



peace and reconciliation journal



Mennonite Church Canada
WITNESS

A MONTHLY PRAYER LETTER PUBLISHED BY DANN & JOJI PANTOJA
International Partnership Workers, Mennonite Church Canada
Working with PeaceBuilders Community, Inc., Republic of the Philippines

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PBCI DEPLOYS BUKIDNON PAR TEAM ORGANIZERS



PBCI team and the new field staff during their deployment in the Municipality of Lantapan

November 2011—Peacebuilders Community, Inc. (PBCI) deployed two teams of Peace and Reconciliation (PAR) Team Organizers in the province of Bukidnon. For one year, each team will organize and train volunteer pastors and church leaders who will be willing to undergo the series of PAR training in their respective areas. The organized teams will be part of the bigger network of PAR Community Region 10, which has recently been organized and whose officers were installed by Bishop Efraim Tendero of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC). Rev. Provo Antipasado and Rev. Rodney Sarilla were the provincial coordinators for the province of Bukidnon. They assisted the team in determining the reference people in the areas where the teams were deployed.

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PBCI SUPPORTS GPH-NDFP PEACE TALKS

7-9 November 2011—Midsayap, North Cotabato. PeaceBuilders Community, Inc. (PBCI) staff participated at the Ecumenical Peacebuilding Training conducted by the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP). The Peacebuilding training aimed to analyze the root causes of conflict between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), as well as to provide biblico-theological reflections of peace on the said issues.

On the first day, the Lumad (Indigenous People), Bangsamoro (mostly Muslims), and Migrants (mostly Christians) presented their analysis of the root causes of conflict based on their own perspectives. The Lumads aspire for sovereignty of their ancestral lands, restoration of self-governance, and assertion of their understanding of development based on their right to self-determination.

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Bishop Efraim Tendero of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) and Rafael Baylosis of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) while having a meaningful and peaceful conversation over dinner.

PBCI CONDUCTS MEDICAL OUTREACH IN MAGUINDANAO

28 November 2011—Maguindanao.

Peacebuilders Community, Inc. conducted a Medical Outreach in Brgy. Bagoenged, Municipality of Pagalungan, Province of Maguindanao. The medical outreach was held in Bagoenged Elementary School, where the School Principal and the Barangay Captain warmly welcomed the team.

PBCI Healthcare Specialist, Mei Solocasa, led the PBCI team and some volunteer nurses from the community in conducting patient assessment and check-up. She prescribed medicines for those whose illnesses can be cured by medicine.

Kriz Cruzado, Director of Field Operations, distributed the medicines, to make sure that the prescribed medicines are properly given to the patients.

Bennette Tenecio, Trauma Healing Specialist, conducted a Trauma healing session among the children in the community. Two BSc Psychology students from Ateneo de Davao University volunteered to be part of the Trauma-healing session for children. The volunteers, Kim and Rodge, shared how the children responded and interacted during their workshop. The effect of war and conflict between the AFP and MILF are very evident in the lives of the traumatized children in that community.

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PBCI team with PAR Cotabato members and some community volunteers



Children in the community enjoying their trauma-healing session

PAR Cotabato, led by Rev. Val Juan, prayed for the whole team and the medical mission before we started



PBCI DEPLOYS BUKIDNON...

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The team assigned in Valencia City consists of a Journalist and a Development Communication Specialist. Twinkle Bautista (Team Leader) is a twenty-five year old BSc Journalism graduate from the University of the Philippines. Her previous work experience in Northern Luzon inspired her to continue her journey in pursuing peace with PBCI. She is a very enthusiastic person and delights in learning and meeting new people. Sherel Quider, Assistant Team Leader, is a BSc Development Communication graduate from Bukidnon State University (2011). At age twenty-one, she already sees her calling as an active peace and reconciliation advocate in her own province. She was born and raised in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon. PBCI feels so blessed to have her as part of the team.

The team assigned in the Municipality of Lantapan consists of two Community Development Specialists from Southern Christian College. Jane Edmar Lorenzo (Team Leader), is a twenty-three year old active lady who sees joy and excitement in the new task assigned to her at PBCI. Jeffrey Estallo, Assistant Team Leader, has been exposed to Lantapan area even before he worked with PBCI. He sees his task as a big challenge, and yet he gives joy and meaningful insights to the people he deals with.

The two teams initially met with key leaders of the municipalities they were assigned in. PBCI prays that they will be able to determine and discern the volunteers that God called to be part of the PAR training in the next months.

Reported by Regina Lyn Mondez

PBCI SUPPORTS GPH-NDFP...


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Unless these aspirations are not yet reached, they will continue their struggle to exercise their rights. The Bangsamoro representatives, on the other hand, emphasized that deep structural reforms in the government are needed. They feel that the Bangsamoro people are "heard by the government," but they were "never listened to." The Christians acknowledge their contribution to the root causes of conflict, and are committed to help solve the issues of conflict in a peaceful and non-violent way.

On the second day, the GPH and NDFP Peace Panels updated the public about the current status of the peace talks. The NDFP presented updates and prospects of the Comprehensive Agreement on Socio-Economic Reforms and Political Reforms (CASER). Both the GPH and NDFP want to continue the peace talks, but the NDFP has a precondition for the GPH to release the thirteen personalities they believe are covered by the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). The GPH, however, stated that they will not submit to this precondition.

