



Dyeing the natural way

BY JOHN C. TAMAYO, ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST, NTFP-TF

IT WAS ALREADY 9:30am when I received a text from Ruth, “*Nasaan na kayo? Magsisimula na kami.*” (Where are you? we’re about to start.) She was referring to our scheduled training on natural dye application, conceived during our discussions with partners on natural dye and experiences in a research on “*katutubong kulay*” (indigenous colors).

Also, I was immersed into this subject through Boni Sanchez of BIND, our partner in Negros, where I am assigned. He kept asking me if I had done any research on natural dyes and how it could be adopted by the community in Negros, particularly in *pandan* weaving activities

The participants of the training were partners of the NTFP-TF coming from different parts of the country. Although I was late, I came into the discussions on the scouring and bleaching processes.

The presentation of the topics was not hard like chewing theoretical and conceptual frameworks. It was more like a science lab discussion presenting figures, chemicals to be used (oops! It is chemically benign and environment-friendly, the speaker claimed). The different natural dye sources are from trees, leaves and seeds. The colors extracted depend on the source: *sibukao* or *sapang* for red and violet (imagine one dye source can produce two colors, that’s magic!), annatto seeds for orange, yellow ginger for yellow, mahogany for brown, and *talisay* leaves for black.

The next step was chaotic but the merriest part of training - hands-on dyeing! We were divided into groups according to the colors that we were going to extract (yellow, red, black, brown and violet). I chose the violet team for the reason that I didn’t want to pound ginger. It was like we were in a cooking competition - boiling and simmering our materials - the difference was we

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NTFP staff and partners busy in various dye preparation activities: weighing abaca, weighing yellow ginger (on scale) and *sibukao* (foreground).

ANCESTRAL DOMAIN PLANS FOR LIVELIHOOD AND FOREST MANAGEMENT

KaPLANO para sa Kabuhayan at Kagubatan

BY RENAND MARASIGAN, MANGYAN MISSION

ON SEPTEMBER 14, 2005, a dialogue between *Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Mangyan Alangan* (SANAMA), the tribal organization of Alangan Mangyan and *Kapyan Agpaysarigan Mangyan Tadyawan, Inc.* (KAMTI), the tribal organization of Tadyawan Mangyan with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) was held in Calapan City.

The activity was organized by the Mangyan Mission and *Kapulungan Para sa Lupaing Ninuno* (KPLN) in cooperation with Non-Timber Forest Product-Exchange Program (NTFP-EP). This main objective of this activity was to present the ancestral domain management plan of the Mangyans which they called "*Kaunlarang Angkop Para sa Lupaing Ninuno*" (KAPLANO), thus recognizing it as a strategy for the management and utilization of natural resources within their ancestral domains. Furthermore, the Mangyans expected that a Memorandum of Agreement between the DENR, NCIP and SANAMA/KAMTI will be signed.

The activity was attended by PENRO Juan dela Cruz, Fe Cortez-CADC DENR Officer, Pablo Santos-Forest Management Bureau, Joey Austria and Silvestre Soriano of DENR-Central Office, Commissioner Lagtum Pasag-NCIP Commissioner, Karen Ignacio-NCIP Provincial Officer, Romeo Morente-CDO III/NCIP, Fr. Ewald H. Dinter, SVD-Mangyan Mission Director and representatives from

the seven Mangyan tribes in Oriental Mindoro, Mangyan Tribal Churches Association (MTCA) and Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF).

The KAPLANO

The major part of the one-day activity was the discussion of the KAPLANO of Mangyan Alangan and Tadyawan. Presented were the history and objectives of KAPLANO, highlighted the formulation process of KAPLANO which started in 1998 after receiving the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claims (CADCs) from DENR. KAPLANO is a comprehensive and long-range plan for ancestral domain and the natural resources within. For the Mangyans, their ancestral domain is their life because it is the source of their strength, livelihood and culture. The Mangyans recognize that their right over their ancestral domains entails responsibility. Development for the Mangyans should be rooted to their culture and respects the sacredness of nature. The ancestral domains claimed by the Mangyans

covered 208,000 which is almost half of the total land area of the Province of Oriental Mindoro. This motivates the Mangyans to responsibly manage the natural resources within their ancestral domains.

