



BALAKAT TRAINING PROGRAM

2021-2022



With the indigenous peoples of Sitio Haduan, a series of 12-day-long training sessions were held. The schedule included the days of March 28 through April 12, 2022. This was an essential component of the assistance that the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) provided to Mabalacat City College (MCC) in order to help the college achieve the goal of enhancing the Sitio Haduan indigenous community's economic well-being. For thorough community development planning, different experts from various agencies were enlisted.



In this capability enhancement intervention, a holistic approach was being adopted. Economic well-being, while so much desired, could not be imposed by outsiders. The desire for any positive change will have to come from and be desired by the people of the community, first and foremost. The perspectives of people whose very lives will be affected by the interventions must be taken into consideration and used as a springboard.



ESTABLISHING THE BALAKAT SANCTUARY: COMMUNITY FOCUS



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This was the part of the training that ensured that the project was indeed community-driven. The sessions were facilitated by Dr. Leocito Gabo, Director of the College of Social Work and Community Development at UP Diliman.

This training clarified and established where the IPs of Sitio Haduan would want to go vis-à-vis economic and tourism objectives and the significance of the Balakat Sanctuary. They also determined where they are right now and identified strategies and steps on how they could bridge the gap. Considering their vision, mission, and objectives, they identified the directions they would like to tread. Exposing a great deal of hope for the future, they then named their group Bayung Biyaya (new life).

In the next phase, this group of IPs will be helped to establish their own association, be officially registered with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and be named the Bayung Biyaya Association.

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This training equipped the people with job-specific skills in order for them to engage in sustainable organic farming. This took place under the mentoring of the team of Dr. Norman De Jesus from Pampanga State Agricultural University (PSAU). The first day of the training tackled improved crop production to improve the quality of crops, decrease production costs, and increase the profits of farmers and marketers.



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The participants were also taught how to make organic fertilizers and pesticides like wood vinegar, microorganisms (IMO—indigenous microorganisms) using cooked rice, calcium (Ca) using eggshells, fish/kuhol amino acids, fermented plant juice (aka FPJ), fermented fruit juice, hot chili extract, madre de cacao extract, marigold extract, and neem tree extract.

These organic concoctions reduce the toxic load, keep the chemicals out of the air, water, soil, and bodies of water, reduce, if not eliminate, farm pollution, thus build healthy soil, protect future generations, and result in better-quality crops.



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BALAKAT TREES

Vermiculture and worm composting were also explained, along with the proper soil sampling procedure. The participants were asked to take soil samples from their farm, which were brought by the speaker for testing.

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The second day of this technical training was a very significant day because it was the day that taught people how to do the Balakat Tea Processing—how to make Balakat Tea from the raw materials up to the finished product, including the necessary tools and equipment needed for the process. This is an income-generating project aimed at boosting the livelihood of the community at Sitio Haduan.

OPERATING THE BALAKAT SANCTUARY: TECHNICAL FOCUS- DISASTER RISK

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A team from the City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (CDRRMO) of the Mabalacat City Government, headed by Ms. Khay Bayani, its Training Officer, conducted an orientation on the various types of disasters and what needs to be done in case such eventualities occur.

The talk centered on earthquakes, landslides, floods, and fires. There was an animated exchange of discussion as the speakers asked the community about their experiences during those calamities, and the participants eagerly shared theirs.

The guest speakers emphasized prioritizing one's safety over material belongings. At the end of the session, they shared the numbers to call in cases of emergency and distributed booklets containing guidelines for when a disaster happens, as well as an emergency whistle for each of the attendees.



A 4-day bamboo handicrafts training was done to level up the quality of work of the Aetas when it comes to handicraft-making. This was to help ensure that their products would become a sustainable source of their livelihood using resources that are naturally abundant in their environment, namely bamboo.

The training was conducted by the Forest Products Research and Development Institute (FPRDI) from Laguna, an agency attached to DOST. The 5-man team was headed by Engr. Jovi Elec, Subject Matter Specialist, together with Christian Amante, Techno-Transfer Specialist, and Mr. Rosauro Reyes, Jr., and Laidon Lastimoso, both Subject Matter Specialists

A brief lecture or discussion on bamboo craft making and demonstration started each module, which was followed by hands-on activities. From a few rather sloppy outputs at the beginning, the participants eventually were able to get a grip on the skills required, and at the end of the program, they created and produced refined bamboo lamps, cellphone cases, speakers, and trays that could become competitive in the market.



