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OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE PHILIPPINE NETWORK OF FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMMES

PNFSP-TDH's disaster and resiliency project assists Yolanda victims in Cebu, Leyte

Crying children, destroyed homes, desperate people. These were the images that shocked the whole world after typhoon Yolanda (international name Haiyan) blew its strong winds and poured torrential rains on the Visayas islands last November 8, 2013.

Because of the government's incompetence to sufficiently address the needs of the hundreds of thousands of people who were affected by the typhoon, PNFSP has forged a partnership with Terre des Hommes-Germany (TDH) for the former's Community-led Disaster Preparedness and Resiliency Program (CLDPR). This program aims to restore the livelihoods of the people, establish mechanisms for disaster prevention, response, and recovery through Community-led Disaster Preparedness committees, and help them get their lives back in order.

The project areas are Barangays Kagbana, Villa Corazon, Dinaayan, and Buenavista in the municipality of Burauen, Leyte; Sitio Manan-aw in Tindog and Barangay Dalingding Sur in the municipality of Medellin, Cebu; and Sitio Mayho, Paypay and Dalingding Norte in the municipality of Daan Bantayan, Cebu.

The partner organizations of PNFSP are Eastern Visayas Rural Assistance Program (EVRAP) and Advocates for Community Health (ACH) for the areas in Leyte, while the Women's Resource Center of the Visayas (WRCV) and the Visayas Primary Health Care Services (VPHCS) are focused in the communities in Cebu.

Community Organizing

After the courtesy calls with the barangay officials, PNFSP and its partners first formed a Peoples' Organization (PO) in the eight



Winster Abasolo (center), PNFSP Field Officer, gathered the Yolanda survivors of Brgy. Dinaayan to help form their people's organization. Inset: Food assistance in Kagbana

communities and held General Assemblies. The community organizers found it easy to form the farmers' associations and in fact, the survivors were very eager to become members. The reason is that the people know that their PO will be able to provide them with a strong support system whenever they are in need, especially during times of natural disasters. However, they are also aware that they have responsibilities and must exert great effort in maintaining these POs.

Different committees were also formed for every PO, each with its own task. These are: 1) Disaster Preparedness Committees; 2) Health Committee which facilitates the basic psycho-

social processing for adults and children. It spearheads various activities in order to build individual and collective coping strategies, and to raise the awareness on the health effects of disasters; 3) and Socio-economic Committee which ensures the socio-econ projects such as Sustainable Agriculture and Bio-Intensive Gardening for each household.

Psychosocial support

VPHCS conducted 3 psychosocial sessions for each of the 4 barangays in Northern Cebu.

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PNFSP holds its 2nd general assembly

Since its establishment in 2005, it was only after 9 years that PNFSP was able to hold its 2nd General Assembly last August 13-14, 2014. It was attended by representatives of PNFSP's original members and organizations wishing to join the Network.

PNFSP was able to give them technical assistance especially on sustainable agriculture and appropriate technology projects, which were very beneficial to the farming communities. The cross-visits or exchange program between members also helped them to gather additional knowledge based from the experiences of the visited member.



Representatives of PNFSP member organizations together with the Secretariat

The first day started with a Welcome Remarks from Cynthia Deduro, PNFSP's Interim Chairperson and Executive Director of DAGSAW.

She was followed by the Keynote Speech of Dr. Romeo Quijano, President of Pesticide Action Network -Philippines, which focuses on Food Safety and Food Security. According to him, food security cannot be attained without food safety, and food safety is an essential element of the right to food. He defined food as being safe "when it will not likely cause adverse health effects on those who will consume it. Food is unsafe if contains an agent/contaminant or if it is in a condition that could potentially cause an adverse human health effect. Agents/contaminants can be biological, chemical, or physical. The condition of the food itself can render it unsafe." He goes on to explain that "food security is meaningless without food safety. Food contaminated with pesticides and other toxic pollutants negate the very objective of food security, that is, to achieve good health and maintain life. Health is the common objective while food security serves as the foundation of good health, food safety provides the umbrella for the maintenance of health." Dr. Quijano concluded his presentation with the acronym ANTIDOTE, which enumerates the actions needed to be done to further promote food safety and food security. These include Awareness raising, Networking among groups, Technical capacity building, Information exchange/monitoring, Deepening of understanding, Organizing concerned people, Transformative action, and Empowerment of people.

