CONTENTS

2 | JUSTICE
3 | HUMAN RIGHTS, FOOD SECURITY TOP
CONCERNS IN CEC EDUCATIONAL
DISCUSSIONS
4 | LEONARD CO: BRINGING KNOWLEDGE
OF THE FORESTS TO THE PEOPLE
8 | ENCOUNTERING THE TRUTH:
THE KANANGA 3 KILLINGS
11 | A BLOODSTAINED HISTORY: THE 19TH IB’S
RECORD OF RIGHTS VIOLATIONS
13 | RENEW TRAINING BARES ENVIRONMENTAL
PROBLEMS OF URBAN POOR COMMUNITIES
14 | THE ENVICORE ENGAGEMENT: SAVE
THE WORLD, TAKE THE CRASH COURSE
17 | ANTI-SLAPP BILL OF 2010 CAMPAIGN
KICKS-OFF WITH CULTURAL NIGHT
17 | CEC PILOTS FIRST LUZON-WIDE
ENVICORE TRAINING
18 | ASIA-PACIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATORS, ACTIVISTS UNITE
ON GLOBAL WARMING
20 | EDUCATION FOR CHANGE AND
SUSTAINABLE PEOPLE’S DEVELOPMENT
22 | GIVE IT A FACE
24 | LANDLESSNESS AND CARPER,
CULPRITS IN WORLD ‘FOODLESS’ DAY
It is a simple word, yet one most elusive in these troubling times.

On November 15, 2010, the Philippines lost one of its most respected experts in ethno-botany and taxonomy: Leonard Co. Along with farmer Julius Borromeo and forest guard Sofronio Cortez, Co was gunned down by troops in the forests of Kananga, Leyte while on fieldwork. The 19th Infantry Battalion, instead, blames the deaths of Co and his team on an encounter with rebels, denying their culpability in the incident. Yet, as facts on the case continue to unravel, more and more evidence and testimonies point out to the military as the sole culprit responsible for the killing.

It is ironic that one of our best experts on forest species and biodiversity conservation was killed during this juncture of two globally environmental events: 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity and 2011, the International Year of Forests. The statement of the Philippine Native Plant Conservation Society, an organization that Co was very much a part of, underscores a chilling truth: How can this champion of conservation suffer at the hands of his supposed guardians?

There is clearly no justice in that, and no justice in the way that things have been.

There is no justice in letting environmental advocates be slaughtered. A country is only as wealthy as its resources and its people. In this era of vanishing natural resources due to plunder and destruction, the killing of scientists and environmentalists like Co are crimes doubly heinous. Those who stand by the protection of the environment and people’s welfare are also the first to be felled in the face of ignorance and impunity.

There is no justice in mere forgetting and simply accepting the lack of accountability in the killings of the Kananga Three. The killing of Co, Cortez and Borromeo is a blatant violation of basic human rights, international rules of engagement and the treatment of civilians by armed forces, elementary security protocols, and even humanity and common sense at the very least. It is unacceptable to just write off the killings as a tragic aberration. As human rights groups pointed out, the killing of Co and his team is not an isolated case, a freak accident. Many other educators, teachers, researchers, and health workers who have set aside opportunities for career and monetary advancement to work in rural communities have been falsely accused of being terrorists, harassed, illegally detained, and even killed. Many farmers have been gunned down by soldiers on mere suspicion of being rebels. More ominously, other environmental advocates have been deliberately targeted by death squads in the past few years.

There is no justice if we allow this climate of impunity to fester. Co’s killing fits into a lengthy list of extrajudicial killings (EJKs) over the past ten years, crossing over two Presidential administrations.

Co’s killing is one of the first EJKs to occur under the new Aquino administration. The thousands of deaths and killings that have occurred with disturbing regularity are not incidental; there is a system that is responsible for the regular recurrence of impunity, for the continuous bloodshed.

The challenge now, not just for Co’s family, peers, and colleagues but also for all Filipinos, is to pursue justice on both a case to case and policy-wide basis: seeking accountable the hands that pulled the trigger to the masterminds who imposed policies that have turned military troops into a mercenary, merciless army, considering civilians as mere expendables. There will be more like Co, Borromeo, and Cortez unless these realities are addressed.

We must pursue Co’s killers and hold them accountable for the crime. And we must do what we can to help change this climate of impunity prevailing for nearly a decade. Only then can justice be truly served.
HUMAN RIGHTS, FOOD SECURITY TOP CONCERNS IN CEC EDUCATIONAL DISCUSSIONS

ROG AMON

Human rights and food security were among this quarter’s topics in *Talakayan sa Kubo*, CEC’s monthly educational discussions.

Danilo Ramos, Secretary-General of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) discussed *Food Security and the Philippine Peasant Situation* in the October session of Talakayan sa Kubo. Ramos said that the Philippines’ agrarian and agricultural policies continue to drag citizens into deeper poverty and hunger. The country is the world’s number one rice net importer and the National Food Association merely acts as a trader for imported rice.

Instead of offering solutions, the Aquino government has recorded violations of peasant rights that tolled 13 victims of extrajudicial killings (EJK) last year, 2 enforced disappearances and five accused of trumped-up charges.

KMP reported that 80% of farmers at the province are landless and are systematically subjected to exploitative conditions such as high land rent, usury, underpricing, low wages and even harassment brought about by militarization. The persistent oppression of our food producers coupled with unpredictability of weather patterns caused by climate change aggravates the country’s food insecurity.

December’s *Talakayan sa Kubo* zoomed in on the issue of the Human Rights Situation in the Philippines. Thaddeus Ifurung of Karapatan said that President Aquino's *Daang Matuwid* is not a far cry from GMA’s blood-stained regime. A statement from Karapatan reads, “We see no glimmer of change and his straight path is marred by the blood of victims of political killings.”

“There were 18 victims killed during the last six months of Macapagal-Arroyo. There are now at least 25 victims of extra-judicial killings (EJK’s) barely five months after Aquino took over (July 1 – November 30, 2010).” Aquino’s government has been deaf to the insistent call for the immediate release of 43 health workers much less to the clamor for justice for the death of the country’s top botanist Leonardo Co and his two companions. In spite of the dispiriting culture of impunity, it is the people’s responsibility to defend human rights, justice and democracy and end the horrors of continuing state violence and repression,” Karapatan said.

From January 21, 2001 to June 30, 2010 which is the end of Arroyo’s intensely repressive rule, a total of 1,206 people have been victims of EJK, 153 of whom are women and 475 are human rights defenders. There are a total of 206 victims of enforced disappearance, 31 of whom are women and 68 are human rights defenders. More than 2000 have been arbitrarily arrested for their political beliefs.

- Karapatan Monitor, July- September 2010
LEONARD CO: 
BRINGING KNOWLEDGE OF THE FORESTS TO THE PEOPLE

LISA ITO-TAPANG

They did not realize it then, but when the military fired upon the team of Leonardo L. Co in the forests of Kananga, Leyte, they felled one of the most passionate scholars and protectors of our country’s forests, one among a rare and endangered breed of scientists for the Filipino people.

An ethno-botanist and plant taxonomist, the 56-year old Co was in Kananga as a consultant on biodiversity for a reforestation project. At the time of his death, Co was also serving as a museum researcher and lecturer for the University of the Philippines Institute of Biology (UP IB). He is married to Glenda F. Co. Their eight-year old daughter, Linnaea Marie, was named after Carl Linnaeus, the Swedish botanist known as the father of modern taxonomy.

FILIPINO-CHINESE HERITAGE

Leonardo Legaspi Co was born in Manila on December 29, 1953. His father, Lian Sing Co
immigrated to the Philippines from mainland China as a young man and married Emelina Legaspi from Taguiddin, Ilocos.

Co was the eldest child and the sole son in a Chinese-Filipino household. He grew up in Caloocan City, learning Fookien and Mandarin in addition to English and Filipino. Joaquin Sy, in his tribute, recalls the young Co as one who excelled in Chemistry at the Philippine Chinese High School, becoming involved in the student council and the student paper, where he wrote a column under the pen name Siling Labuyo.

