In the number of recorded earthquakes, the Philippines ranks fifth behind Iran, Indonesia, Russia, and China. Thirty-seven major tremors jolted the Philippines during the same time span between 1960 and 1996. Disasters such as the earthquake and tsunami that hit southern Mindanao in 1976, a series of eruptions of the Taal Volcano between 1965 and 1977 and of the Mayon Volcano in 1968, 1978 and 1984, as well as the earthquake in Baguio in 1990, claimed thousands of lives.

Another source of natural disasters during the months of May through December in the Philippines is the annual cycle of tropical storms or typhoons. Accordingly, these storm systems arise with particular frequency between July and September, cutting across the Philippine islands with wind speeds of up to 300 km/h. Warm temperatures and a lack of air movements over the open waters of the Pacific Ocean between the Carolines,

Marianas and Philippines are the main factors in the buildup of the storms. The number of cyclones over the northwestern portions of the Pacific is higher than anywhere else in the world, and the Philippines alone see an average of 20 typhoons per year.



Top: Christian leaders in Nueva Ecija Province present their group report on Disaster Risk Management as part of their Training of Teachers Program, an advanced PAR equipping seminar. Bottom: Mei Solocasa introduces herself during a courtesy meeting with the newly-elected mayor, the Hon. Analiza Palawan and the key leaders of the Municipality of Poona Piaqapo, Lanao del Norte Province.

This is the reason why we are resourcing the Body of Christ in the Philippines, in partnership with Mennonite Central Committee, to be trained in Community-Based Disaster Risk Management and to engage local government units to develop an emergency cooperative action plan. Perhaps, with the active presence and skilled involvement of the followers of Jesus Christ, there will be a significant reduction, if not the total elimination, of corruption of the government's Calamity Fund.

HEALTH CARE. Our new government needs US\$200M to provide basic health care to the 5 million poorest individuals in our country. The Shalom of our Being is a major thrust in our holistic peace-building ministry. PBCI's response to this challenge is well-expressed by Mei Solocasa, our PARTO in Mindanao:

PCBI works in areas that belong to the poorest provinces of the Philippines such as Lanao del Norte, North Cotabao, and Maguindanao. The residents in some of the areas that we worked could barely eat three times a day because of poverty. Due to this, medical services are also at its lowest in these provinces. Aside from poor medical services, poverty situation prevents the people from seeking medical services because they have no money to pay for the medicines and doctors so they would just endure their illnesses until they get worse.

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) conflict between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and MILF combatants worsened their situation. After the failed signing of the Memorandum of

Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) on August 5, 2008, armed conflict intensified and displaced more than 700,000 people. Today, many returned to their communities but many also remained at the evacuation centers because of the fear armed conflict can happen anytime which will endanger their lives.

It is the goal of the PeaceBuilders Community Incorporated-Health Care Program (PBCI-HCP) to help the communities in these areas including those who are in the evacuation centers through health promotion and disease- prevention measures.

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES. During the first six months of this year, the administration of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo spent far greater than its revenue. The deficit grew to US\$43,500,000. This means that President Aquino will be forced to borrow from multinational establishments, like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, for the survival of his administration. The current indebtedness of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines is US\$100,718,788,013. We are facing the possibility of increased compliance to foreign policies that will adversely affect our land and people despite the well-meaning intention of our new President to change the Government of the Republic of the Philippines for the better.

This is a motivating factor for us at PBCI to passionately advance the message of Biblical Shalom in its economic-ecological manifestations. We do this by promoting a fair trade movement through Coffee for Peace (www.coffeeforpeace.com), initially among tribal coffee farmers, and eventually, among the major players in the Philippine coffee industry. Why coffee? Second to oil, coffee is the second largest traded liquid in the

world. Coffee for Peace is our practical contribution to the just-development of a major industry in the Philippines. Through an effective fair trading movement, we envision to contribute to the economic liberation of this country from unjust global trading systems. This is shalom-based, Anabaptist-influenced, transformational economic development from the ground up!