After lunch, the participants were grouped into Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao members for the workshop. The objective was to draw out from the members their assessment and reflection of PNFSP as a national network for food security concerns. According to the reports of each group, PNFSP was able to give them technical assistance especially on sustainable agriculture and appropriate technology projects, which were very beneficial to the farming communities. The cross-visits or exchange program between members also helped them to gather additional knowledge based from the experiences of the visited member. This also facilitated seed exchanges of traditional rice varieties which the visiting member subsequently planted in their trial farms. In the future, they hope to be able to engage in more partnerships with the Sustainable Agriculture Community Level Appropriate Technology (SACLAT) program of PNFSP in order to address the problems of climate change.

The second day began with the presentation of the three-year project phase with SolidAgro. It was followed by the unification of the research design on the Implications of Large-Scale Mining on Food Security. Next on the agenda was the election for the National Council. Each region selected the organization which would be their representative in the NC. The selected representatives of the National Council will then elect the Executive Committee. The new set of officers are Prof. Ed Deveza as the Chairperson, Cynthia Deduro as the Vice Chairperson for External Affairs, Estrella Catarata as the Vice Chairperson for Internal Affairs, Lorie Beyer as Secretary, Anna Zofia Leal as Treasurer, Leve Laurente as Auditor, and Dr. Romeo Quijano as Public Relations Officer. They then took their oath of office in front of the whole assembly. Prof. Deveza gave his culminating message and concluded the two-day event.



The new ExeCom: (from left) Prof. Ed Deveza, Estrella Catarata, Cynthia Deduro, Leve Laurente, Dr. Romeo Quijano, Lorie Beyer, and Anna Zofia Leal

Mega dams threaten ancestral lands nationwide

The Philippine government has long pursued the construction of mega dams as an important source of water and energy supplies. It is also being touted as a source of investment with regional economic benefits such as providing livelihoods. However, these dam projects have given rise to public outcries because of its detrimental impacts. At present, there are 35 mega dams in the country. Of these, 21 are located in ancestral lands.

Because of this, the Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan sa Pilipinas (KAMP), Integrated Development Program for Indigenous People -Southern Tagalog (IDPIP-ST), and the Philippine Task Force for Indigenous Peoples' Rights (TFIP) jointly organized a "Forum on Laiban Dam and Other Dams in Indigenous Peoples' Ancestral Domains" on September 25, 2014. It served as the venue for dam-affected indigenous communities from all over the country to share their experiences and to be able to arrive at unities based on insights and lessons learned from various dam struggles.

Water is Life

Water has a deep and integral part in the life of indigenous people. It is part of their history, ancestral land, and cultural identity.

The Igorots of Cordillera, for example, have a particular system of irrigation in the mountains called the *Lampisa* system. The main factor in the completion of this project is the resilient communal participation involved in the development, maintenance and management of irrigation systems. It is impressive and noteworthy since all field owners participate in the whole process through the indigenous mutual aid system termed the *ob-obbo*.

Rivers, shores, and other water bodies mark the identity of the natives and also their cultural beliefs. An indigenous community often gets its name from the river or island where they live. These have also been a part of their political system. It functions as the marker of their territorial boundaries and site for tribal battles.

The indigenous people are also in need of electricity. However, they firmly believe that electricity, as with other utilities, should be received by each citizen. They are open to the use and development of water bodies for the interest of the public, as long as they are respected and given due consideration for their right to self-determination and ancestral lands.

Laiban Dam

Now dubbed as the "New Centennial Water Project" the Kaliwa Dam, a part of the integrated Laiban Dam is poised to push through under President Aquino's Public-Private Partnership scheme. The 113 meter high dam project, which will be implemented with a Php 52 billion loan, is targeted to produce 1,900 million liters per day and 25 megawatts power for Metro Manila and parts of Cavite.

The Dam will affect 28,000 hectares of ancestral lands, mostly forest lands, critical watershed and biodiversity-rich areas in the Sierra Madre Range, and inundate 7 barangays, which are mostly indigenous peoples' communities in Tanay, Rizal and 1 barangay in Upper North Quezon.