The DENR and NCIP policies

Fe Cortez discussed the policy guidelines of Ancestral Domain Management Plan (ADMP) which is required after the tribe has received the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC). She commented that KAPLANO was properly done however it was not discussed with DENR due to the passage of IPRA. Moreover, PENRO dela Cruz said that KAPLANO contained varied approaches to protect the natural resources but lacks clear plan on its utilization. Comm. Lagtum Pasag explained the tasks and responsibilities of NCIP towards the indigenous peoples. In line with the management of the ancestral domain, Comm. Pasag briefly explained the Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development Protection



Plan (ADSDPP). He acknowledged the tedious process that the Mangyans underwent in formulating KAPLANO. Joey Austria stated that the basis in the formulation of ADSDPP is the ADMP and he wished that ADSDPP will not be an additional burden to the Mangyans. He also mentioned the need to strengthen the coordination between the DENR and NCIP towards the harmonization of its policies regarding the management of natural resources within the ancestral domains of Mangyans through the formation of a Technical Working Group (TWG) in the province.

Sharing of experiences of Palawa'n and Ikalahan Tribes

Another significant event that day was the sharing of two representatives from NATRIPAL on their experiences on the management and utilization of natural resources in Palawan. Mr. Bungcas of Nagtagbo shared about their good relationship with the PENRO and CENRO. According to him, the inventory of natural resources was not a problem for them. The CENRO was very supportive in their preparation for the affirmation of their ancestral domain management plan. DENR did not ask any amount from them when they asked for their participation in the resource inventory. This was different from the experience of Mangyan Alangan about their problem on inventory of natural resources, a requirement for the renewal of rattan cutting permit. A big amount was asked by the DENR but was not given by SANAMA. This is the main reason why DENR did not grant the renewal of rattan cutting permit to SANAMA.

Pastor Delbert Rice of Kalahan Educational Foundation shared his experience in Nueva Viscaya. He claimed that the Ikalahan defended their rights to their ancestral domain against government officials and politicians. They are not marketing raw resources from their ancestral

land, but processed it and marketed the products. There was a high level of coordination between them and the DENR because it was the Secretary of the Department who signed the agreement.

Issues and problems raised

Mangyan Alangan leader from Kisluyan, Villa Cerveza Victoria, Oriental Mindoro, a part of the



ancestral domain of Mangyan Alangan disclosed the application for rattan cutting permit of *Samahang Apo Diya sa Kisluyan (SADAKI)*. This organization was formed with the support from non-Mangyans who have personal interest to control the vines and rattan in the said area. The representatives from SANAMA strongly expressed opposition against the application of SADAKI. The application is in central office of NCIP and was given a certification from Director Ulysses Britto of NCIP that the area applied for is not a part of the Alangan ancestral domain. Because of this, SANAMA has filed a complaint against Dir. Britto to the NCIP-Central Office through Comm. Pasag. Joey Austria and Com Lagtum promised that they will hold the approval of this application.

On the other hand, Pablo Santos said that a rattan cutting permit was already issued to SANAMA. There was a great discussion regarding this matter because the license mentioned was given to another group supported by non-Mangyan businessmen. A leader of SANAMA expressed that for a long time they were applying

for this license and it was not given to them. Moreover, they expressed their disappointments on the injustice that happened. Joey Austria asked a formal complain from the legitimate SANAMA leaders regarding this matter and promised that he will look into the possibility of suspending its operation. As a quick response, the SANAMA leaders present made and submitted the letter asked by Mr. Austria hoping for a positive result.

Results of the dialogue

The dialogue identified the urgent need to organize the Technical Working Group (TWG) compose by the DENR and NCIP in the Province of Oriental Mindoro. The thorough review of KAPLANO will be tackled in the first meeting of TWG. This will also include the discussion of the agreement on the management and utilization of natural resources within

ancestral domain made by SANAMA and KAMTI which were presented during the dialogue.

There is still a need for SANAMA and KAMTI to improve the part of KAPLANO related to the utilization of natural resources. They also need to provide map that shows the land uses and the location of allowable natural resources. They have to prepare these in time for the first meeting of TWG.

The activity provided an opportunity for the Mangyans and the tribes of Palawan, to share their own strategy on the management of ancestral domain and how the government supported their plans.

As a whole, this activity heightens the consciousness of organizations present (GOs, NGOs and POs) regarding the interacting policies in the management of natural resources. For the Mangyans, they have realized that DENR has the regulatory functions over the country's natural resources. For the DENR and NCIP, they have to recognize KAPLANO as a congruent of ADSDPP or ADMP. They need to respect the "prior rights" of the Mangyans over their ancestral domains. *nbtta*

Legal harvests as illegal

BY BENEDICTO SANCHEZ, BIND

THEY CONSIDER LEGAL harvests as illegal.” So emailed Ma Theresa Brunia in frustration. She works as forester for the Broad Initiatives for Negros Development (BIND). Brunia bewailed the confiscation of legally-harvested rattan poles. This happened despite the by-the-book process of harvesting forest resources and without under-the-table deals.

After working so hard on survey mapping, inventory, writing the

of non-timber forest products)

The harvesters are *Bagong Silang Marcelo Katilingban sang Sustenidong Mangunguma* (BSMKSM), the first people’s organization granted the Community-Based Forest Management Agreement in Region VI.

After over a year’s delay, BSMKSM in the presence of DENR and BIND began harvesting on September 20 and 21 and started processing the 87 poles harvested raw materials into

finished products like baskets and trays which will be exhibited at Gateway Cubao in November and, in partnership with the TF-NTFP, for possible export to Europe next year.

With funding assistance from the Netherlands Committee for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the Swiss Inter-church Aid, BIND Food Security and Forest Conservation programs are aimed to assist

marginalized forest-dependent communities shift from subsistence into a sustainable and environment-friendly market-based economy.

In real terms, this means assisting them with value-adding livelihoods based, on among other things, non-timber forest resources like pandan, reeds and rattan as major alternatives to timber utilization. The aim is to strike a balance between the economic needs of tenured communities through sustainable resource utilization, and forest conservation, especially of its dipterocarps.

Axe to grind

Salvador Benedicto Mayor Cynthia de la Cruz ordered the confiscation. She

was one of the main accused persons in authority on the illegal logging hotspot in Negros Occidental. Her arraignment, together with her husband, Nehemias was recently terminated after Justice Secretary Raúl Gonzalez dismissed the charges of illegal logging against them and their eight co-accused.

The confiscation was her way of hitting back at BIND for supporting a case against her. Gonzalez’s dismissal of the case for “insufficiency of evidence” are suspect in itself since previous DOJ secretaries from Hernani Perez, Merceditas Gutierrez to Simeon Datumanong, and Senior State Prosecutor Jocencito Zuño and two state prosecutors had reviewed the de la Cruz case since 2002 and all agreed that there was probable cause. The judicial process had started. Justice demands that the accused should have their day in court.

De la Cruz’s official excuse for the rattan confiscation was that the process didn’t pass through her office. Besides, she denied that her office received the necessary documents which DENR Region VI sent her. Most likely under instruction from the town hall, BSMKSM member and Bagong Silang Barangay Captain Clemente Bacordo himself confiscated the rattan poles. A surprise move, since he attended the meeting discussing the harvest plan.

It wasn’t just Bacordo who flip-flopped, however. Reversing himself, Defensor stopped the rattan cutting upon the request of de la Cruz to Sec. Defensor. OIC CENRO Joan Gerangaya informed BIND Executive Director Eva de la Merced to relay to BSMKSM to halt the harvests.

Unless the DENR reverses itself and asserts its mandate to manage the country’s patrimony and natural resources, the inescapable conclusion, the moral of the flip-flops would be to poach. No hassles, no big overhead costs. No paperwork to tackle, and the paper not used for documentation might just as well save the trees.