ENTERPRISE MASTERY– ACQUIRING THE BASICS OF OPERATING A COMMUNITY MICRO-ENTERPRISE

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Learning sessions were conducted by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to equip the people with the fundamentals of microenterprise development. Mr. Mark Pagaduan of DTI and a Go Negosyo mentor was the resource person. Mr. Pagaduan delivered an engaging and informative discussion as he shared his knowledge and skills drawn from his vast experiences as an entrepreneur.

During day 1 of his talk, his focus was on the entrepreneur mindset. According to him, entrepreneurs see opportunities, and they bet on themselves to take advantage of those opportunities. They will take the risks that others will not, and they will find ways to create value for society.

The characteristics of an entrepreneur include having a vision, having a high energy level and tolerance for failure, being very creative, having a strong desire to achieve, and having an internal locus of control. Self-confidence and optimism are also in the nature of an entrepreneur. The speaker stressed time and again, “To raise your net worth, you must raise your self-worth”. To further develop oneself, having a mentor and acquiring more experience are necessary.



Day 2 was a business planning workshop. Here, Mr. Pagaduan mentioned that wealth is first created in the mind and that abilities and the right attitude will spell out achievement. A short marketing pitch was performed by the participants, who were grouped into pairs. They were tasked with highlighting the value proposition, the edge, or the uniqueness of their products, bamboo crafts, as compared to the same products of competitors. The participants delivered a lively and fun presentation, and a convincing one at that, where they managed to underscore the unique quality of their sample products. The speaker also talked about the common reasons why some small businesses fail and the difference between the traditional and the new start-up model for business. For the old model, it starts with an idea, while for the new model, the primary consideration is what the customers need or want. Mr. Pagaduan also emphasized the need to invest in technology, by owning a cellphone at least, as the trend now is towards online selling or via social media. Likewise, to engage in networking, collaborations, partnerships, and coordination with the proper agencies, like DTI, where they could get assistance and support.

For the culminating activity, the participants were asked to create their business model canvas. This is like a road map of their business plan, which includes the profile, marketing channels, key activities, resources, and partners, as well as the cost structures, revenue streams, and customer relationships. The participants, with the guidance of the speaker, were able to identify and list down the crucial information in their business model canvasses that will be quite useful to them when they embark on a microenterprise in the future as a community.

At the end of the seminar, Mr. Pagaduan expressed his willingness to extend his support to the community when they eventually begin their business venture.



Participants in pairs doing their marketing pitch at which time they highlighted their value proposition, the edge or the uniqueness of their bamboo-craft products over those of their competitors. Learning sessions facilitated by Mr. Mark Pagaduan of DTI and a Go Negosyo Mentor.

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The last topic for the Balakat Training Program concerns ECO-TOURISM, which is the cluster on Part III: Mastering the Balakat Sanctuary as an Enterprise.

Dr. Norman De Jesus, Director of the PSAU-ALIAS (Alternative Low Input Agriculture System) Center, conducted an extensive talk on the subject matter. He explained the concept of eco/agritourism. He further stated that eco/agritourism provides opportunities for diversification and economic incentives for growers, promotes economic development, and helps educate the public about the important contributions of agriculture to the country's economy and quality of life.

In his personal assessment, Sitio Haduan has huge potential as an ecotourism site. It is rich in natural resources, which in itself is already a tourist attraction. It just needs to highlight its distinct features, such as the waterfalls, hanging bridges, and unique offerings like the Balakat tea. The all-terrain activity (ATV) rides and the rehabilitation of the abandoned view deck that can be converted into a museum showcasing Aeta culture and heritage would also be added attractions. He also showed in his presentation some examples of agritourism farms in different parts of the country. Dr. De Jesus suggested that the community put all their products together and sell them only in one place so that tourists seeking the products will go to their place and not them running after the tourists to maintain their dignity. Other products that can be sold include bamboo crafts, camote chips, ube jam, or "mafia" (a kind or a variety of ube), or the community may venture into rabbit raising. Integrated farming would be an attractive and sustainable form of agri-tourism.



It is also a must to establish guidelines, policies, and regulations according to industry standards for the protection of the environment, community, and visitors.

The necessity of practicing good hygiene, especially in tea and food production, was likewise emphasized.



BAYUNG BIYAYA

This potent group of Aetas from Sitio Haduan seizes now and the future with a great deal of hope now that they feel capacitated with the fundamentals vis-à-vis community, technical, and enterprise preparation.

***Bayung Biyaya, meaning, New Life, is a name that the participants gave their association which will be officially registered with the Department of Labor and Employment.**