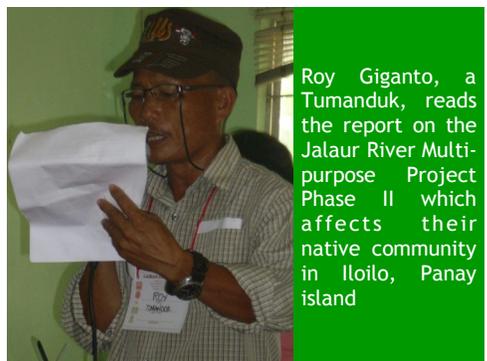
An estimated 10,000 indigenous Dumagats and Remontados will be dislocated, resulting to landlessness and loss of traditional livelihood leading to utmost poverty, and cultural disintegration; environmental destruction and irreversible habitat and agricultural land loss.



A cultural presentation depicts the militarization and harassment experienced by indigenous people and residents of communities affected by the mega dams

Steadfast opposition from affected communities and advocates deterred the Dam's full construction. The more than 3-decade struggle against it is now once again put to the test, with the full pursuit of the Aquino government on one hand, and the Dumagat indigenous peoples on the other hand.

Jalaur Dam



Roy Giganto, a Tumanduk, reads the report on the Jalaur River Multipurpose Project Phase II which affects their native community in Iloilo, Panay island

In 2013, it was announced that the Jalaur River Multipurpose Project Phase II (JRMP2) is the second flagship project of Pres. Noynoy Aquino. It costs 11.2 billion pesos of which, 8.9 billion will be loaned from the Korean Export-Import Bank while the 2.2 billion counterpart budget of the Philippine government comes from the controversial Disbursement Acceleration Program. This project entails the construction of 3 dams to serve as the main reservoir, after bay, and catch dam in Barangay Agcalaga, Calinog, Iloilo.

Upon its completion, large portions of barangays Garangan, Masaroy, Agcalaga, Alibunan, and Cahigon in the municipality of Calinog would have to be submerged. This will then result to the dislocation of 17,000 Tumandoks (indigenous people of Panay) with their livelihoods, culture, and ancestral lands destroyed. Downhill of the main dam, the towns of central Calinog, Dingle, Duenas, San Enrique, Pototan, Barotac Nuevo, Zarraga, Dumangas, and the city of Passi are threatened with massive flooding. Added to this is the landslide-prone edges of Jalaur river which will eventually lead to

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A lecture on disaster education, impact and reaction to trauma was given. Afterwards, a pre-test was conducted to assess the feelings experienced during Typhoon Yolanda, and a post pre test of the feelings at present. Through these tests, it was determined who among the survivors needed psychosocial therapy.

This was then followed by stress debriefing through group therapy.

Meanwhile, the children engaged in play therapy wherein a facilitator had the children perform in order to draw out their feelings of fear and anger. The facilitator then processed the emotions expressed during the play.

In the case of Burauen, Leyte, ACH first gave a General Project Orientation and conducted the following trainings: 1) Health Disaster Preparedness including First Aid, Home Remedies, and Traditional medicine; and 2) Mental health orientation and Psychosocial Processing

While the persistent anxiety brought about by poverty further aggravated by the typhoon remains, the adults said that the newly formed committees and organization have given them a better chance to bond together for a more concrete plan for long term response to continuing vulnerabilities to disaster.



Winster Abasolo (far right), PNFSP's Field Officer, during the General Assembly of Villa Corazon Organic Farmers Organization (VCOFO)

Food and school assistance

The POs in the 8 barangays were the ones who facilitated the distribution of the food and school supplies. Officers of each organization met, discussed the mechanics, and helped in the canvassing, hauling and rice distribution.

Amy Banag-banag, chairperson of the Kagbana Farmers Association, effectively summed up the emotions of the people after the distribution. She said that "because we're poor and victims of calamities, we have felt so low, even more so because of how society looked down on us while we were helplessly lining up and just waiting and begging for relief goods. But, our CLDPR project is very good because it does not regard us as lowly beggars. This project somehow boosted our confidence and morale in recognizing our big role and responsibility in alleviating our poor situation."

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- Amy Banag-banag,
Chairperson of Kagbana
Farmers Association

In the name of genuine service

Written by FARDEC

In spite of all the struggles and the hardships, the Central Visayas Farmers Development Center, Inc. (FARDEC, Inc.) celebrated its 25th year of continuous service to the peasants of the region.