PRAY FOR THE PBCI STAFF

Bennette Tenecio is our director of support operations. She looks after the day-to-day office operations—i.e., financial stewardship, formal-legal affairs, human resources, information-communication technology, etc.—to free Joji to focus more on long-term resource development.

Kriz Cruzado is our interim director of field operations. She follows-up all the new field partnerships that Dann is starting up. She makes sure that all peacebuilding partnerships on the field, old and new, are strategically-coherent and directed towards the realization of our overall vision, mission, and goals.

Mei Solocasa is our Mindanao PAR team organizer. She is a registered nurse by profession and is assigned in one of the most critical armed-conflicted areas in Mindanao. She gathers local healthcare volunteers, develops them into PAR Teams, and trains key leaders from among them. She's now working on her third team on her second year on the field.

Regina Mondez is our Luzon PAR team organizer-in-training. Her expertise is in Development Communications. She's assigned in an armed-conflict area in the northern island of the Philippines where the New Peoples Army—the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines—operates. Reg is being trained to gather local peace volunteers, to develop them into a PAR Team, and to train key leaders from among those volunteers.

Arjay Freg Balabag is our technical and creative support, doing most of the information and communication technology-stuff in our office. He's the quiet artist in our team.

Joy Betios is our office support, doing most of the clerical tasks, like bookkeeping, dealing with government offices, etc. When on the field, Joy loves to be the team's background support-in-prayer.

Fred Abelitado is our office custodian and maintenance support. We believe he's the person who can fix everything!

DANN'S PRAYER CALENDAR

Please pray for wisdom and strength as Dann works with the leaders of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) and the Integrated Mennonite Church, Philippines (IMCP) to advance Peace and Reconciliation in our land.

Wednesday, Aug 25. Meeting with Bishop Porcincula & Dr. Ely Mondez, Integrated Mennonite Church, Philippines (IMCP). Objective: To help strategize IMCP Church Planting and Development Program.

Friday, Aug 27. Meeting with Bishop Efraim Tendero, National Director, PCEC, with Susan Granada, Interim National Coordinator, PCEC's Peace and Reconciliation Commission (PCEC-PARC), and with Pastor Joseph Ongkiko, PARC Lead Training Facilitator. Objective: To help configure the details of PCEC-PARC formation, from the ground up.

Monday, Aug 30. PAR Orientation, La Union Christian Leaders. Objective: To present to 25-30 selected Christian leaders in the Province of La Union the ministry of PBCI and its vision to establish PAR Teams in each province of the Philippines.

Thursday, Sept 02. Meet with Bishop John Tayoto, President, Asian Center for Leadership Education and Development (ACLEAD). Objective: To get an update regarding the organization of PAR in the Province of Nueva Ecija and its interim set of officers, and to understand the relational dynamics of PAR among major Christian ministries in that province.

JOJI'S PRAYER CALENDAR

Please pray for creativity and wisdom as Joji leads our office staff in gathering resources—i.e., to connect with funding partners, to submit proposals, and to submit reports properly and promptly—in behalf of PBCI. She also makes sure that the resources entrusted to us are being managed well based on biblical stewardship. Her long-term task is to design and establish a sustainable resource base for peace and reconciliation ministries that fits the Philippine economic realities.

Sunday, Aug 22. Meeting with Richard Abellon, Chairman of the Cordillera Regional Arabica Coffee Council (CRACC). Objective: To update and enhance the partnership between CRACC and Coffee for Peace (CFP).

Tuesday, Aug 24. Selection of CFP applicants for part-time baristas (a *barista* is a coffee drink designer).

Wednesday, Aug 25. Start on-site inspection of all the suggested places for Matt Tiessen's and Megan Enn's respective homes in Davao City.

Friday, Aug 27. Finalize FY 2011-12 PBCI Budget Proposal to MCCanada, to be submitted on August 31st.

Tuesday, Aug 31. Prepare agenda and reports for the CFP Annual Corporate Meeting which will be held on 20th of September, 2010.