Bishop Efraim Tendero of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) gave a theological reflection on the Characteristics of the Triune God – God the Father as the Author of Peace, Jesus Christ as the Agent of Peace, and the Holy Spirit as the Advocate of Peace. Rev. Dann Pantoja presented a lecture on biblical peace building and reconciliation. Dr. Muriel Montenegro facilitated a bible study on peace. Several discussions went around the character of God as a just God and at the same time as a God of peace.

In the evening, a Focused Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted, and most of the participants aired their emotions and respective sentiments regarding the GPH-NDFP issue. A few hours of discussion was spent in tackling issues of the Lumads, issues of the Bangsamoro people, and the issues of the NDFP and the GPH themselves. PeaceBuilders Community helped in the facilitation of the conversation and in the documentation of the whole FGD.

The FGD ended with a tri-people prayer for peace, recognizing the hope for peace between the GPH and NDFP, and peace for the whole country through the help of the Creator and the Holy Spirit. 

ATE EDNA AND HER PAINS: AN UPDATE

Feature Story

Ate Edna is the 50-year old woman diagnosed with hip dislocation related to osteoporosis whom I met in the Municipality of Kolambugan, Lanao del Norte.

Sadly, last November 09, 2011, Ate Edna died. She wasn't able to have a biopsy to know if her ailment was cancer or not but with the severity of pain, rapid weight loss and fast deterioration of her bone strength, it would seem like cancer.

Finally, Ate Edna's pains ended. I could still remember our times when I would hold her hand and we would pray together. I believe God listened to our prayers and God's will is perfect. With sadness of Ate Edna's short life and gladness of her rest after all the pains, I continue to pray that God would comfort Ate Edna's family as they grieve for her death.

Reported by Mei Solocasa

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

PBCI CONDUCTS...

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Regina Mondez assisted the patients while they wait for their turn for the check-up and pharmacy, while Byron Pantoja documented the event.

Ustadz Abdulkadir Abubakar, PBCI Strategic Adviser on Islamic Values, coordinated the event with the local community leaders. It is through his leadership and coordination that the whole team was able to safely conduct the Medical Outreach in that area.

The Peace and Reconciliation Community (PAR) in Cotabato City, headed by Rev. Valentin Juan, supported the event and joined the team. Four members of PAR Cotabato volunteered to be part of the medical mission. They prayed for the community, and assisted in some of the tasks.

Ustadz Abdulkadir prayed a Muslim prayer for the community while Rev. Val Juan also prayed a Christian prayer. The whole community was shocked and at the same time felt happy that there are Christians who care for them and pray for their welfare.

At the end of the day, there were a total of 131 patients that were checked and given free medicines. There are also around 50 children who participated in the Trauma healing sessions.

We praise God for the volunteers, the teachers in that school, the barangay officials and healthcare workers, the children, parents, and all the people who joined and supported the activity.

Although a one-day medical activity is not enough to cure all the sicknesses of the people in Bagoenged, we hope and pray that this event will signify our sincere respect and care for the Bangsamoro people. We praise God for Ustadz Abdulkadir and for Rev. Val Juan, who, despite their religious differences, were able to peacefully interact and lead their fellow believers into a successful day with lots of fun and learning.

Alhamdulillah! 🌿

Reported by Regina Lyn Mondez

PRAY FOR THE PBCI STAFF



Dann Pantoja. Praise God for his joyful heart! Praise God for an energizing Management Team! Thank God for the enthusiastic staff! Please pray for new PAR Community organizing explorations: Bukidnon Province, Mindoro Province, Region 13, and Bicol Region. Pray for spiritual discernment as he prioritizes his speaking and consulting engagements. Please pray for strength--body, spirit, and soul.



Joji Pantoja. Please pray for PBCI and CFP staff who were affected by the flash flood in Davao City. Please pray that we may raise Php 40, 000.00 to help some of the staff rebuild their homes which were washed away by the flood.



Bennette Tenecio. Please pray for good health; wisdom and discernment in her work especially in evaluating and assessing applicants for the new ministry in Bukidnon; for the Coloring Books to be published and launched. That through these coloring books, many people will embrace "Peace, Joy, and Love" in their lives..



Kriz Cruzado. Please pray for God's leading, a humble heart and a clear direction. Also pray for strength, wisdom and sharp discernment as she leads the Field Operations.



Mei Solocasa. May God give her wisdom and good health to fulfill the tasks of Mindanao Coordination.



Regina Mondez. Please pray for guidance and clear direction as she adjusts to her work in Mindanao. Pray for a clear and sharp mind so she could always perform her tasks with excellence.



Keith Grubaugh. Keith is our new intern specializing in Technical Support—Accounting. Please pray for wisdom and strength.



Jenna Grubaugh. Please pray for energy and enthusiasm to finish up the last leg of their journey in the Philippines.



Arjay Freg Balabag. Please pray for him and his family, as they rebuild their home which was washed away by the recent typhoon.



Joy Betios. Please pray for renewed strength for her work from day to day, as their home and everything they possess were washed away by the recent flash flood in Davao City.



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.