With the theme, "25 years of relentless service to the peasants of Central Visayas for the achievement of Genuine Agrarian Reform and Sustainable Development", the institution held its anniversary, along with its annual General Assembly, last December 19, 2014 at UCCP Cendet, Osmeña Boulevard Cebu City.

Several farmer leaders from the 200 farmers' organisations attended the celebration and shared their experiences about their struggles over the lands they are tilling, the challenges they were able to overcome, and the victories gained together with FARDEC. Older farmer-leaders and former FARDEC staff were also present and they, too, shared their most memorable experiences and the lessons they learned while working for the organization.

When asked for a testimonial, FARDEC Board of Trustees member and farmer-leader, Adriana Varga or more known as Nang Diana, said, "The peasants are in the core of this struggle. If they weren't united, FARDEC would not be effective in its work. If not for the peasants, FARDEC would not even exist."

The different farmer-leaders who shared their gains and experiences over the past years reiterated Nang Diana's point by saying that they owe their victories to their strong organisation, that FARDEC only served as a guide in making them understand the real cause of their problems and what they should do to overcome it.

Along with the testimonials and sharing of experiences, the farmers, including the staff, also shared their talents to the plenary through cultural presentations. Several cultural presentations were made by different youth groups from the islands of Bohol, Cebu and Negros Oriental showcasing the struggles experienced by the farmers in those respective areas and how they managed to overcome it.

And to honour those who died in the name of genuine service to the peasant sector, a tribute to the martyred farmers and farmer-leaders was held at the beginning of the program.

The celebration was ended by FARDEC staff singing the institution's theme song, *Buhay at Bukid* by the band *Buklod*, which signifies the hardships faced by the farmers despite them being the ones producing the food for millions of people, not only in Central Visayas and in the Philippines, but the whole world as well.

FARDEC's former Executive Director now Board of Trustees Chairperson, Estrella Flores-Catarata, said that despite FARDEC's 25 years, there is still a long way to go and that the institution will continue to provide genuine service to the oppressed and marginalised peasant sector and help them achieve Genuine Agrarian Reform and end all other forms of injustices.

Agri schools joined Manilakbayan to call for food and peace in Mindanao

On the evening of October 27, 2014, armed men ransacked a cooperative store in Kabulohan, Brgy. Buhisan, San Agustin, Surigao del Sur. They then used kerosene from the store to burn down the nearby school owned by the Tribal Filipino Program of Surigao del Sur (TRIFPSS-NGO). Witnesses say that the men first burned the tarpaulin posted on the wall which says "This school is a zone of peace." Luckily, the residents of the community were able to put out the fire. Unfortunately, this was not the case of another TRIFPSS school located in Sitio Kabalawan which was burned down by the armed men.

These were just two incidents in a series of terror attacks of alleged government soldiers and members of a tribal paramilitary group named Bagani which is led by Datu Calpet Egua. Henry Alameda, a council member of MAPASU (Persevering Struggle for the Next Generation), an inter-municipal Lumad organization in Surigao del Sur, was ruthlessly killed in front of his family. Other leaders and their family members were also murdered, and about five houses were damaged or destroyed due to arson or during the strafing.

These horrifying events forced more than 1,700 Manobo residents to flee their homes and communities and evacuate in a gym located in Diatagon, Surigao del Sur. As a result, 10 community schools suspended their classes and around 900 students were affected by the cancellation of classes.

Black Propaganda

According to Annabelle Campos, a teacher of TRIFPSS, militarization has always been a problem of their school. The military started to camp-out in their schools since 1997.

"During the latest attack, the paramilitary group led by Marcos Bocales threatened the parents of the students, saying that something bad will happen to them if they continue sending the children to our school", relates Campos. "This prompted the communities to evacuate immediately so that our lives will not be endangered", she added.

The militarization is part of the Aquino administration's counter-insurgency program called "Oplan Bayanihan". "It is sad that we civilians - our leaders and students, are the ones being victimized by Oplan Bayanihan", tells Campos. "We dedicate our lives in teaching Manobo children because the government cannot provide public schools in the mountains. Yet, this is what we experience at the hands of the military", she continued.