True, illegal will be illegal. But not legal as illegal. **nbtta**



Checking rattan harvests (from left: BIND’s Theresa Brunia, DENR CBFMO’s Caroline Afable; BSMKSM members Jinalyn and Florinda Magno, HEKS Philippine Coordinator Barbara Salazar)

environmental impact statement, and getting the necessary permits from Sec. Michael Defensor himself, the joint efforts of BIND with the local PO and DENR, and the 303rd IB paid off. The PO harvested 87 rattan poles on September 20-21, 2005.

In his Memorandum from the Secretary signed on March 21, 2005, Defensor recognized the need to ensure the continuous supply of non-timber forest products for various forest based communities and industries and authorized the “harvesting, gathering, disposition, utilization of non-timber forest products (NTFP) by existing permittees (to) continue to be allowed under existing regulations.” (Clarification on the harvesting and utilization

Savoring the Taste(s) of Honey

BY ARLAN M. SANTOS, NTFP-TF

DURING THE LAST honey-harvesting season in Palawan, it was very interesting to see the different honey varieties produced by the bee species of *Apis dorsata*, locally known as *pukyutan*. The honey sold to NATRIPAL (United Tribes of Palawan) by the communities has a wide range of colors, smells, and tastes. The honey colors vary contrastingly from golden light yellow to shades of dark brown. Its acquired sweet aroma and bouquet enhance honey's distinctive taste - from lightly sweet, too sweet, bittersweet, flowery to subtly fruity. Honey's unique characteristics are much influenced by the diversity of pollens and flowers in the forest that the bees had painstakingly collected. Below, the stimulating honey flavors and qualities harvested by the different communities:

- ◆◆ **Sagpangan, Aborlan** - golden yellow - high traces of pollen - tastes distinctly sweet with flowery taste
- ◆◆ **Barake, Aborlan** - slightly dark golden yellow - distinct pollen - sweet bouquet smell - sweet flowery taste
- ◆◆ **Irawan, Puerto Princesa** - dark golden yellow - distinct pollen - sweet bouquet smell - lightly sweet
- ◆◆ **Aramaywan, Quezon** - dark golden brown - sweet bouquet smell - distinct bitterness with subtle sweetness
- ◆◆ **Municipality of Narra** - very dark brown to almost black - sweet, fruity taste with slight bitterness **nbta**



Bookkeeping for communities

BY SHARON M. PADILLA, NTFP-TF

IT WAS A GREAT opportunity when I entered the world of NTFP-TF's partners, trying to help communities gain a better understanding of bookkeeping in relation to their own livelihood activities.

When I learned that I was to give a training to different communities, it posed a big challenge for me. It was also a bit scary because field work is something new to me, quite unlike my previous job which is mostly desk work. But I was excited to do it because it is my first time to board a plane, ride a ferry, and the ever-famous *habal-habal* (motorcycle) . . . it's like doing a reality adventure show.

I first visited our partner LASSIWAI in Lake Sebu in Mindanao last July 27-28. It was my first time to interact with people that I only knew from books and magazines. I mistakenly thought that it would be difficult for me to communicate with them but I was

warmly accepted and I have gained new friends. They actively participated in the discussion and although it was new knowledge for them, they easily understood the concepts - how to analyze transactions, how to enter in book accounts, in journal books, ledgers and the simple ways of reading and making financial statements. They found the training very useful and the positive and the feedback from them was overwhelming. They bade farewell in a small program - Sinda, one of the weavers, presented a dance, some gave a speech and they were very thankful to NTFP for the new learning. It was a very emotional day for me as some of them cried like we had known each other for so long that it was hard to leave. But I know that there will be other times for me to go back and visit.

I next went to Bait Mansalay, Mindoro, last September 1-2, to

another group of minority Mangyans. They understood the training tackling basic bookkeeping, ledgers and financial statements, and I think that they can easily adopt these methods in a short period of time. Again they welcomed me into their community and I saw how they make the different products that they market.

Lastly, I went to Palawan last September 22-23 to visit Natripal and other communities. I was pleasantly surprised with the smooth sailing discussion because unlike the other communities where I needed to start from scratch, here they are quite knowledgeable in finance, have systems in place, and books to support their financial matters. What I did was to update and check if all the entries in the book were organized and properly entered, and gave them some tips or guides with ledgers and bookkeeping.