Co entered UP in 1972 as a Chemical Engineering major, but later on shifted to Botany. This was perhaps a result of his taking on an interest in plants (particularly ferns) and started trekking and mountain hiking. His colleagues recalled that Co was inspired by his high school biology teacher, Benito Tan, who became an internationally-recognized moss taxonomist.

**BOTANIST FOR THE MASSES**

It was at UP where Co pursued his passion for science and service to the people. He would be involved in organizations which merged his various interests, such as the UP Botanical Society, the Samahan ng mga Mag-aaral sa Pilipino and the UP Mountaineers.

Rey Casambre, Director of the Philippine Peace Center, recalled that Co also “belonged then to a group of bright and dedicated activists” who were undergrad majors or graduates of botany or zoology. The group was part of a network of Filipino scientists who were “committed to using their scientific and technical knowledge and skills to serve the Filipino people, resisting the Marcos dictatorship, and struggling for an independent, genuinely democratic and just society.”

Among the group’s projects was a survey of Philippine medicinal plants. For at least five years, Co and this team dedicated their time to completing this study. By 1977, they compiled and published this wealth of material, through the UP Botanical Society, into a 193-page illustrated publication entitled “A Manual on Some Philippine Medicinal Plants.” As many rural Filipinos did not have access to medical services and goods—a reality prevailing up to the present—such research helped promote the use of local and readily-accessible herbal medicines by grassroots communities. It is now considered a pioneering and seminal work.

From 1976 to 1981, Co also served as a research assistant for an inventory of endangered and rare plant and animal species by the UP Natural Science Research Center-Ministry of Natural Resources. Leaving Manila soon after this stint, Co continued his research and immersion with grassroots communities in the mountains of the Cordillera region.

**PEOPLE’S SCIENTIST AND PROFESSOR**

In 1981, Co and other advocates founded a Baguio-based NGO, named Community Health, Education, Services and Training in the Cordillera Region (Chestcore), a community health group working across six provinces. Chestcore was able to document 122 medicinal plants in the region, complete with their scientific and common names, descriptions, illustrations and their nutritional and medicinal values. They worked with indigenous peoples communities to “systematize the knowledge of the masses about medicinal plants for basic health care,” Casambre said.

Co offered his knowledge of traditional Chinese and herbal medicine and scientific expertise to the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera, whose remote and poor communities have been neglected for most part by the national government. The Cordillera Peoples Alliance and the Tongtongan Ti Umili said in separate statements that Co was a “great scientist who devoted his life to practicing science and health for the people,” enduring “difficult travel along rocky mountain roads, even trekking up many steep trails on foot to reach communities where government health and social services did not reach” and training local health workers on the use of medicinal plants and the practice of acupuncture, so that they could attend to their community’s health needs.

By 1989, Co and Chestcore published a book entitled “Common Medicinal Plants in the Cordillera Administrative Region: A Trainer’s Manual to Community-Based Health Programs (CBHP),” as a resource book for upland communities seeking more accessible sources of medicine for common illnesses. Dr. Eleanor Jara, director of a national health NGO, wrote that this book eventually served as an “invaluable reference to more than 50 CBHPs nationwide” and “paved the way for the documentation of medicinal plants in CBHP areas.”

**LEGENDARY PLANT TAXONOMIST**

Upon returning from the Cordillera, Co continued to work in the field of biodiversity conservation, establishing himself as a top-notch plant taxonomist and among the best in his field.

In 1988, he became a pharmacologist at the Acupuncture Therapeutic and Research Center in
Manila. Afterwards, he worked as a field botanist for Conservation International-Philippines (CI) and as a freelance consultant for various environmental impact assessment projects. At CI, he conducted biodiversity monitoring in the forests of Sierra Madre, Palawan, and Eastern Mindanao.

In 2000 to the last few months of his life, Co became involved as the principal investigator for a 16-hectare biodiversity research facility project in Palanan, Isabela by the UP IB, CI, Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, and the Center for Tropical Forest Science of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. He later on co-authored a book related to this in 2006, entitled “The Forest Trees of Palanan, Philippines: A Study in Population Ecology.”

Co joined many other environmental and professional organizations, such as the Wildlife Conservation Society of the Philippines and Laksam-buhay Conservation, Inc. In 2007, he founded the Philippine Native Plant Conservation Society, Inc. (PNPCSI), an NGO devoted to the conservation of indigenous Philippine plants and their natural habitats. Through this, he was able to mobilize many plant enthusiasts to support the cause of biodiversity conservation and pursue the practice of taxonomy.

Few can realize the herculean task that Leonard Co set out to undertake. He spent a lifetime exploring and gathering precious data on the rapidly diminishing forested regions of the country; No one understood our native forest dynamics the way that he did; He provided a glimpse into its hidden order and where one would see just endless green, he would expound on the complex interrelationships between one living thing to another; He possessed firsthand knowledge that can never be found in any literature,” the PNPCSI attested in a statement.

He also engaged government as a representative of the CSO sector, becoming part of the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau’s Philippine Plant Conservation Committee (responsible for compiling the national “Red List” of threatened plants) in 2004 and National Wild Flora Council (a technical body for policy-making related to the sustainable use of plant resources) in 2008.

Co did not finish his Botany degree in UP until 2008, 32 years after he entered the University. Yet this delay in attaining complete academic credentials never deterred him from becoming one of the major experts in his field. From 1977 to 2009, his researches led him to co-author six books and 13 articles in peer-reviewed publications, including researches on the *Rafflesia arnuntia* (Rafflesiacae), *vaccinium* (Ericaceae), *Xanthostemon fruticosus* (Myrtaceae), and Philippine ferns.

Dr. Perry Ong, Director of the UP IB, describes Co as “a world-class plant taxonomist bar none.” “He might not have had the formal appointment as a professor but people considered him one because of their recognition of his scholarly outputs...His swordplay with the living greats in plant taxonomy is legendary wherein he was able to argue with these icons and they could only nod in agreement and accept his analysis...”
nity] expressed that Leonard’s death is a great loss to the world of plant taxonomy,” Ong wrote in an article for the Philippine Star.

Co’s expertise was such that fellow scientists had a plant named after him: the Rafflesia Leonardi, discovered by an Agta native in Cagayan Valley, in 2008. With large orange-red flowers, it is one of the eight endemic species of rafflesia in the Philippines.

A NATION’S LOSS

Co was felled at a time when his life’s work was beginning to see fruition, at a point when he was in a position to accomplish even greater things. His killing on November 15, 2010 abruptly cut short his work to document and save the country’s remaining forest resources and biodiversity from extinction, plunder, and destruction. Yet his spirit persists in the resolve to carry on with what him and his peers have set out to accomplish.

A person is remembered by the way he has changed the lives of others. I did not have the privilege of meeting Leonard Co when he was still alive. But witnessing the flowing words and tears of his peers, his students, and his loved ones leaves me with the conviction that our country has lost a person most extraordinary: an uncompromising scientist who purely and passionately pursued the love of knowledge, a mentor who fired up people with a passion for taxonomy and a wonder for what the earth has to offer, and a teacher whose depth and breadth of expertise and commitment inspired many others to follow in his footsteps.

An iskolar ng bayan (scholar of the people) in the very real sense of the word, the example of Co’s life again redefines our understanding of honor and excellence, the University’s motto: honor in serving the people and protecting our natural wealth; integrity that foremost defines the standards of excellence and distinction on one’s own terms and not that of others.

During the wake, the elder Co shared that he tried to impart to his son two valuable lessons: a passion for books, and helping his fellowmen. Looking back at his short but fruitful life, one can say that the younger Co imbibed a fervor for learning and a firm commitment to share that wisdom with others and spent his life practicing this in the classroom, the communities, and the forests.