Agricultural Schools

The Tribal Filipino Program of Surigao del Sur (TRIFPSS-NGO) is an institution which promotes the enhancement of the knowledge and capabilities of indigenous people by providing education and training programs. The subject of agriculture is given much emphasis in the whole elementary curriculum. Its four

branches are discussed extensively: agronomy, horticulture, animal husbandry, and forestry. Level 1 students even have their own vegetable gardens. The level 3 students practice animal husbandry with goats, pigs, and chickens. The parents help with the land preparation and the older students are the ones who plant crops like corn. According to Campos, they teach the students the basics of agriculture so that when they start attending ALCADDEV (Alternative Learning Center for Agriculture and Livelihood Development) for their high school, the children already have an idea on what to do.



Learners of TRIFPSS during class

Alcadedev is an alternative learning system especially designed to provide secondary education to indigenous youth. It was built through the determined efforts of the MAPASU. In here, each year level has been entrusted with an area inside the school to cultivate into a vegetable garden. The produce from these gardens will become the school's food source to feed the students throughout the year. In instances like the evacuation of the whole community because of militarization, the farms are left unattended and the students have less harvest and less food to eat when they come back to the school.

Manilakbayan 2014

"Food and Peace for MindaNow!" was the theme of Manilakbayan 2014. 300 Lumads, farmers, workers, students, leaders of progressive organizations, environmentalists, human rights defenders, and Moro representatives tirelessly marched from Surigao in Mindanao to Leyte and Samar in Visayas to Manila in the National Capital Region.

They did not heed the rains or the heat, just so they could show the whole country that they are protesting against the various atrocities being done by the government's military forces in their regions. Instead of providing the farmers with agricultural support so that the people will be able to enjoy three meals a day, the peasants are being harassed and their lands being used for plantations. The tribal leaders who oppose the entry of large mining corporations in the Andap Valley Complex in Surigao del Sur were killed and their lives continually threatened by government troops.

These clearly show that Pres. Aquino protects the interests of foreign and local capitalists while being indifferent to the calls and protests of its people.

siltation near the dam. JRMP2 is also near the 11 kilometer long West Panay fault line, which makes the dam vulnerable if an earthquake occurs.

The people in the affected barangays are currently experiencing militarization. Two battalions of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police are deployed in the areas. The leaders of people's organizations are the number one target of the harassment. They are called in secret meetings with the Mayor of Calinog together with officials of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

These are the main reasons for the militant struggle and protests of the Tumandoks and people of Panay island. They continue to gather signatures for the on-going petition against the construction of the mega dam. They are also educating the residents of the barangays that will be affected and organizing the Tumandoks.

The Aquino administration and the spokespersons of the NIA and the National Commission on Indigenous People are lying when they said that the JRMP2 will be able to provide the needed water for irrigation and domestic use, supply of electricity, ecotourism, and flood control. The only ones who will benefit from this project are the big electric and water businesses, corrupt government officials, landlords, and capitalists.

“The government enforces liberalized agriculture, thereby opening the agriculture sector for market-oriented and corporation-controlled systems and mechanisms.”

PNFSP as resource speaker in climate change, food safety conferences in Beijing, China

Beijing, China - Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Rule of Law Programme in Asia together with the Tsinghua University invited Estrella Catara, PNFSP’s Executive Director, to serve as a resource person during its Conference on Climate Change and Energy Law in Asia held last September 3-5, 2014. She discussed “The State of Food Insecurity in Asia and the Philippines: Community Initiatives and Proposals at Mitigation”. The conference gathered leading experts from Asia to tackle the legal issues of climate change. The topic on renewable energy sources and their promotion was especially highlighted during the plenary sessions.



Estrella Catarata, PNFSP’s Executive Director (third to the left in front row) with the other participants

Meanwhile, the 2nd Roundtable Conference on Asia-Pacific Food Safety Governance organized by the Center of Cooperative Innovation for Food Safety Governance and the Renmin University of China Law School was held last November 7, 2014. Lorie Beyer, PNFSP’s Executive Committee Secretary, represented the Network. She gave a presentation entitled “Unsafe and Insecure: GMOs and Their Implication on the Filipino People’s Food Security” to help encourage further research and collaboration on the issue of Genetically Modified Organisms.