I also observed that most of them are professionals or have some background in finance.

I do believe that it does not end there in the training. We need to continuously follow-up and update them with new methods. **nbta**



REFLECTION ON RITUAL

The Dumalongdong of Datu Palasambag

BY GENEVIEVE LABADAN, ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST, NTFP-TF

THE DUMALONGDONG in Kiudto, Barangay Hagpa, Impasug-ong, Bukidnon was convened on August 17-20, 2005 after months of preparation and planning. Higaonon tribal leaders and families from different municipalities of Bukidnon, Agusan del Sur and Misamis Oriental attended the big Higaonon gathering.

Traditionally, a *dumalongdong* is convened to strengthen peace pacts and put an end to conflicts between tribal groups.

Updating of Datus

The tribal leaders gave updates on their present situations. Issues that arose were self-governance, boundary, tribal justice, *dang-el*, *lidu*, Higaonon education, logging and mining.

The whole process of *Dumalongdong* was facilitated and given direction by LGU-Impasug-ong through Hon. Paul Paraguya. After the updating, Paraguya gave a synthesis based on the reports of the tribal leaders.

One Vision

After an exhausting discussion on the present conditions of Higaonon communities in different provinces, the tribal leaders agreed to organize themselves and call it Mindanaw Higaonon Cumadon (MIHICU). They also agreed to have the following as their common vision:

1) Sustain Higaonon culture and work for lasting peace and development in the areas of livelihood, governance and traditions;

2) Unite and strengthen the Higaonon of Mindanao (8 *talugan*, namely: Agusan, Gingoog, Balatukan, Kabulig, Cagayan de Oro, Pulangi, Tagoloan and Lanao);

As for Higaonon from Impasug-ong municipality, there was a discussion of this vision to create the said municipality into a Tribal City. This is to make distinct Impasug-ong as a Higaonon-dominated municipality.

Kiudto Declaration

The Higaonon came up with a declaration that stated the unity of eight Higaonon territories from different provinces through the

Mindanao Higaonon Cumadon for the cultural conservation, peace and development.

Dumalongdong of Datu Palasambag

Datu Palasambag did not say much when he sat on the *bangkaso* to pass on to the present tribal leaders the traditional guidelines in directing tribal matters. According to Amay Mantangkilan, it must be because the supreme datu is already very old and could not speak for how long. It was said that the Kiudto *dumalongdong* was the fourth one and probably the last held under the datuship of Palasambag.

Before the *dumalongdong* was actually held, words about who the next would be supreme datu was passed around. However, no one was *na-dang-elan* to become the next supreme datu of Upper Pulangi. Datu Palasambag's three sons secured embellished red turbans from the *bangkaso* and put it on their heads. The three sons are - Datu Mansaguinod (anointed Datu by his father years ago but said to have abolished his rights as datu when he joined the military), Datu Mandedlayan (present ABC president of Impasug-ong) and Jonie Nanulan (official representative of Agtulawon ancestral domain). Prior to the *dumalongdong*, there was this talk that it would be Jonie Nanulan who will be anointed as the next datu. But no one was specifically anointed by Datu Palasambag to be the next supreme datu during the said *dumalongdong*.

Tribal leaders especially the traditional ones could be heard saying (or complaining?) that the Kiudto *Dumalongdong* was "*hadi'g ka-iling gabi anay*," meaning, no longer the same just like the old times. Some participants from Agusan refused to sign in the registry for the reason that it is not in their tradition to register and be given name tags during a *Dumalongdong*.

The *bangkaso*, said to be the symbol of Higaonon life and structure, was a wooden piece in the center decorated with *kamuyot*, bolos, bronze bracelets, woven *banig*, candles and betel nuts. It was deprived of the ancient clay jars symbolizing Higaonon treasures that are usually arrayed around it. The

Higaonon wine or *sinibog* were placed in plastic containers instead of the traditional ancient jars. The host of the *dumalongdong* usually provides these clay jars.

Reflections

This is the first *dumalongdong* I have attended in the eight years that I have worked with the Higaonon of Impasug-ong. I was surprised and disappointed by how the LGU actively asserted itself in facilitating the whole process of the gathering. Although I was also a bit thankful by this intervention because it gave direction to the ongoing discussions given the time constraints and helped in formulating visions and concrete plans at the end of the convention.

The Higaonon were complaining to each other about the dilution of datuship because of *dumagat* who are mostly government officials anointed and given the honor of a datu's name. And yet they did not notice that in front of them was a *dumagat* Councilor of Impasugong who was given a datu's honor through a *pog-dang-el*. The Higaonon are also complaining about their rights to self-governance and tribal justice being challenged by the prevailing mainstream structure of leadership and authority. And yet, they did not complain when LGU-Impasugong intervened into their *dumalongdong* from beginning to end. If the Higaonon leaders were serious about these issues, they would have asserted themselves... but on a second thought, maybe this is how weak, wavering and powerless they are. Or maybe, that was their way of telling the non-Higaonon to leave them alone but insensitivity received their laments.

I doubted if the idea of the Tribal City came collectively from the Higaonon people of Impasug-ong or at least from most of the tribal leaders of this municipality. I doubted it even more if the Higaonon people understood the rationale and purposes of Impasugong becoming a tribal city.

Nothing new was written in the Kiudto Declaration. Sustaining Higaonon Culture. Lasting Peace. Development. All these have been the

cry of the Higaonon since I first came to work for them. By this time, they should be assessing where they are and what they have become. Like, I first came to know about peace instability in Sinakungan, Agusan del Sur way back in 1994. Eleven years later, the people from this place report that their situation is not any better. I know that there had been interventions towards forging peace in this area in the previous years. LGU-Impasugong and the Diocese of Malaybalay even went to Agusan del Sur and facilitated peace meetings as an attempt to put a stop to Manpatilan and Lidanhug clan *lidu* that spelled deaths and destruction of homes to many.

Again, the issues related to preservation of culture challenging their identity as a people have been a problem for them ever since I got to know them professionally. They complained that people are given

the *datu* name even if they are not Higaonon by blood and have not measured to what a true datu should be. Years later, more and more local officials I know were still accorded the *datu* name.

In the area of development, they are gearing towards it albeit slowly. Many of their children and young people have been attending school and becoming professional teachers, health workers, farm technicians and development workers. And most of them are going back to their communities – this is not only observed in Mintapod but also among the Agusanon. A good number of NGOs nowadays are giving out livelihood assistance and assisting communities within the framework of sustainable development.

When asked to give a solidarity statement along with the NCIP provincial officer, KIN top officers and Diocese of Malaybalay representative,

I highlighted their vision to attain development. I emphasized the need to have sustainable livelihood that does not threaten the environment, encouraging them to pursue livelihoods that develops NTFPs. The Higaonon audience brightened when I affirmed their artistic abilities and unique IKSP that, if given the chance, has the capacity to make it in the world-class market while sustaining and not compromising their resource base. This, I told them, plus the raw materials that are naturally abundant in their surroundings are the ingredients to a sustainable livelihood. I encouraged them not to be anxious about learning new skills and concepts if only to better equip them and enhance their innate abilities. I ended my brief speech by telling them that they do not need to look for answers somewhere else when the answers may be found from within them. **nbta**

NTFP-TF partners joined in “A Future Beneath The Trees”

BY PERLA ESPIEL, ANTHROWATCH

On August 24, 2005, I, along with Marvin Geolina, flew to Canada to participate in the conference entitled “A Future Beneath the Trees: International Symposium on the Non-Timber Forest Products, Community Economic Development and Forest Conservation” of the Centre for the Non-Timber Resources of the Royal Roads University in Victoria, BC, Canada. The event ran from August 25-27 with a fair trade show “Shop the Wilds” held August 28 in the open fields of the University.