His colleagues described Co best. “A teacher at heart, he imparted knowledge freely. He taught intensely, convincingly, provocatively. He knew and loved his subject with ardor and conviction and taught in an intrinsically colorful, even poetic, yet comprehensive manner that the student cannot help but imbibe the same passion,” the PNPGSCI said of Co. That is perhaps the best honor that one can give to a mentor: affirming how one’s words, ideas, and practice have lit the fire of learning and change in other’s minds and hearts.

(continued on page 15)
ENCOUNTERING THE TRUTH: THE KANANGA 3 KILLINGS

LISA ITO-TAPANG

On November 15, 2010, the Philippines lost one of its finest ethnobotanists and taxonomists, Leonardo Co and his teammates, forest guard Sofronio Cortez and farmer Julius Borromeo, to a hail of bullets in the forests of the Manawan-Kananga Watershed in Leyte province. This article recounts the ordeal of Co and his team, as reconstructed by previous media reports and by the November 26 independent fact-finding mission led by Agham and the Justice for Leonard Co Movement.

At the time of his death, Co and his team were in the area to collect specimen seedlings of endangered trees as part of a reforestation project for the Lopez-owned Energy Development Corp (EDC) in the Leyte Geothermal Production Field, the world’s largest wet steamfield. Katungod Sinirangan Bisayas, a local human rights organization, said that the incident happened within the vicinity of the EDC-PNOC, of the Mahi-aw Plant where there are camps of a special Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) unit and a 19th Infantry Battalion (IB) team.

CO AND COMPANY: FIELDWORK IN KANANGA’S FORESTS

Co arrived at the EDC in Kananga, Leyte on November 9. As a biodiversity consultant for EDC’s reforestation project, it was Co’s responsibility to identify and collect rare seedling specimens along with his team. From November 10 to 13, Co and his guides were able to conduct their fieldwork in three different pads within the EDC territory. A pad is an area where geothermal steam is piped from the ground to the EDC plant. Co’s team and his guides took the day off on November 14, the day of Manny Pacquiao’s successful boxing bout against Antonio Margarito.

On the early morning of November 15, Monday, Co and four of his team mates left the geothermal plant staff house to resume fieldwork in pad 403, reportedly a choice site for collecting forest samples.

They reached the pad at around 9:30 a.m. and started their survey. It was a small, efficient team: Co and Cortez would examine trees and their leaves to identify their species. Policarpio Balute, a peasant guide, measured their diameter. Ronino Gibe, a forester, was in charge of recording the data observed. Borromeo brought their food and tools. The team had just finished marking a mayapis, syzygium and tanguile tree when a heavy rainshower prompted them to stop. They planned to go back to the nursery of the geothermal plant facility and texted driver of the EDC service vehicle to fetch them.

They were still waiting when the rain abated at around 11:15 a.m; Co decided to resume the survey. The fourth tree that they set out to identify was an interesting case, and the five men gathered all around it for a closer inspection.

That was the last tree that Co, Cortez, and Borromeo would ever survey. At around three in the afternoon, their three lifeless bodies, riddled with bullets, were carried by soldiers back to pad 403 and later on transported to the V. Rama Funeral Homes by the EDC. Balute and Gibe, shaken from their ordeal, were brought to a hospital in Ormoc City.

MILITARY: CASUALTIES OF A “CROSSFIRE”

Initial media reports later quoted the local police and army as saying that the killings of the three men was the “unfortunate” result of a “legitimate military operation” in the forest area, where troops reportedly sighted and pursued New People’s Army (NPA) rebels.

According to the police blotter of the Kananga Police Station, 38 troops from the 19th IB troops, led by First Lieutenant Ronald Odchimar and 2nd Lieutenant Cameron Perez, reportedly engaged in a firefight with around ten persons with long firearms, at Sitio Mahiao, Barangay Lim-ao. In the course of clearing operations, the troops “found out (sic) three dead bodies.” The military also reportedly received intelligence information about NPA sightings on November 12 and subsequently communicated...
this to the EDC. The 19th IB supposedly started conducting operations in the vicinity on Sunday, November 14.

In a press statement on November 17, 19th IB Commanding Officer Federico Tutaan said that their troops observing the area spotted around “seven men carrying high-powered firearms,” who opened fire upon sensing the government troops around 30 meters away. A ten-minute exchange of gunfire reportedly ensured, wound- ing “an determined number” of rebels and reaching the civilians “incidently located within the line of fire.”

SURVIVORS: WE WERE THE ONLY ONES THERE

However, doubts quickly surfaced as to whether a crossfire indeed occurred. Testimo-
nies by Co’s surviving crew, as well as subsequent inspections of the area, pointed out otherwise: that Co’s team was alone in the area and was never caught in a clash between government and rebel forces.

Balute, a farmer who served as one of the team’s local guides, recalled how they were closely studying the fourth tree when a rapid burst of gunfire from unseen shooters erupted around 30 to 40 meters behind the team.

“Dooon lang galing sa may itaas lahat at isa lang ang direksyon, (All shots came from one direction, which is from above)” Balute was quoted as saying. He denied hearing any exchange of shots that indicated a gunfire between opposing sides.

Co and his team mates dropped to the ground, with only tree branches and roots for cover. They pleaded for the shooting to stop. “Maawa kayo, hindi kami kalaban! (Have mercy, we are not enemies),” the survivors recalled Co pleading for mercy. He was already crying out in pain, having sustained a shot in the back.

“Dia lang diay mo!” (“So there you are!”), someone from the group that fired at Co’s team shouted back. They were continuously assaulted by rapid gunfire and big explosions.

Balute decided to flee the site because he was positioned at the back of a big tree; the four were still lying face down on the ground. Gibe, meanwhile, managed to creep towards another large tree and hide behind its buttress. Gibe dared not peep out of his hiding place for fear of being shot. His companions were no longer responding to his calls; one by one, they fell silent as gunfire riddled the ground for around twenty more minutes.

When the firing finally stopped, Gibe peeped out and saw soldiers in camouflage approaching them from both sides. He broke cover and raised his arms.

“May isa pa palang buhay dito (There is one more here alive),” a soldier ordered him to come out at gunpoint. Crying and shaking in fear, Gibe pleaded for medical help for his companions. Co and Cortez lay motionless while Borromeo was moaning in pain.

“Wala na, ‘di na aabot sa ospital kasama mo (It’s gone, your companion will not make it to the hospital),” another soldier told Gibe.

A soldier asked Gibe about his other two “armed” companions and asked the latter to show his weapons. Gibe denied that he or any other member of his team were armed.

“P...ina, natalay tayo!” one soldier exclaimed. Gibe was ordered to lie down on the ground while the troops took away his cellphone and GPS unit. Gibe identified himself as an EDC employee, explaining his group’s purpose and activities in the area and the identities of Co and Borromeo. Gibe was instead further interrogated about the equipment he had on hand, including his notes and the map the team had, as well as his contacts from the EDC. He again asked for help for his companions. By this time, Borromeo was already bleeding, telling Gibe that he was hit near the heart. Gibe pleaded to the soldiers to help Borromeo.

“Wag kang maingay! Ligtas ka na! (Don’t be noisy! You’re already saved!),” another soldier told Gibe to shut up. It was around one in the afternoon.

Gibe remained lying face down for about two hours while the troops met and talked among themselves from a distance. He was then asked to stand up and answer the same questions they asked him earlier. The soldiers asked Gibe if he knew about the military’s operations in the area, saying that it was impossible for Gibe’s group to miss the three armed men the soldiers were observing for thirty minutes. Gibe said that his group did not see anyone and again asked for help for Borromeo.

The troops then gave first aid to Borromeo, and called his condition peklat (scar). At this point, Gibe asked for his cellphone and called his superiors from EDC to relay details of the incident. He was then ordered by troops to proceed back to pad 403. It was around two in the afternoon.

The walk down was the last time Gibe saw Borromeo alive. Borromeo was laid on a sack and...
brought down by the soldiers. At around three in the afternoon, an EDC service vehicle arrived to send Gibe to a hospital in Ormoc. He later learned that Borromeo died while at the pad.

**SCIENTISTS: NO SIGNS OF A CROSSFIRE**

Around ten days after the killing, an independent citizens fact-finding mission (FFM) was organized from November 26 to 28 to gather testimonies and other relevant information on the case. Led by Agham-Advocates of Science and Technology for the People and the Justice for Leonard Co Movement, the 33-member team composed of scientists, experts, environmental advocates, human rights workers, and journalists gathered testimonies, documentation and observations from people involved in the incident, the local police, the 19th IB, and the EDC staff. The team documented the findings from their interviews.

They went back to the site of the killing and to the ridge where the soldiers supposedly shot it out with rebel troops. Among the significant observations noted in the site was that the direction of the bullet marks on the trees originated from a vantage point on the ridge above Co and his team. The direction of the bullet marks was bearing downwards and mainly concentrated in the area where Co’s team was standing.

Tree number four, where the group gathered around for one last time, was hit three times. The large tree that saved Gibe from certain death had six bullet marks on it. In contrast, the team did not observe any bullet marks on the trees from the ground looking up to the ridge or from any side.

The only consistent explanation for these key observations, the team concluded, would be that the military was positioned on top of the ridge and firing towards Co’s team. There was no indication of any crossfire. By waiting for at least an hour before bringing Co’s team down to pad 403, Kananga.

despite Gibe and Borromeo’s repeated requests, the 19th IB troops likewise failed to provide immediate medical attention and hospital treatment to Borromeo, which prolonged his agony and ultimately led to his death.

The FFM team recommended specific actions related to the 19th IB and the EDC. All military personnel connected to the chain of command related to the shooting must be included in the investigation and filing of charges, their firearms secured and surrendered to the proper authorities. The liability of the troops who failed to give Borromeo immediate medical attention and evacuation must also be pursued. The EDC, on the other hand, must fully cooperate into clarifying their communication, security coordination protocols. All documents that would further shed light on the truth must be made available.

The case has just began, but life will never be the same for the loved ones of the “Kananga Three,” after that fateful morning on November 15. Borromeo and Cortez were both laid to rest on November 25 by their families in Leyte. They left behind six and three children, respectively. Co was cremated on November 23 in Quezon City.

Part of his ashes have been scattered over a dita tree at the University of the Philippines, home to Co’s humble yet beloved herbarium. His only child, still a young girl, will have to learn to love the trees of this country without her father. Their families and colleagues continue to seek answers to the unresolved questions behind their deaths. The full extent of circumstances that have led to the 19th IB’s killing of Co, Cortez, and Borromeo have yet to be affirmed by the government bodies tasked to investigate the case.

Grief can know no closure without truth and justice. The culprits accountable for the crimes have to be made accountable for this transgression of human rights; the truth should be pursued up to the very end. Only then can we begin to overcome the impunity that killed three good men, one rainy morning in the silent forests of

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**REFERENCES:**


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A BLOODSTAINED HISTORY:
THE 19TH IB’S RECORD OF RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Unknown to many, the army unit involved in the killing of Leonard Co, Sofronio Cortrez, and Julius Borromeo has been dubbed by human rights groups as the “Massacre Battalion” for being implicated in at least three previous mass killings of civilians in Region 8.

The 19th Infantry “Commando” Battalion (IB) was activated during the Marcos dictatorship on 31 October 1973, at the height of the secessionist movement. It was assigned to combat operations in Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Buluan and Mariano Marcos, and Lanao del Sur, before being transferred to Northern Samar in 1985. The 19th IB is currently under the jurisdiction of the 8th Infantry Division (ID) of the Philippine Army in Eastern Visayas (EV).

A closer scrutiny of the 19th IB’s track record in Northern Samar also reveals that there were at least two more massacres perpetrated by elements of this battalion against civilians, where victims were either similarly written off as being caught in the crossfire or were suspected rebels.

MASSACRE IN NORTHERN SAMAR

The earliest documented massacre happened in January 28, 1999, when patrolling elements strafed the house of a peasant family in Sitio Mogus, Brgy. Capacungan, Palapag, Northern Samar. Ermito Nuguit, 52 years old, was killed along with his pregnant wife, Delia, and their three sons. The army later claimed that it was an encounter with New People’s Army (NPA) rebels.

DEPLOYMENT TO NORTHERN leyte

In November 2001, the 19th IB moved from Northern Samar to Zamboanga City and Jolo in order to augment military operations against the MNLF. Returning to EV in March 2002, the 19th IB established temporary base in Ormoc, Leyte. By July 1, 2002, the 19th IB transferred to its new headquarters to Brgy. Aguiting, Kananga, Leyte. Camps and strategic detachments were later on established throughout Northern Leyte.

THE FIRST KANANGA MASSACRE

In between five to six a.m. on April 16, 2003, residents of farming communities in Brgy. San Isidro and Brgy. Bagabao, Kananga awoke to a volley of gunfire emanating from a hill in Sitio Mahayhay, San Isidro. Farmers sent their wives and children to the nearby sitio to avoid being hit by stray bullets.

Farmers Allan Collarte, Roy Collarte, and Mateo Tequilla were discussing the situation when they were approached by soldiers in a rice field, who shot at them after they sensed danger and ran away to safety. Tequilla was left behind and forced at gunpoint to be interrogated and accused of being a rebel. Other residents who were left behind in the sitio overheard cries of people—including a woman and a child—pleading or in pain, followed by gunshots.

When the firing stopped at around 9 a.m., residents and barangay tanods approached the incident site and collected the bodies of nine civilians from the army troops in the place. The dead included a pregnant woman, four minors, and a former barangay councilor who was the chairperson of the local farmers association. The bodies were brought to the Kananga Municipal Hall at 1:30 p.m. Injuries indicated that the victims were shot at close range and sustained contusions,

There were at least two more massacres perpetrated by elements of this battalion against civilians, where victims were either similarly written off as being caught in the crossfire or were suspected rebels.
burns, and bludgeoning by hard objects.

A preliminary inquiry was initiated by local human rights organizations on April 18 and a national fact-finding mission was held from May 30 to June 3, 2003 on the incident. These investigations concluded that victims were civilians belonging to people’s organizations who “summarily executed despite their immobility and helplessness.” These also concluded that the 19th IBPA Command undertook armed military operations in any area of their choice without the required coordination and courtesy accorded to the concerned local officials and also committed other HRVs against residents and witnesses.

UNDER THE ‘BUTCHER’

The 8th ID was among the army units placed directly under Major General Jovito S. Palparan, known among activist groups as the “Butcher” due to his record of racking up human rights violations in areas where he was deployed. Palparan served as the Commanding General of the 8th ID from February 10 to August 25, 2005, and has been credited for “reducing the insurgency problem in Samar by 80 percent.”

THE SECOND MASSACRE IN PALO, LEYTE

Shortly after Palparan’s stint in EV, the 19th IB was implicated in the November 21, 2005 massacre of eight civilians in Palo, Northern Leyte. The victims were among the 50 farmers participating in a “balik uma” (back to farm) activity after having successfully won a landgrabbing case filed by members of the San Agustin Farmer Beneficiaries Multi-Purpose Cooperative with the Department of Agrarian Reform against landlord Pedro Margallo.

At around 5 a.m., the farmers were preparing breakfast in a hut near the contested rice lands when they were shot at by men in bonnets and ski masks. The farmers shouted that they were civilians but were still attacked with gunfire and hand grenades. When the firing stopped, armed men in military gear ordered the survivors to lie down and admit that they were rebels. Their pleas for immediate medical attention were ignored. Local police were prevented from responding to the incident.

Col. Louie Dagoy admitted that the 19th IB was responsible for the attack but claimed that this was a legitimate encounter between the army and the rebels. The army also filed criminal charges of illegal possession of firearms and illegal assembly against the surviving farmers. Eight farmers were detained pending resolution of the court cases and have reported receiving death threats during this period. One died in jail. The charges of illegal possession were dismissed in 2006 while the other case continues in court.

This massacre was included in the list of charges filed by HUSTISYA, Desaparecidos, SELDA, and BAYAN against the administration of former Pres. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to the Permanent People’s Tribunal second session in the Philippines held at the Hague, The Netherlands in March 2007.

PRELUDE TO THE THIRD MASSACRE

In 2007, Lieutenant Col. Henry Bumiltac, commanding officer of the 19th IB declared the towns of Kananga, Palompon, Tabango, Matagob, Isabel and Merida, as well as some parts of Ormoc City as “completely free” of the insurgency. Media reports in 2008 and 2009 cited Army officials’ statements that they were winning the campaign against insurgency.

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RENEW TRAINING BARES ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF URBAN POOR COMMUNITIES

CHE DOMINGUEZ AND LISA ITO

Pollution-triggered diseases, flooding, lack of viable housing projects, and unsafe and unsanitary relocation areas remain as major environment-related concerns among the Philippine urban poor sector, revealed a recent Restoration Ecology Workshop (RENEW) training by the Center for Environmental Concerns-Philippines.

RENEW is CEC’s basic environmental education course. This RENEW training was co-organized with the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay), a national federation of urban poor organizations. It was held last November 13 to 14, at the Bahay Daluyan of St. Theresa’s College in Quezon City.

The RENEW workshop gathered 21 participants, mostly community and youth leaders from urban poor communities in Quezon City, Caloocan City and Montalban, and Kadamay national staff members.

Through the course workshops, participants shared the environmental situation of urban poor communities, stressing the persistence of the following realities:

• Problems related to housing woes: Some relocation areas, such as Montalban, are located in geohazard sites, deforested and landslide-prone areas, or near large dam projects vulnerable to flooding. Housing projects are already congested and face problems related to sanitation, spread of pests such as rats, mosquitoes, and fleas as well as lack of access to medicinal plants.

• Flooding of urban poor communities due to rivers, creeks and waterways clogged with waste.

• Disaster unpreparedness: Urban poor communities are vulnerable to disasters related to the impacts of floods, landslides, earthquakes, fires, heat waves, and lack of water services. There is a lack of a comprehensive and effective flood control program and disaster preparedness programs.

• Lack of basic social services: These include services related to health, sanitation, water, and waste collection and segregation services. Implementation of public projects, such as sewerage systems, is inefficient and defective. Social services are scarce and often commercialized.

• Food insecurity: Food has to be purchased commercially due to lack of areas to grow or forage for food.

• Impacts of land use conversion: Agricultural areas are increasingly being converted into relocation sites or other non-agricultural uses, displacing already landless peasants and increasing the rural poor diaspora into urban centers.

• Culture of commercialization: Consumption of non-essential goods is encouraged and also contributes to the increase of domestic and plastic waste.

• Diseases arising from exposure to pollution: Including air, water, and noise pollution. There is widespread incidence of communicable and infectious diseases (such as dengue) due to urban congestion, flooding, and lack of sanitation services. Some areas are also concerned about the impacts of improper infectious waste disposal of hospitals.

• Lack of occupational safety: Employment is rare and often comes in the form of dirty and dangerous jobs.

• Lack of educational opportunities

• Constant threat of demolitions
ANTI-SLAPP BILL OF 2010 CAMPAIGN KICKS-OFF WITH CULTURAL NIGHT

CHEAMSON BOONGALING

To strengthen its advocacy and lobby work, CEC explores various forms of educating and mobilizing supporters in comprehensive yet entertaining ways. “SLAPP Us Not! A night of art and music in defense of the environment and human rights” was a venue to showcase such creativity from artists, poets, and musicians who gathered to support the Anti-SLAPP Bill of 2010.

Recent years have seen the rise in number of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation or SLAPP cases initiated by influential entities against non-governmental organizations, people’s organizations, local community groups, and individuals in an attempt to intimidate the latter into discontinuing their protests, opposition, or criticisms against any initiative of the former.

Currently there is no comprehensive anti-SLAPP mechanism in the Philippines, whether in the country’s substantive and procedural law. House Bill (HB) 3593 or the Anti-SLAPP Act of 2010, aims to define SLAPPs, prohibit the filing of such harassment suits, and provide measures for its dismissal. It was introduced in the 15th Congress by representatives from prawitiels Bayan Muna, Anakpawis, Gabriela Women’s Party, Kabataan and ACT Teachers and was filed last November 2010.

The event held on December 7 in Vinzon’s Hall, UP Diliman was attended by a diverse audience from students to urban poor community members. In time for the international human rights day on December 10, the event underscored that environment protection is not separate from the defense of human rights.

CEC PILOTS FIRST LUZON-WIDE ENVICORE TRAINING

CHE DOMINGUEZ

EC-Philippines kicked off the Luzon leg of its pilot Environmental Cadres Course (EnviCore) from October 11 to 16 at the Women and Ecology Wholeness Farm in Mendez, Cavite.

Participants of this second batch included representatives from the Computer Professionals Union, Scientists and Technologists for the People (Agham), Agham Youth, the Cordillera Development and People’s Center, Cordillera Peoples Alliance, Bukal Batangas, and Save the Valley Serve the People chapters in Isabela and Cagayan Valley.

EnviCore was conceptualized and developed as a second-level course and a response to the need to develop the capacity of environmental cadres and workers of CEC and its network partners. Its modules include updates on the national and global environmental situation, reviews of basic ecological concepts, frameworks of analysis, use of research tools and environmental investigative missions, introduction to environmental laws, and sharing sessions on campaign, research and networking strategies.

Participants welcomed the opportunity to be oriented with different aspects of environmental education, research, and advocacy work (see related article, The EnviCore Engagement).

Among the recommendations of participants was the affirmation of the EnviCore solidarity night and the various workshops as a venue for learning, the need for video-documentation of the training, tackling of more case studies for discussions, and the dissemination of written presentations by the resource speakers as materials for re-echo sessions among the graduates’ organizations and communities.

The first EnviCore training was piloted by CEC from June 29 to July 4 at the Maryridge Convent and Training Center, Tagaytay City. Participants from the pilot batch came from eleven national environmental and sectoral organizations, representing urban poor, peasant women, fisher folk, indigenous peoples, women, and youth.
EnviCore was conceptualized and developed as a second-level course and a response to the need to develop the capacity of environmental cadres and workers of CEC and its network partners.

THE ENVI CORE ENGAGEMENT: SAVE THE WORLD, TAKE THE CRASH COURSE

“[S]aving humanity and saving the earth. You can’t expect to achieve one without the other, and neither is possible under the existing system.” – John Bellamy Foster

BY LEON DULCE

Hold up a flashcard with the word “environmentalism” to a high school class and ask them what it means. You will hear the usual motherhood statements of saving Mother Nature and caring for the environment. Ask them to give concrete examples of environmentalism, and you’ll get just about the same broad strokes: proper waste segregation and disposal, tree-planting, coastal clean ups, and living a more eco-friendly lifestyle.

Having never accepted the approach of promoting individual lifestyle changes made popular by mass media, every encounter I had with the environmental movement was always with a doubtful look and taken with a grain of salt. It was only in the later parts of my stint as an activist in the University of the Philippines did I encounter a different brand of environmental activism, one that I would discover later to be of the principles, concepts and strategies embodied in the Environmental Cadres Course (EnviCore) training course I would be taking years later (see related article on page 14).

FIRST ENCOUNTER

We were organizers then in the Student Alliance for the Advancement of Democratic Rights in UP, and we were helping to consolidate our member regional organizations hailing from Bicol, Marinduque, and other regions. We decided to conduct a big forum on the biggest concerns of their hometowns, which through consultation were identified mainly as the practices of rampant deforestation and mining.

In search of resource speakers who have a genuine understanding of the situation in the grassroots communities, we came upon the Center for Environmental Concerns – Philippines (CEC Phils) and the Kalikasan People’s Network for the Environment. The presentations were a refreshing break from the beauty pageant proclamations we usually hear: presented was a comprehensive overview of both quantitative and qualitative data on our natural resources and its exploitation by big transnational corporations.

It was the first time we were exposed to the

CEC shares the reflections of one of EnviCore’s graduates: a piece on how today’s youth and professionals can learn about and contribute to environmental awareness and advocacy.
economic and political ramifications of these environmentally destructive practices, and the first time we were presented with a concrete array of solutions both in the long-term and short-term. The discourse looked at the issues from the perspective of poor and vulnerable people and communities: the impacts, after all, primarily affected the economically marginalized.

**FAST FORWARD**

Onwards to 2010, I am now working in the Computer Professionals’ Union (CPU), a non-government organization of information and communications technology (ICT) professionals, students and advocates. We serve as a bridge between the ICT community and the broad mass movements in the Philippines, mobilizing its members and volunteers to provide technical services to its network of non-government and people’s organizations, as well as to have a direct involvement in their campaigns and other activities.

CPU has long worked with other progressive science & technology organizations, including those involved in environmental advocacy. It started to have a deeper engagement in the environmental movement beyond providing technical services in its participation in the national grassroots conference on climate change organized by the CEC–Phils and the Philippine Climate Watch Alliance (PCWA), which we officially joined shortly thereafter.

Leading the operations of multimedia documentation and serving as technical partner in PCWA’s different involvements, CPU finally ventured into its own environmental project with the Global Green Grants Fund-supported Greenbot Philippines, a project that aims to produce an online web portal that documents case studies of environmental issues around the nation, starting with the particular cases of coastal ecosystems in Bohol, Sorsogon and Negros, and a manual for environmental activists on useful online tools for their campaigns, education and organizing.

**FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

Then the opportunity came for CPU to finally get its formal training in the area of environmental advocacy and education: CEC Phils invited us to participate in their second Environmental Cadres’ Course (or EnviCore for short) for Luzon-based organizations. It is a comprehensive six-day course that aims to integrate environmental perspectives in the work of advocates from different sectors of society. It also aims to develop their capacities in organizing effective and sustainable campaigns and developing projects on environmental issues and concerns.

Excited for a closer encounter with the concrete methodologies of progressive environmental advocacy, and hoping to finally be its implementor in the sector of ICT, I embarked with other delegates from around Luzon to an eco-farm in Cavite for a focused, if not bordering on hermetic, study. EnviCore here we come! We were a mixed bunch of youths and students, indigenous people’s leaders, scientists and development workers, but all were involved to an extent in environmental activism. Coming as an ICT activist, I was easily one of the participants who weren’t your usual fold of environmental advocates.

We were trained in basic ecological concepts to have a sufficient scientific framework as basis for the setting of our guiding principles in our campaigns, projects, training and education. The national and international environmental situation was also imparted to give participants the social contexts that have shaped modern trends in the environmental movement. We were also given specific inputs on climate change science and policy trends.

It was in here that I fully appreciated the people-oriented perspective that environmental activism should subscribe to: nature is no mere wonder, but a resource that the majority of Filipinos rely on for their survival and livelihood. As ecologist John Bellamy Foster puts it, the more effective advocates of environmental sustainability in the world are the ones with a pro-people principle under their belts, such as Bolivian socialist President Evo Morales.

**FOR THE PEOPLE**

With the framework down pat, delegates were then equipped with skills and tools in the day-to-day operations of an environmental advocacy organization: there were sessions on legal work, policy advocacy, networking, issue profiling and research, and planning campaigns. Despite delegates having different campaigns, activities and projects appropriate to their own lines of work, everyone still benefited from understanding how the entire operation works. It enabled us to see the context where our ICT projects fit in the big picture of the Philippine environmental movement, for instance.

One would realize after going through EnviCore that everything is connected when it comes to environmental advocacy. Every human activ-
ity, after all, has an impact on and is affected by changing trends in the environment. For us ICT activists, the dream of having a competitive domestic software and hardware manufacturing industry has a stable and modernized agriculture as its prerequisite. Where else will we get the raw materials for production and the operational requirements such as food, health care and shelter if our agricultural production remains stunted and import-dependent?

On the flipside, every sector can also contribute to the struggle for the people and the environment. We can help cause-oriented organizations and campaigns related to the environment be more efficient by providing them with appropriate computer tools and technologies, and training them in its optimal usage. Scientists can help concretize studies and investigations on different environmental impacts. Cultural workers can help popularize campaigns through engaging visual communication. Business graduates can help generate resources to help sustain projects and campaigns.

The possibilities that we must make possible are endless.

Leon Dulce is the new media coordinator of the Computer Professionals’ Union. He pursues his interests in design, writing, technology and activism online and offline, all in service to the people’s struggles.

LEONARD CO
(continued from page 7)

Sustained by sheer passion and sharpened through practice, the value of Co’s vast and almost encyclopedic expertise was that it did not remain lodged in repositories or libraries, comfortable in being proprietary and profitable. We shall always be grateful to Co and his colleagues who labored during the days of the dictatorship to make health and knowledge an attainable reality for the most dispossessed of communities, and who continued to pursue the protection of our national patrimony in the years thereafter. We shall always recall with respect the quirky, intense taxonomist who played the harmonica, the humblest of musical instruments, and who considered the hymns of struggle and national liberation as music to the ears.

Losing Leonard Co to a hail of bullets is a great injustice, an irreparable loss to his family, the University and the country.

The following days will be filled with battles against forgetting, against apathy and against injustice. By engaging in these struggles, we can fully honor a National Treasure and a true scientist for the people.

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Environmental educators and representatives of non-government and peoples organizations from the Philippines, Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, South Korea, Japan, and Uzbekistan gathered in Manila for the first Forum on Climate Change and Environmental Education in Asia-Pacific: Building Capacities for Sustainable People’s Development in the Region from December 14 to 15, 2010 at the Bayview Park Hotel, Manila.

The event was organized by the Climate Change Learning Initiative Mobilizing Action for Transforming Environments in the Asia-Pacific (CLIMATE Asia-Pacific) and hosted by the Center for Environmental Concerns-Philippines (CEC-Phils), with the support of DVV International. The conference also included an exhibition of environmental education materials and solidarity night among participants.

The forum emphasized the relevance and urgency of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the context of addressing the challenges and impacts of global warming, particularly on the poor and marginalized sectors in the Asia-Pacific region. In December 2002, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared the years 2005 to 2014 as the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, designating UNESCO as the lead agency.

ESD IN A ‘CLIMATE-CHANGED WORLD’

CEC-Phils Executive Director Frances Quimpo introduced the CLIMATE Asia-Pacific network as a platform for solidarity and sharing of learning resources among educators and grassroots organizations across the region.

Dr. Jose Roberto Guevara, President of the Asia-South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education, and former Executive Director of CEC, stressed the need to advocate for a “different education in a ‘climate changed’ world.”

“Literacy is not just reading, writing, and so on. We now should be able read the new world: the climate changed world. Literacy is not just reading, writing, and so on. We now should be able read the new world: the climate changed world. It is understanding the complexity of climate change, beyond the technical and scientific focus, beyond adaptation and mitigation. It is to understand the need for justice and political focus that informs our action and empowers us to act,” Guevara said.

“Transformation is the end goal: not just of the self but of the society and the system that has brought us to this situation. We must not be victims, forced to adapt to climate change. We must understand and challenge the root causes of climate change and demand just responses,” Guevara concluded.
“It’s the urgency that’s new,” Guevara stressed, “We have a decade to focus on ESD, but do we have a decade to act?”

**Evolving Definition of ESD and Development**

The conference’s keynote speaker, ACT Teachers Partylist Representative Antonio Tinio, also emphasized the role of education in the current environmental crisis. Tinio and Guevara both acknowledged the changing definitions of ESD and sustainable development, considering these as a tool that could work for or against the people’s welfare.

Tinio cautioned that powerful multilateral organizations have historically played a major role in appropriating the term ‘sustainable development’ and aligning it with neoliberal policy agendas. These, he said, were reflected in the country’s privatization of the educational system and the liberalization of investments that have severely depleted natural resources.

“We educators should critically address the concept of sustainable development: who sustains it? What kind of development? Development for whom?” Tinio said.

**Global Context of Climate Change Policies**

The morning of the conference featured a panel on updates in environmental situations and contexts. Dr. Giovanni Tapang, AGHAM Chairperson, highlighted the impacts of global warming in the Asia-Pacific region, stressing that it has worsened the existing impacts of globalisation, especially among the most vulnerable or marginalized segments of the population.

Atty. Elpidio Peria, legal consultant for the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, shared updates and agendas related to the Convention on Biodiversity, a non-binding treaty ongoing since 1993 which, like the Kyoto Protocol, has yet to be signed by the United States. Elenita Dano, Program Manager of the Erosion Technology and Conservation Group, presented updates on the climate negotiations in Cancun, Mexico, summarizing the developments as a continuation of Copenhagen, which provided the foundation for the current climate regime.

**Common Threads**

The afternoon panel focused on ESD case studies and the regional challenges of these efforts. Yuka Ozawa, Program Officer of the Education Cooperation Division of the Asia-Pacific Cultural Center for UNESCO in Japan, shared their experiences in coming up with the Tokyo Declaration of Hope and the “HOPE” (holistic, ownership-based, participatory, and empowering) evaluation approach as a learning process.

Teresita Vistro of the Asia Peasant Women’s Network focused on agriculture and ESD, discussing the impacts of climate change on regional agriculture and rural populations, especially women. She articulated their education agenda as supporting farmers knowledge, sustainable adaptation and mitigation practices, the need to address destructive farming practices, building resilience of communities, and integration with broader issues of human rights and social justice.

Dominic D’ Souza, Associate Director of Laya in Vishakhapatnam, India, discussed forestry and ESD, spanning fundamental concerns related to science, political economy, ethics, and action.

**Experience Sharing**

The second day of the conference featured two simultaneous panel sessions on case studies (continued on page 23)
**EDUCATION FOR CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE PEOPLE’S DEVELOPMENT**

This conference statement was drafted and affirmed by participants of the Forum on Climate Change and Environmental Education in Asia-Pacific last December 14 to 15, 2010 in Manila, Philippines.

We, educators, learners and leaders of civil society, environmental and people’s organizations from the Asia-Pacific region, gather to collectively affirm our solidarity and unity to advance education and learning initiatives towards climate justice and sustainable people’s development.

Global warming has caused immense devastation across the Asia-Pacific region, the largest and most populous continent worldwide with more than four billion people. More and more communities have experienced firsthand the impacts of global warming, such as changes in temperature and rainfall, flooding, freshwater scarcity, infestations and epidemics, landslides, stronger droughts and typhoons. Our region is home to among the most destitute communities of the globe, left to fend for survival amidst poverty and massive illiteracy.

The extreme vulnerability of our peoples to disasters, displacement and death is not merely due to our geographic contexts: it is rooted in the historic and systemic denial of the people’s rights—to land and water, to rights and livelihood, and to a healthful ecology—spawned by unsustainable models and paradigms of development.

The current environmental and socio-political policies, programs, and systems, instituted and implemented by governments and states in the region have instead ravaged our ecosystems, livelihoods, and ways of living.

While the Asia-Pacific region has some of the world’s highest GHG emitters, majority of the most vulnerable peoples in the world to climate change are also from the region.

The current climate negotiations, controlled by powerful leaders and nations from the Annex I countries who represent the world’s top emitters, have repeatedly refused to recognize genuine solutions to lower greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) to the levels needed to stabilize the world’s climate. Instead, these negotiations have largely peddled false solutions to the crisis. These are dangerous experiments, driven by corporate greed and the quest for profit, which fail to address the current crisis of unsustainable overproduction and overconsumption which has contributed to the unprecedented levels of man-made GHG emissions into our atmosphere.

Whose lives are at stake in the climate crisis? All of our lives are at stake but some are more endangered than others. The tillers of our lands; the nurturers of our seas, forests and mountains; the toiling peoples, such as peasants and farmers, indigenous peoples, fisherfolks, urban poor, workers, women and children. Never at any other moment has the situation been as critical as it is today. Never has the danger to our ecosystems, communities, and cultures been as pronounced and real.

What can be done in the face of such looming and widespread suffering? As educators, learners, and leaders, we recognize that our education work needs to explicitly address the politics of global warming and motivate informed action for a sustainable and just future.

A. EDUCATION FOR A CLIMATE-CHANGED WORLD

Education is central to surviving in a climate-changed world. It is a vital requisite to leading the widest number of people to defend, protect, and rehabilitate the integrity of creation and our ecosystems. It can transform individual perspectives and lifestyles into systems and structures of governance. Through education, we are enabled to envision possibilities towards a more viable future and empowered to transform them into reality.

What kind of education is critical to redefining sustainability that prioritizes the people’s needs and their environments, as well as the welfare of future generations? One that is dem-
ocratic and anchored on science, historical realities, respect for local and indigenous knowledge, and concrete plans for action towards gender equality, justice and peace. One that is:

• **Inclusive**, which can reach the widest number of government, non-government, and private sectors and embrace the contributions of sectors such as women, youth, and differently-abled persons.

• **Owned by the people**, created with consultation from the grassroots, prioritizing the people’s participation in learning, and involving the basic sectors of our societies, such as indigenous peoples, fisher folk, farmers, and workers.

• **Rights-based**, which will uphold and promote the pursuit of basic human rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and indigenous people’s rights to ancestral lands and self-determination, as upheld in United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

• **Rooted in the people’s knowledge, practices, and community science**, which respects, promotes, and integrates traditional wisdom and socio-political systems for sustainable development.

• **Threads in the perspective of gender** in analysing and dealing with global warming impacts.

• **Mass-based** and directed towards pursuing social change and collective action. How are we to go about creating such educational structures for sustainable people’s development? The challenge is how to support such a vision of learning, in terms of content, method, and access:

• **In terms of content**, education must nurture a critical understanding of the roots and solution to the crisis of sustainability, emphasizing the responsibility of developed countries on global warming. It must support genuine solutions that prioritize the people’s needs over corporate greed and build the resiliency of Asia-Pacific grassroots communities by working to reduce their vulnerabilities.

• **In terms of access**, there must be comprehensive and participatory measures to integrate such education into all aspects of developmental learning, from formal to non-formal. It must be accessible for youths, adults, and families. Support and access to environmental education should be given to marginalized sectors in the rural and urban areas, to the poor whose lives are dependent on nature and are most adversely affected by climate change impacts.

• **In terms of method**, the development of popular, participatory, and accessible approaches and information, education, and campaign materials and tools must be supported.

**B. FROM EDUCATION TO COLLECTIVE PEOPLE’S ACTION**

Effective education must go beyond facilitating understanding and towards translating awareness into collective action, into altering our current ways of thinking and doing to achieve sustainable people’s development. In a climate-changed world, education is about advancing social change. Thus, we call for and affirm the following actions:

• **The need to support people and communities asserting their rights to livelihood, a sound environment, and protection of patrimony.** Community and grassroots voices must be heard in the global negotiations on agriculture, biodiversity, climate change, and forests.

• **The urgent need to demand justice, responsibility and accountability from Annex I countries, which are the world’s biggest emitters.**

• **The need for government accountability, transparency, and support.** Accountability and transparency should be exercised in decision-making on matters of environmental and public concern and responses to global warming. State support should be given for programs which build the capacities of the poorest and most vulnerable communities. Recognition must be given to the role of civil society and people’s organizations in the development and implementation of educational policy and programs in response to global warming.

• **The need to reject market-based mechanisms, frameworks, and false solutions to climate change which do not reduce GHG emissions and support the further exploitation and corporate control of the people’s natural resources.**

• **The need to uphold the people’s rights and knowledge over corporate interests in the agriculture and fisheries sectors.** We oppose biopiracy, seed patenting, massive privatization and conversion of agricultural lands and coastal waters and other fishing areas for ecotourism and other commercial and industrial purposes and other corporate mechanisms to further privatize the commons. Instead, support must be channelled to the promotion and development of traditional varieties, organic farming, local climate change adaptation technologies

(continued on page 24)
Only two percent of old-growth Philippine forests are left. Thousands of squatters will be displaced and lose their homes. Typhoons destroy thousands of houses. Logging destroys millions of hectares in the Amazonian rain forests. Increasing carbon dioxide emissions threaten the global climate. Every six seconds, a child dies of hunger. Every week, another endangered species vanishes.

LINDA PRACEJUS

Sounds horrible, doesn’t it? But does it really touch you? Do you really feel what these numbers mean? These must be huge, but these seem to be random facts which are hard to imagine or to connect to real life.

At least, that is what happens to me. Whenever I hear facts about climate change or news like “200 people in Afghanistan died because of an earthquake,” a part of me feels sorry. Still, if I don’t put a lot of effort in imagining what that could mean, it is no more than just numbers far away from my daily life here in Manila.

The same happened to me when I heard about the “squatters.” Although I have seen enough poor people in the street and the poor constructions they call their houses, it was something far away from me. Reading the newspaper, all I ever read about them gave me a rather negative impression: they seemed to be a dubious crowd of people, occupying places that the government needs for further “development” of Metro Manila. Just a faceless crowd without any individual thoughts, not even to mention feelings.

When I heard that some thousands of those squatters were going to be displaced, a moral part of me said that this is very bad and I felt sorry. But, because of having no personal relations, for me it was just bad news about this anonymous, alien mass of faceless people.

That totally changed when Ryan took me to Barangay Pinahan, one of those “squatter” communities which face the threat of being dislocated, torn away from the home where they grew up, where they saw their children growing up. Suddenly, these odd crowds were no longer just faceless strangers. They were very friendly people, inviting me into their houses, talking to me about their lives, their fears—sharing what little they had with me and making me really feel welcome. Every time I read about them now, it’s no longer just a mass of strangers that I see in my imagination, but it’s people I really like.

Needless to say, I have already been against the dislocation program before. But now that I have a connection these people, it touches me a lot more. My will to fight for their rights has multiplied tenfold. Sure, I’d also have fought without ever meeting them, just because I am generally against injustice. But now I’m sure my efforts will be a lot stronger, motivated by the feelings I have for these people, who I now call my friends.

To see how my feelings changed after the “squatters” became my friends made me think about how urban people feel for nature. I grew up in the countryside and nature has always been a huge part of my life, so helping to conserve the environment seemed to me to be as natural as cleaning the teeth in the evening. Talking to people who didn’t care always left me with
Linda Pracejus is finishing a BS degree in Management of biological and environmental resources at the University of Vienna. She is in the Philippines as a CEC intern and volunteer through the AIESEC Development Traineeship Program.

This huge question mark above my head how ignorance and heartlessness could somehow be possible.

But now I begin to understand. It’s a totally different thing fighting for something that you know by heart or some injustice that you think is really bad, but you have no direct connection to. Many of the people we think are cold and don’t care about the world might actually have a very good morality – they just never had the possibility to really feel the need for a change.

If we want to encourage people to join our struggle for equitable living conditions and against climate change, we have to give them the possibility to really feel the need for a change. Take them to the “squatters”, of which they have only heard bad things in the news, and let them see that they are people like you and me. Take them to the forest, let them breathe the fresh air, hear the river flowing, listen to the birds singing, and feel the value of undamaged nature. What should they care about a random, unimaginable number of some trees far away from them if they have never had any good “tree-experience.” Give the squatters a face, let the people feel the forest and many more people will be motivated to fight for justice and a healthy environment. It’s all about awareness.

GLOBAL WARMING

(continued from page 19)

on environmental education programs.

Jung Kyung Il from the Korea Environmental Education Center, established in February 2000 to develop education programs, researches, and training for teachers and NGO activists, shared their initiatives to forge partnerships between local government, NGOs, and community residents. CEC’s Training and Community Services Coordinator Ricarido Saturay shared the center’s two-decade experiences in creating and developing its core education module, the Restoration Ecology Workshop since 1990.

Some panelists focused on the links between education and advocacy work. Clemente Bautista, Jr. of Kalikasan People’s Network for the Environment (KPNE), a national campaign network, shared their experience in strengthening Filipino environmental mass movements and promoting sustainable development from the point of view of people’s organizations. Aleksandra Povarich of the Uzbekistan Youth Environment Network, a union of more than 180 youth and environmental organizations, shared their various programs and projects. Jane Yap-eo of the Center for Development Program Networks in the Cordillera, a network of 12 NGOs based in the northern Philippines, shared the contexts of their education practices among indigenous peoples and their struggle for defense of land, life, and resources.

Other panelists shared their experiences in community-based conservation programs. Ricky Nunez of Conservation International shared the center’s experience in using education to promote the protection and conservation of the Verde Island passage off the coast of Luzon. The area contains among the country’s richest fishing grounds and is considered as the “center of the center of marine shorefish biodiversity” worldwide.

Hasan Masum of the Coastal Development Partnership in Bangladesh focused on the challenges on ESD and climate change education among coastal populations, stressing the potential of converting traditional community knowledge and practices into appropriate and relevant information for climate change policy and planning. Paul Santos shared the story of the Kalin-gap Marikina Watershed, a Church-initiated community-based project in Bgy. San Jose, Antipolo City integrating watershed rehabilitation and protection with sustainable farming systems and sloping agroforest land technologies.

BUILDING SOLIDARITY

The conference was capped by the presentation and plenary discussion of the conference statement (please see text of the statement on page 20) and a ritual of affirmation and solidarity among participants.

“Our educators in the climate change advocacy network and social movements gave us significant insights and political agitation by telling the world of their accomplishments and breakthroughs in environmental education work and inspire many to work hard for the cause of the people and the environment,” concluded KPNE Chairperson and national fisherfolk leader Fernando L. Hicap in his closing remarks.

Hicap expressed optimism that CLIMATE Asia-Pacific would help “set the stage for more dynamic and active participation of the people and social movements in the region to struggle and advocate for a better and free world for the majority of the poor people across the globe.”
LANDLESSNESS AND CARPER, CULPRITS IN WORLD ‘FOODLESS’ DAY

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t’s World ‘Foodless’ Day in the Philippines as peasants are still landless and are continuously displaced by landlords and land-grabbers that make use of the anti-peasant provisions of CARPer.”

This according to the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), who along with KMP-Negros and KASAMA-TK (KMP Southern Tagalog) and other peasant supporters, held a protest in front of the Department of Agrarian Reform office in Quezon City last October 16 to mark the globally-observed World Food Day.

Peasant groups blamed massive landlessness and the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms or CARPer, as culprits to the continuous poverty and hunger experienced by Filipinos.

Latest data in 2010 reveals 32.9 percent of the population are below the poverty line, a swift increase of 9.67 percent from 30 percent in 2009. Meanwhile, a national survey early this year showed 21.1 percent, or an estimated 4 million Filipino families, have suffered from hunger in recent months.

Protesters cooked symbols of CARPer, tagging it as “inedible to farmers” to show that the law has not solved land reform neither food security problems. Instead, farmers pushed for the passage of House Bill 3745 or Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill.

EDUCATION FOR CHANGE

(continued from page 21)

• The need to sustain our advocacy of climate justice. Therefore, we continue our initiatives to exchange resources, experiences, and link our common efforts towards genuine sustainable people’s development.

To advance our aspirations for education and action for sustainable people’s development, we affirm our urgent commitment to building people’s solidarity and unity as a response to the global crisis of climate change.

Climate Change Learning Initiative Mobilizing Action for Transforming Environments in Asia Pacific (CLIMATE Asia Pacific)