The Philippines has several relevant laws regarding GMOs, among them are the Executive Order 514 (National Biosafety Framework), Republic Act 10068 (Organic Agriculture Act), and Republic Act 10611 (Food Safety Act) which was recently passed into legislation last 2013. However, the political will of the government in enforcing these laws strictly is left wanting. Beyer adds that “government agencies are clueless as to their particular roles in the assessment and regulation of GMOs”. More importantly, the government “enforces liberalized agriculture, thereby opening the agriculture sector for market-oriented and corporation-controlled systems and mechanisms.”

It is thus up to peoples’ organizations and NGOs to uphold the people’s right to food through campaign, advocacy, and mass actions.

Peasants and scientists join in forum, protest

The Resistance and Solidarity against Agro-chemical TNCs (RESIST) organized the 2nd National Peasants-Scientists Conference (NPSC) with the theme “*Forging Strong Partnership and Exchanges for the Advancement of a Farmer-led Agricultural Research and Practices towards Genuine Rural Development*” on 30-31st of July until 1st of August 2014 in Quezon City.

Rafael “Ka Paeng” Mariano, national chairperson of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas or Peasant Movement of the Philippines (KMP) gave the welcome remarks and set the tone for the next 2 days. In his speech, he stressed that science and technology should serve the people and not the capitalists who earn billions of profits at the expense of the people’s welfare and interests. He clarified that the development and advancement of science and technology should not cause harm and damage to both people and the environment. He explained the need for a science and technology which is geared towards genuine agricultural development and farmer-led agricultural research that serves the objectives of genuine land reform and national industrialization programs. He ended by stressing the importance of strengthening the partnership of peasants and scientists towards genuine rural development.



Workshop on Climate Change, facilitated by PNFSP staffs, and attended by various organizations

Estrella Catarata, Executive Director of the PNFSP, talked about “Addressing Climate Change through Community-Based Initiatives.” Catarata cited several anecdotes of personal experiences with farmers themselves as she explained the more widespread dangers of the change of cropping season, subsequent change in crops and cropping patterns, infestation of pests and diseases and reduced overall productivity of farmers in general.

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Climate Change Network Launched

On November 7, 2014, the Climate Change Network for Community-based Initiatives (CCNCI) was officially launched at Balay Kalinaw, UP Diliman. Its convenors are: the Center for Disaster Response Center (CDRC), Center for Environmental Concerns (CEC Phils.), Advocates for Community Health Services (ACHS), Regional Development Center -Northern Luzon (RDC-NL/KADUAMI), and the Philippine Network of Food Security Programmes (PNFSP). The launching was attended by representatives from the government sector, civil society, academe, and church people who are actively involved in disaster management.

CCNCI believes that a disaster-resilient Philippines is possible if people and communities are able to develop strategies, plans and measures to address the impact of climate change.

So in her presentation, Estrella Catarata, PNFSP's Executive Director, talked about the different community-based adaptation measures used by the Network's members. One of these is the planting of adlai (Job's Tears) seeds which is a climate change resilient crop. It serves as an alternative food



Estrella Catarata, PNFSP's Executive Director (far left), giving her presentation

for the farmers of TABI-Masbate during extreme drought since adlai does not require irrigation as much as rice. Another adaptation measure is the System of Rice Intensification or SRI. This was promoted by the Central Visayas Farmers Development Center (FARDEC) in Cebu and Bohol. The 7 improved rice varieties were able to survive the dry season and required 50% less water. They also proved to be pest-resistant, and more importantly, no chemical inputs were used. Meanwhile, the Montanosa Research Development Center developed the

Mabaca Micro-Hydro Power Project, with the water being used for irrigation and the energy produced is utilized for agro-processing, blacksmithing, and lighting of households.

Catarata concluded her discussion by stressing the fact that what is "basic in the success and sustainability of community-based initiatives is a strong peoples' organization that ensures collective management of the project, effective technology transfer, and discipline among its members".

Other speakers during the launching were Dr. Virginia Cuevas of the University of the Philippines Los Banos who encouraged the audience to "make ecology a way of life" as an adaptation to climate change. Dr. Leoncio Amadore discussed the "Climate Change Challenges for Community-based Initiatives in the Coming Decades". On the other hand, Commissioner Naderev Sano of the Philippines' Climate Change Commission and lead negotiator for the United Nations Climate Convention was unable to attend the event and his solidarity message was read by Suyin Jamoralin, Executive Director of CDRC.