The conference presented the economic potential and contribution to forest protection of non-timber forest products. Employing a “North-learns-from-South-Approach,” there was recognition that NTFPs are more prominent in the tropics and sub-tropics than in the North. At least 275 participants attended, representing a total of 21 countries including Nepal, Africa, Russia, United States, India, Brazil, and Alaska, among others.

The Non-Timber Forest Product-Exchange Program facilitated our participation in the conference and trade show. The NTFP-EP has been closely working with AnthroWatch, which I am part of, and Father Vincent Cullen Tulugan Development and Learning Center (FVCTLD) of which Marvin Geolina is affiliated with. For the past three years, the three organizations have been providing assistance to the Higaonon of Mintapod, Bukidnon towards attaining tenurial security, formulation of the community development plans and implementation of livelihood programs. We culled this collaborative experience and presented a case study on NTFP use and management highlighting the

experiences of Higaonon of Mintapod and support groups. *Hinabol* was cited as the specific example of NTFP finished product. *Hinabol* is a cloth made from abaca and is culturally significant to Higaonon aside from its economic contribution.

We highlighted three things in the presentation: the processes involved before the community engages in the marketing of *hinabol* which stressed the participatory and community-friendly tools we used in the field when working with indigenous communities; putting premium on culture and environmental protection in undertaking these processes and consequently, incorporating these values in the overall marketing strategy; and also lessons learned from this rich experience.

After the presentation, we, along with

fellow presenters from Nepal and Bangladesh, got good questions in terms of addressing gender-related issues in our projects and risks involved when engaging with NTFPs as perceived by community and support groups.

For the remaining days, we listened to presentations from Nepal, India and the First Nations of Canada. The conference culminated with a synthesis on the various presentations and learnings as shared by other participants.

On August 28, we participated in the trade show amidst minor difficulties like running out of tables and unavailability of materials. Yet we resolved that by being resourceful - using beddings as ground sheets and using available items we rummaged from our bags (hair bands, rubber cord of my backpack, etc). In the end, Custom Made and MODI crafts were run-away winners, and buyers were amazed at the very cheap prices for “finely handcrafted products” (a statement from one of the buyers). Some of them even asked if the makers were paid well given the prices we set for the products. We saw this as an opening for potential markets abroad and true enough, some participants showed interest in importing crafts from the Philippines. Also, the story behind each product is the selling point, along with the design and functional components.

Overall, our experiences in participating in an international conference are useful in the continuous assessment and reassessment of programs and strategies as we work towards community development and forest conservation. The conference may have been focused on the commercial viability of the various NTFPs yet, there was a significant realization that there is no simple, one-size-fits-all solution to reconciling community development with forest conservation. **nbta**





Weighing *sibukao*, a source of a natural red and violet dyes.

were cooking abaca fibers and dye extract!

After almost five hours of cooking, boiling, straining, filtering, soaking and washing, we finally had our results vibrant red-colored abaca, vibrant yellow, strong black, dazzling brown-colored abaca and...ahh... I don't know if it's violet or brown or maroon! And with this, we were teasing and joking on the results of the supposed violet-colored abaca, we just said to the other groups "*Violet yan, color blind lang kayo,*" to everybody's laughter.

Extracting natural dye from dye yielding plants is not as difficult as we imagine. Besides, it is an age-old practice of our ancestors long before synthetic dyes were introduced to our country. It is still used nowadays in some part of the country. It doesn't require comprehensive technical knowledge in chemistry, but rather, knowing its basic concepts and having a heart for dyeing the natural way. Using natural dyes in our crafts not only giving value addition to its

quality, but also brings us back to our cultural practices. We also eliminate the harmful effects of using synthetic dyes.

After almost two months, I shared the process of natural dyeing with the farmers and staff of BIND here in Negros. Using different variety of dye yielding plants here in the region, the results are the same as those in the training held at the office. The only difference is I undertake the entire process, from bleaching to dyeing.

Still, I cannot perfect the violet one ... oh well, this will be another story. For now, I will practice some more. And that's the art of natural dyeing... *nbtta*

The source of natural dye (here, *sibukao* bark) is boiled (top right), then washed and rinsed (right) ... yielding brightly colored abaca strands (below).



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