Peasants | Continued from page 6

The next day, 5 simultaneous workshops were held with the following topics: (1) Farmer-led agricultural researches and practices towards genuine rural development, (2) Agricultural modernization to accelerate agricultural productivity geared towards national industrialization, (3) Climate change and agriculture adopting pro-people climate resilient varieties and agricultural program, (4) Indigenous and traditional community health practices, and (5) Advancing the genuine land reform movement.

Meanwhile, two prominent scientists graced the event. They were Engr. Igmedio Tabianan and Prof. Edward Deveza who humbly shared their experiences and insights on peasants and scientists partnership. Engineer Igmedio Tabianan, is an "Outstanding Agricultural Engineer for Agricultural and Rural Development" as proclaimed by the Philippine Society of Agricultural Engineers (PSAE). He notably said that the, "organic agriculture program of the government will only succeed if this will be genuinely supported and will be implemented with political will. If we can do it in Negros Occidental, other provinces can also do it." Prof. Edward Deveza, is a Physicist hailing from the University of the Philippines (UP) in Diliman, Quezon City. According to him, theories done by scientists can only be proven right once tested in actual

practice, in the field. And so the role of the scientist, as he "goes down his ivory tower", is not to dictate to the farmer what to do, instead he ought to consolidate and systematize the farmer's rich experiences.

On August 1, the NPSC ended with a solidarity action in front of the Department of Agriculture (DA) office in Quezon City. The group lamented the lack of support from the government for research and development. "Instead of researches that will advance pro-farmer and pro-people technology, we are being auctioned to render our services to agrochemical corporations and to foreign companies," said Ms. Cosico of AGHAM. Mr. Antonio Flores, secretary general of KMP added that "Aquino has failed miserably in addressing the root causes of poverty in the rural areas, even in the advancement of science and technology for the people, and worse, he has proved once again his subservience to TNCs, his true bosses." The protesters pledged to forward the fight for genuine rural development and called on the enactment of pro-peasant bills, such as the GARB (Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill), RIDA (Rice Industry Development Act), Accelerated Irrigation Act, GMO-Free Agriculture Act and the repeal of Presidential Decree 1620.

Source: Excerpts from the NPSC Proceedings

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EDITORIAL

Yes to family farming, farmers' land rights

PNFSP's statement on the occasion of World Foodless Day 2014

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) chose Family Farming as its focal point in its World Food Day celebration for the year 2014. In the Philippines, farming is indeed a family affair, as the children are expected to help in the farm at a young age and are supposed to continue this livelihood with their own families.

However, certain conditions prove to be obstacles for Filipinos to practice family farming. These include the prevalent cases of foreign land-grabbing of agricultural lands and destructive large-scale mining activities that damage fertile soil.

In the CARAGA Region for instance, agriculture remains the main source of income of its people since 452,600 hectares are cultivated with rice, corn, coconut, bananas, mango and root crops for local consumption. However, in 2007, it was declared by former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as the mining capital of Asia, and up to now, it remains as the main target of mining companies under the Aquino administration. Its rich, abundant and irrigated agricultural lands are also being converted from rice lands into oil palm and banana plantations. Thousands of hectares of forest and agricultural lands are being opened for exploitation by foreign businesses.

According to Caraga Watch, the environmental destruction brought about by mining deprives the peasants of their once fertile land and has displaced thousands from their homes and farmlands. Landslides and flashfloods in their region resulted in the decrease of rice and corn production.

We, at PNFSP also advocate family farming in rural communities to ensure food security of each household. But, we recognize the fact that family farming can only be achieved through genuine agrarian reform, wherein each peasant family is given an ample size of land that they can till and make productive. Destructive large-scale mining projects and foreign ownership of agricultural land are also prohibited to give primacy on the agricultural sector.

Through our Sustainable Agriculture Community-Level Appropriate Technology (SACLAT) program, we teach and train farmers organic farming practices since traditional petrochemical farming is more expensive and harmful to the environment and people's health. We encourage each household to grow their own backyard garden so that they are food secure throughout the year.

It is indeed appropriate for the FAO and the United Nations to highlight the importance of family farming in contributing to a country's food production. However, these institutions must also recognize the vulnerability of small-scale farmers in the face of mining and landgrabbing. We thus call on FAO and the UN to advance their campaign on the promotion of peasants' rights, instead of accommodating agricultural investments that deprive farmers of their lands.

PNFSP partners:

